

# Vision Blueprint Commercial Regulatory Amendment 27 for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

## Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Discussion Document



The Vision Blueprint Commercial Regulatory Amendment 27 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region would address specific action items in the 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

March 31, 2017

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place Drive; Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

Award Number FNA15NMF4410010

## Draft Purpose and Need

### ***Purpose for Action***

The purpose of this amendment is to modify commercial regulations such as fishing seasons, trip limits, seasonal closures, and size limits for species in the snapper grouper fishery.

### ***Need for Action***

The need for this amendment is to lengthen commercial fishing seasons, minimize discards, improve compliance, and aid in enforcement of regulations in the South Atlantic region.

## Action 1. Establish a commercial split season for blueline tilefish

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial fishing year for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic EEZ is from January 1 to December 31.

**Alternative 2.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for blueline tilefish. Allocate the blueline tilefish commercial ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through June 30 and YY% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Alternative 3.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for blueline tilefish. Allocate the blueline tilefish commercial ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through \_\_\_\_\_ and YY% to the period \_\_\_\_ through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

### To Consider:

- A blueline tilefish amendment (Amendment 38) has been slated to address changes resulting from the new stock assessment (SEDAR 50). Results of the assessment are expected in 2018.
- The blueline tilefish fishery has been very dynamic over the past few years due to many regulatory changes. Fishery-dependent data have consequently been affected, which has implications for analyses.

## Action 2. Establish a commercial split season for red porgy

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial fishing year for red porgy in the South Atlantic federal waters is from January 1 to December 31. During January, February, March, and April, the seasonal harvest limit of red porgy in or from South Atlantic federal waters is three per person per day or three per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive. From May 1 through December 31, the trip limit is 120 fish.

**Alternative 2.** Maintain the annual January 1 to April 30 seasonal harvest limit for red porgy.

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** Allocate the directed commercial red porgy ACL into two quotas: 50% to the period January 1 through June 30 and 50% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Allocate the directed commercial red porgy ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through \_\_\_\_\_ and YY% to the period \_\_\_\_ through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Others??**

**Alternative 3.** Remove the annual January 1 to April 30 seasonal harvest limit for red porgy.

**Sub-Alternative 3a.** Allocate the directed commercial red porgy ACL into two quotas: 50% to the period January 1 through June 30 and 50% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** Allocate the directed commercial red porgy ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through \_\_\_\_\_ and YY% to the period \_\_\_\_ through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Others??**

### To Consider:

- In the terminal 5 years of the assessment, the stock seems to have ceased rebuilding or perhaps even declined slightly. The increase in stock status in the early 2000s appears to have been initiated by strong recruitment events in 2002 and 2005 and a severe reduction in fishing mortality beginning in 2000. The more recent trend of stabilization appears to be supported by below average recruitment and modest increases in fishing mortality since approximately 2007. The assessment indicated that the stock remains in an overfished state [http://sedarweb.org/docs/suar/2012\\_SARPUupdate\\_Revised.pdf](http://sedarweb.org/docs/suar/2012_SARPUupdate_Revised.pdf)

- Red porgy spawn from mid-November through mid-April along the southeastern U.S., with a peak during January through March  
[http://sedarweb.org/docs/suar/2006\\_SA\\_red\\_porgy\\_update.pdf](http://sedarweb.org/docs/suar/2006_SA_red_porgy_update.pdf)
- Standard assessment scheduled for completion in January 2019

## Action 3. Establish a commercial split season for snowy grouper

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial fishing year for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic federal waters is from January 1 to December 31.

**Alternative 2.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for snowy grouper. Allocate the snowy grouper commercial ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through June 30 and YY% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Alternative 3.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for snowy grouper. Allocate the snowy grouper commercial ACL into two quotas: XX% to the period January 1 through \_\_\_\_\_ and YY% to the period \_\_\_\_ through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

## Action 4. Establish a commercial split season for greater amberjack

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial fishing year for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic federal waters is from March 1 to the end of February.

