

Amendment 15 Read First Document

The purpose of this document is to aid the SSC and Council in their review of Amendment 15. It outlines the recently added actions and amendments to current actions made by the Council since the SSC last met, the changes to the amendment (analyses, introduction, etc.) made by the Council/NMFS/NOAA GC writing team, and the sections currently incomplete. The items, at the least, that Council staff feels should be addressed by the SSC are outlined in the roadmap document on the SSC CD.

A. Changes to Amendment 15 actions since the last SSC meeting (December 2006).

1) In terms of the recreational overage action, the alternatives previously read that action should be taken if recreational overages occur for 3 and 5 consecutive years for alternatives 4a and 4b, respectively. Now it reads to take action if overage occurs based on a 3 year and 2 year running average, respectively. The Council's preferred alternative would reduce the recreational harvest in the fourth year if the average annual recreational catch over a three year period exceeds the average annual allocation over that same period. The Council made the changes as they believe using an average versus consecutive years is more conservative to the stock.

2) An action was added to limit black sea bass pot effort through either limiting the number of black sea bass pots allowed or the distribution of pot tags. The Council is concerned increased restrictions imposed through Amendment 13C, including a commercial quota for black sea bass, will increase incentive to fish more pots. Currently there is no limit to the number of tags issued to fishermen or the number of pots that can be fished. The Council is also concerned about the possibility of fishermen leaving large numbers of traps fishing for multiple days due to vessel or weather problems, which could unnecessarily kill many black sea bass. Fishing large numbers of traps also increases the chance that traps could be lost and "ghost fishing" could occur. Furthermore, fishing large numbers of traps increases the chance of entanglement of pot lines with right whales and other protected species.

3) Allocation alternatives were added for snowy grouper and red porgy.

4) In terms of rebuilding strategies, constant catch strategies were moved to the "Considered But Rejected Alternatives Appendix" for snowy grouper and black sea bass as they would allow overfishing to occur for a significant number of years. All rebuilding strategies for the 3 overfished species now have an estimation of discards included. The estimation of discards included in the rebuilding strategies for snowy grouper and black sea bass is based on recommendations from the SSC at the December 2006 meeting. The rebuilding scenario for red porgy uses a scenario selected by the Council for estimation of the magnitude of increased discards. The

SSC did not select a preferred scenario for red porgy but recommended additional analyses be conducted with a different baseline of years.

5) Underage alternatives were moved to the “Considered But Rejected Alternatives Appendix”. The Council is concerned that it would be difficult to apply an underage to the following year’s allowable catch considering when final landings are received, the length of time to implement a management change, and the need for an SSC to review. In addition, an underage could be due to poor recruitment; a raise in TAC the following year could significantly impede rebuilding. In general, the Council felt that since many species are in an overfished condition, it is best to “bank” any portion of the TAC not caught.

B. Changes to Amendment 15 (effects analyses, introduction, etc.) since the last Council meeting (December 2006).

In general, modifications to the amendment were made to respond to the changes made to the alternatives as described above. Discussions of the biological effects of allocation and black sea bass pot alternatives were added to the amendment.

As requested by the SSC, staff included (in Appendix F) additional scenarios to estimate discards for snowy grouper, black sea bass, and red porgy. Those additional scenarios are outlined in the December 2006 SSC Report and in Appendix F.

C. Undeveloped/incomplete sections.

- 1) Economic and social effects analyses for rebuilding strategy alternatives for snowy grouper and black sea bass. Social effects analysis for red porgy.
- 2) Economic and social effects analyses for allocation alternatives for snowy grouper and red porgy.
- 3) Economic and social effects analyses for alternatives to change the golden tilefish fishing year.
- 4) Economic and social effects analyses for alternatives to establish a deepwater species unit and partially complete for deepwater management unit alternatives.
- 5) Economic and social effects analyses for alternatives to limit the distribution of black sea bass pot tags.
- 6) Update of economic logbook data in section 3.