

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 15-16, 2021

The Committee approved the minutes from the March 2021 meeting and the agenda for the June 2021 meeting.

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff updated the Committee on the status of Regulatory Amendment 34 (Special Management Zones in NC and SC). A final rule for this amendment was published on April 2, 2021. The rule went into effect on May 3, 2021.

Gag Grouper Stock Assessment

SEDAR 71 included data through 2019 and indicated that the Gag Grouper stock in the South Atlantic is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) staff presented the assessment's results to the Committee. The South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed results of SEDAR 71 in April 2021. Genny Nesslage, SSC Chair, presented the SSC's recommendations. Council Staff provided an overview of available Gag Grouper landings and other pertinent data.

The Committee discussed projections and rebuilding timelines at different fishing mortality and recruitment scenarios. With management starting in 2023 and average recruitment, under the $F=0$ (no fishing mortality) scenario the stock would be rebuilt by 2028 (6 years). For the $F=0$ and low recruitment option, the stock would be rebuilt by 2030 (8 years). However, the Committee noted that the projection of no fishing mortality is not achievable for the multi-species fishery that catches Gag Grouper, due to dead discards that would persist even if landings were prohibited. Therefore, the Committee requested a projection that included discard mortality but no landings mortality to determine the time to rebuild under this scenario (See item under Other Business). The Committee made the following motion:

MOTION 1: INITIATE A PLAN AMENDMENT TO REBUILD AND END OVERFISHING OF GAG GROUPEL.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Red Porgy (Amendment 50)

The most recent assessment of the Red Porgy stock in the South Atlantic followed a standard approach with data through 2017 and indicated that the South Atlantic Red Porgy stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. The Council received the results of the assessment and the SSC's recommendations at their June 2020 meeting and directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment. Scoping hearings were conducted in February 2021 and, during the March 2021 meeting, the Committee reviewed, modified, and approved actions and the range of alternatives under each action for further analyses. Jimmy Hull, Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, presented feedback from the AP. Council staff presented an overview of the decision

document and updated analyses. The Committee made the following motions and provided the following guidance:

MOTION 2: APPROVE PURPOSE AND NEED AS MODIFIED

Purpose for Action

The *purpose* of this fishery management plan amendment is to ~~revise the rebuilding schedule,~~ **establish a rebuilding plan, set an acceptable biological catch, sector allocations and annual catch limits and recreational annual catch target** for South Atlantic Red Porgy based on the results of the most recent stock assessment, and modify management and accountability measures.

Need for Action

The *need* for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic Red Porgy, rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Action 1. Establish a Rebuilding Plan for Red Porgy

- The Committee directed the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) to clarify language for the No Action Alternative considering that the previous rebuilding plan (which ended in December 2017) was not successful in rebuilding the stock.

MOTION 3: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 5 UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED

Action 1. Establish a Rebuilding Plan for Red Porgy

Alternative 5. Establish the rebuilding plan to equal the time estimated to rebuild the stock with a 50% probability of success while maintaining fishing mortality at 75% of the Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold during the rebuilding period. For Red Porgy, $75\%MFMT = 75\%FMSY$. This would equal 26 years with the stock reaching a 50% probability of rebuilding success in 2047. 2022 would be Year 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 4. Establish the rebuilding plan to equal T_{min} times two. This would equal 22 years with the rebuilding period ending in 2044. 2022 would be Year 1.

MOTION FAILS FOR LACK OF SECOND

Action 2. Revise the Red Porgy Total Annual Catch Limit and Annual Optimum Yield

- Direction to staff: Use gutted weight instead of whole weight to specify catch levels and retain current preferred.

MOTION 4: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

APPENDIX

Action 2. Revise the Red Porgy Total Annual Catch Limit and Annual Optimum Yield

Alternative 5. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for Red Porgy and set equal to zero. The 2022 annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Action 3. Revise the Red Porgy sector allocations and sector annual catch limits

Alternative 4. Remove sector allocations and manage under the total annual catch limit.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 3

Action 3. Revise the Red Porgy sector allocations and sector annual catch limits

Alternative 3. Apply the current allocation formula: Annual catch limit = ((mean landings 2006-2008)*0.5) + ((mean landings 1986-2008)*0.5) to the revised total annual catch limit. This would result in a commercial allocation of 51.43% and a recreational allocation of 48.57%. using revised recreational landings estimates from the Fishing Effort Survey.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 7: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A AND 3A AS PREFERRED (15 FISH PER TRIP IN EACH SEASON)

Action 4. Action 4. Modify Red Porgy commercial trip limits

Alternative 2. Reduce the commercial trip limit for Red Porgy from January 1 – April 30 to:

2a. 15 fish per trip

Alternative 3. Reduce the commercial trip limit for Red Porgy from May 1 – December 31 to:

3a. 15 fish per trip

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 8: MOVE ALTERNATIVES 3 AND 4 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Action 5. Modify Red Porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5a. Bag and vessel limits