**Alternative 2.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for greater amberjack. Allocate the commercial ACL for greater amberjack into two quotas: XX% to the period March 1 through August 31 and XX% to the period September 1 through the end of February. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

**Alternative 3.** Specify two commercial fishing seasons for greater amberjack. Allocate the commercial ACL for greater amberjack into two quotas: XX% to the period March 1 through \_\_\_\_\_ and YY% to the period \_\_\_\_\_ through the end of February. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

### To Consider:

- During April, commercial harvest is limited to one per person per day or one per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

## Action 5. Modify the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper in the second season

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper in the South Atlantic federal waters is 1,000 pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) and the commercial ACL is split equally between two six-month seasons. When 75% of the vermilion snapper seasonal quota is met or is projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 500 lbs gw. Any remaining quota from Season 1 transfers to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 is not carried forward.

**Alternative 2.** Implement a 750 lbs gw vermilion snapper commercial trip limit for the second season (July 1 through December 31). The commercial trip limit is reduced to 500 lbs gw when 75% of the second season quota is met or is projected to be met.

**Alternative 3.** Remove the step-down to 500 lbs gw when 75% of the seasonal quota is met or projected to be met, and implement a 500 lbs gw vermilion snapper commercial trip limit for the second season (July 1 through December 31).

### To Consider:

- Table below suggests trip limit step-down may be inadequate to promote season remaining open.
- Step-downs add administrative burden and are subject to uncertainty.

	Season	Total Landings	ACL (quota)	Units	ACL (quota) %	Status
2017	1	296,006	431,460	ww	68.61	Trip Limit Reduction: 3/22/17
	2	0	431,460		0	
2016	1	429,774	431,460	ww	99.61	Trip Limit Reduction: 3/2/16 Closed: 3/29/16
	2	425,014	432,305		98.31	Trip Limit Reduction: 8/28/16 Closed: 10/11/16 Reopened 12/14/16 through 12/15/16 Closed 12/16/16 through 12/31/16
2015	1	435,435	438,260		99.69	Trip Limit Reduction: 3/2/15 Closed: 4/15/15
	1	457,259	438,260		104.34	Trip Limit Reduction: 9/10/15 Closed: 9/22/15
2014	1	454,084	446,080		101.79	Trip Limit Reduction: 3/11/14 Closed: 4/19/14
	2	437,523	446,080		98.08	Trip Limit Reduction: 8/23/14 Closed: 9/12/14



	Season	Total Landings	ACL (quota)	Units	ACL (quota) %	Status
2013	1	304,432	466,480	gw	65.26	Closed: 2/13/13
	2	623,347	613,278		101.64	Closed: 12/2/13
2012	1	400,787	315,523		127.02	Closed: 2/29/12
	2	504,525	302,523		166.77	Closed: 9/28/12
2011	1	333,001	315,523		105.54	Closed: 3/10/11; Re-opened 5/1/11-5/8/11
	2	591,067	302,523		195.38	Closed: 9/30/11
2010	1	360,065	315,523		114.12	
	2	524,797	302,523		173.47	Closed: 10/6/10
2009	1	425,665	315,523		134.91	
	2	409,858	302,523		135.48	9/18/09
2008	Jan 1 - Dec 31	1,112,224	1,100,000		101.11	No closure
2007		981,369	1,100,000		89.22	
2006		772,496	1,100,000		70.23	
2005		1,029,081	None			
2004		1,017,889	None			

## Action 6. Implement a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There is no commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex (lesser amberjack, almaco jack, and banded rudderfish).

**Alternative 2.** Establish a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** 500 pounds whole weight (lbs ww)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 400 lbs ww

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 300 lbs ww

**Alternative 3.** Establish a commercial trip limit for almaco jack.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 500 lbs ww

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 400 lbs ww

**Sub-alternative 3c.** 300 lbs ww

### Reg 24 preliminary trip limit analysis for Jacks Complex

Percent that would be landed under various commercial trip limits for Other Jacks Complex (lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, and almaco jack).

