



Content and Status of Active Snapper Grouper Amendments

October 2018

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 (Recreational)

Public hearings were held via webinar in May 2018. In June, the Council reviewed public input, decided to narrow the focus of the amendment, and removed several actions/sub-actions. The Council reviewed the amendment and the updated analyses at their September/October 2018 meeting and provided further guidance to staff. The amendment is scheduled to be approved for formal review at the December 2018 Council meeting. Refer to **Attachment 1b** for a summary of the analyses and to view the Council's modifications.

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 (Commercial)

Public hearings were held via webinar in May 2018. In June, the Council received public input and finished selecting preferred alternatives. At their September/October meeting, the Council reviewed the economic analyses, made modifications, and approved the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Refer to **Attachment 1c** for a summary of the analyses and to view the Council's modifications.

Regulatory Amendment 28 (Golden Tilefish)

In June 2017, the Council requested that NMFS issue interim regulations to reduce overfishing of golden tilefish and set the ACL for 2018 at 323,000 pounds (gutted weight), the projected yield at 75% F_{MSY} . The interim rule became effective on January 2, 2018. Regulatory Amendment 28 was developed to establish permanent measures to end overfishing of golden tilefish and revise management measures:

- Total annual catch limit (ACL) = 342,000 pounds gutted weight.
- Commercial ACL (97%) = 331,740 pounds gutted weight.
 - Hook and line component (25%) = 82,935 pounds gutted weight
 - Longline component (75%) = 248,805 pounds gutted weight
- Recreational ACL = 2,316 fish.

The Council considered changing the fishing year start date for the hook-and-line component of the commercial sector but opted to take no action.

New regulations are expected to be in place by January 1, 2019.

Abbreviated Framework 2 (Vermilion Snapper and Black Sea Bass)

During the December 2017 meeting, the Council discussed options for addressing the stock status for vermilion snapper and black sea bass. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended an acceptable biological catch (ABC) for vermilion snapper and black sea bass in May 2018 based on results of the SEDAR 55 and SEDAR 56 assessments, respectively. In June 2018, the Council directed staff to develop an abbreviated framework amendment to adjust the ACLs based on the ABC recommendations from the SSC. The Council accepted public comment at their September/October

meeting and approved the amendment for Secretarial review. The proposed fishing levels are shown below:

Table 1. Proposed **vermilion snapper** overfishing level (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and annual catch limits (ACLs) beginning in 2019. ACLs are specified in both pounds whole weight (lbs ww) and pounds gutted weight (lbs gw). Whole weight to gutted weight conversion factor for vermilion snapper is 1.11.

	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww and lbs gw)	Recreational ACL (lbs ww and lbs gw)
2019	1,810,000	1,579,000	1,579,000	1,073,720 / 967,315	505,280 / 455,207
2020	1,614,000	1,478,000	1,478,000	1,005,040 / 905,441	472,960 / 426,090
2021	1,486,000	1,408,000	1,408,000	957,440 / 862,559	450,560 / 405,910
2022	1,412,000	1,362,000	1,362,000	926,160 / 834,378	435,840 / 392,649
2023 until modified	1,371,000	1,336,000	1,336,000	908,480 / 818,450	427,520 / 385,520

Table 2. Proposed **black sea bass** OFL, ABC, and ACLs beginning in 2019. ACLs are specified in both pounds whole weight (lbs ww) and pounds gutted weight (lbs gw). Whole weight to gutted weight conversion factor for black sea bass is 1.18.

	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL-Quota (lbs ww and lbs gw)	Recreational ACL (lbs ww and lbs gw)
2019	818,000	760,000	760,000	326,800 / 276,949	433,200 / 367,119
2020	718,000	669,000	669,000	287,670 / 243,788	381,330 / 323,161
2021 until modified	703,000	643,000	643,000	276,490 / 234,314	366,510 / 310,602

Amendment 42 (Sea Turtle Release Gear and Revisions to Snapper Grouper Framework)

The Southeast Fisheries Science Center approved three additional turtle release gear types for use in handling and releasing incidentally caught sea turtles when fishing for snapper grouper species. Amendment 42 would include the new gear in the regulations for the snapper grouper fishery and consider modifications to the snapper grouper framework so the Council may more quickly modify sea turtle and other protected resources release gear and handling requirements in the future. Scoping webinars were held on April 23rd and 24th, 2018. At their June 2018 meeting the Council reviewed scoping comments and approved actions and alternatives to be analyzed. Amendment 42 will be reviewed in December 2018.