Alternative 3. Establish a recreational vessel limit for private recreational and charter vessels for Red Porgy as:

Alternative 4. Establish a vessel limit for headboats for Red Porgy as:

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 9: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A AS PREFERRED

Action 5. Modify Red Porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5a. Bag and vessel limits

Alternative 2. Reduce the recreational bag limit for Red Porgy to:

2a. 1 fish per person per day, or 1 fish per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 10: SELECT ALTERNATIVES 3 AND 4 UNDER ACTION 5B AS PREFERRED

Action 5. Modify Red Porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5b. Recreational fishing season

Alternative 3. Establish a recreational fishing season for Red Porgy; harvest would be allowed during May through June.

Alternative 4. Establish a recreational fishing season for Red Porgy; harvest would be allowed during July through August.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 11: ADD NEW ALTERNATIVE ESTABLISHING A RECREATIONAL FISHING SEASON FOR RED PORGY FROM JUNE THROUGH AUGUST

Action 5. Modify Red Porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5b. Recreational fishing season

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 12: ADD THE ALTERNATIVE BELOW TO ACTION 6

Action 6. Modify Red Porgy Recreational Accountability Measures

If the total (commercial and recreational combined) annual catch limit is exceeded, reduce the length of the following year's recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the annual catch limit from being exceeded in the following year. However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best available science, that it is not necessary.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION 13: APPROVE AMENDMENT 50 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS. DIRECT STAFF TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS DURING THE SEPTEMBER 2021 MEETING.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Tilefish Stock Assessment

SEDAR 66 included data through 2018 and indicated that the Tilefish stock in the South Atlantic is not overfished and is not experiencing overfishing, although the assessment notes high uncertainty in both statuses. SEFSC staff presented the assessment's results. The South Atlantic SSC reviewed results of SEDAR 66 in April 2021. Genny Nesslage, SSC Chair, presented the SSC's recommendations. Council staff provided an overview of available Tilefish landings and other pertinent data.

The Committee discussed ways to improve data informing recruitment estimates. The assessment noted a lack of information on fish 7 years and younger, leading to uncertainty in recruitment estimates, especially in the terminal years of the assessment. Current survey efforts have had difficulty sampling small Tilefish. Some new deep water surveys may be useful for informing

future assessments, but these will require some years to accumulate enough data. Commercial dealers or observers may be another source that could provide small Tilefish for length composition or age information. The Committee made the following motion:

**MOTION 14: INITIATE A PLAN AMENDMENT FOR TILEFISH TO INCORPORATE NEW ABC RECOMMENDATION AND CONSIDER REVISIONS TO ALLOCATIONS.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

Yellowtail Snapper

The Council received catch level recommendations for the Yellowtail Snapper stock in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico during its December 2020 meeting. The Council instructed staff to initiate an amendment to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan to respond to those recommendations in cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council since the stock overlaps both Councils' jurisdictions. The Snapper Grouper AP discussed the Yellowtail Snapper fishery during its April 2021. Council staff presented an overview of available Yellowtail Snapper landings and other pertinent data. The Committee discussed the AP's feedback, a tentative timeline of development, and the suite of actions that were once considered for the fishery. The Committee provided the following guidance:

- Important to maintain consistency in regulations between South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.
- Timeline presented is acceptable to the Committee.
- Bring back preliminary catch level analysis, including potential closures due to changes in catch levels for review at next meeting.
- Look at any modification to management measures after looking at catch levels. May need to consider a commercial trip limit.
- IPT to develop range of alternatives for commercial trip limits and sector allocations for the South Atlantic.

Red Snapper Stock Assessment

SEDAR 73 included data through 2019 and indicated that the Red Snapper stock in the South Atlantic is not yet rebuilt and is experiencing overfishing. Compared to the last benchmark assessment (SEDAR 41, 2017), this assessment suggested lower levels of overfishing in terminal years and higher values of stock size relative to their benchmarks. SEFSC staff presented the assessment's results to the Committee. The South Atlantic SSC reviewed results of SEDAR 73 in April 2021, and requested to revisit these results with additional information in the summer of 2021. Genny Nessler, SSC Chair, presented the SSC's comments and recommendations. Council Staff also presented an overview of available Red Snapper landings and other pertinent data. Additionally, Council Staff provided a presentation summarizing takeaway points from the assessment and draft tasks for the Committee to consider in forming their management responses to the assessment results. The Committee edited these draft tasks, providing the following guidance and direction:

Summer SSC Meeting Discussions

- Direct staff to schedule an SSC meeting in Summer 2021 for the SSC to revisit results of the SEDAR 73 stock assessment and recommendations for the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC).
- The Council requests that the SEFSC provide projections based on recent recruitment (last 10 years of assessment) for consideration by the SSC.
 - Coordinate requested projection with SSC.
- The Council requests that the SSC:
 - Provide short-term management advice (i.e., 3-year yield stream of OFL and ABC) based on alternative recruitment projections (recent 10 years) that consider recent trends in recruitment.
 - Staff will work with GC to address potential legal questions.
 - Provide a range of plausible OFLs and ABCs noting associated uncertainties.
 - Consider weighting and averaging results, as appropriate.
 - Provide the Council guidance on the effects of alternative recruitment assumptions on stock rebuilding by 2044 and to preventing overfishing over the next 3 years.
 - Further evaluate discard mortality reductions due to descending devices in SG RA 29 and provide short-term management advice based on alternative descending device usage and mortality rates. Thoroughly document the justification for any recommendations that deviate from SEDAR 73.
 - Review the alternate assessment projection approach offered by the SEFSC that accounts for shifting of yield from discards to landings.

Short-Term Response (Options Paper in September 2021)

- Amendment to 1) Revise ACL based on SEDAR 73 and SSC recommendations, and 2) Consider revision to allocations.
 - Maybe additional Council Meeting between September and December.
 - Short-term response timing intended to affect 2022.
- Brainstorm ideas to help shift discard loss to retained catch (Exempted Fishing Permit or longer season), etc.
 - Discuss ideas in September for inclusion in longer-term response.
- Direct Staff to begin an Options Paper in anticipation of receiving the SSC's recommendations in July 2021.
 - SSC will present their recommendations and guidance in September 2021.
 - Staff will present the SSC's recommendations in Options Paper format at the September 2021 meeting, as well.
 - Council Staff will coordinate with SERO on amendment timing.

Long-Term Responses (Amendment to follow short-term response)

- Consider recommendations of the SAFMC recreational reporting working group and evaluate data improvements to better characterize discards.
- Consider recommendations that come out of Section 102 Working Group.
 - Context of overall Snapper Grouper fishery.
- Based on brainstormed ideas, develop management strategies that reduce discards and increase landed yield.

- Evaluate the efficacy of a slot limit for rebuilding and after the stock is rebuilt.
- Direct the Council Staff to develop a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) simulation model to consider different approaches to management designed to help minimize dead discards and increase landed yield.
 - Context of overall Snapper Grouper fishery.
 - Later discussion to specify strategies to consider.
- SSC Recruitment Projections and Assumptions Best Practices Working Group
 - Would not have Red Snapper decisions this summer.
- Evaluate Alternative proxy reference pts (F_{MSY} and MSST proxy values, MSST reporting units)
 - Range of higher/lower F_{MSY} proxies.
 - Proxy should approximate F_{MSY} ; SSC would need to weigh in.
 - Possibly re-run/update analysis from SEDAR 41.
- AP Recommendations:
 - Potential gear changes: large hooks, single hook rig, smaller leader, no natural bait.
 - Spatial or time closure of bottom area.
 - Improve data on recreational catch and effort.
 - Continue to promote descending device use and best practices for releases.
 - Consider changes to timing of the season.
 - Consider requesting a recreational federal fishing license for the Snapper Grouper fishery.

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Recommendations not covered in previous items

The Snapper Grouper AP met on April 21-23, 2021, and discussed a list of topics besides those addressed in this Committee meeting. Some of these topics are scheduled to be discussed in September. Jimmy Hull, AP Chair, presented the AP's recommendations on items not scheduled for discussion at this meeting or scheduled for September, including the AP's comments on recreational discards and recommendation for a recreational license for the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper fishery.

The Committee asked about consideration of a slot limit for the Red Snapper fishery. The AP had some mixed commentary on a slot limit, but not a direct, in-depth discussion. Some Committee members commented that a slot limit could be explored further to potentially reduce discards due to high-grading and increase the number of large, old fish in the population. The AP also commented on the potential use of gear changes or bottom area closures to help reduce discards. Some of the AP's recommendations for reducing discards were listed in the long-term management response for Red Snapper for further exploration.

Updates

Red Snapper and Greater Amberjack Research Projects:

In 2020, the NMFS Sea Grant Consortium received funding to administer programs to solicit research on Red Snapper (South Atlantic) and Greater Amberjack (South Atlantic and Gulf). The goal is to support research that would generate absolute estimates of abundance, with accompanying measures of uncertainty, for these stocks. The intent is for this information to be used as an "anchor point" for future stock assessments. These are sister projects to the much

larger “Great Red Snapper Count” that was conducted in the Gulf of Mexico. Council staff serve on the Steering Committees for each project and provided updates on progress to date for each project.