TRIP LIMIT (lbs ww)	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		MEAN 2010-2014	
NO TRIP LIMIT	266,450	100	343,858	100	327,121	100	203,902	100	226,345	100	273,535	100
2000	265,114	99.5	340,387	99	322,080	98.5	202,182	99.2	223,699	98.8	270,692	99
1500	262,513	98.5	334,115	97.2	312,365	95.5	199,425	97.8	218,731	96.6	265,430	97.12
1000	250,584	94	312,822	91	287,950	88	191,019	93.7	207,525	91.7	249,980	91.68
750	236,612	88.8	289,453	84.2	264,689	80.9	181,861	89.2	197,058	87.1	233,935	86.04
500	210,922	79.2	253,215	73.6	228,067	69.7	165,232	81	178,006	78.6	207,088	76.42
400	195,329	73.3	231,475	67.3	207,638	63.5	153,893	75.5	164,531	72.7	190,573	70.46
300	173,852	65.2	204,005	59.3	181,344	55.4	136,654	67	145,721	64.4	168,315	62.26
250	160,165	60.1	186,964	54.4	164,958	50.4	125,106	61.4	133,627	59	154,164	57.06
200	142,951	53.7	166,736	48.5	145,457	44.5	110,709	54.3	119,027	52.6	136,976	50.72

## Action 7. Modify the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) is prohibited annually in the South Atlantic federal waters from January 1 through April 30.

**Alternative 2.** Prohibit commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species annually by area:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** In federal waters off East Florida from the Georgia/Florida state boundary south to the end of the SAFMC's jurisdiction), the closure applies (month) to (month).

**Sub-alternative 2b.** In federal waters off Georgia and the Carolinas from the Georgia/South Carolina border north to the North Carolina/Virginia border, the closure applies (month) to (month)

**Alternative 3.** Prohibit commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (excluding black grouper) south of 28° North latitude (approximately off Palm Bay, Florida):

**Sub-alternative 3a.** January – March (3 months)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** February – March (2 months)

**Sub-alternative 3c.** February – April (3 months)

**Sub-alternative 3d.** February – May (4 months)

**Alternative 4.** Prohibit commercial harvest and possession of black grouper in federal waters off (specify area based on Alternative 2 above)

**Sub-alternative 4a.** January – March (3 months)

**Sub-alternative 4b.** January

**Sub-alternative 4c.** February

**Sub-alternative 4d.** March

*Note: The Council's intent is to consider a different closure for black grouper off Florida.*

**Alternative 5.** Prohibit commercial harvest and possession of red grouper in federal waters off (specify area based on Alternative 2 above)

**Sub-alternative 5a.** January – May (5 months)

**Sub-alternative 5b.** February – May (4 months)

**Sub-alternative 5c.** March – June (4 months)

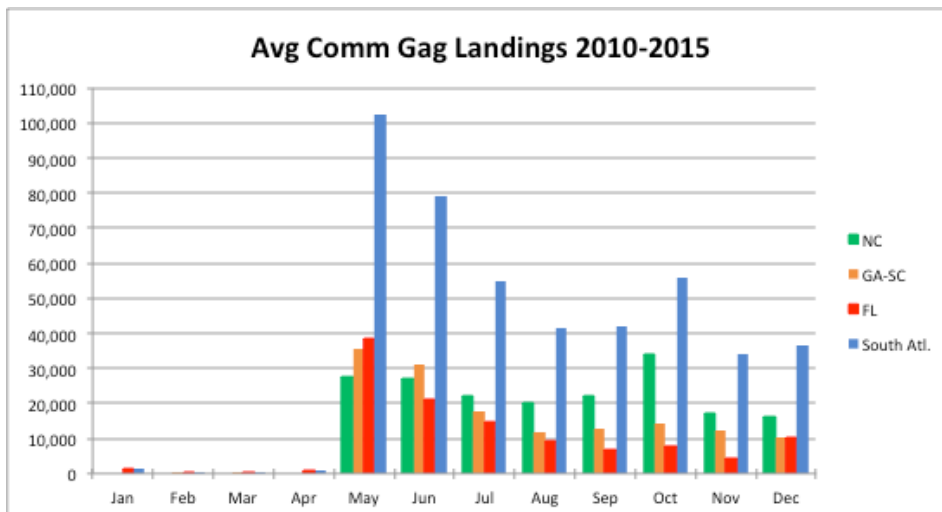
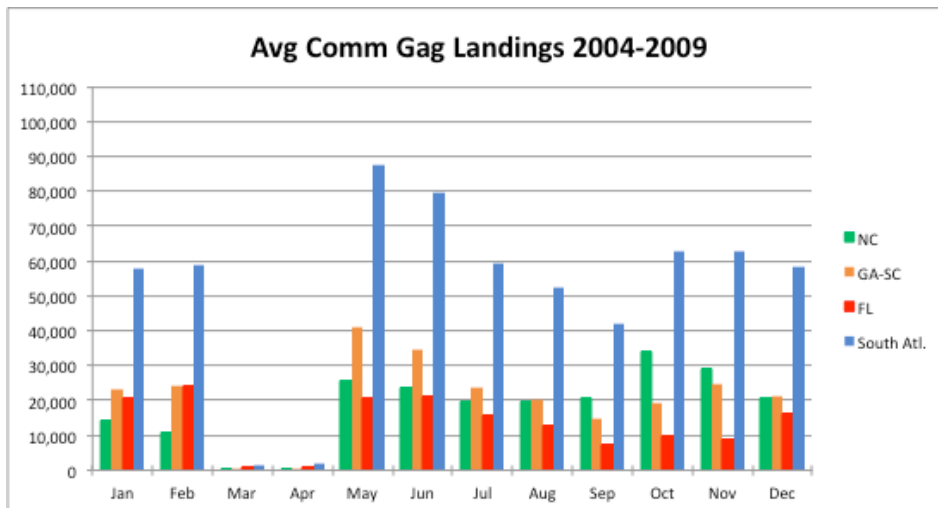
*Note: The Council's intent is to consider a different closure for red grouper off North Carolina.*

