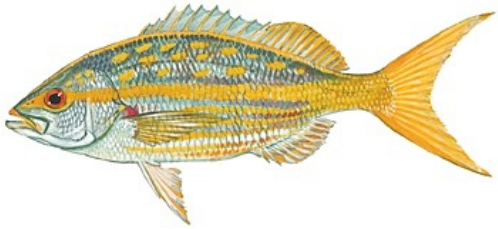
Public Hearing Summary
For
Amendment 44 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region



Specify a single Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limit for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico and modify sector allocations and accountability measures for yellowtail snapper.

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This Public Hearing Summary includes the actions and alternatives, a brief discussion for each action, and a summary of the analysis.

For further details on the potential effects of the actions, please see Draft Amendment 44 (full document) available at http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/public-hearings-scoping-meetings/

Why is the South Atlantic Council Taking Action?

In 2015, commercial landings met the sector annual catch limit (ACL) of 1,596,510 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and commercial harvest was closed on October 31, 2015 for the remainder of the calendar year. In the same year, the recreational sector did not harvest 45% of the recreational sector ACL, resulting in approximately 550,000 lbs ww of the total ACL for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic going unharvested.

Because there was a closure of the commercial yellowtail snapper sector in 2015 but several hundred thousand pounds of the total ACL was not landed, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) is considering options in Amendment 44 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Snapper Grouper Amendment 44) that would allow for quota sharing between the commercial and recreational sectors or would reallocate a portion of the total ACL to the commercial sector. The South Atlantic Council is also considering an action that would specify a single acceptable biological catch (ABC) and single ACL for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. (Note: This action was added during the December 2016 South Atlantic Council meeting to obtain public input. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council was told about this action and they will discuss this potential action at a future Council meeting. Ultimately, for this action to go forward, both Councils would have to amend their fishery management plans to include the same wording on all the specifics of how this action would work). These actions are intended to provide flexibility in managing the ACL for yellowtail snapper and to prevent or reduce the length of harvest closures in the commercial yellowtail snapper sector.

What are the trends in landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions?

Table S-1 shows commercial and recreational landings of yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions from 2005 through 2015, the latest year of finalized data available. In the South Atlantic Region, the current total ACL for yellowtail snapper is 3,037,500 lbs ww that is divided into a commercial ACL of 1,596,510 lbs ww (52.56% of the total ACL) and a recreational ACL of 1,440,990 lbs ww (47.44% of the total ACL). In the Gulf of Mexico Region, the current total ACL for yellowtail snapper is 901,125 lbs ww, which is treated as a stock ACL with no allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors. **Figures S-1** and **S-2** show commercial and recreational landings of yellowtail snapper in relation to the total ACLs for Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions from 2005 through 2015

Table S-1. Commercial and recreational landings (lbs ww) of yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions from 2005 through 2015.

	Commercial			Recreational			Combined
Year	Gulf	South Atl.	Total	Gulf	South Atl.	Total	Total
2005	510,437	814,899	1,325,336	31,176	576,247	607,424	1,932,760
2006	542,237	694,958	1,237,195	21,477	560,320	581,797	1,818,992
2007	350,079	628,608	978,687	19,726	786,399	806,126	1,784,813
2008	460,569	910,323	1,370,892	6,056	746,313	752,369	2,123,261
2009	891,925	1,085,281	1,977,206	19,250	348,536	367,787	2,344,993
2010	569,275	1,126,231	1,695,506	8,783	434,259	443,041	2,138,547
2011	769,729	1,125,220	1,894,949	25,560	390,998	416,557	2,311,506
2012	630,984	1,439,586	2,070,570	5,087	493,409	498,495	2,569,065
2013	734,112	1,328,931	2,063,043	6,991	666,026	673,018	2,736,061
2014	798,154	1,245,744	2,043,898	21,536	933,759	955,295	2,999,193
2015	507,398	1,691,807	2,199,205	78,833	791,157	869,989	3,069,194
Average	614,991	1,099,235	1,714,226	22,225	611,584	633,809	2,348,035

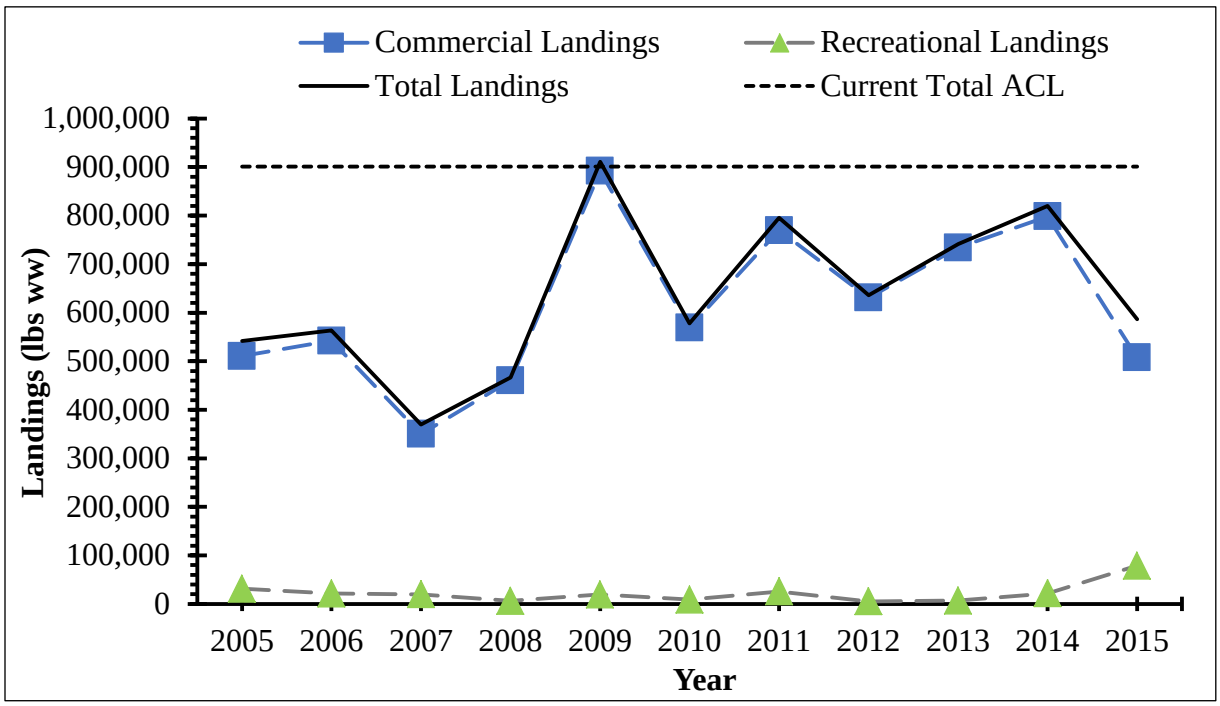


Figure S-1. Landings (lbs ww) of yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

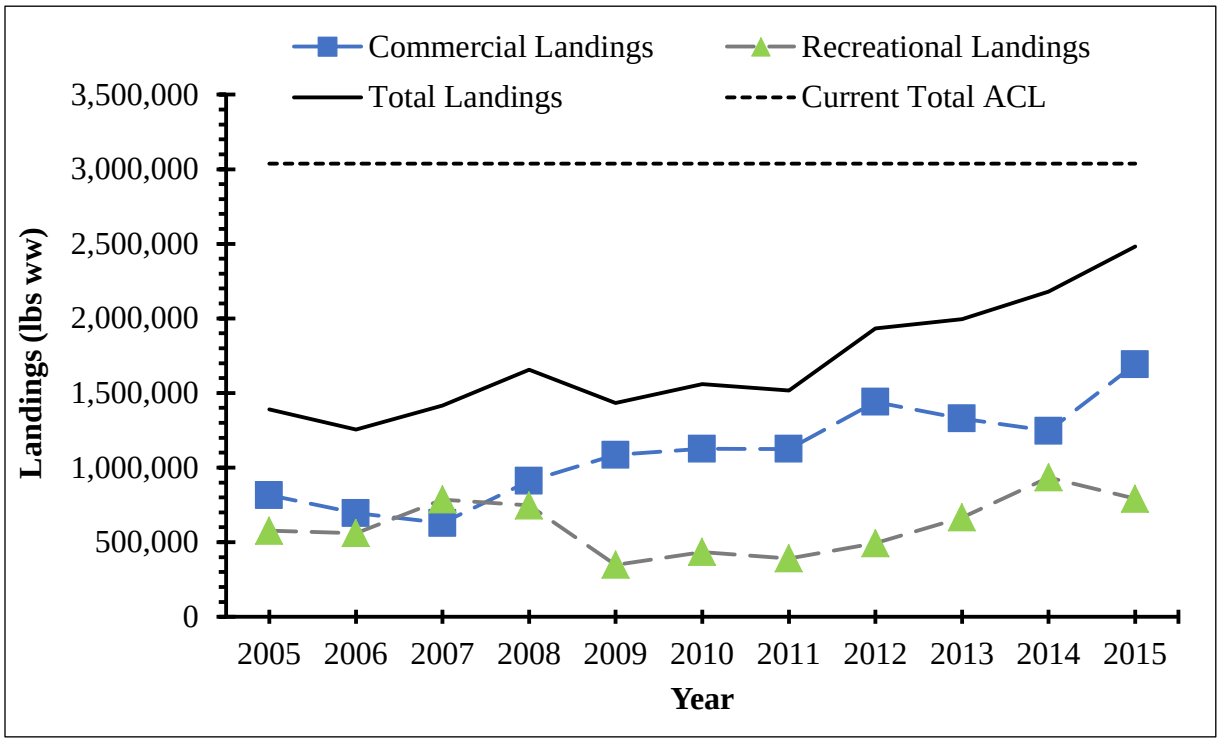


Figure S-2. Landings (lbs ww) of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic.