Other Business

After feedback from NOAA General Counsel, the Committee decided that the Gag Grouper rebuilding timeline will be decided in September.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 15: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Draft Options Papers for the Gag Grouper and Tilefish amendments for the December 2021 Council Meeting.
- Work with NOAA General Counsel and SERO to develop options for rebuilding timelines for Gag Grouper for discussion in September 2021.
- Request an assessment projection estimating the rebuilding timeline for Gag Grouper with no harvest allowed (landed F=0) but accounting for discard mortality.
- Conduct public hearings for Amendment 50 DURING the September 2021 meeting.
- Add language regarding SMZs being designated as Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern to Amendment 50.
- Conduct preliminary catch level analysis for Yellowtail Snapper, including potential closures due to changes in catch levels, for consideration at the September 2021 meeting.
- Schedule an SSC meeting in Summer 2021 for the SSC to revisit results of the SEDAR 73 (Red Snapper) stock assessment and recommendations for the OFL and ABC.
- Draft an Options Paper to adjust catch levels and for Red Snapper (based on the SSC’s OFL and ABC recommendations from their Summer 2021 Meeting) and revise sector allocations. Prepare this for review at the September 2021 meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEE COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
September 14-15, 2021

The Committee approved the minutes from the June 2021 meeting and the agenda for the September 2021 meeting. One item concerning blueline tilefish was added for discussion under Other Business.

Snapper Grouper 2 for 1 Discussion

In 2020, the Council provided a response to Executive Order (EO) 13921: Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth, identifying the 2 for 1 provision for the South Atlantic Unlimited Snapper Grouper permit as an item to be evaluated and to consider if changes would provide social or economic benefits to the fishery. The Committee reviewed information describing background of the provision, a preliminary evaluation of trends in the commercial Snapper Grouper fishery, and initial input from the Snapper Grouper advisory panel (SG AP). The Committee provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- **PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON:**
 - LEASED PERMITS AND ASSOCIATED LANDINGS
 - THE MAXIMUM TIME PERIOD ALLOWED TO PURCHASE AN ADDITIONAL SG 1 PERMIT WHEN A NON-CORPORATE SG 1 PERMIT IS PURCHASED
 - POTENTIAL OPTIMUM YIELD IN THE FISHERY (UPDATE PREVIOUS WORK COMPLETED ON THE TOPIC)
 - CORPORATE OWNERSHIP OF PERMITS
 - 225 LB TRIP LIMITED PERMIT
 - LANDINGS
 - UTILIZATION
 - OWNERSHIP TYPE (CORPORATE VS INDIVIDUAL)

- **ASK THE SG AP TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE TOPIC**
 - PROVIDE SIMILAR INFORMATION TO THE AP THAT WAS PRESENTED AT THE SEPTEMBER 2021 COUNCIL MEETING
 - INCLUDE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS THAT WERE PART OF THE INFORMATION PAPER AND GENERATED THROUGH COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

- **PROVIDE A WHITE PAPER FOR REVIEW AT THE DECEMBER 2021 MEETING**

Greater Amberjack (Amendment 49)

The most recent assessment of the greater amberjack stock in the South Atlantic followed a standard approach with data through 2018 and indicated that the stock is not overfished and not

experiencing overfishing. The Council received the results of the assessment and the SSC's recommendations at their June 2020 meeting and directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment. In March 2021, the Committee reviewed actions and alternatives and approved Amendment 49 for scoping. In April 2021, scoping hearings were held via webinar and the AP discussed the amendment and developed recommendations. Staff provided an overview of scoping comments and the most recent draft language and analyses by the IPT. The AP Chair presented the AP's comments and recommendations. The Committee made the following motions and provided the following guidance:

MOTION 1: MOVE TO ADD A CONSTANT CATCH ALTERNATIVE TO ACTION 1

Action 1. Revise the greater amberjack total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- USE 2.8 MILLION POUNDS (THE MIDDLE VALUE FROM THE YEARS IN ACTION 1-PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 2) AS THE VALUE FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS, THEN RE-EVALUATE LANDINGS FOR LATER YEARS.

MOTION 2: MOVE TO ACCEPT THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION 1 FOR ANALYSIS.

Action 1. Revise the greater amberjack total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 3: MOVE TO ACCEPT THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION 2 FOR ANALYSIS.

Action 2. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for greater amberjack

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- APPLY THE ALLOCATION DECISION TREE TO GREATER AMBERJACK AS A TEST COMPARISON OF ACTION 2 ALTERNATIVES.

MOTION 4: MOVE TO ACCEPT THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION 3 FOR ANALYSIS.

Action 3. Remove recreational annual catch targets from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: MOVE TO ADD AN ACTION TO AMENDMENT 49 TO CONSIDER CHANGING THE COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SIZE LIMITS FOR GREATER AMBERJACK.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- INITIALLY CONSIDER MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT RANGES OF 28 TO 36 INCHES FORK LENGTH FOR EACH SECTOR

MOTION 6: MOVE TO ADD AN ACTION TO CONSIDER INCREASING THE COMMERCIAL SEASON TRIP LIMIT FOR SEASON 2.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES BASED ON ADVISORY PANEL'S RECOMMENDATION OF 1,200 POUNDS (SAME AS SEASON 1).

