



Content and Status of Active Amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP

March 28, 2016

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure and gear markings) Council lead: Brian

The amendment contains two actions: the first addresses the prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots that was implemented through Regulatory Amendment 19 and became effective on October 23, 2013; the second action specifies potential new black sea bass pot gear modifications that reduce the required breaking strength for buoy lines and weak links, and changes to aid in gear identification in the event of a whale entanglement. The Council reviewed public hearing comments and made final decisions for the document at their September 2015 meeting. The Council approved the document to send to the Secretary at the December 2015 meeting. The amendment was submitted to the NMFS on March 4, 2016.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 33 (and Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 7; transport of fillets from The Bahamas) Council lead: Brian

This amendment revises the landing fish intact provisions for vessels that lawfully harvest dolphin, wahoo, or snapper grouper in or from Bahamian waters and return to the U.S. EEZ by allowing fillets to be brought back from the Bahamas. To better allow for identification of the species of any fillets, the amendment requires that the skin be left intact on the entire fillet of any dolphin, wahoo, or snapper grouper carcass on a vessel in transit from Bahamian waters through the U.S. EEZ. In addition, the amendment specifies that for any dolphin, wahoo, or snapper grouper species lawfully harvested in Bahamian waters and onboard a vessel in the U.S. EEZ in fillet form, two fillets of the respective species of fish, regardless of the length of each fillet, are equivalent to one fish. This measure would assist law enforcement in enforcing the relevant U.S. bag and possession limits. Further, the amendment specifies documentation and transit and stowage provisions. The final rule for Amendment 33/Dolphin Wahoo 7 published in the Federal Register on December 28, 2015 and regulations became effective on January 27, 2016.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 34 (accountability measures for snapper grouper species) Council lead: Brian

Snapper Grouper Amendment 34 is part of the Generic Accountability Measures and Dolphin Allocation Amendment. The amendment considers changes in accountability measures for snapper grouper species to determine when ACL overages need to be paid back and to bring consistency to accountability measures. The amendment was submitted to NMFS for formal review on February 26, 2015. The final rule published in the Federal Register on January 22, 2016. Regulations were effective on February 22, 2016.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 35 (removal of species from the FMU) Council lead: Myra

This amendment would remove 4 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU: black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster. Representatives from the State of Florida requested the South Atlantic Council remove the above 4 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU as well as Nassau grouper. At their June 2014 meeting, however, the Council opted to retain Nassau grouper in the FMU given its ESA status. Florida regulations would be extended into federal waters off Florida to manage the remaining 4 species.

Scoping for Amendment 35 took place in August 2014 and public hearings were held in January 2015. The amendment was submitted on September 10, 2015. A Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register on February 5, 2016 soliciting public comments through April 5, 2016.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 (Spawning Special Management Zones) Council lead: Gregg

Amendment 36 would specify a process for identifying spawning sites/aggregations for snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, based on the characteristics of sites important for spawning. Proposed regulations only prohibit fishing for and/or possessing snapper grouper species in areas designated as Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs) in the following Spawning SMZs: (1) South Cape Lookout (5 square miles)(NC), (2) Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (3.1 square miles)(SC), (3) Area 51 (2.99 square miles)(SC), (4) Area 53 site (2.99 square miles)(SC), and (5) Warsaw Hole (4 square mile)(FL). The amendment would also revise the boundary of the Charleston Deep Reef MPA, and address transit and anchoring provisions within newly designated Spawning SMZs. A 10-year sunset provision whereby the Spawning SMZs designation would be discontinued unless spawning were documented is included, and a framework provision to reauthorize the Spawning SMZs is also included. At their December 2015, the Council approved all actions in Amendment 36. The amendment includes a System Management Plan (SMP) to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the Spawning SMZs. Scoping for this amendment took place in August 2014 and development continued in 2014. In 2015, two rounds of public hearing were held, respectively, in April (via webinar) and August (in-person). The Council reviewed public comments at their September meeting and approved all actions in December 2015. The Council approved the amendment for formal review at their March 2016 meeting.

System Management Plan (Amendment 14 MPAs) Council lead: Chip

Eight Deepwater MPAs were established through Snapper Grouper Amendment 14 in January 2009. The Council has developed a System Management Plan (SMP) that serves as the framework for resource protection, research and monitoring, outreach, administration, and evaluation of the MPAs. The SMP includes action items to assist in achieving the goals and objectives of the SMP and potential metrics for evaluating the management effectiveness of the MPAs. Eventually, the SMP will be expanded to encompass all the Council's managed areas, with sections for MPAs, Spawning SMZs, SMZs, and Coral HAPCs. The Council approved the SMP at their March 2016 meeting.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 41 (mutton snapper) Council Lead: Myra

In June 2015, the Council directed staff to begin development of a new amendment that will include actions to revise the biological parameters, catch levels, and management measures for mutton snapper. At their December 2015 meeting, the Council approved Amendment 41 for scoping. Scoping hearings were held in January/February, 2016. The Council reviewed scoping comments at their March 2016 meeting.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 (hogfish) Council Lead: Myra