What Actions Are Being Proposed in Snapper Grouper Amendment 44?

The South Atlantic Council is considering an action that would specify a single acceptable biological catch (ABC) and a single annual catch limit (ACL) for yellowtail snapper in both the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. Additionally, the South Atlantic Council is considering an action that would allow quota sharing between the commercial and recreational sectors or to reallocate a larger portion of the total ACL to the commercial sector.

Specifically, the actions in this Amendment include:

- **Action 1: Specify a single Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and Annual Catch Limits (ACL) for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.**

  Currently: The total ABC for yellowtail snapper is split between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions, with 75% of the ABC allocated to the South Atlantic and 25% of the ABC allocated to the Gulf of Mexico.

  In the South Atlantic, the ABC for yellowtail snapper is 3,037,500 lbs ww. The total ACL (equal to ABC) is 3,037,500 lbs ww. The commercial sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 52.56% (1,596,510 lbs ww) of the total ACL. The recreational sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 47.44% (1,440,990 lbs ww) of the total ACL.

  In the Gulf of Mexico, the ABC for yellowtail snapper is 1,012,500 lbs ww. The total ACL (11% less than the ABC) is 901,125 lbs ww. There are no sector specific allocations in the Gulf of Mexico.

  Preferred: The South Atlantic Council has not selected a preferred alternative for **Action 1**. (Note: This action was added during the December 2016 South Atlantic Council meeting to obtain public input. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council was told about this action and they will discuss this potential action at a future Council meeting. Ultimately, for this action to go forward, both Councils would have to amend their fishery management plans to include the same wording on all the specifics of how this action would work.)

- **Action 2: Revise sector allocations and accountability measures for South Atlantic yellowtail snapper.**

  Currently: The recreational sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 47.44% (1,440,990 lbs ww) of the total ACL. The commercial sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 52.56% (1,596,510 lbs ww) of the total ACL. The South Atlantic Council set the yellowtail snapper sector allocations using the following method:

  Sector allocation = (0.5 * *catch history*) + (0.5 * *current trend*)

  Whereby, the *catch history* = average landings 1986-2008 and the *current trend* = average landings 2006-2008.

  The commercial accountability measure (AM) is an in-season closure if the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. The commercial ACL is reduced by the amount of the commercial overage in the following fishing year only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

  The current recreational AM is an in-season closure if the recreational ACL is met or projected to be met. A shortening of the recreational season may be triggered if the recreational ACL is exceeded, but only after recreational landings have been monitored for persistence in increased landings. The length of the recreational season is not reduced if the Regional Administrator determines the best available science shows it is not necessary. If a reduction is necessary, the recreational season may be shortened and the recreational ACL reduced in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded

  Preferred: The Council has not selected a preferred alternative for **Action 2**.

What are Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures and why are they required?

A reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) in 2007 required implementation of new tools to end and prevent overfishing to achieve the Optimum Yeild OY from a fishery. The tools are annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs).

Amendment 44 includes alternatives that would potentially revise the current ACLs for yellowtail snapper.

South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Amendment 44

What is an Annual Catch Limit?

ACL= Annual Catch Limit
An ACL is the level of annual catch of a stock that, if met or exceeded, triggers some corrective action.

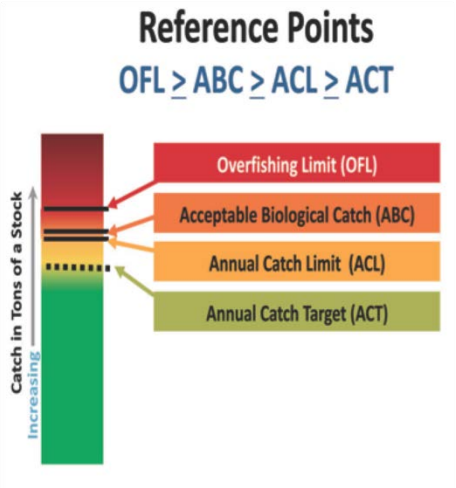
What is an Accountability Measure?

AM= Accountability Measure
An AM is a corrective action or management control, established by the Council, to prevent ACLs from being exceeded and to correct overages of ACLs if they occur.

Examples

- *An in-season closure if catch is projected to reach the ACL.*
- *Reducing the ACL by an overage that occurred the previous fishing year.*

How are Annual Catch Limits determined in the South Atlantic?



ACLs are derived from the overfishing limit (OFL) and the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) (**Figure S-3**). The South Atlantic Council's SSC determines the OFL from the stock assessment and the ABC (based on the South Atlantic Council/SSC's ABC control rule), and recommends those to the South Atlantic Council. The OFL is an estimate of the catch level above which overfishing is occurring. The ABC is defined as the level of a stock or stock complex's annual catch that accounts for the scientific uncertainty in the estimate of OFL and any other scientific uncertainty.

Figure S-3. The relationship of the reference points to each other.

What species and areas would be affected by the proposed actions?

Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 only addresses yellowtail snapper. Yellowtail snapper are a single stock but managed separately according to the jurisdictional boundary of the South Atlantic Council and the Gulf of Mexico Council, which are split geographically along the Florida Keys. **Action 1** affects both the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions. **Action 2** potentially affects both regions as well; however, should **Action 1** not move forward, **Action 2** would only apply to the South Atlantic Region.

How does the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils determine the division in the ABC?

The South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils established a jurisdictional allocation based on the Florida Keys (Monroe County) jurisdictional boundary between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions for yellowtail snapper acceptable biological catch (ABC) based on the following method:

South Atlantic = 75% of ABC and **Gulf of Mexico** = 25% of ABC

This was established by using 50% of average landings from 1993-2008 + 50% of average landings from 2006-2008. The jurisdictional allocation method was set in the South Atlantic Council's Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Amendment in 2011.

How does the South Atlantic Council determine the sector allocations?

The South Atlantic Council set the yellowtail snapper sector allocations using the following method:

Sector allocation = (0.5 * catch history) + (0.5 * current trend)

Whereby, the *catch history* = average landings 1986-2008 and the *current trend* = average landings 2006-2008. The commercial and recreational allocations specified and resulting sector ALCs will remain in effect until modified. The sector allocation method was set in the South Atlantic Council's Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Amendment in 2011.

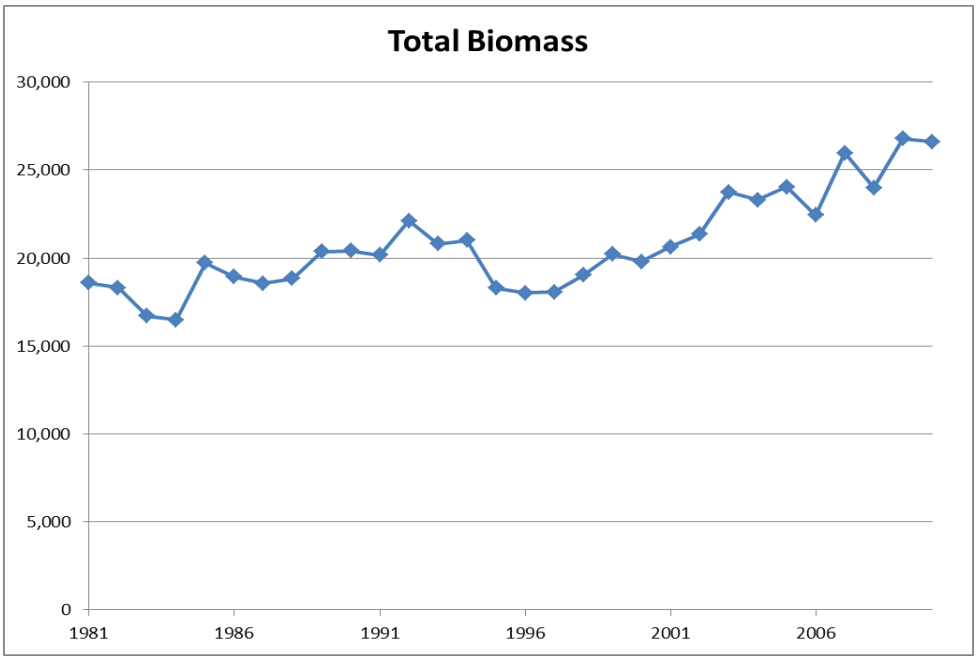
What is the status of the yellowtail snapper stock?