MOTION 7: MOVE TO ADD AN ACTION TO CONSIDER CLOSING THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR IN APRIL.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- RESEARCH MANAGEMENT HISTORY RELATED TO THE APRIL CLOSURE.
- **NOTE:** SPAWNING OCCURS JANUARY-JUNE, WITH PEAK SPAWNING IN APRIL AND MAY (SEDAR 15)

Snowy Grouper (Amendment 51)

The most recent assessment of the Snowy Grouper in the South Atlantic indicated that the South Atlantic Snowy Grouper stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. The Council received the results of the assessment and the SSC's recommendations for overfishing and acceptable biological catch levels at their March 2021 meeting and directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment. Jimmy Hull, the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, provided comments and recommendations from the AP. Council staff presented an overview of the options paper. The Committee discussed the AP's feedback, a tentative timeline of development, and the suite of actions being considered. The Committee provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF

- CONTINUE TO SPECIFY THE RECREATIONAL ACL IN NUMBERS OF FISH.
- REVIEW THE POST-SEASON RECREATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES.
- BRING THE OPTIONS PAPER TO THE OCTOBER 2021 SNAPPER GROUPE AP MEETING PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION FOR SCOPING, AND HAVE THE SNAPPER GROUPE AP:
 - DISCUSS THE PROS AND CONS OF EITHER REDUCING THE COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT OR CREATING A COMMERCIAL SPAWNING SEASON CLOSURE AS POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR ACTION 3.

- CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RECREATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON A DEEPWATER STAMP/ENDORSEMENT FOR SNOWY GROUPER AND OTHER DEEPWATER SPECIES.
- CONSIDER A MODIFICATION TO RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES.

Yellowtail Snapper (Amendment 44)

The Committee reviewed an options paper with proposed actions to modify catch levels for yellowtail snapper resulting from the most recent stock assessment. The amendment is being developed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council as the species is considered a single stock across both Councils' jurisdictions. However, the Committee only reviewed information pertaining to the South Atlantic at this meeting. The Committee provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- ADD OPTION FOR CONSTANT CATCH TOTAL ACL THAT IS UNDER THE LOWEST RECOMMENDED ABC.
- REQUEST FEEDBACK FROM THE ADVISORY PANEL(S) ON:
 - POTENTIAL TRIP LIMIT DURING SPAWNING SEASON (MAY 15 TO JULY 31)
 - TRIP LIMIT STEP DOWN AFTER 75% OF ACL IS MET
 - TRIP LIMIT FOR PART-TIME FISHERMEN – 500 OR 400 POUNDS
 - TRIP LIMIT FOR MULTI-DAY FISHERMEN (WOULD REQUIRE VMS FOR DUALY PERMITTED VESSELS) – 3,500 LBS PER WEEK
- TAKE THE AMENDMENT OUT FOR SCOPING AND OBTAIN ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FROM THE SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL, GULF REEF FISH ADVISORY PANEL, AND GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL.

Red Snapper Assessment Response

In June 2021, the Committee received the results of SEDAR 73, which indicated that the red snapper stock in the South Atlantic is not yet rebuilt and is experiencing overfishing. An SSC recommendation for catch levels was not yet available for that meeting. The SSC met in July to continue discussion of the assessment results and develop catch level recommendations. Dr. Genny Nessler, SSC Chair, presented the SSC's comments and recommendations of overfishing and acceptable biological catch levels. The Committee Chair provided a statement concerning the assessment results, SSC recommendations, and potential management responses. The Committee agreed to the following general plan of responding to the most recent assessment results and other issues in the fishery:

Actions for Council Consideration

1. Initiate an immediate framework action to reduce discard removals
 - Discards account for 90% of the fishing mortality experienced by the stock, according to the SEDAR 73 stock assessment.

- Include action to consider gear modifications suggested by the SG AP
 - single hook rigs
 - larger hooks
 - leader modifications
 - natural bait prohibition
 - slot limit
2. Increased outreach and data collection
 - Support increased outreach activities on best fishing practices
 - Expand and promote the Release App to improve information available on discarded fish for consideration in the next assessment.
 3. Create a Council Workgroup to lead an MSE approach to develop management strategies that reduce discards and increase landed yield across the entire Snapper Grouper fishery, while balancing the needs for fishery access and resource use while preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks.
 - Direct staff to develop a project plan for Council review in December 2021, including a timeline, costs, and potential participants.
 4. Prioritize a Research Track Assessment for Red Snapper at the next available opportunity
 - Replace White Grunt assessment with Red Snapper (RT)
 - Consider new sources of data such as for-hire reporting, Release reports, and Florida State Reef Fish Survey to better describe discarded fish by size and depth of release and address descending device usage and best practices adoption.
 - Consider alternative assessment methods that may address the ongoing inability of the current model to estimate stock productivity, and resolve issues and uncertainties in prior assessments noted by the SSC and peer reviews.
 5. Initiate an FMP amendment to:
 - Revise MSY, ABC, ACLs and allocations.
 - Incorporate recommendations of the SAFMC Recreational and Joint Section 102 working groups
 - Incorporate results of the MSE project
 - Consider additional recommendations of the SG AP
 - Spatial (depth) or time closure of bottom area.
 - Alternative harvest season timing
 - Recreational federal fishing license for the Snapper Grouper fishery.

