

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26

Decision Document

With guidance from the October 2018 Snapper
Grouper Committee Meeting

Background

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 addresses specific action items in the 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Vision Blueprint) for the recreational sector. The Vision Blueprint identifies the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that support the vision for the snapper grouper fishery and centers around four goal areas - Science, Management, Communication, and Governance. During a series of stakeholder meetings in 2014, the Council gathered input from recreational fishermen from throughout the region. In 2015, the Council prioritized action items that would be addressed through amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP over the next five years. The Council chose to focus on actions that would address “seasonality” and “retention” in the fishery and began development of two amendments to address the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively. Regulatory Amendment 26 includes modifications to recreational management measures based on stakeholder input and is intended to better reflect how the recreational snapper grouper fishery currently operates in the South Atlantic region.

During the June 2018 meeting, the Committee reviewed public comment and recommendations from advisory panels. The Committee directed staff to simplify the amendment by removing some actions/sub-actions and moving the action pertaining to red grouper to Regulatory Amendment 30. The Committee revised the purpose and need and the timing of development for the amendment given that the requested changes would require more time to complete.

Actions in this amendment

- **Action 1:** Establish a deep-water species aggregate
- **Action 2:** Specify the recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate
- **Action 3:** Specify the aggregate bag limit for the deep-water species aggregate
- **Action 4:** Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species
- **Action 5:** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off east Florida
- **Action 6:** Modify the aggregate bag limit for the 20-fish aggregate

Expected amendment timing

September 2018 Review changes from June and approve all actions.

December 2018 Consider approval for formal review

Purpose and need statement

Purpose for Actions

Address recreational stakeholder input to increase predictability for the deep-water component of the recreational snapper grouper fishery, minimize regulatory discards, and improve regulatory compliance and consistency.

Need for Actions

Improve management of the recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery to achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects for recreational fishermen in the South Atlantic region.

Proposed Actions and Alternatives

Action 1. Establish a deep-water species aggregate

Alternative 1 (No Action). The following recreational Snapper Grouper aggregates are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper.

Grouper and Tilefish Aggregate: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, Atlantic spadefish, tomtate.

Species outside aggregates: black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, red porgy, and wreckfish.

Alternative 1 (No Action): Current Aggregates			
Snapper	Grouper	Species without bag limit	Not included in aggregate
Lane snapper	Gag	Whitebone porgy	Black sea bass
Yellowtail snapper	Black grouper	Jolthead porgy	Vermilion snapper
Gray snapper	Red grouper	Knobbed porgy	Greater amberjack
Mutton snapper	Scamp	Saucereye porgy	Hogfish
Cubera snapper	Yellowfin grouper	Scup	Red porgy
Queen snapper	Yellowmouth grouper	Almaco jack	Wreckfish
Blackfin snapper	Red hind	Banded rudderfish	
Silk snapper	Rock hind	Lesser amberjack	
	Graysby	White grunt	
	Coney	Margate	
	Sand tilefish	Sailor's choice	
	Snowy grouper	Atlantic spadefish	
	Misty grouper	Gray triggerfish	
	Yellowedge grouper	Bar jack	
	Blueline tilefish	Tomtate	
	Golden tilefish		

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish.

Alternative 3. Establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, wreckfish, silk snapper, queen snapper, and blackfin snapper.

Discussion:

In June 2018, the Committee opted to retain an action to specify a deep-water species aggregate but did not select a preferred alternative. **Alternative 2** differs from **Alternative 3** in that it does not include queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper.

Committee Action:

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 1

Alternative 2. Establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish.

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Action 2. Specify the recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate

Alternative 1 (No Action). Recreational fishing for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper is allowed from May 1 through August 31, annually. Recreational fishing for wreckfish is allowed from July 1 through August 31, annually. Recreational fishing for other deep-water species (queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and golden tilefish) is allowed year-round.