A benchmark assessment for yellowtail snapper was last conducted by the state of Florida in 2012 with data through 2010. The assessment applied to the entire stock of yellowtail snapper occurring both in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The 2012 assessment showed that yellowtail snapper are **not overfished** and **overfishing is not occurring**.

The spawning stock biomass (SSB) was over three times higher than the SSB that would produce the maximum sustainable yield, or SSB_{MSY} (335.7% of SSB_{MSY}, **Table S-2**). Fishing mortality (F) at the time of the assessment was well below F_{MSY} (18.9% of F_{MSY}, **Table S-2**). Stock biomass showed a period of stability until the mid-1990s followed by an increasing trend that continued into the final years of the assessment (**Figure S-4**). Also, there was no trend in the level of recruitment entering the stock, but there was a large amount of year-to-year variation. The fact that the population continued to grow despite large fluctuations in recruitment, coupled with the fact that F was only 19% of F_{MSY} and SSB was over three times higher than SSB_{MSY}, suggests that recruitment was not being affected by stock size or fishing pressure during the assessment period, but by variations in environmental factors. These diagnostics suggest that the stock, as of the date of the assessment, was being sustainably harvested and that the rate of exploitation and total take could increase without detriment to the stock.

Table S-2. Management parameters from the 2012 benchmark assessment for yellowtail snapper. Values are given for maximum sustainable yield (MSY), the fishing mortality at MSY (F_{MSY}), the fishing mortality from the terminal year of the assessment (F_{2010}), spawning stock biomass at MSY (SSB_{MSY}), the minimum stock size threshold (MSST), and the spawning stock biomass from the terminal year of the assessment (SSB_{2010}).

Parameter	Value
FMSY	0.24
F2010	0.0454
SSBMSY (mt)*	3,072
MSST (mt)	2,488
SSB2010 (mt)	10,311
MSY (mt)	2,088



Fgure S-4. Total biomass of yellowtail snapper in metric tons.

Who is Proposing the Management Measures?

The South Atlantic Council is proposing these management measures. The South Atlantic Council recommends management measures and sends them to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) who ultimately approves, disapproves, or partially approves, and implements the actions in the amendment through the development of regulations on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce. NMFS is a line office in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

Additionally, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) may also pursue complimentary management measures should both Councils agree to specify a single ABC and a single ACL for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, combined (**Action 1**). The South Atlantic Council added **Action 1** at their December 2016 meeting. The Gulf Council is aware of this action and will discuss this action at a future meeting.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- Responsible for conservation and management of fish stocks in the South Atlantic Region.
- Consists of 13 voting members: 8 appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, 1 representative from each of the 4 South Atlantic states, the Southeast Regional Director of NMFS and 4 non-voting members. The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Council also includes two voting seats for representatives from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.
- Responsible for developing fishery management plans and amendments under the Magnuson-Stevens Act; recommends actions to NMFS for implementation.
- Management area is from 3 to 200 miles off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and east Florida through Key West with the exception of Mackerel which is from New York to Florida, cobia which is from New York to Georgia, and Dolphin-Wahoo, which is from Maine to Florida.

Proposed Actions and Alternatives

ACTION 1. Specify a single Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

Alternative 1 (No action).

The total ABC for yellowtail snapper is split between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions, with 75% of the ABC allocated to the South Atlantic and 25% of the ABC allocated to the Gulf of Mexico.

South Atlantic: The current acceptable biological catch (ABC) for yellowtail snapper is 3,037,500 pounds whole weight (ww). The current total annual catch limit (ACL) (equal to ABC) is 3,037,500 lbs ww. The current commercial sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 52.56% (1,596,510 lbs ww) of the total ACL and the current recreational sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 47.44% (1,440,990 lbs ww) of the total ACL.

Gulf of Mexico: The current ABC for yellowtail snapper is 1,012,500 lbs ww. The current total ACL (11% less than ABC) is 901,125 lbs ww. There are no sector specific allocations for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

South Atlantic Accountability Measures (AM)
The current commercial AM is an in-season closure if the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. The commercial ACL is reduced by the amount of the commercial overage in the following fishing year only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

The current recreational AM is an in-season closure if the recreational ACL is met or projected to be met. A shortening of the recreational season may be triggered if the recreational ACL is exceeded, but only after recreational landings have be monitored for persistence in increased landings. The length of the recreational season is not reduced if the Regional Administrator determines the best available science shows it is not necessary. If a reduction is necessary, the recreational season may be shortened and the recreational ACL reduced in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

Gulf of Mexico Accountability Measure (AM)
If the sum of the commercial and recreational landings, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, exceeds the stock ACL, then during the following fishing year, if the sum of commercial and recreational landings reaches or is projected to reach the stock ACL, the Assistant Administrator will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial and recreational sectors for the remainder of that fishing year.

Alternative 2. Manage yellowtail snapper as a single unit with an overall combined acceptable biological catch and combined total ACL, but manage the ACL under the South Atlantic sector allocations and accountability measures (AMs).

Alternative 3: Manage yellowtail snapper as a single unit with an overall combined acceptable biological catch and total ACL, but manage the total ACL under the Gulf of Mexico accountability measure.

Discussion of Action 1

Yellowtail snapper is an important commercial and recreational species in Florida, particularly in South Florida and the Florida Keys. The effects on fishermen and coastal communities due to changes in the annual catch limit and associated accountability measures for yellowtail snapper will be associated with any increases or decreases in access to yellowtail, and the benefits of consistent regulations in the Florida Keys.

The top five communities with the highest levels of commercial landings of yellowtail snapper include the Florida communities of Key West, Miami, Marathon, Fort Lauderdale, and Key Largo. These areas could be most affected by changes for yellowtail snapper commercial harvest, particularly in Keys communities in which commercial fishing is an important social and economic component. In general, an increase in access to the yellowtail quota for commercial fishermen and reduced likelihood of triggering an accountability measure that would restrict access to yellowtail will be beneficial to commercial fishermen and associated businesses.

The top Florida communities for recreational fishing also include communities in south Florida and the Florida Keys. Although some areas have high levels of recreational engagement, such as Fort Lauderdale and Miami, it is not likely that changes to yellowtail snapper management would have community-level effects. However, for some Keys communities with high numbers of private anglers and for-hire businesses (such as Islamorada, Key Largo, and Key West), changes that could affect recreational fishing opportunities for yellowtail may result in effects at the community level as well as effects on individuals and businesses. In general, changes to yellowtail management that affect the current or potential future fishing opportunities may have negative effects on private anglers and for-hire businesses. However, recreational landings in recent years have been lower than the South Atlantic recreational ACL and the Gulf quota (**Table S-1**). Additionally, recreational fishing in the Florida Keys is closely tied to tourism, and access to yellowtail snapper during the high tourist season (winter) will be important to maintain social and economic benefits of yellowtail harvest for the Keys communities and fishermen.

Because there would be no changes to the yellowtail management under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, there would be little or no expected effects on recreational fishermen and for-hire businesses targeting yellowtail snapper, as recreational landings have been lower than the South Atlantic recreational ACL and the Gulf quota (**Figure S-5**). Commercial landings for the South Atlantic have been close to or over the South Atlantic commercial ACL (**Figure S-6**). Because it is likely that the same commercial fishermen harvest yellowtail on both the Gulf and South Atlantic sides, the status quo under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** could continue to constrain

commercial harvest by not increasing the available quota, as proposed under **Alternatives 2** and **3**.

