



## Content and Status of Active Amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP

October 16, 2015

### Amendments Recently Implemented

*Snapper Grouper Amendment 32 (blueline tilefish)* - effective March 30, 2015.

- Set ACL at 98% of ABC
- ACLs of 17,841 and 17,791 pounds whole weight for the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively, based on existing sector allocations.
- Commercial trip limit of 100 pounds gutted weight.
- Recreational vessel limit of one fish per vessel per day for May through August each year. Recreational harvest prohibited September through April each year.
- Removed blueline tilefish from Deepwater (DW) Complex, adjusted ACLs for the DW Complex, modified Accountability Measures (AMs) for the DW Complex and established AMs for blueline tilefish.

*Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 20 (snowy grouper)* - effective August 20, 2015.

- For 2015: Commercial ACL = 115,451 pounds gutted weight; Recreational ACL = 4,152 fish.
- Commercial trip limit of 200 pounds gutted weight.
- Recreational limit of 1 fish per vessel per day from May through August with no recreational retention during the rest of the year.

*Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 22 (gag and wreckfish)* – effective September 11, 2015.

- Wreckfish – For 2015: Total ACL = 433,000; Commercial ACL = 411,350 pounds whole weight; Recreational ACL = 21,650 pounds whole weight.
- Gag – For 2015: Total ACL = 632,700 pounds gutted weight; Commercial ACL = 322,677 pounds gutted weight; Directed Commercial Quota = 295,459 pounds gutted weight; Recreational ACL = 310,023 pounds gutted weight.

*Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (ORCS)* - effective July 1, 2015.

- Updated the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's acceptable biological catch control rule to incorporate a new methodology for determining the acceptable biological catch of unassessed species.
- Adjusted the acceptable biological catch value for 14 unassessed snapper grouper species.
- Revised the annual catch limits for three species complexes and four snapper-grouper species.

- Established a 12-inch fork length minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia for both the commercial and recreational sectors.
- Increased the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off the east coast of Florida from 12-inches to 14-inches fork length.
- Established a commercial split season for gray triggerfish.
- Established a 1,000 pound whole weight commercial trip limits for gray triggerfish.

## **Amendments Under Development**

### *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 the analyses for this amendment at their December 2014 meeting, made modifications to the amendment, and revised the timeline for development. In March 2015, the Council selected a preferred alternative for Action 1. The Council approved the amendment for public hearings at their June 2015 meeting, deselected the preferred alternative, and added two new alternatives. Public hearings would be held in August 2015. The Council reviewed public hearing comments and made final decisions for the document at their September 2015 meeting. The Council is scheduled to approve the document to send to the Secretary at the December 2015 meeting.

### *Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 23 (golden tilefish H&L, jacks complex)* Council Lead: Myra

Prior to June 2015, this regulatory amendment contained an action to lengthen the golden tilefish fishing season for the longline sector but that was removed in June 2015 and an action to modify the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector remained. Additionally, two actions (addressing black sea bass and the Jacks Complex) that had been included in Regulatory Amendment 24 were moved to Regulatory Amendment 23 in June 2015. A scoping webinar was held in August 2015. In September 2015, the Council reviewed comments and moved the black sea bass bag limit action to another amendment (Regulatory Amendment 25). Work on Regulatory Amendment 23 will resume in 2016.

### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 33 (transport of snapper grouper fillets from the Bahamas)* Council lead: Brian

This amendment modifies what is currently allowed by recreational fishermen to bring snapper grouper species fillets from the Bahamas into the US EEZ. Also included for consideration is leaving skin on the fillets, onboard documentation requirements, as well as determining how many Bahamian fillets may be aboard the vessel in the U.S. EEZ.

At the March 2014 Council meeting, the Council received input on the proposed actions and alternatives from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and the Law Enforcement Committee. The Council made revisions to the Purpose and Need and revised actions and alternatives. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings in August 2014. Approval for submission to the Secretary of Commerce took place in December 2014. The amendment was submitted for formal review

on May 1, 2015. The proposed rule published on September 28, 2015, and the comment period will close on October 29, 2015.

*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. A scoping webinar was held in February 2014 and the Council reviewed the amendment at their March 2014 meeting. The Council approved the Purpose and Need and revised the range of alternatives. The Council also clarified that payback of an ACL overage would apply only to the amount above the total ACL, not the sector ACL. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings in August 2014. The Council approved the amendment for formal review in December 2014. The amendment was submitted to NMFS for formal review on February 26, 2015. The proposed rule published on July 15, 2015, and the comment period closed on September 14, 2015.

*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. At their September meeting, the Council reviewed the scoping comments and provided guidance to continue development of the amendment. Additionally, the Council added an action to the amendment to address issues with golden tilefish longline endorsements. The Council reviewed the amendment at their December 2014 meeting and approved it for public hearings in January 2015. The Council considered public comment during the March 2015 meeting and approved all actions. In June 2015, the Council approved the amendment for Secretarial review. The amendment was submitted on September 10, 2015.