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a recreational season for species in the deep-water species aggregate (snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish):

Sub-alternative 2a. May 1 through June 30

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. May 1 through August 31

~~**Sub-alternative 2c.** July 1 through August 31~~

~~**Sub-alternative 2d.** July 1 through October 31~~

Preferred Sub-alternative 2e. January 1 through end of February

Sub-alternative 2f. December 1 through January 31

Discussion:

Note: Analyses will be updated for December 2018 meeting

- Estimates of the number of fish landed based on the proposed recreational season alternatives for the deep-water species aggregate are highly uncertain.
- **Preferred Sub-alternative 2b** would result in the smallest decrease in landings of deep-water aggregate species compared to landings of those species in 2014-2016. On average **Sub-alternatives 2a, 2c, and 2d** are predicted to result in a reduction in recreational harvest of deep-water species from about 50% to as much as 87% compared to landings from 2014 to 2016 (**Table 1**).
- Important to note:
 - There were many regulatory changes for blueline tilefish during 2015 and 2016 (e.g., ACL changes, recreational management measures including establishing a recreational season).
 - Recreational landings of golden tilefish exceeded the ACL in 2015 and 2016
 - Recreational landings of snowy grouper exceeded the ACL in 2014 by 132%. The ACL was increased in 2015 and a May-Aug season put in place. Landings in 2016 went over the new ACL (which was higher than the 2015 ACL) by 117% mainly due to 2 MRIP intercepts in Wave 3.
 - Interpretation of results should consider that harvest of some deep-water species occurs in state waters, where regulations may be different than those in federal waters, yet landings are applied to the ACL.

Table 1. Predicted reduction in landings (in numbers of fish) and percent reduction of deep-water aggregate species for Action 2 based on season alternatives from 2014 to 2016 for (A) deep-water grouper and tilefish (Action 1 Alternative 2) and (B) deep-water grouper, tilefish, and snapper (Action 1 Alternative 3). Preferred alternative indicated in bold.

(A)

	Year	Alt 1	Sub-Alt 2a	Sub-Alt 2b	Sub-Alt 2c	Sub-Alt 2d
Deep-water Grouper and Tilefish	2014	30,117	6,305	14,329	8,016	11,303
	2015	20,290	4,591	7,197	2,613	4,217
	2016	50,545	10,138	35,045	24,907	25,024
	2014		-79.07%	-52.42%	-73.38%	-62.47%
	2015		-77.37%	-64.53%	-87.12%	-79.22%
	2016		-79.94%	-30.67%	-50.72%	-50.49%
		Average		-78.79%	-49.20%	-70.41%

Committee Action:

MOTION: ADD SUB-ALTERNATIVE FOR RECREATIONAL SEASON JANUARY 1 TO END OF FEBRUARY AND SELECT AS AN ADDITIONAL PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: ADD ANOTHER SUB-ALTERNATIVE FOR A RECREATIONAL SEASON FROM DECEMBER 1 THROUGH JANUARY 31
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: MOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2C AND 2D TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Action 3. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the deep-water species aggregate

Alternative 1 (No Action). The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper¹, cubera snapper², queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper

¹Maximum of five mutton snapper per person per day

²Maximum of two cubera snapper measuring 30 inches (76.2 cm), total length, or larger, per person or per vessel per day in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone off Florida

Grouper and Tilefish Aggregate Bag Limit: Three per person per day: gag¹, black grouper¹, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper², misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish³.

¹Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

²Maximum of one snowy grouper per vessel per day

³Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

The recreational bag limit for wreckfish is one per vessel per day.

Preferred Alternative 2. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the **deep-water species aggregate (snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish)**:

Sub-alternative 2a. One fish per person per day.

Sub-alternative 2b. One fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

Sub-alternative 2c. Two fish per person per day.

Sub-alternative 2d. Two fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

Sub-alternative 2e. Three fish per person per day.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2f. Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

Discussion:

- Proposed aggregate bag limit alternatives for deep-water species were analyzed in combination with proposed recreational season alternatives under **Action 2**.
- While some deep-water species have bag limits of 3 fish per person or less (i.e., blueline tilefish, snowy grouper, golden tilefish and wreckfish), queen snapper, silk snapper and blackfin snapper are currently included in the 10-snapper aggregate.
- Very few of the trips examined reached the maximum proposed bag limit of 3 fish per person per day even if the deep-water species aggregate were to include the three deep-water snappers (queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper) (**Table 2**).
- Note that landings of deep-water species can occur in state waters where regulations may differ.

- The combination of the preferred recreational season for deep-water species under Action 2 (May-August) and the preferred bag limit for the deep-water species aggregate (3 per person per day with existing restrictions for golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish) is estimated to result in a 44-45% reduction in harvest (**Table 3**).
- The estimated changes in consumer surplus as a result of the expected reductions in harvest from the combination of a recreational season and bag limit alternatives are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 2. Percent of trips reaching combined bag limits for deep-water species (**Action 1 Alternative 3**) from 2014 to 2016. Trips from MRIP were expanded using expansion factors and headboat estimates were developed from reports in the SRHS.