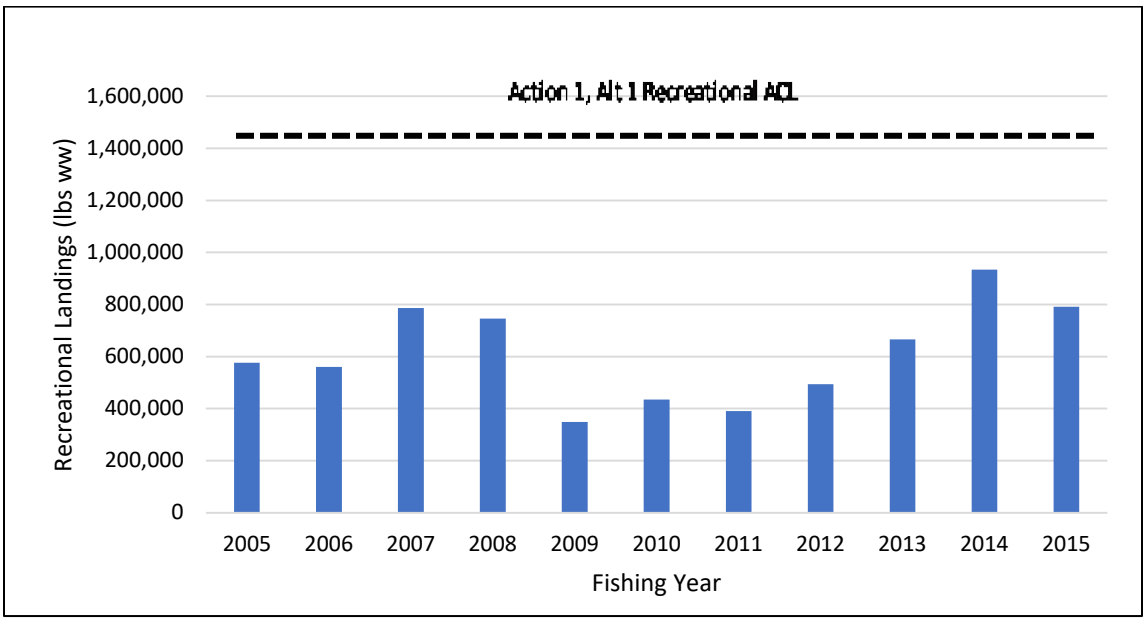


Figure S-5. Rereational landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic, compared to the current recreational ACL in **Alternative 1** (dashed line), assuming current South Atlantic commercial/recreational allocations.

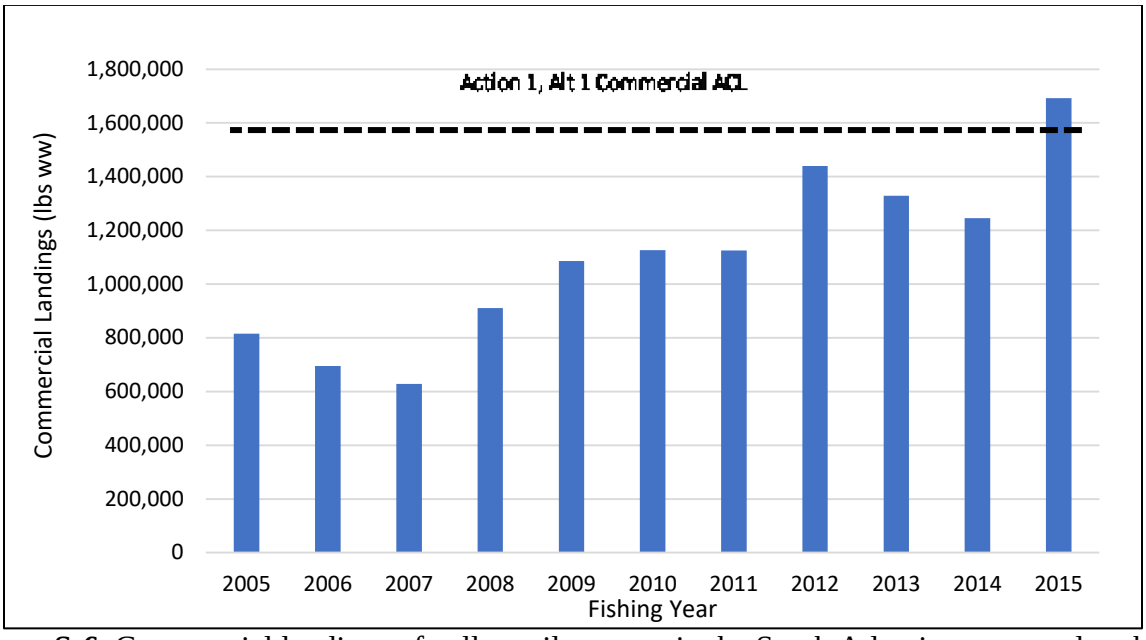


Figure S-6. Commercial landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic, compared to the current commercial ACL in **Alternative 1** (dashed line), assuming current South Atlantic commercial/recreational allocations.

Alternative 2 would combine the yellowtail snapper jurisdictional ABC and ACLs for both regions and manage harvest under the South Atlantic Council's approach with sector allocations and corresponding accountability measures. Combining the ABC for the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Region would result in an ABC for yellowtail snapper that is 4,050,000 lbs ww and not allocated between the two regions. If the current South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico total ACLs are maintained, the combined total ACL for the South Atlantic Region (currently equal to the South Atlantic ABC) and the Gulf of Mexico (currently 11% less than the Gulf ABC) would be 3,938,625 lbs ww. Under this alternative, the sector allocations for the South Atlantic Region would apply in both the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. The exact sector ACLs would depend on the management alternative that is chosen in **Action 2,** which addresses sector allocations and the potential for quota sharing between the two sectors. The AMs for the South Atlantic Region would be used to ensure the total ACL of 3,938,625 lbs ww is not exceeded.

Assuming no change is made to the current South Atlantic sector allocation and accountability measures for the yellowtail snapper fishery, the new commercial ACL under **Alternative 2** would be 2,070,141 lbs ww and 1,868,484 lbs ww for the recreational sector. Under **Alternative 2**, there would be some increase in available quota set aside specifically for commercial harvest, although commercial landings may be close to or over the proposed commercial ACL (assuming the current sector allocations) (**Figure S-7**). Unless the commercial allocation is increased in **Action 2**, the benefits to the commercial sector would be minimal and similar to **Alternative 1 (No Action**). Because recreational landings would likely be below the proposed recreational ACL in **Alternative 2** and assuming current sector allocations (**Figure S-8**), the effects on recreational fishermen and for-hire businesses that target yellowtail would be expected to be minimal and similar to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.

The separate accountability measures for commercial and recreational harvest under a combined ACL in **Alternative 2** may also affect commercial and recreational fishermen targeting yellowtail snapper. For commercial fishermen, it is possible that the commercial ACL would be met and commercial harvest in both the Gulf and South Atlantic regions would close before the end of the fishing year. Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, commercial fishermen may still be able to target yellowtail in Gulf waters if the South Atlantic is closed, because the Gulf stock ACL has not been met in recent years.

However, separate ACLs and accountability measures for each sector under **Alternative 2** may be beneficial to recreational fishermen, because recreational fishing opportunities will not be affected even if commercial harvest is closed.

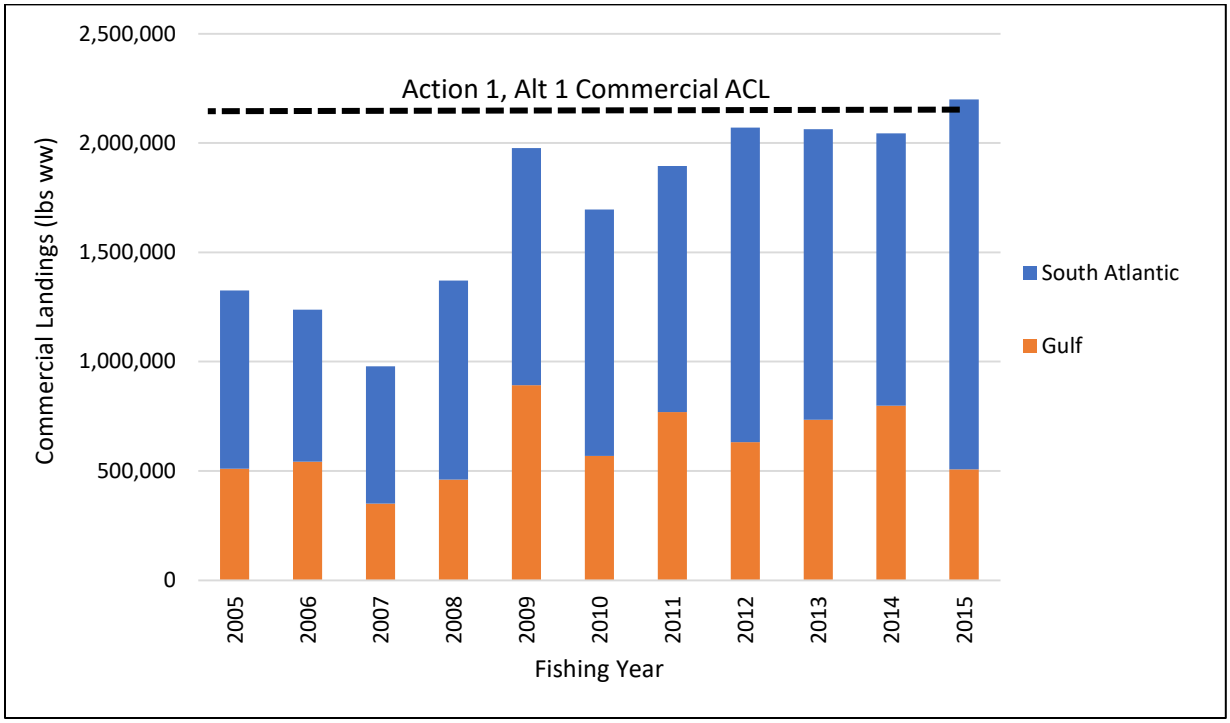


Figure S-7. Commercial landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf, compared to the proposed commercial ACL in **Alternative 2** (dashed line), assuming current South Atlantic commercial/recreational allocations.

