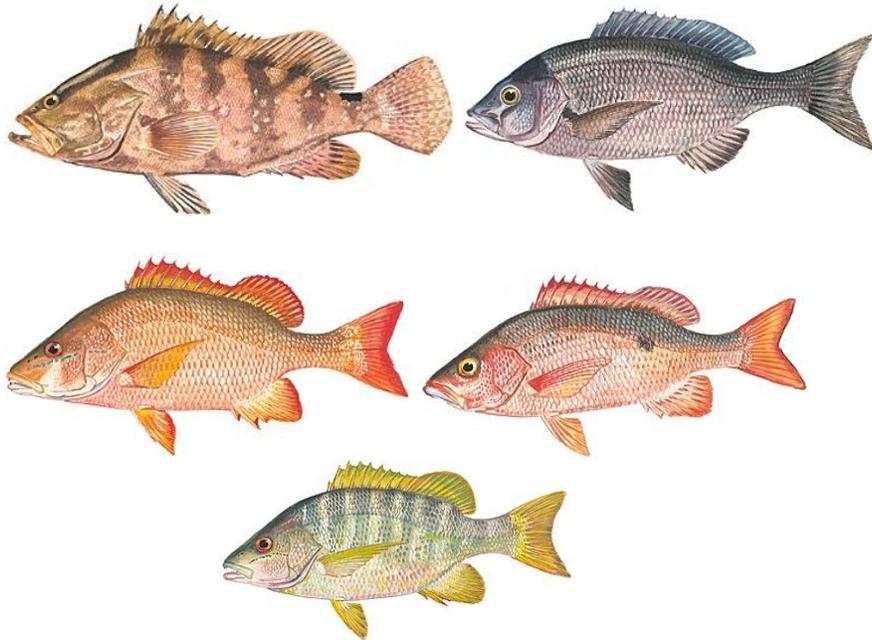




**MAGNUSON – STEVENS ACT/NEPA
DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT
Amendment 35 to the Fishery Management Plan
For the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region:
Remove Nassau Grouper, Black Snapper, Dog
Snapper, Mahogany Snapper, & School Master
from the Snapper Grouper FMU**



MAY 15, 2014

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BACKGROUND – WHY ARE WE HERE?

- 1. Landings of these species are very low especially in states other than Florida** – landings data for these 5 species is discussed in **Appendix C**.
- 2. South Atlantic Council has removed other species** – The South Atlantic Council removed 13 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (SAFMC 2011) due to low landings and the high percentage of landings in Florida state waters. The South Atlantic Council also removed blue runner from the Snapper Grouper FMP through Amendment 27 (SAFMC 2013) due in part to the large percentage of landings (99%) in waters off Florida and the fact that the State of Florida was willing to extend existing regulations into federal waters and put in place any other management measures the state deems appropriate for the sustainable management of the species.
- 3. Gulf Council removed these species from the Reef Fish FMU in 2011** – The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council removed these 5 species from their Reef Fish Fishery Management Unit in their Final Generic Annual Catch Limit/Accountability Measures Amendment dated September 2011 (GMFMC 2011) due to low landings. It was agreed that the South Atlantic Council would assume responsibility for managing Nassau Grouper in the Gulf and this was done in Amendment 27 (SAFMC 2013).
- 4. So who would manage these species?**
 - a. Representatives from the State of Florida have requested the South Atlantic Council remove these 5 species from the Snapper Grouper FMP.
 - b. Florida regulations would be extended into federal waters off Florida. The State of Florida is willing to extend existing regulations into federal waters and put in place any other management measures the state deems appropriate for the sustainable management of these species.

PURPOSE & NEED FOR ACTION

Purpose: The purpose of Amendment 35 is to: remove 5 species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) that do not need federal management. Some of these species were originally placed in the fishery management plan for data monitoring purposes, rather than because they were considered to be in need of federal management. Taking into account mandated specifications to provide ACLs and AMs for species in a fishery management plan other than annual stocks or designated ecosystem component species, the Council is simplifying its system of ACLs by removing some of the less frequently landed species that are not in need of federal management.