Number Kept Per Person	2014	2015	2016
All Released	15.95%	9.52%	1.44%
Less than 1 per person	50.88%	67.79%	67.10%
1 to 1.99	17.33%	21.54%	9.35%
2 to 2.99	12.57%	1.12%	12.27%
3 to 3.99	2.09%	0.02%	6.32%
4 to 4.99	0.83%	0.01%	0.55%
5 to 5.99	0.00%	0.01%	0.00%
6 to 6.99	0.33%	0.00%	1.24%
Greater than 7	0.01%	0.00%	1.74%

Table 3. Average estimated landings (in numbers of fish) and percent reduction for **Sub-Alternatives 2a-2f (Preferred)** and **Action 2 Alternatives 2a-2d** (recreational season) for deepwater species (**Action 1 Alternatives 2 and 3**). Aggregate bag limit sub-alternatives that would maintain existing restrictions on the harvest of golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish are denoted with *. The combination of current preferred alternatives is denoted in bold.

Action 3 Sub-Alt	Deepwater Grouper and Tilefish (Action 1 Alt 2)					Deepwater Grouper, Tilefish, and Snapper (Action 1 Alt 3)				
	Action 2 Alt 1 (Status Quo)	Action 2/2a	Action 2/2b	Action 2/2c	Action 2/2d	Action 2 Alt 1 (Status Quo)	Action 2/2a	Action 2/2b	Action 2/2c	Action 2/2d
Status Quo	33,651	7,011	18,857	11,845	13,515	39,034	7,453	19,826	12,372	14,594
2a (1 fish)	25,950	6,883	14,484	7,602	8,840	29,505	7,538	16,776	9,238	11,111
2b (1 fish*)	22,045	5,411	11,378	7,082	8,233	25,817	6,134	13,737	8,742	10,550
2c (2 fish)	33,671	9,121	19,966	10,845	12,371	37,074	9,640	22,207	12,566	14,653
2d (2 fish*)	27,805	6,625	16,895	10,270	11,728	31,609	7,271	19,392	12,121	14,185
2e (3 fish)	35,883	9,459	21,949	12,490	14,186	39,446	9,958	24,366	14,408	16,647
2f (3 fish*)	30,002	6,993	18,806	11,813	13,470	33,820	7,564	21,388	13,823	16,040
2a (1 fish)		79.55%	56.96%	77.41%	73.73%		80.69%	57.02%	76.33%	71.54%
2b (1 fish*)		83.92%	66.19%	78.96%	75.54%		84.29%	64.81%	77.60%	72.97%
2c (2 fish)		72.89%	40.67%	67.77%	63.24%		75.30%	43.11%	67.81%	62.46%
2d (2 fish*)		80.31%	49.79%	69.48%	65.15%		81.37%	50.32%	68.95%	63.66%
2e (3 fish)		71.89%	34.77%	62.88%	57.84%		74.49%	37.58%	63.09%	57.35%
2f (3 fish*)		79.22%	44.11%	64.89%	59.97%		80.62%	45.21%	64.59%	58.91%

Table 4. Estimated change in consumer surplus for deep-water species for **Action 3** in comparison to Action 1, Alternative 2 and Action 2 (2016 dollars). Aggregate bag limit sub-alternatives that would maintain existing restrictions on the harvest of golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish are denoted with *. Combination of preferred alternatives in bold.

Deepwater Grouper and Tilefish (Act. 1 Alt 2)					
	Act. 2, Alt 1 (No Action)	Act. 2, Sub-alt 2a	Act. 2, Pref. Sub-alt 2b	Act. 2, Sub-alt 2c	Act. 2, Sub-alt 2d
Act. 3, Alt 1 (No Action)	\$0	-\$2,743,920	-\$1,523,782	-\$2,246,018	-\$2,074,008
Act. 3 Sub-alt 2a (1 fish)	-\$793,203	-\$2,757,104	-\$1,974,201	-\$2,683,047	-\$2,555,533
Act. 3 Sub-alt 2b (1 fish*)	-\$1,195,418	-\$2,908,720	-\$2,294,119	-\$2,736,607	-\$2,618,054
Act. 3 Sub-alt 2c (2 fish)	\$2,060	-\$2,526,590	-\$1,409,555	-\$2,349,018	-\$2,191,840
Act. 3 Sub-alt 2d (2 fish*)	-\$602,138	-\$2,783,678	-\$1,725,868	-\$2,408,243	-\$2,258,069
Act. 3 Sub-alt 2e (3 fish)	\$229,896	-\$2,491,776	-\$1,205,306	-\$2,179,583	-\$2,004,895
Act. 3 Pref. Sub-alt 2f (3 fish*)	-\$375,847	-\$2,745,774	-\$1,529,035	-\$2,249,314	-\$2,078,643