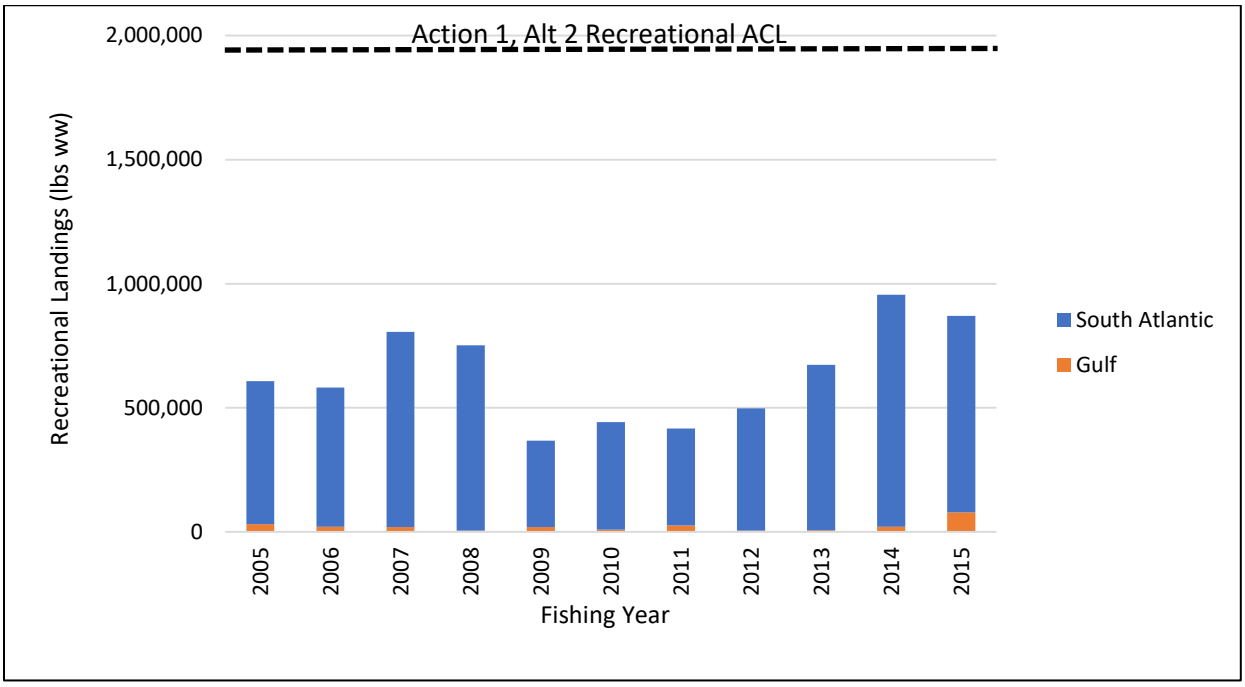


Figure S-8. Recreational landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf, compared to the proposed recreational ACL in **Alternative 2** (dashed line), assuming current South Atlantic commercial/recreational allocations.

Under **Alternative 3**, the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico ABCs and ACLs for yellowtail snapper would be merged and managed under the Gulf of Mexico Council's approach. Under this alternative, there would be no sector allocations since none are currently in place in the Gulf of Mexico. However, the AMs for the Gulf of Mexico would be used to ensure the total ACL of 3,938,625 lbs ww is not exceeded. The AMs for the Gulf of Mexico apply to a stock ACL. Therefore, the current commercial and recreational sector allocations in the South Atlantic Region would be combined into a stock ACL with no sector allocations.

Having a single ACL for recreational and commercial harvest in both the Gulf and South Atlantic regions under **Alternative 3** may the most beneficial to commercial fishermen, because it would potentially result in the highest available quota since there would be no sector allocations. **Alternative 3** would also allow some flexibility in managing the ACL in years where one sector experiences exceptionally high landings without necessarily triggering a closure or other accountability measures. Combined landings of both regions have not reached the combined regional ACLs (3,938,625 lbs ww) (**Figure S-9**). However, **Alternative 3** does create the potential for increased landings in one sector to trigger the closure of yellowtail snapper harvest for both sectors, leading to inequitable utilization of the resource between the recreational and commercial sectors with respect to the manner that yellowtail snapper is currently exploited. Any such closure or large scale change in how the yellowtail snapper resource is harvested could lead to potential negative effects in one or both sectors.

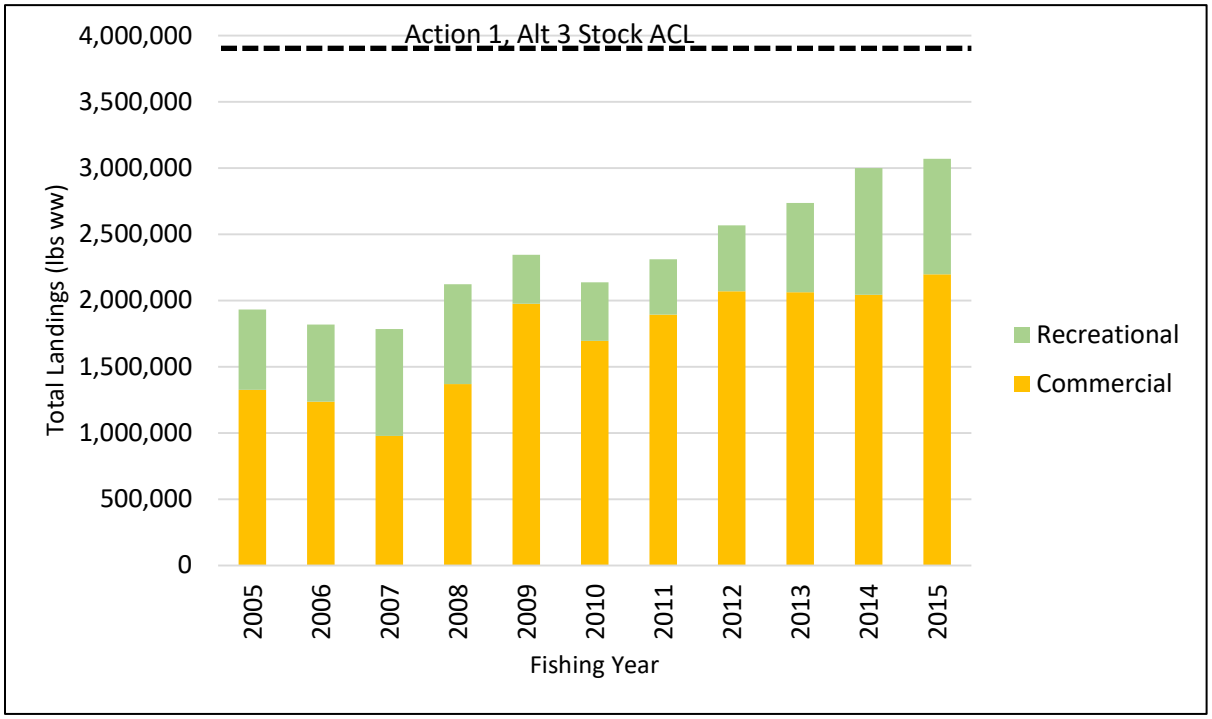


Figure S-9. Total landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf, compared to the proposed stock ACL in **Alternative 3** (dashed line).

ACTION 2. Revise sector allocations and accountability measures for South Atlantic yellowtail snapper.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The current recreational sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 47.44% (1,440,990 lbs ww) of the total Annual Catch Limit (ACL). The current commercial sector allocation for yellowtail snapper is 52.56% (1,596,510 lbs ww) of the total ACL. Note: Total ACL=ABC=OY.

The current commercial accountability measure (AM) is an in-season closure if the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. The commercial ACL is reduced by the amount of the commercial overage in the following fishing year only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

The current recreational AM is an in-season closure if the recreational ACL is met or projected to be met. A shortening of the recreational season may be triggered if the recreational ACL is exceeded, but only after recreational landings have be monitored for persistence in increased landings. The length of the recreational season is not reduced if the Regional Administrator determines the best available science shows it is not necessary. If a reduction is necessary, the recreational season may be shortened and the recreational ACL reduced in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

Alternative 2. Maintain current sector ACLs, but revise AM to not close either sector until total ACL is met.