Need: The need for Amendment 35 is to: Simplify federal management without reducing the protection for 5 species rarely caught in states other than Florida.

This draft wording is offered for Committee/Council consideration.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Option 1. Approve Purpose and Need.

Option 2. Modify Purpose and Need and approve.

Option 3. Others??

The Council is considering the following actions in Amendment 35:

- Remove the following 5 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU:
 - Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*)
 - Black Snapper (*Apsilus dentatus*)
 - Dog Snapper (*Lutjanus jocu*)
 - Mahogany Snapper (*Lutjanus mahogoni*)
 - Schoolmaster (*Lutjanus apodus*)

What Next?

Scoping meetings for Amendment 35 will be held as shown below. The scoping document, PowerPoint presentation, and video presentation will be made available on the Council's website prior to the scoping meetings. An informal question/answer webinar will be held prior to the scoping meetings.

The scoping meetings will begin at 4 p.m. and end at 7 p.m. DATES AND CITIES ARE FINAL BUT THE SPECIFIC LOCATIONS MAY CHANGE.

<u>August 6, 2014</u> North Myrtle Beach, SC Bay Watch Resort & Conference Center 2701 S. Ocean Boulevard N. Myrtle Beach, SC 29582 Phone: 252-240-1155	<u>August 7, 2014</u> Crystal Coast Civic Center 3505 Arendell Street Morehead City, NC 28557 Phone: 252-247-3883
<u>August 11, 2014</u> Key West Marriott Beachside 3841 North Roosevelt Boulevard Key West, FL 33040 Phone: 305-296-8100	<u>August 12, 2014</u> Doubletree by Hilton Oceanfront 2080 North Atlantic Ave. Cocoa Beach, FL 32931 Phone: 321-783-9222
<u>August 13, 2014</u> Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk 1515 Prudential Drive Jacksonville, FL 32207 Phone: 904-396-5100	<u>August 14, 2014</u> Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum 175 Bourne Avenue Pooler, GA 31322 Phone: 912-743-8888

Written comments must be received by 5 P.M. on August 18, 2014. All comments will be considered by the Council in drafting Snapper Grouper Amendment 35. There will be a number of opportunities to provide public input if the Council moves forward to develop an amendment. A simplified schematic of the Council process is presented in **Appendix B.**

COMMITTEE ACTION:

- Option 1. Approve the Scoping Document for SG Amendment 35 for scoping.
- Option 2. Approve the modified Scoping Document for SG Amendment 35 for scoping.
- Option 3. Do not approve the Scoping Document for SG Amendment 35 for scoping.
- Option 4. Others??

References

GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council). 1996. Amendment 14 for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan. Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, Florida 33607.

GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council). 2011. Final Generic Amendment Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures Amendment for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Red Drum, Reef Fish, Shrimp, Coral and Coral Reefs Fishery Management Plan. Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, Florida 33607.

SAFMC (South Atlantic Fishery Management Council). 1991. Snapper Grouper Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Ste 201, Charleston, S.C. 29405. Available online at: www.safmc.net

SAFMC (South Atlantic Fishery Management Council). 2011. Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment for the South Atlantic Region with Final Environmental Impact Statement, Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, Regulatory Impact Review, and Social Impact Assessment/Fishery Impact Statement. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Ste 201, Charleston, S.C. 29405. 755 pp. plus appendices. Available online at: www.safmc.net

SAFMC (South Atlantic Fishery Management Council). 2013. Snapper Grouper Amendment 27 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Ste 201, Charleston, S.C. 29405. Available online at: www.safmc.net

Appendix A. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council 2013-2014 Membership