Actions in Amendment 37 include modifying the FMU for hogfish (genetic evidence indicates three distinct stocks); revising MSY, MSST, ABC, ACLs, AMs and recreational ACT, as appropriate, for the two stocks in the SAFMC jurisdiction; establish a rebuilding plan for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock, and commercial and recreational management measures for each stock. The amendment was approved for scoping in June 2015. Scoping was held via webinar in August 2015. In September 2015, the Council reviewed scoping comments and reviewed actions/alternatives in the document. The Council requested revised projections for the FLK/EFL stock in September due to high recreational landings (recreational sector closed on August 24, 2015). At their September 2015 meeting, the Council requested that the SSC reconsider their ABC recommendation for the GA-NC stock and that a letter be sent to MRIP requesting an evaluation of hogfish landings in 2015. The SSC met in October 2015 and recommended no changes to the approach used to obtain an ABC for the GA-NC stock. The ABC for that stock was revised based on updates to the landings. Amendment 37 was approved for public hearings at the December 2015 Council meeting and hearings were held January-February, 2016. The SSC will convene via webinar on March 4, 2016 to consider methodologies to specify ABCs for the FLK/EFL stock considering that the minimum size limit for that stock will likely increase and thus affect tracking of landings in pounds vs. numbers of fish. The Council received the SSC's recommendations and reviewed public hearing comments at the March 2016 meeting.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25 (blueline tilefish, yellowtail snapper, black sea bass) Council Lead: Myra

At their September 2015 meeting, the Council approved development of Regulatory Amendment 25 to address revisions to blueline tilefish fishing levels and management measures in response to a new ABC recommendation. Alternatives to specify the blueline tilefish ACL and OY set aside a portion to account for landings in the area north of the Council's jurisdiction. The Council's preferred alternative would set the blueline tilefish annual catch limit at 78% of the ABC (Total ACL = 174,798 pounds whole weight (lbs ww); commercial ACL = 87,521 lbs ww; recreational ACL = 87,277 lbs ww). Other actions would revise commercial and recreational management measures setting the commercial trip limit at 300 lbs gw and the bag limit at 3 fish/person/day included in the grouper aggregate during May-August. In addition, the amendment would also modify the fishing year for yellowtail snapper (start date of August 1) and increase the bag limit for black sea bass (7 fish/person/day). A public hearing webinar was held in November 2015 and the Council approved the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce at their December 2015 meeting. The amendment was submitted to the NMFS on March 4, 2016.

Generics

Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment Council lead: John

The amendment includes an action to consider modifying the timing of reporting requirements for commercial logbooks in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic resources, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries, and providing an option for logbooks to be submitted electronically. Currently, logbook reports from commercial fishermen targeting snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. The amendment also considers requiring that the components of the commercial logbooks (landings, economic, and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip. This would increase the timeline for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fishermen to complete logbooks, and decrease the timeline for golden crab fishermen. Commercial electronic logbooks, as proposed in this amendment, would not be used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they could serve as a means to verify dealer reports and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program standards that require two sources for verification of quota-monitored species. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the commercial logbook landings, with the new timing and compliance requirements specified in this amendment, to compare with commercial trip ticket landings to help ensure the commercial ACLs are not exceeded.

At their June 2013 meeting, the Council approved scheduling a NMFS SEFSC presentation on the details of the commercial electronic logbook pilot study at the September 2013 meeting. The Council receives updates at each Council meeting. SA Council staff will work with Gulf staff and NMFS staff to allow fishermen to voluntarily provide their data electronically and to plan for completion of the amendment incorporating results from year 1 of the pilot study.

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (bycatch) Council lead: Chip

The action in CE-BA 3 considers improvements in bycatch/discard data collection methods to better quantify all sources of fishing mortality in South Atlantic fisheries. Alternatives consider expanding aspects of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's Release, Discard and Protected Species Module to coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only) and dolphin and wahoo fisheries; and also implementing a commercial observer program at 2-5% coverage levels for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only), dolphin and wahoo, and golden crab vessels.

Based on discussions at the September 2014 Council meeting, the SEFSC/SERO agreed to draft a comprehensive bycatch reporting system for the southeast. The SEFSC and SERO will provide an update on their efforts at each Council meeting. The Council's intent is that the bycatch reporting system would be specified and implemented through this amendment.

The Council received a briefing from NMFS at the March 2016 meeting.

South Atlantic For-Hire Logbook Amendment Council lead: John

During the March 2015 meeting, the South Atlantic Council approved draft actions/alternatives that would require weekly electronic reporting by charter vessels. The actions/alternatives are patterned after the recently implemented headboat electronic reporting requirements. The South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils reviewed the amendment at the Joint Council meeting in Key West in June 2015. In September 2015, the South Atlantic Council directed staff and the IPT to revise the amendment to be for South Atlantic charter vessels only. In December 2015, the Council approved the amendment for public

hearings, which were held in January/February 2016. The Council reviewed public hearing comments at the March 2016 meeting.