**To Consider:**

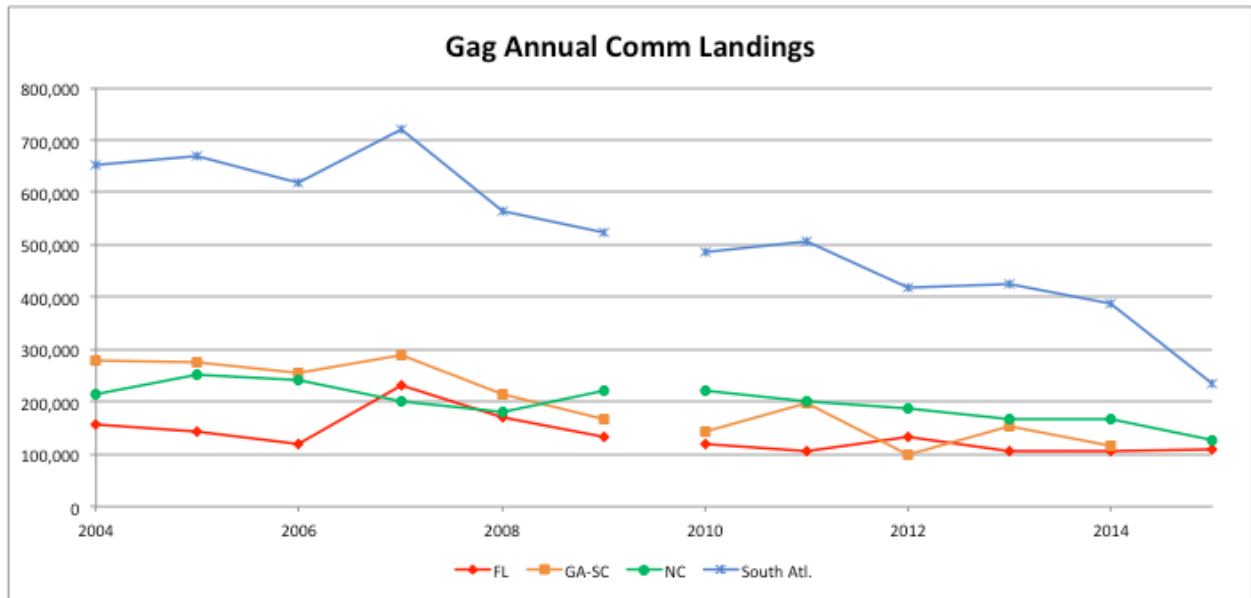
- Black grouper stock assessment is ongoing. At the data workshop, problems with species ID between gag and black grouper off South Florida were identified. This could have implications for analyses.
- Red grouper assessment will be presented to the Council in June 2017.