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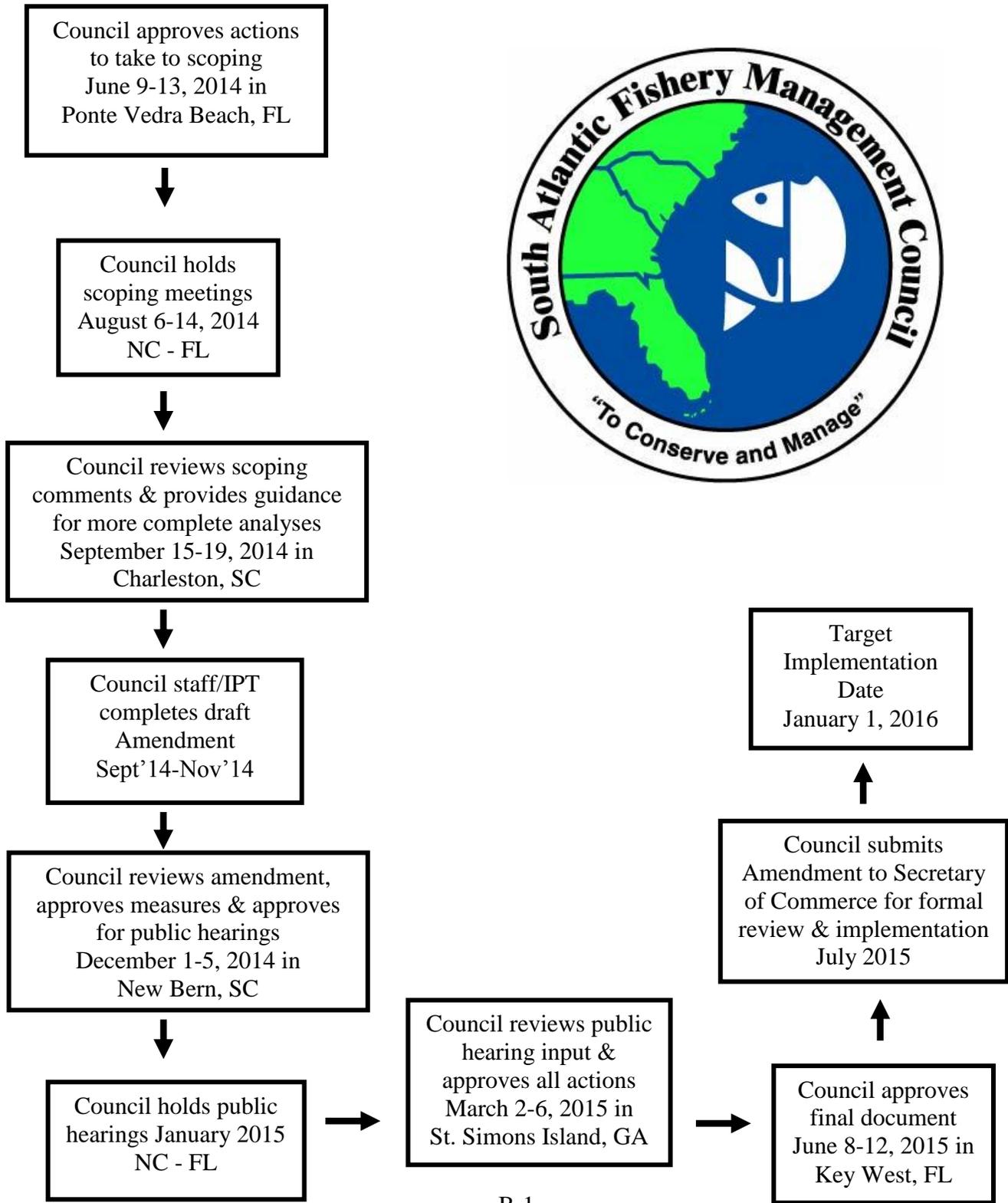
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Appendix B. A Simplified Schematic of the Council Process for this amendment.



Appendix C. Landings data for these 5 specie off NC, SC, GA, and FL

Note: The bulk of commercial landings and headboat landings for these species are confidential and cannot be presented. Historical data for Nassau grouper from the Gulf Council’s Generic ACL/AM Amendment (GMFMC 2011) are included. A general discussion for each species is presented to give an idea of the level of landings for each species.

Source: Landings from 1986 through 2012 were compiled by Mike Errigo, SAFMC Staff, from the NMFS SERO ACL Database.