*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 (bottom topography, current systems, etc.). Spawning SMZs would only consider prohibiting fishing for and/or possession of snapper grouper species (species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit); fishing for all other species would be allowed. The amendment would also revise the boundary of the Charleston Deep Reef MPA, and includes an action to address transit and anchoring provisions within newly designated Spawning SMZs. Note: The Spawning SMZ approach would not make any changes to the existing MPAs. Alternatives to prohibit anchoring and allow transit are included. The Council added a 10-year sunset provision whereby the Spawning SMZs would automatically go away unless spawning is documented and the Council approves a framework action to reauthorize the Spawning SMZs.

The Council is developing a System Management Plan to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the existing MPAs. The

necessary System Management Plan items for the Spawning SMZs will be added as an appendix to the amendment.

Scoping for this amendment took place in August 2014 and development continued in 2014. The Council reviewed the amendment at their March 2015 meeting and approved it for the first round of public hearings. Public hearings were held via webinar in April 2015 and during the June 2015 Council meeting. The Council reviewed public input and approved the amendment for more public hearings at the June 2015 meeting. A second round of hearings will be held August 10-25, 2015. The Council reviewed public comments at their September 2015 meeting and approved all actions with preferred alternatives. DEIS comments will be reviewed and the Council is scheduled to approve the amendment for formal review in December 2015.

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

The Council is developing a System Management Plan (SMP) to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the existing 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 reviewed a draft at the June meeting and directed staff to continue work with the goal of having a document ready for the December 2015 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. The Council intended to approve the amendment for scoping at their September 2015 meeting but opted to delay work on the amendment to allow for higher priority items to be competed. Work on this amendment will resume in 2016.

#### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 (hogfish) Council Lead: Myra*

This amendment previously included actions pertaining to multiple species but in June 2015, the Council revised the actions to include only actions for hogfish. 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 from FWRI in September due to high recreational landings (recreational sector closed on August 24, 2015). Projections apply to the Florida Keys/East Florida stock as the GA-NC stock's ABC is being set using the ORCS approach. The Council will review the revised projections and provide guidance to staff at the December 2015 meeting. 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.

#### *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. The amendment would specify the blueline tilefish ABC in the South Atlantic based on various percentages of the coast wide ABC and revise ACLs and OY accordingly.

Alternatives are designed to account for landings in the area north of the Council's jurisdiction. In addition, the amendment includes actions to revise existing commercial and recreational management measures for blueline tilefish. Actions to modify the fishing year and commercial accountability measures for yellowtail snapper are also included, as well as an action that would increase the bag limit for black sea bass. Public hearings are being held via webinar in November 2015 and the Council intends to approve the amendment for secretarial review at their December 2015 meeting.

## **Generic Amendments**

### *Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment* Council lead: Gregg

During the December 2012 meeting, the South Atlantic Council approved a motion moving the commercial logbook reporting action out of CE-BA 3 and indicated their wish to work with the Gulf Council on a joint amendment to address commercial logbook issues in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

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 plan for completion of the amendment incorporating results from year 1 of the pilot study and target regulations being effective on January 1, 2016.

Note: The Council directed staff to work with the SERO, SEFSC, and ACCSP staff to provide a mechanism whereby commercial fishermen could voluntarily provide their commercial logbook data electronically rather than using the paper logbook. The Council has been receiving updates at each meeting and the plan is to have this option available in the fall.

### *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 reviewed the measures in CE-BA 3 in September 2015.

### *Joint Charterboat Logbook Amendment* Council lead: Gregg

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 Councils reviewed the amendment at the Joint Council meeting in Key West in June 2015. In September 2015, the South Atlantic Council directed the IPT to revise the amendment to be for South Atlantic charter vessels only. In December 2015, the South Atlantic Council will review the amendment and approve for public hearings to be held in January 2016.

### *Joint South Florida Amendment* Council lead: Gregg

The Joint Council Committee on South Florida Management Issues (Joint Council Committee) was formed in response to a South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) motion in June 2011. The group was first convened in January of 2014 to begin discussing management needs of south Florida species, which roughly refers to those areas adjacent to the Floridian peninsula and south of 28° North latitude. The South Atlantic Council appointed their Executive Committee to represent the Council during development of this amendment with recommendations going from the Executive Committee to the South Atlantic Council. The Gulf Council appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to represent the Gulf Council with recommendations going first to the Reef Fish Committee and then the Gulf Council.

Prior to the Joint Council Committee meetings, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FL FWC) held a series of South Florida workshops in August of 2013. The results of these workshops were discussed at the January 2014 Joint Council Committee meeting and the full summaries are in Appendix A. These workshops and the public input at the Committee meetings represent scoping as required by MSA and NEPA.

The Commission and Councils are responding to various suggestions for addressing the inconsistencies in management across the three jurisdictions (Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council, and State of Florida) in south Florida that arose prior to and during the scoping workshops and Committee meetings.

During the Joint Council Session in June 2015, the Councils made changes to the amendment and directed staff to modify the document and bring it back to the Gulf Council in August and the South Atlantic in September. The Goal is to complete the amendment by the end of the year or early 2016. The Joint Amendment focuses on yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper; other measures like circle hook and spawning seasons are also included.