

Port Meeting Summary
Morehead City, NC
March 19, 2014, 11 a.m. session

1) Flexible regulations / longer seasons

Solutions --

- Use trip limits to extend seasons and stabilize market prices
- Keep adjusting trip/possession limits as practicable
- Manage for maximum economic yield
- Open red snapper – specify certain number of pounds per trip; give pounds per trip all year
- Consider regionally appropriate seasons/regulations
- Do not close season when quota is not met (33% of red grouper last year) individual interested in keeping species open during the spawning closure if their ACL is not met (may have been some confusion that this was a spawning season closure instead of an ACL related closure)
- Open red grouper through February
- Have management goal to maximize season length per TAC to improve profitability
- Consider catch shares for year-round availability
- Open black seabass pots during the winter
- Open all fisheries during the same time to eliminate excess pressure on specific species
- Maximize and align fishing seasons to keep as many species open at once (trip limits)
- Interest by group in keeping snapper grouper fishery open year round; suggestion to potentially set trip limits to make quota last throughout the season; will give fishermen more options on species to target and will reduce discards; gray triggerfish used as an example – if have trip limit, would allow season to be open longer and would help stabilize the market because GTF would be available year round
- Interest by group in lining up fishing years so everything is open at same time (besides spawning season closures) to help reduce discards
- Suggestion for closures to affect all sectors at the same time

2) One-size-fits-all management vs. state-by-state management

Issues/Not Working --

- Not enough fish for NC
- No ITQ or limited entry
- When fishing seasons open in January the weather is bad in NC, but nice in FL; individuals voiced concerns that this allows FL fishermen an unfair advantage in catching the quota and caused NC fishermen to go out in bad weather (safety concerns)
- Based on economics and differing environmental factors – need to look at region by region management; let states manage for themselves and their user groups

- One size fits all management doesn't work; Council manages very large area; large geographic, economic, and cultural differences in the area the Council manages

Solutions --

- Divide quota around states evenly
- Year round availability "catch shares"
- Management that is cheaper than tax payer
- State by state management
- Set coastwise season fair to all – adjust opening/closure dates based on what state you are in; set up seasons differently dependent on what state you are in
- Divide quota among commercial permits
- Adjust seasons geographically (used vermilion snapper as an example)

3) Improve data collection / stock assessments

Issues/Not Working –

- Mistrust in the data, particularly the recreational data (snowy grouper CRP mentioned as an example)
- Misunderstanding / misconceptions of how recreational data are collected – specifically MRIP
- Group emphasized that management needs to rely on good science

Solutions --

- Collect and use real time data for assessments
- Smart regulations – base them on sound facts not trial and error
- No guessing just the facts

4) Complexity of regulations

Issues/Not Working --

- Need better regulations, Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS)
- Regulations need to be easily understood, easily implemented, and easily enforced
- A few individuals expressed concern that commercial fishermen are able to work in both the commercial and recreational sectors

5) Improve reporting

Issues/Not Working --

- Reporting should be fair for all stakeholders
- Recreational fishermen need to be more accountable for reporting catch; not fair to require commercial and for-hire (moving toward census style reporting) fishermen to report catch when the private recreational sector is not required to report

Solutions --

- Trip tickets for all stakeholders
- Check box for reef fish on recreational saltwater fishing license to help identify recreational snapper grouper fishermen

- Pilot program for (voluntary?) self reporting system for recreational sector
- Change accountability measures - individuals expressed interest in closures impacting all sectors the same; once one sector reaches their ACL for a species, all sectors would close; to allow for this recreational regulations may have to be adjusted so that they would be able to reach their ACL in the allotted time.

6) Shifting abundance of resources

Issues/Not Working --

- Focus on abundance for recreational opportunity; abundance is shifting inshore for many species, causes fewer issues with baurotrauma

Solutions --

- Conservation allowance for recreational opportunities; do not allow excess recreational quota to go to the commercial sector

7) Reducing discards

Issues/Not Working --

- Million+ pounds of dead discards deducted from TAC every year
- Bycatch
- MSA manadates to limit waste, make efficient use of resources, and promote our safety at sea are being ignored
- bycatch hurts the entire fishing industry

Solutions --

- Allow a bycatch amount per trip (or %)
- Some allowable bycatch 100-200 lbs per trip (red snapper, red porgy, gag)
- Open recreational season year round with strict creel limits and no size limits; outlaw high grading – full retention, no size limits; high grading would potentially be a problem
- Make recreational and commercial black seabass size limits the same
- Promote descending devices on illegal fish suffering baurotrauma to reduce discard mortality allocation in updated stock assessments

8) Inconsistent supply of seafood

Issue/Not Working –

- Hard to offer local seafood in restaurants due to regulations; need consistent product to stay in business

Solutions --

- Allow for a dependable supply of local seafood by properly managing quotas to avoid total closures and excessive regulatory discards
- Use trip limits with step down to keep season open; product would be available year round which would help stabilize markets

9) Other Issues/Solutions

- Seafood labeling – fisheries are highly regulated; labeling with gear and or location information have helped increase prices in other fisheries (tuna); better labeling could help marketing for the snapper grouper fishery
- Get official approval for lionfish traps
- Offer document stating that all species harvested in federal waters are managed sustainably
- Focus on enhancing our fisheries with artificial reef habitat instead of MPAs
- Make public hearing information available on website in more timely fashion – transcripts typically not available until after the comment period closes
- Issue trip tags for recreational sector
- Issue red snapper tags for the commercial sector – would allow commercial fishermen to catch red snapper throughout the year instead of just during the short mini-season