Nassau Grouper

Harvest of Nassau grouper is currently prohibited within the United States due to the species being overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Nassau grouper fisheries in the Southeast region were closed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council beginning on January 1, 1992 through Amendment 4 (SAFMC 1991); closed by the Florida FWC under Reef Fish, Chapter 46-14, F.A.C. (effective December 31, 1992); and closed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in 1996 through Amendment 14 (GMFMC 1996). The following table is from the Gulf Council’s Final Generic Amendment Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures Amendment (GMFMC 2011).

Table 2.1.3.1. Landings of Nassau grouper (whole weight) in federal, state, and unknown waters of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic from 1981-1996.

Year	Federal waters		State waters		Unknown		Total	
	Gulf	Atlantic	Gulf	Atlantic	Gulf	Atlantic	Gulf	Atlantic
1981	3,860	77,747	42,567	216,789	----	----	46,427	294,536
1982	32,843	108,945	1,468	59,628	----	----	34,311	168,573
1983	16,292	128,541	0	317,959	----	----	16,292	446,500
1984	53,399	2,460	11,676	314,282	----	----	65,075	316,742
1985	11,341	71,266	0	29,595	----	----	11,341	100,861
1986	7,003	270,757	54,295	106,176	47	79	61,345	377,012
1987	20,560	998	22,879	45,745	257	721	43,696	47,464
1988	8,531	1,276	14	23,045	0	519	8,545	24,840
1989	2,099	23,564	28	48,927	6,080	470	8,207	72,961
1990	2,076	30,003	83,983	82,015	228	135	86,287	112,153
1991	7,838	23,717	0	59,367	53	123	7,891	83,207
1992	1,102	2,194	0	35,038	0	150	1,102	37,382
1993	1,824	17,090	25	23,736	4,128	98	5,977	40,924
1994	269	3,512	0	2,740	0	72	269	6,324
1995	798	0	0	0	15	44	813	44
1996	57	0	0	1,843	0	56	57	1,899
Average	10,618	47,629	13,558	85,430	983	224	24,852	133,214

Sources: Post-stratified MRFSS (2011) for recreational (1981-1996) and SEFSC ACL Datasets (2011) for headboat (1986-1996) and commercial (1986-1996). Please see text for full description of jurisdictional apportionment between the Gulf and South Atlantic coasts.

The early years of landings include Nassau grouper caught in the Bahamas and landed in Florida. This makes it difficult to determine the actual poundage from state and federal waters in Florida. Total (recreational and commercial) landings since 1996 have been low. Total landings in 1997 were less than 100 pounds whole weight (lb ww) but increased to less than 10,000 lb ww from 1998 through 2000. From 2001 through 2005, total landings have been less than 1,000 lb ww. From 2006 through 2012, total landings have been 0 lb ww. Total landings in Georgia through North Carolina were less than 10,000 lb ww with lots of years of 0 landings from 1986 through 2000; there were no landings from 2001 through 2012.

Black Snapper

Total landings (recreational and commercial) of black snapper were 0 pounds whole weight (lb ww) from 1986 through 1990; less than 500 lb ww in 1991 and 1992; less than 5,000 lb ww in 1993 and 1994; less than 600 lb ww with some years of 0 lb ww from 1995 through 2010; and 0 lb ww in 2011 and 2012. There were no landings of black snapper in Georgia through North Carolina from 1986 through 2012.

Dog Snapper

Total landings (recreational and commercial) of dog snapper were less than 8,000 pounds whole weight (lb ww) from 1986 through 2012 except 2007 when landings increased to less than 25,000 lb ww. Total landings in Georgia through North Carolina from 1986 through 2005 were 0 lb ww except 2000 when total landings were less than 6,000 lb ww; from 2006 through 2012, total landings were less than 400 lb ww.

Mahogany Snapper

Total landings (recreational and commercial) of mahogany snapper were less than 600 pounds whole weight (lb ww) from 1986 through 2012 except 1999 and 2007 when landings increased to less than 4,000 lb ww. There were no landings of mahogany snapper in Georgia through North Carolina from 1986 through 2012.

Schoolmaster

Total landings (recreational and commercial) of schoolmaster were less than 15,000 pounds whole weight (lb ww) from 1986 through 2012. There were no landings of schoolmaster in Georgia through North Carolina from 1986 through 2012 except 1995 when less than 5 lb ww were landed.