Alternative 3. Modify sector ACLs.

> **Sub-alternative 3a.** Allocate 42% (1,275,750 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate 58% (1,761,750 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on average landings from 2005-2014)
> **Sub-alternative 3b**. Allocate 40% (1,215,000 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate 60% (1,822,500 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on 2013 landings).
> **Sub-alternative 3c**. Allocate 30% (911,250 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate 70% (2,126,250 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on 2012 landings)
> **Sub-alternative 3d**. Allocate 28% (850,500 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate 72% (2,187,000 lbs ww) of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on 2011 landings)

Alternative 4. Set aside a portion of the total ACL that can be used by either sector as a common pool allocation.

Sub-alternative 4a: 1% (30,375 lbs ww) of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL (3,007,125 lbs ww) is split between the recreational sector (1,426,580 lbs ww) and the commercial sector (1,580,545 lbs ww) according to the current allocation.
Sub-alternative 4b: 2.5% (75,938 lbs ww) of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL (2,961,562 lbs ww) is split between the recreational sector (1,404,965 lbs ww) and the commercial sector (1,556,597 lbs ww) according to the current allocation.
Sub-alternative 4c: 5% (151,875 lbs ww) of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL (2,885,625 lbs ww) is split between the recreational sector (1,368,941 lbs ww) and the commercial sector (1,516,685 lbs ww) according to the current allocation.
Sub-alternative 4d: 10% (303,750 lbs ww) of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL (2,733,750 lbs ww) is split between the recreational sector (1,296,891 lbs ww) and the commercial sector (1,436,859 lbs ww) according to the current allocation.

Alternative 5: Conditionally transfer a certain percentage (Sub-alternatives 5a-5d) of the ACL from a sector that is not landing its ACL to the other sector that is landing all or almost all of its ACL in the next fishing year, if the minimum landings threshold is not met for the donating sector (Sub-alternatives 5e-5g). If the receiving sector does not land at least 90% of its unadjusted ACL, this transfer will not occur. The highest landings from the donating sector based on available finalized data from the five years prior will be used as criteria to determine if allocation transfers will occur.

Conditional ACL Transfer (MUST CHOOSE ONE):
Sub-alternative 5a: Conditionally transfer 5% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.
Sub-alternative 5b: Conditionally transfer 10% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.
Sub-alternative 5c: Conditionally transfer 15% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.
Sub-alternative 5d: Conditionally transfer 20% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.

Donating sector's ACL Minimum Threshold (MUST CHOOSE ONE), if the donating sector's landings are:
Sub-alternative 5e: less than 50% of its unadjusted ACL.
Sub-alternative 5f: less than 65% of its unadjusted ACL.
Sub-alternative 5g: less than 75% of its unadjusted ACL.

Discussion of Action 2

From 2012 through 2015, the commercial sector harvested an average of 98% of the commercial ACL. The commercial ACL was exceeded in 2012 by 26%, but landings data were not available in time to close the commercial sector that year. In 2015, commercial landings were projected to exceed the commercial ACL of 1,596,510 lbs ww, and the commercial sector was shut down on October 31, 2015. Updated commercial landings data show that 1,691,807 lbs ww were landed in 2015, exceeding the commercial ACL by 6%. The recreational sector harvested 53% of the recreational ACL, on average, during 2012-2015 (**Table S-2**).

Table S-2. Yellowtail snapper landings (lbs ww) by sector and percentage (%) of sector ACL harvested each year, during 2012-2015.

Year	Commercial landings (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Harvested	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Harvested
2011	1,125,220	N/A	N/A	390,998	N/A	N/A
2012	1,439,586	1,142,589	126	493,409	1,031,286	48
2013	1,328,931	1,596,510	83	666,026	1,440,990	46
2014	1,245,744	1,596,510	78	933,759	1,440,990	65
2015	1,691,807	1,596,510	106	791,157	1,440,990	55
Average	1,366,258	-	98	655,070	-	53

Note: There were no ACLs or TAC for yellowtail snapper prior to 2012.

Alternative 1 (No Action) keeps in place the current sector allocations for yellowtail snapper. Under the current total ACL, the recreational sector is not expected to reach its ACL based on recent landings. In most recent years, the commercial sector did not reach its ACL, with the exception of 2015, when the current commercial sector ACL was exceeded, resulting in a commercial harvest closure for two months. The commercial sector did not reach its ACL for yellowtail snapper in 2016; however, the fishing year changed to start August 1st instead of January 1st, so it is unclear whether the commercial fishery will continue to meet the commercial sector ACL. If the average commercial yellowtail snapper landings over the previous five years (2011through 2015) of 1.37 million lbs ww are used to project likely landings in the fishery, the commercial sector will continue to under-harvest its ACL by approximately 230,000 lbs ww annually. If commercial landings from 2015 are indicative of the future commercial fishery, then the commercial sector ACL will be met and a harvest closure will be put in place towards the end of the fishing year.

Alternative 2 would maintain the current sector ACLs (**Alternative 1, No Action**), but revise the AMs to not close either sector until the total ACL is met. Harvest of yellowtail snapper would not close for either sector even when one sector harvests more than its sector ACL as long as the other sector is under-harvesting its sector ACL by an equal or greater amount. The fishery would close for both sectors if the total ACL was met, regardless of which sector landed more fish. This alternative would allow some flexibility in managing the ACL in years when one sector experiences exceptionally high landings without necessarily triggering a closure or other accountability measures. However, **Alternative 2** does create the potential for increased landings in one sector to trigger the closure of yellowtail snapper harvest for both

sectors, leading to inequitable utilization of the resource between the recreational and commercial sectors with respect to the manner that yellowtail snapper is currently exploited. Any such closure or large scale change in how the yellowtail snapper resource is harvested could lead to potential negative effects in one or both sectors.

Alternative 3 modifies the sector ACLs to allocate more of the total yellowtail snapper ACL to the commercial sector and less to the recreational sector. The amount of ACL that is reallocated would depend on which sub-alternative is chosen (**Sub-alternatives 3a** through **3d**). In years of exceptionally high commercial landings, such as in 2015, an increased allocation to the commercial sector would have delayed or prevented a closure in the fishery (**Figure S-7**). In the South Atlantic Region, the current commercial sector allocation of 52.56% would increase to a range of 58%-72%, and the current recreational sector allocation of 47.44% would decrease to range of 42%-28% (**Sub-alternatives 3a-3d**). The change in sector ACLs and allocations are shown in **Table S-3.** Note: Due to recently amended landings, the allocation percentages may change.

Table S-3. Commercial and recreational ACLs under **Sub-alternatives 3a-3d** and the difference from current sector ACLs for South Atlantic yellowtail snapper.

Sub-alternative (Average landings based on these years)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww) / Percentage (%) of Total ACL	Recreational ACL (lbs ww) / Percentage (%) of Total ACL	Difference in commercial ACL (lbs ww)	Difference in recreational ACL (lbs ww)
Sub-alternative 3a (2005-2014)	1,761,750 lbs ww/ 58%	1,275,750 lbs ww/ 42%	+ 165,240 lbs ww	- 165,240 lbs ww
Sub-alternative 3b (2013)	1,822,500 lbs ww/ 60%	1,215,000 lbs ww/ 40%	+ 225,990 lbs ww	- 225,990 lbs ww
Sub-alternative 3c (2012)	2,126,250 lbs ww/ 70%	911,250 lbs ww/ 30%	+ 529,740 lbs ww	- 529,740 lbs ww
Sub-alternative 3d (2011)	2,187,000 lbs ww/ 72%	850,500 lbs ww/ 28%	+ 590,490 lbs ww	- 590,490 lbs ww

There are potential positive effects for the commercial sector from **Alternative 3** should the total ACL decrease due to a change in the status of the yellowtail snapper stock or if landings in the commercial sector increase appreciably that would be incurred through increased revenue from yellowtail snapper landings or a longer fishing season. Assuming resource availability is not appreciably changed due to a shift in allocation, realized negative effects for the recreational sector are not likely to occur under any of the sub-alternatives based on average landings observed in recent years (**Table S-2**), however, it is noted that 2014 recreational landings were above the recreational ACLs specified in **Sub-alternative 3c** and **3d** (**Figure S-8**). Should landings reach this level again under either of these two scenarios, an in-season closure would occur in the recreational sector, creating notable negative effects for the sector.