Action 4. Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species

Alternative 1 (No Action). The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone is 12 inches total length.

Preferred Alternative 2. Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Discussion:

- There was a total of 19 MRIP intercepts including deep-water snapper species and 259 trips reporting deep-water snapper species in the SRHS.
- Removing the minimum size is expected to increase the landings of deep-water snapper species by 334 fish over the three years (2014-2016) or 111 fish per year
- The potential increase in weight is not likely to result in the recreational ACL for the Deepwater Complex (yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper) being reached.
- The estimates of landings of deep-water complex species are highly uncertain.

Action 5. Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off east Florida

Alternative 1 (No Action). The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone off east Florida is 14 inches fork length. The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina is 12 inches fork length.

Preferred Alternative 2. Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off east Florida to 12 inches fork length.

Discussion:

- The proposed reduction in the minimum size limit of gray triggerfish was analyzed before proposed changes to the 20-fish aggregate bag limit (**Action 6**) since such a change would affect the bag limit analysis.
- **Preferred Alternative 2** is expected to increase gray triggerfish recreational landings by 67% (**Table 5**). This change averaged only 2015 and 2016 since changes to the regulations increased the minimum size limit from 12 inches to 14 inches in July 2015.
- This increase in landings may cause the ACL for gray triggerfish to be exceeded. These predicted increases include landings that would occur in Monroe County; however, landings from Monroe County would not be counted toward the South Atlantic ACL.
- The predicted increases in 2015 and 2016 would result in additional 43,084 to 402,487 pounds of gray triggerfish being landed, respectively (Note: the gray triggerfish recreational ACL is 404,675) (**Table 6**).
- The predicted closure would occur in Wave 5 (September-October) based on average landings from 2015 and 2016.
- The estimated increase in consumer surplus from a reduction on the gray triggerfish minimum size limit off east Florida would be \$189,125 based on an estimated increase in harvest of about 15,000 fish (**Table 7**).
- An in-season closure is likely, as recreational landings are projected to greatly increase under **Preferred Alternative 2** and have reached or come close to reaching the ACL in recent years, with recreational landings of gray triggerfish at 122%, 88%, and 97% of the recreational ACL in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively.

Table 5. Estimated gray triggerfish landings (in numbers of fish) for Alternative 1, and due to a decrease in the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off east Florida under **Preferred Alternative 2**.

Year	Alt 1	Alt 2	% Change
2014	220,044	219,822	-0.10%
2015	155,877	184,599	18.43%
2016	193,916	417,519	115.31%
Average last 2 years		301,059	66.87%
Average last 3 years		273,980	44.55%

Table 6. Gray triggerfish landings (pounds whole weight), annual catch limit, and potential increase in landings due to size limit change in the South Atlantic region from 2014 to 2016.

Year	Landings (lbs)	ACL (lbs)	Increase in landings with average weight 1.5 lbs	Increase in landings with average weight 1.8 lbs
2014	495,706	353,638	0	0
2015	358,707	404,675	43,084	51,700
2016	378,257	404,675	335,406	402,487

Source: Landings and ACL from SERO ACL Monitoring website and average weight is based length-weight equation in SEDAR 41 for 12-inch and 13-inch fork length for gray triggerfish (SEDAR 2016).

Table 7. Estimated change in consumer surplus for **Preferred Alternative 2** of **Action 5** in comparison to status quo (**Alternative 1 (No Action)**) (2016 dollars).

Alternative	Change in Gray Triggerfish Landings (numbers of fish)	Change in Consumer Surplus
Preferred Alternative 2	15,082	\$189,125

Action 6. Modify the aggregate bag limit for the 20-fish aggregate

Alternative 1 (No Action). The following recreational aggregate bag limit is in place for species without individual bag limits in the South Atlantic Region:

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: 20 fish per person per day: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

Alternative 2. Specify no more than 10 fish can be gray triggerfish within the 20-fish aggregate.