**Preliminary Data Analysis:**

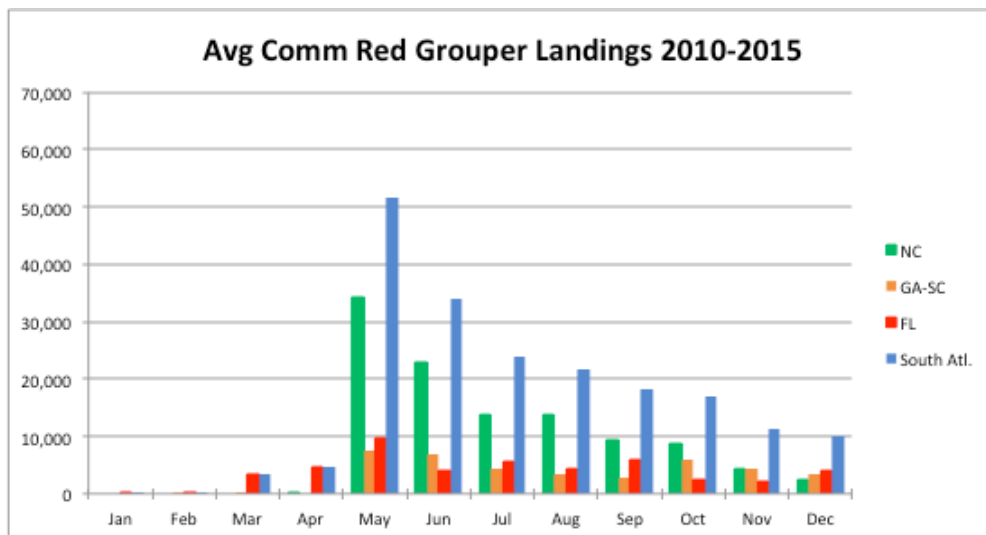
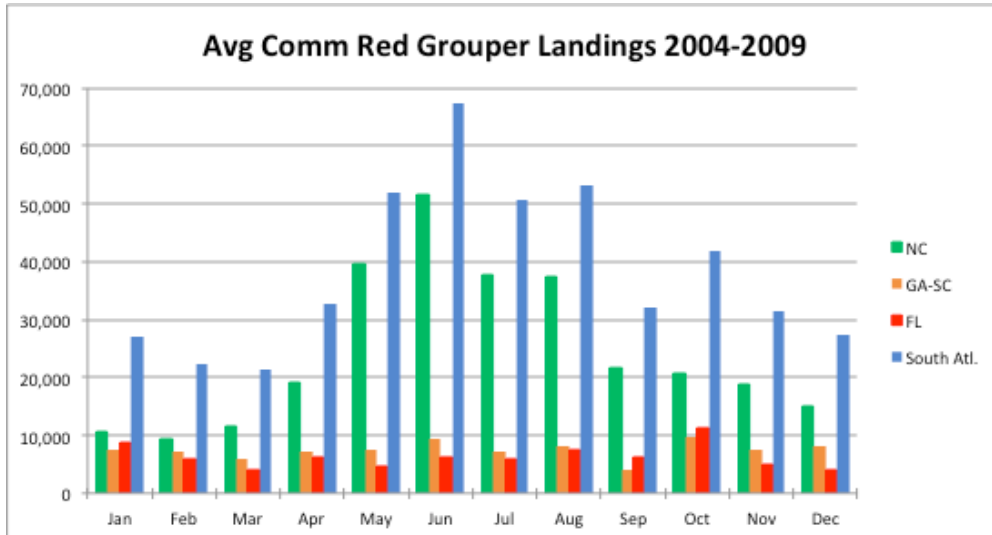
Average commercial landings (pounds whole weight; lbs ww) of **gag** are shown below by month and state (North Carolina [green], Georgia-South Carolina [orange], Florida [red], and all South Atlantic states combined [blue]) for pre-closure (2004-2009) and post-closure (2010-2015) years. For easier comparison, the range of landings (y-axis) was kept the same for both figures (Source: SAFMC based on SAFE data from SEFSC). Note that an annual prohibition on commercial sale and purchase was put in place during March and April for gag (also black grouper & red porgy) through implementation of Amendment 9 in 1999.