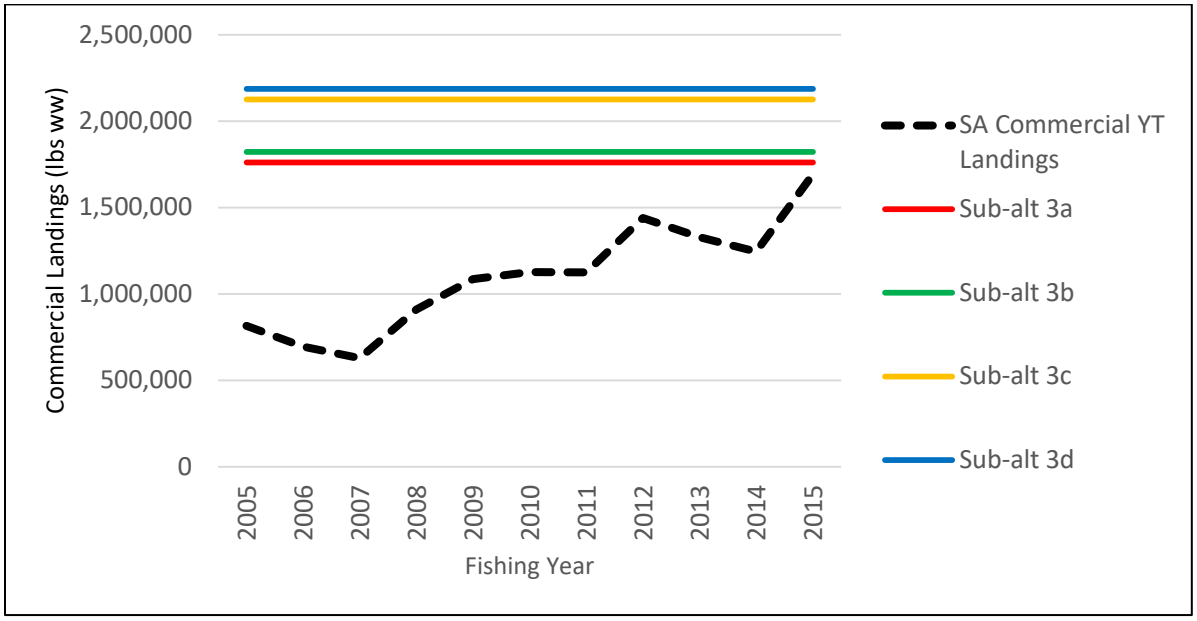


Figure S-7. Commercial landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic, compared to the proposed South Atlantic commercial ACLs in **Sub-alternatives 3a-3d**. This graph assumes Alternative 1 in Action 1. The fishing year is January-December for 2005-2015.

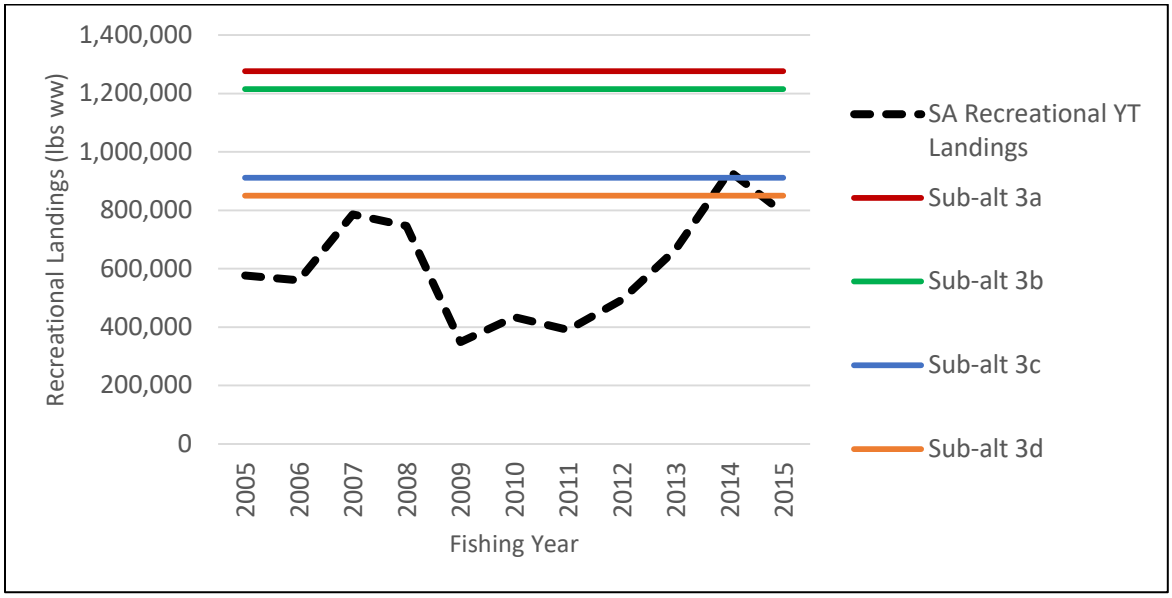


Figure S-8. Recreational landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic, compared to the proposed South Atlantic recreational ACLs in **Sub-alternatives 3a-3d**. This graph assumes Alternative 1 in Action 1. The fishing year is January-December for 2005-2015.

Alternative 4 would set aside a portion of the total ACL that can be used by either sector if needed to help prevent an in-season closure of harvest in the fishery. Under this scenario, a certain percentage of the total ACL is set aside into a "common pool" category for use by either sector. The size of the common pool ACL increases progressively from **Sub-alternative 4a** to **4d**, with the total ACL decreasing accordingly. The ACLs for both sectors are then re-set based

on the remaining total ACL. The outcome will be reduced sector ACLs for both the recreational and commercial sectors, but either sector may use the common pool ACL if they exceed their respective sector ACLs and the common pool category ACL has not been exhausted. There are potential benefits that may occur with the addition of the common pool ACL. Each sector has the potential to increase its landings beyond the current sector ACLs, presumably increasing benefits for that sector and decreasing the possibility of a harvest closure for yellowtail snapper, as long as one sector continues to under harvest its revised sector ACL. **Table S-4** shows the common pool ACL along with the subsequent total and sector ACLs under **Sub-alternative 4a** to **4d.**

Table S-4. Commercial and Recreational ACLs for South Atlantic yellowtail snapper under Sub-alternatives 4a-4d.

Sub-alternative	Common pool ACL (lbs ww) / Percentage (%) of Total ACL	Remaining Total ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL + common pool ACL (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL + common pool ACL (lbs ww)
Sub-alternative 4a	30,375/ 1%	3,007,125	1,580,545	1,426,580	1,610,920	1,456,955
Sub-alternative 4b	75,938 / 2.5%	2,961,562 l	1,556,597	1,404,965	1,632,535	1,480,903
Sub-alternative 4c	151,875/ 5%	2,885,625	1,516,685	1,368,941	1,668,560	1,520,816
Sub-alternative 4d	303,750/ 10%	2,733,750	1,436,859	1,296,891	1,740,609	1,600,641

Creating a portion of the total South Atlantic ACL to be common pool (**Alternative 4**) could be beneficial in allowing both sectors to access additional quota when needed, but also may create derby conditions if both sectors are reaching their respective ACLs. The effects of **Sub-alternatives 4a-4d** on each sector depends on the likelihood of needing to access the common pool quota and if the total accessible quota is higher than landings under current conditions. Because a larger proportion of the total ACL designated as common pool quota would be more beneficial to commercial fishermen harvesting yellowtail, it can be assumed that **Sub-alternative 4d** would be most beneficial to the commercial sector, followed by **Sub-alternative 4c, Sub-alternative 4b**, and then **Sub-alternative 4a**. However, if commercial landings are similar or higher than landings in recent years, it is possible that the common pool quota under **Alternative 4** would not mitigate the negative effects on the commercial fishermen due to triggering an in-season AM (**Figure S-9**).