Alternative 3. Specify no more than 10 fish can be Atlantic Spadefish within the 20-fish aggregate.

Preferred Alternative 4. Specify no more than 10 fish can be of any one species within the 20-fish aggregate.

Discussion:

- If the gray triggerfish minimum size limit were reduced as proposed under **Action 5**, **Alternatives 2** through **4** would result in a net increase in recreational landings (using 2015-2016 data) from about 9% (**Alternative 4**) to 12% (**Alternative 3**) for this group of species (**Table 8**).
- The greatest increase would occur under **Alternative 3** (10-fish limit of Atlantic spadefish within the 20-fish aggregate) since this is the only alternative that does not limit retention of gray triggerfish to 10 fish.
- The direct economic effects on overall harvest, and thus consumer surplus, are expected to be minimal.

Table 8. Predicted landings (in numbers of fish) and percent change in landings for 20-fish aggregate species from 2014 to 2016 combined with the proposed size limit changes for gray triggerfish (Action 5).

Year	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 2 and 3
2014	1,277,636	1,279,233	1,258,602	1,277,636
2015	1,118,682	1,119,440	1,082,968	1,118,682
2016	1,140,992	1,158,309	1,138,358	1,139,471
2014	-0.68%	-0.55%	-2.16%	-0.68%
2015	0.85%	0.91%	-2.37%	0.85%
2016	21.70%	23.55%	21.42%	21.54%

Committee Action:

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 6

Alternative 4. Specify no more than 10 fish can be of any one species within the 20-fish aggregate.

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Appendix A. Recreational Accountability Measures for Deep-water species

Golden Tilefish

If recreational landings for golden tilefish, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 3,019 fish, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished**, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for golden tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

If recreational landings for golden tilefish, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 558,036 lb (253,121 kg), gutted weight, 625,000 lb (285,495 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year.** The AA will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for golden tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Snowy Grouper

If recreational landings for snowy grouper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished**, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such notification, the bag and possession limits for snowy grouper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero. The recreational ACL for snowy grouper is 4,152 fish for 2015; 4,483 fish for 2016; 4,819 fish for 2017, 4,983 fish for 2018; 5,315 fish for 2019 and subsequent fishing years.

If recreational landings for snowy grouper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if snowy grouper are overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in §622.193(b)(1)(iii) is exceeded during the same fishing year.** NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for snowy grouper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Deep-Water Complex (yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper)

If recreational landings for the deep-water complex, as estimated by the SRD, are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 38,628 lb (17,521 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year**, unless the RA determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits are zero.

If recreational landings for the deep-water complex, exceed the applicable recreational ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 169,896 lb (77,064 kg), round weight, is exceeded, and at least one of the species in the deep-water complex is overfished, based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register, to **reduce the length of the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year to ensure recreational landings do not exceed the recreational ACL the following fishing year**. When NMFS reduces the length of the following recreational fishing season and closes the recreational sector, the following closure provisions apply: The bag and possession limits for the deep-water complex in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero. Additionally, the recreational ACL will be reduced by the amount of the recreational ACL overage in the prior fishing year. The fishing season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the RA determines, using the best scientific information available that no reduction is necessary.

Wreckfish

If recreational landings for wreckfish, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL specified in §622.193(r)(2)(iii), the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished**, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for wreckfish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

If recreational landings for wreckfish, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in §622.193(r)(1)(ii) is exceeded during the same fishing year**. The AA will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for wreckfish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Blueline tilefish

If recreational landings for blueline tilefish, as estimated by the SRD, are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 87,277 lb (39,588 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to **close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing**

year, unless the RA determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits are zero.

(ii) If recreational landings for blueline tilefish, exceed the applicable recreational ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL (total ACL) specified in paragraph (z)(3) of this section is exceeded, and blueline tilefish is overfished, based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register, to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year to ensure recreational landings do not exceed the recreational ACL the following fishing year. When NMFS reduces the length of the following recreational fishing season and closes the recreational sector, the following closure provisions apply: The bag and possession limits for blueline tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero. Additionally, the recreational ACL will be reduced by the amount of the recreational ACL overage in the prior fishing year. The fishing season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the RA determines, using the best scientific information available, that no reduction is necessary.

The combined commercial and recreational sector ACL (total ACL) is 174,798 lb (79,287 kg), round weight.