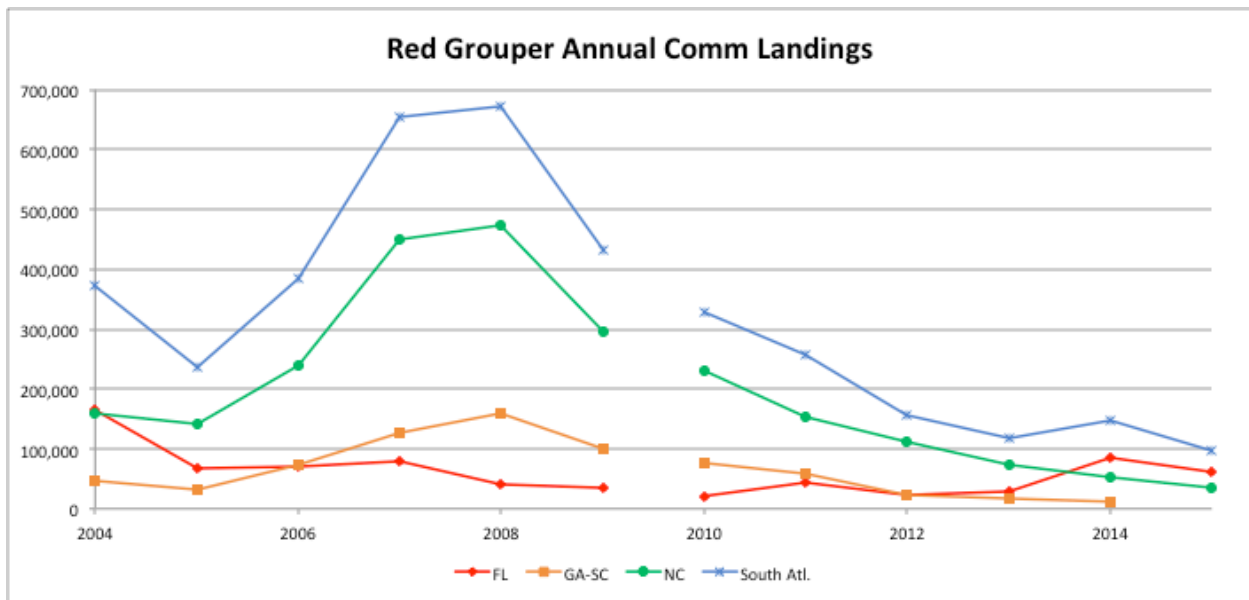
Annual commercial landings (lbs ww) of **gag** from 2014 through 2015 are shown below. The shallow water grouper closure was implemented in 2009, depicted in the figure by a break in the series.



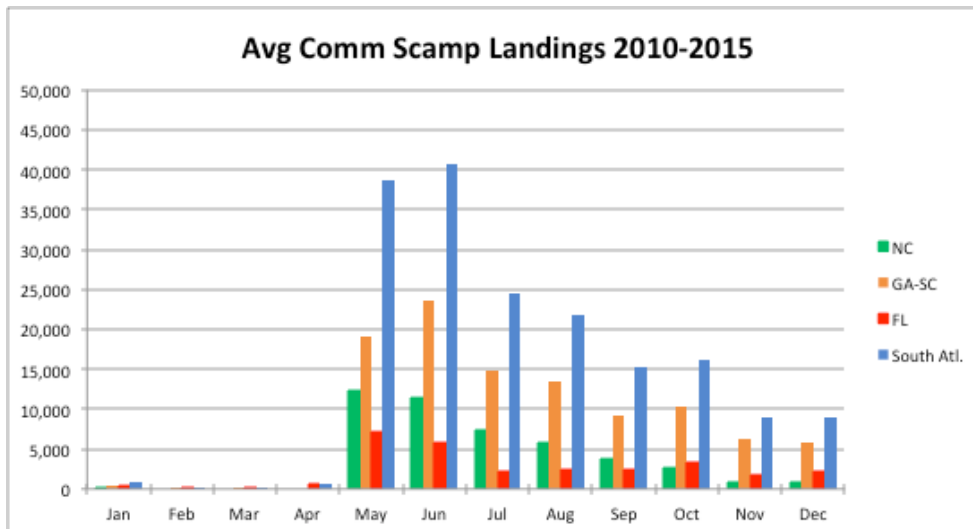
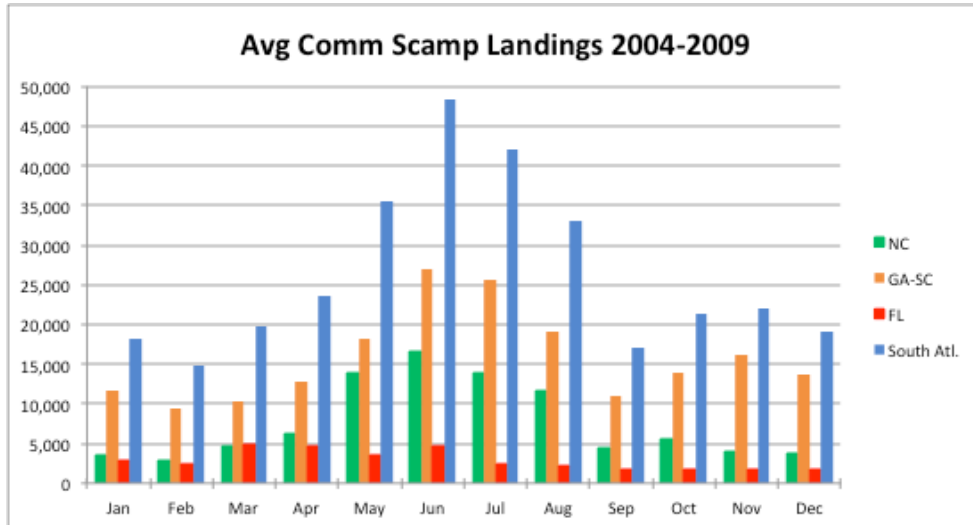
Average commercial landings (pounds whole weight; lbs ww) of **red grouper** are shown below by month and state (North Carolina [green], Georgia-South Carolina [orange], Florida [red], and all South Atlantic states combined [blue]) for pre-closure (2004-2009) and post-closure (2010-2015) years. For easier comparison, the range of landings (y-axis) was kept the same for both figures (Source: SAFMC based on SAFE data from SEFSC).