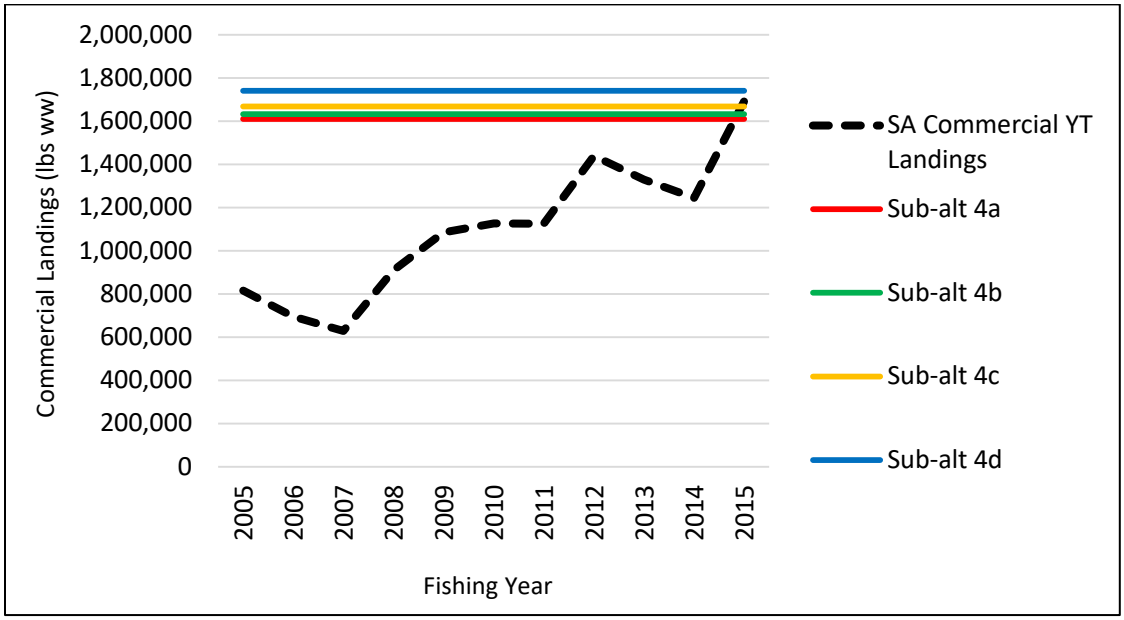


Figure S-9. Commercial landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic compared to the proposed accessible quota for commercial harvest (South Atlantic commercial ACL + common pool quota) in **Sub-alternatives 4a-4d**. This graph assumes Alternative 1 in Action 1. The fishing year is January-December for 2005-2015.

Since recreational yellowtail snapper landings have not reached the South Atlantic recreational ACL in recent years (**Figure S-10**), the effects of **Sub-alternatives 4a-4d** on participants in the recreational sector would be expected to be minimal or none. However, if recreational effort increased in the future but commercial landings stayed at the same level, the loss of the portion of the ACL designated for recreational harvest could reduce access to the yellowtail resource by recreational fishermen.

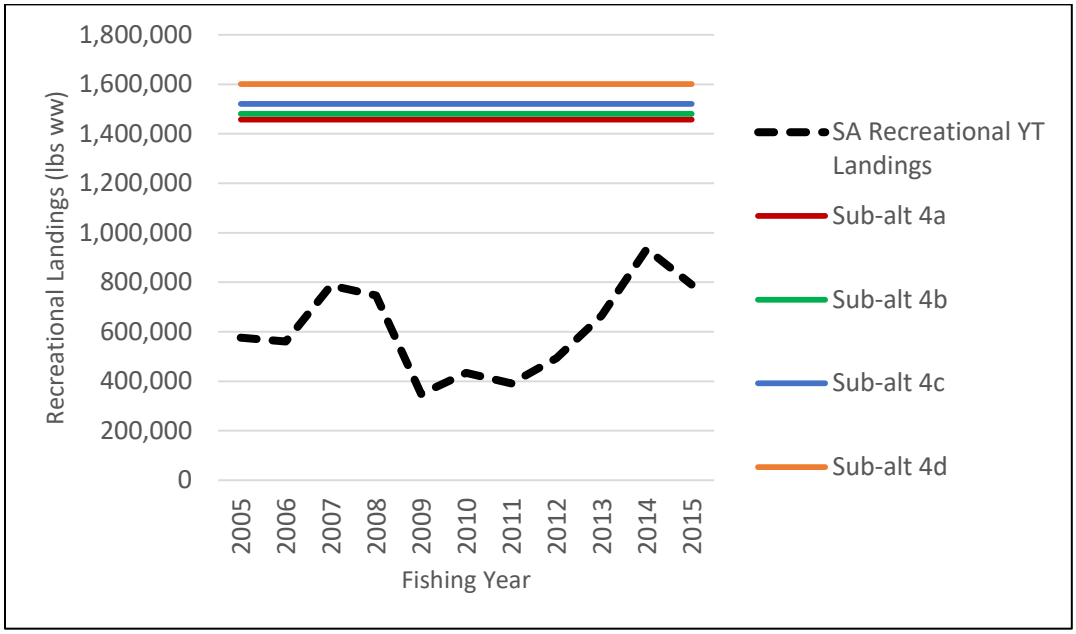


Figure S-108. Recreational landings of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic compared to the proposed accessible quota for recreational harvest (South Atlantic recreational ACL + common pool quota) in **Sub-alternatives 4a-4d**. This graph assumes Alternative 1 in Action 1. The fishing year is January-December for 2005-2015.

Alternative 5 would conditionally transfer 1%-10% (**Sub-alternatives 5a-5d**) of the ACL from a sector that is not landing its ACL to the other sector that is landing all or almost all of its ACL. The condition is that the minimum landings threshold of 50%-75% of the donating sector's ACL must not be met (**Sub-alternatives 5e-5g**). Furthermore, if the receiving sector does not land at least 90% of its unadjusted ACL, this transfer would not occur.

The conditional transfer of ACL, as outlined in **Alternative 5** does allow for potential positive economic effects to occur in the yellowtail snapper fishery when one sector is consistently under-harvesting its sector ACL, while the other sector is harvesting all or almost all of its sector ACL. Based on the observed landings for yellowtail snapper from 2011 through 2015, a transfer of ACL could occur from the recreational sector to the commercial sector under **Sub-alternative 5g**, since the recreational landings have been below the threshold for five years in a row; however, no transfer would occur under **Sub-alternative 5e** or **5f** (**Table S-2**). The extent to which the commercial sector would experience benefits from the transfer would be dependent on the amount of ACL that is transferred (**Sub-alternatives 5a** through **5d**) and the observed commercial landings that were to occur.

For further details and discussion on the expected effects of **Action 1** and **Action 2**, please refer to the draft Amendment 44 document that can be found at http://www.safmc.net/meetings/public-hearing-and-scoping-meeting-schedule. Additional analysis of the alternatives of these actions is in progress. In addition to public comments received on the amendment, additional analyses will be included in the draft amendment available for the March 2017 SAFMC meeting.

Proposed Timing

- Public hearings – January/Febrary 2017
- The Council will review public hearing comments & make needed changes – March 2017
- The Council may take final action to approve for Secretarial review – June 2017

How Do I Comment?

The Council requests that written comments be submitted using the online public comment form for each amendment available from the Public Hearings and Scoping Meetings page at http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/public-hearing-and-scoping-meeting-schedule/.

Comments submitted using the online comment form are immediately posted to the Council's website and available for all Council members and the public to view.

Written comments must be received by 5:00 PM on **February 10, 2017**.

Comments by mail: Send comments to Gregg Waugh, Executive Director, SAFMC, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405.

Comments by fax: 843/769-4520.

View presentations and access the public hearing and scoping documents from the Public Hearing and Scoping Meeting page at the link above or contact the Council office at 843/571-4366 (toll free 866/SAFMC-10).

Public Hearing Information

All meetings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

January 12, 2017 – Scoping Webinar for Vision Blueprint Amendments only	**January 17, 2017** – Question & Answer Webinar (Amendments 43 & 44)
January 18, 2017 – Listening Station (Am 44) Harvey Government Center 1200 Truman Ave.; 2nd floor **Key West, FL** 33040 Phone: 305-295-4385	**January 19, 2017** – Listening Station (Am 44) Hyatt Place Marathon 1996 Overseas Hwy **Marathon, FL** 33050 Phone: 305-743-1234
January 23, 2017 Lexington Hotel & Conference Center 1515 Prudential Drive **Jacksonville, FL** 32207 Phone: 904-396-5100	**January 24, 2017** Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront 1550 North Atlantic Avenue **Cocoa Beach, FL** 32931 Phone: 321-799-0003
January 25, 2017 Flagler Place 201 SW Flagler Avenue **Stuart, FL** 34994 Phone: 772-985-3863	**January 26, 2017** Hilton Key Largo 97000 Overseas Highway **Key Largo, FL** 33037 Phone: 305-852-5553
January 30, 2017 Murrells Inlet Community Center 4450 Murrells Inlet Road **Murrells Inlet, SC** 29576 Phone: 843-651-4152	**January 31, 2017** Crowne Plaza 4831 Tanger Outlet Boulevard **Charleston, SC** 29418 Phone: 843-744-4422
February 1, 2017 Richmond Hill City Center 520 Cedar Street **Richmond Hill, GA** 31324 Phone: 912-445-0043	**February 6, 2017** Hilton Wilmington Riverside 301 N. Water Street **Wilmington, NC** 28401 Phone: 910-763-5900
February 7, 2017 Hatteras Community Center 57689 NC Highway 12 **Hatteras, NC** 27943 Phone: 252-986-2161/252-986-2109	**February 8, 2017** Doubletree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront 2717 W. Fort Macon Road **Atlantic Beach, NC** 28512 Phone: 252-240-1155