The Committee also provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT THAT EXPLORES AND CONSIDERS CHANGES TO THE FOLLOWING MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE SOUTH ATLANTIC SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY:
 - GEAR MODIFICATIONS: SINGLE HOOK RIGS, LARGER HOOKS, LEADER MODIFICATIONS, NATURAL BAIT PROHIBITION
 - TIME/SPATIAL CLOSURES OF THE SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY BASED ON CURRENT DATA
 - SLOT OR MAXIMUM SIZE LIMITS

- IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT, REFERENCE COMMENTARY FROM THE FISHERY THROUGH PREVIOUS VISIONING EFFORTS AND CHARACTERIZE EFFECTS BY SECTOR AND COMPONENT (PRIVATE/FOR-HIRE)

- IF PERSISTENT DIFFICULTIES PREVENT QUICK IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT, FOLD CHANGES INTO THE PLAN AMENDMENT (SEE ACTION NUMBER 5 ABOVE)

- CONSIDER ADJUSTING THE SEDAR SCHEDULE FOR A RESEARCH TRACK ASSESSMENT OF RED SNAPPER TO REPLACE THE SCHEDULED ASSESSMENT OF WHITE GRUNT AND ADJUST THE TIMING SUCH THAT THE RED SNAPPER ASSESSMENT WOULD BE AFTER THE EXPECTED COMPLETION OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER COUNT (END OF 2024)

- BEGIN WORK ON A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (MSE) OF THE SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY AND A LONGER-TERM PLAN AMENDMENT THAT WOULD USE SSC RECOMMENDATIONS, RESULTS OF THE MSE, AND ANY INFORMATION ON EFFECTS OF THE FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO ADJUST CATCH LEVELS FOR RED SNAPPER AND ADJUST MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY.

Wreckfish (Amendment 48)

A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, particularly with respect to confidentiality issues and related constraints; moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and economic data collection. Amendment 48 proposes to modernize the fishery based on those recommendations. Development of this amendment will take significant Council and staff time. Due to concerns about upcoming workload, staff presented several different timelines for development of this amendment for the Council to consider. SEFSC staff indicated that the wreckfish shareholders could participate in a voluntary pilot program for the commercial electronic logbook. The Council provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- BRING AMENDMENT 48 BACK TO THE COUNCIL FOR DISCUSSION EVERY OTHER MEETING OR EVERY THIRD MEETING, DEPENDING ON AMENDMENT PROGRESS AND COUNCIL WORKLOAD.
- CONVENE A MEETING OF THE WRECKFISH SHAREHOLDERS THIS WINTER TO DISCUSS THE COMMERCIAL ELECTRONIC LOGBOOK AND AMENDMENT 48 PROGRESS.
- SELECT OPTION A REGARDING TIMING – AMENDMENT AS A WHOLE TO COME TO THE COUNCIL AT EVERY MEETING OR EVERY OTHER MEETING DEPENDING ON WORKLOAD.

Red Porgy (Amendment 50)

Staff presented an overview that constituted the public hearing presentation for this amendment. Comments on the amendment were requested via the Council’s online comment form and during the public comment session on Wednesday, September 15, 2021. The Committee reviewed proposed actions and corresponding analyses, provided additional rationale for preferred alternatives, and made the following modifications:

MOTION 8: DESELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER SUB-ACTION 5B AS PREFERRED.

Action 5. Modify red porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5b. Recreational Season

~~**Preferred-Alternative 4.**~~ Establish a recreational fishing season for red porgy; harvest would be allowed during July through August.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 9: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER SUB-ACTION 5B TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 5. Modify red porgy recreational management measures

Sub-Action 5b. Recreational Season

Alternative 2. Establish a recreational fishing season for red porgy; harvest would be allowed during January through April.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 10: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 6 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 6. Modify red porgy recreational accountability measures

Alternative 3. When the recreational annual catch limit is changed, use a single year of landings, beginning with the most recent available year of landings, then a two-year average of landings from that single year and the subsequent year, then a three-year average of landings from those two years and the subsequent year, and thereafter a progressive running three-year average to trigger the recreational accountability measure. If the recreational annual catch limits are constant and the 3-year mean (Sub-alternative 3a or 3b) of landings exceeds the recreational annual catch limit, reduce the length of the

following recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational annual catch limit from being exceeded in the following fishing year. However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best available science, that it is not necessary.