Annual commercial landings (lbs ww) of **red grouper** from 2014 through 2015 are shown below. The shallow water grouper closure was implemented in 2009, depicted in the figure by a break in the series.

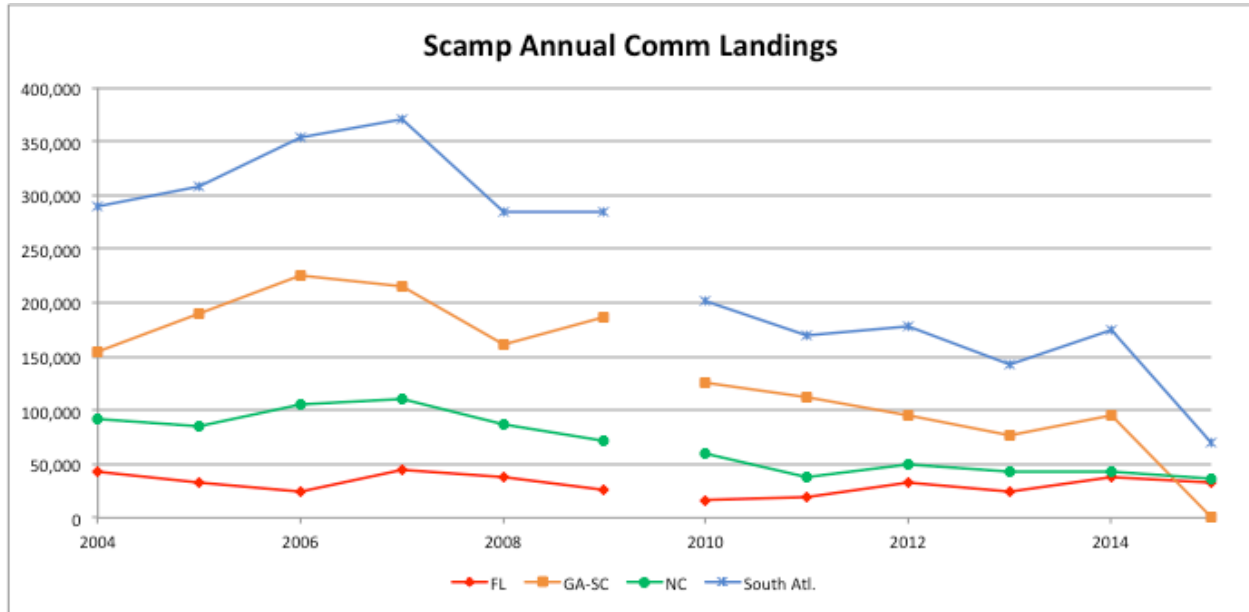


Average commercial landings (pounds whole weight; lbs ww) of **scamp** are shown below by month and state (North Carolina [green], Georgia-South Carolina [orange], Florida [red], and all South Atlantic states combined [blue]) for pre-closure (2004-2009) and post-closure (2010-2015) years. For easier comparison, the range of landings (y-axis) was kept the same for both figures (Source: SAFMC based on SAFE data from SEFSC).