Amendment 38 (Blueline Tilefish)

SEDAR 50 was conducted in 2017 as a joint assessment between the South Atlantic Council (SEDAR Lead) with the Mid-Atlantic Council addressing the stock assessment(s) for blueline tilefish. The SSC reviewed results of SEDAR 50 at their October 2017 meeting and provided catch level recommendations for blueline tilefish for the area south of Cape Hatteras, NC. As ABC recommendations that match the jurisdictional boundaries of the Mid- and South Atlantic Councils (boundary at the NC/VA state line) were needed to develop fishing levels, the SSC formed a workgroup to determine an approach to obtain an ABC that would be useable under the existing management structure. In June 2018, the Council reviewed SSC recommendations on setting an ABC for blueline tilefish but development of this amendment was delayed by other priorities. The Council will resume work on this amendment in 2019.

Amendment 46 (Recreational Permit and Reporting)

In March 2018, the Council directed staff to retain actions on recreational permitting and reporting in Amendment 46 and develop the remainder of the actions (best fishing practices and powerhead regulations) in a framework amendment (Regulatory Amendment 29). The Council approved the amendment for scoping but did not include it as an agenda item for the September 2018 meeting. The Council will resume work on this amendment in 2019.

Amendment 47 (For-Hire Permit Modifications)

The amendment proposed modifications to the snapper grouper for-hire permit requirements. Topics included limiting entry into the for-hire fishery, revising the current permit condition that prevents snapper grouper species from being possessed in state waters when the species close to harvest in federal waters, assigning a consistent identifying number to permits to allow better tracking of permit holders over time, and issuing a permit for an individual rather than a vessel. At the June 2018 meeting, the Committee instructed staff to conduct a round of scoping hearings via webinar. Hearings were held on August 6, 9, and 14, 2018. Additionally, the Committee instructed staff to hold in-person scoping hearings throughout the South Atlantic region in October 2018. At the October meeting, the Council voted to discontinue work on the amendment.

Amendment 45 (ABC Control Rule Revisions for Snapper Grouper)

The comprehensive amendment would modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and revise how uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs. The Amendment includes actions to: 1) revise how the SSC evaluates assessment uncertainty; 2) revise how the risk tolerance is specified; and 3) allow phase-in and carry-over of ABCs. The Council will continue to work on this amendment in 2019.

Regulatory Amendment 31 (Modifications to Recreational Accountability Measures)

Over the past five years, the Council has requested information on possible approaches to improve recreational landings estimates, particularly for species that are infrequently intercepted in the recreational survey. However, the accuracy of such estimates has not improved enough to allow efficient tracking of recreational annual catch limits and has led to mounting frustration among fishery managers, stock assessment analysts, and recreational anglers. The Council is already working on methods to obtain additional data (e.g., Amendment 46, MyFishCount App) that could eventually be used to improve management of recreational fisheries in the region. A possible avenue to lessen the impact of uncertain recreational data on stakeholders is revision of accountability measures. At their March 2018 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin development of an amendment that would revise recreational accountability measures to allow more flexibility in managing recreational fisheries. The Council will discuss this amendment in December 2018.

South Atlantic For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment

The For-Hire Amendment includes Amendment 39 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, Amendment 9 to the FMP for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic, and Amendment 27 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Regions. The amendment proposes mandatory weekly electronic reporting for charter vessel operators with a federal for-hire permit in the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, or coastal migratory pelagic fisheries; reduces the time allowed for headboat operators to complete their electronic reports; and proposes requiring location reporting by charter vessels with the same detail now required for headboat vessels.

The for-hire electronic reporting outreach project has been using a mixture of webinars, in person trainings, and multimedia communication. The webinars have been held twice monthly since September of 2017 and have reached over 50 people, mostly in the government sector. The in-person trainings have reached over 100 people, mostly fishermen, and have been conducted 6 times in SC, 5 times in GA, 3 times in NC and 4 times in northern FL. Plans for Southern Florida and Central Florida are in the final stages. Newsletters, a radio show, phone calls and emails have also been used to spread the word about the electronic reporting amendment, and Council staff has received feedback from fishermen on their opinions as well as how to improve further communication.

The Council was notified on June 12, 2018, that the amendment was approved by NMFS. A final rule to announce when regulations will be effective has not yet published.