Sub-alternative 3a. Use the arithmetic mean to calculate average landings.

Sub-alternative 3b. Use the geometric mean to calculate average landings.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 11: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 6 AS THE PREFERRED AS MODIFIED.

Action 6. Modify red porgy recreational accountability measures

Alternative 4. If recreational landings exceed the recreational annual catch limit and ~~the total (commercial and recreational combined) annual catch limit is exceeded,~~ reduce the length of the following year's recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational annual catch limit from being exceeded in the following year. However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that it is not necessary.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Gag Grouper

In June 2021, the Committee received the results of SEDAR 71, which indicated that the gag grouper stock in the South Atlantic is overfished and experiencing overfishing. The SSC provided recommendations for catch levels that are dependent on the rebuilding timeframe selected by the Committee. Further clarification was needed on legally feasible rebuilding timeframe options. NMFS staff clarified the following points concerning rebuilding of gag grouper:

- Because gag grouper can be rebuilt in 10 years or less, the rebuilding timeframe must be 10 years or less, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- The first year of rebuilding is the first year that revised management measures are implemented.
- The Council is not bound to manage the fishery according to a rebuilding probability of 70%, but probability of rebuilding must be at least 50%.

The Council provided the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- REQUEST ADDITIONAL CATCH PROJECTIONS AT AVERAGE AND RECENT LOW RECRUITMENT SCENARIOS AND WITH PROBABILITIES OF REBUILDING IN 10 YEARS OF 70% AND 50% FOR REVIEW AT THE DECEMBER 2021 COUNCIL MEETING.

Exempted Fishing Permit Brief

NMFS staff provided an overview of a project to be considered for an Exempted Fishing Permit. This application will be reviewed at Full Council.

Project Summary: Shark depredation is an emerging issue that is purportedly affecting several non-HMS (snapper-grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo) as well as select HMS (e.g., tunas and billfishes) fisheries in the southeastern US. While the NOAA Office of Sustainable Fisheries recently produced a report on shark depredation in commercial fisheries (i.e., pelagic/bottom/vertical longlines), there have been no attempts to quantify these interactions in recreational fisheries that heavily support the economies of this region. As indicated in the recent HMS AP meeting, these data are sorely needed to characterize the scale of the issue and determine the need for (and types of) mitigation measures. However, characterization of this issue is impossible without stakeholder involvement. Here, the applicants propose a citizen-science based approach to 1) acquire depredation data (composition, frequency, etc.) in the recreational sector via leveraging existing fishing partnerships), and 2) evaluate fishermen perceptions of the issue.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: COUNCIL IS SUPPORTIVE OF THIS WORK

Discussion of Vermilion Snapper Trip Limits

On September 16, 2020, NOAA Fisheries announced a temporary emergency rule to increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper from 1,000 pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) to 1,500 lbs gw in federal waters of the South Atlantic Region. This temporary rule expired, reverting the trip limit back to 1,000 lbs gw, on March 16, 2021. At the Council's request, the AP discussed at their April 2021 meeting whether more permanent action should be taken to change the commercial trip limit through an amendment. Council staff presented a summary of the Council's previous request for the temporary rule and recent commercial landings data. Jimmy Hull, AP Chair, presented the AP's comments and recommendations. The Council provided the following guidance:

- WITH COMING REDUCTIONS TO OTHER SPECIES, EFFORT COULD SHIFT TO VERMILION SNAPPER.

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- SCHEDULE THE AP TO RECONSIDER THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ON VERMILION SNAPPER WITH ADDITIONAL CONTEXT OF INFORMATION PRESENTED AT THE SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING, INCLUDING FUTURE CHANGES TO RED SNAPPER AND GAG GROUPEr MANAGEMENT.
- DEVELOP PROJECTIONS FOR COMPARISON OF CLOSURE DATES FOR THE CURRENT 1,000 POUND TRIP LIMIT WITH NO STEPDOWN, THE AP'S RECOMMENDED 1,500 POUND TRIP LIMIT WITH A STEPDOWN, AND A 1,250 POUND TRIP LIMIT WITH NO STEPDOWN.
- ASK THE AP:
 - DOES THE AP STILL RECOMMEND IMPLEMENTATION OF A STEPDOWN IN THE COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT?
 - HOW HIGH OF A PRIORITY OR HOW QUICKLY SHOULD CHANGES TO VERMILION SNAPPER BE CONSIDERED?
 - WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS, RISKS, AND PREFERENCES OF A LONGER SEASON VERSUS A HIGHER TRIP LIMIT TO DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE COMMERCIAL FISHERY?