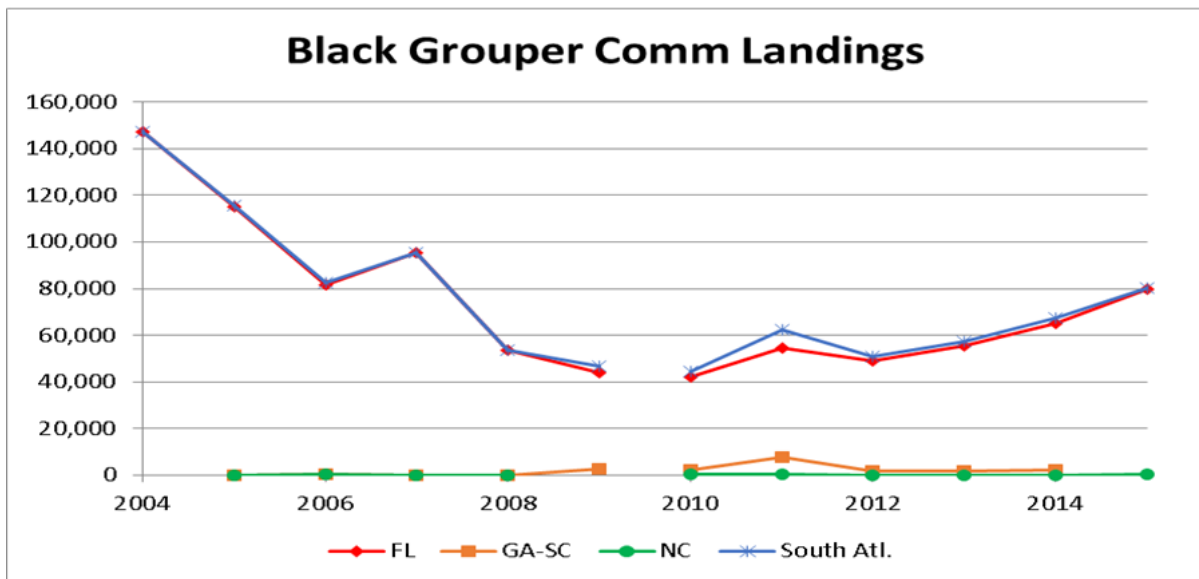




Annual commercial landings (lbs ww) of **scamp** from 2014 through 2015 are shown below. The shallow water grouper closure was implemented in 2009, depicted in the figure by a break in the series.



Annual commercial landings (lbs ww) of **black grouper** from 2004 through 2015 are shown below. The shallow water grouper closure was implemented in 2009, depicted in the figure by a break in the series. The vast majority of commercial black grouper harvest takes place in Florida.



## **Action 8. Remove the commercial minimum size limits for deep-water snapper species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic federal waters is 12 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch TL commercial minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in South Atlantic federal waters.

## Action 9. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off the east coast of Florida

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The commercial minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the South Atlantic federal waters off the east coast of Florida is 14 inches fork length (FL). The commercial minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina is 12 inches FL.

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off the east coast of Florida to 12 inches FL.

### To Consider:

- In 2015, Snapper Grouper Amendment 29 increased the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off east Florida from 12 inches total length (TL) to 14 inches fork length (FL). The amendment also implemented a minimum size limit (for both sector) of 12 inches FL in federal waters off the remaining South Atlantic states.
- The Florida FWC reduced the minimum size limit off east Florida from 14 inches FL to 12 inches FL because fishermen indicated the 14-inch size limit was creating too many discards in South Florida.
- The minimum size limit in state waters off the West coast of Florida is 14 inches.
- The gray triggerfish stock in the Gulf of Mexico is undergoing overfishing. The Gulf Council is considering an increase in the recreational minimum size limit to 15 inches.