Fall 2021 Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting Topics

The Snapper Grouper AP is scheduled to convene in October 2021. Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Gray Triggerfish Fishery Performance Report
- Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper) – overview of proposed actions/alternatives and available analyses
 - *Requested feedback on commercial trip limit, potential commercial spawning season closure, and recreational management measures*
- Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper) – overview of proposed actions/alternatives and available analyses
 - *Requested feedback on trip limit measures*
- Fishery Overview for Golden Tilefish – initial management recommendations
- Overview for Red Snapper – initial management recommendations
- Overview for Gag Grouper – initial management recommendations
- Broader Discussion of Approach to Snapper Grouper Management
 - *Provide feedback on potential closure of an area determined by depth for all or part of the year, with consideration of effect on discards. What would be an appropriate depth range and timing of such a closure?*
 - *Would inclusion of more species in the Shallow Water Grouper spawning closure (January-April) be useful for consideration to reduce discards?*
 - *Species included: Gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney*
 - *What gear modifications or management measures should be the highest priority (top 3-5 actions) to reduce discards in the recreational fishery? Consider compliance and efficiency in accomplishing discard reduction.*
 - *What should be the highest priority(-ies) for management of the recreational fishery, with consideration of the current status of snapper grouper stocks and impact of discards on management? (E.g. longer open season, higher bag limit, size preference, open season during specific time of year, maintenance of reporting requirements, etc.)*
 - *Would the commercial fishery prefer higher trip limits or a longer season?*
 - *Describe the effect of commercial and recreational dive effort on local populations of grouper.*
 - *2 for 1 follow up*
 - *Present analyses from September document.*
 - *What undesirable outcomes has the 2 for 1 commercial SG 1 permit provision caused? What would be the reasons for removing the limitation?*
 - *What undesirable outcomes could removing the 2 for 1 commercial SG 1 permit provision cause? Would removing the provision provide social or economic benefits to the fishery?*
 - *Other than removing the 2 for 1 commercial SG 1 permit provision, are there other solutions for supporting new entrants?*
- Vermilion Snapper Commercial Trip Limit
 - *With additional context of information presented and decisions made at the September 2021 Council Meeting, does the AP still recommend implementation of a stepdown in the commercial trip limit?*

- *How high of a priority or how quickly should changes to vermilion snapper be considered?*
- *What are the potential benefits, risks, and preferences of a longer season versus a higher trip limit to different demographics in the commercial fishery?*
- Updates
 - Climate Change Scenario
 - Amendment updates: Amendment 50 (Red Porgy), Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack), Amendment 48 (Wreckfish; separate meeting for shareholders)
 - Citizen Science update: SAFMC Release
 - SEDAR Update

CONSIDER AN ADDITIONAL AP MEETING AFTER OCTOBER MEETING AND BEFORE SPRING MEETING (PENDING BUDGET APPROVAL). STAFF WORK WITH COMMITTEE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR AND AP CHAIR TO DEVELOP AGENDA.

Updates on Red Snapper and Greater Amberjack Research Projects
(ADDRESSED AT FULL COUNCIL)

In 2020, the NMFS Sea Grant Consortium received funding to administer programs to solicit research on red snapper (South Atlantic) and greater amberjack (South Atlantic and Gulf). The goal is to support research that would generate absolute estimates of abundance, with accompanying measures of uncertainty, for these stocks. These are sister projects to the much larger “Great Red Snapper Count” that was conducted in the Gulf of Mexico. Council staff updated the Council on the status of these research projects.

Other Business

Continual overages of recreational ACL for blueline tilefish

- Recreational harvest of blueline tilefish has exceeded the recreational ACL for several years.
- Reconsideration of the accountability measures for this fishery may be useful to constrain the harvest to the ACL.
- Council and SERO staff will put together a short summary document to address buffers, limits, accountability measures, etc.
- Consideration of changes to the accountability measures for blueline tilefish could be added to the golden tilefish amendment that was initiated at the June 2021 Council Meeting.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 12: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Conduct additional analyses and draft a white paper on the 2 for 1 commercial permit policy for review at the December 2021 Council Meeting.
- Add actions to Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack) considering changes to size limits, the Season 2 commercial trip limit, and closure of the recreational fishery in April.
- Add constant catch alternatives to the actions addressing annual catch limits in Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack) and Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper).
- Conduct scoping meetings for Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper) before the December 2021 Council Meeting.

- Begin work on a framework amendment that explores and considers changes to management measures that would reduce discards in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery.
- Begin work on a management strategy evaluation (MSE) of the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery and a longer-term plan amendment that would adjust catch levels for red snapper and management measures for the snapper grouper fishery.
- Change frequency of Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) review by the Council to every other meeting or every third meeting, depending on amendment progress and council workload.
- Convene a meeting of the wreckfish shareholders this winter to discuss the commercial electronic logbook and Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) progress.
- Request additional catch and rebuilding projections for gag grouper for review at the December 2021 council meeting.
- Develop projections to compare commercial closure dates for vermilion snapper under different commercial trip limits.
- Convene the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel in October.
- Red Snapper Research Track assessment to be considered at upcoming SEDAR Steering Committee meeting.

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