

Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

Discussion Paper (2/6/15)



March 2015

Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 37) would potentially include several actions pertaining to management of the snapper grouper fishery. To date, the Council has indicated that the following actions should be included in the amendment:

- Short-term items resulting from the Visioning Project
- Adjustment to hogfish fishing levels and management measures in response to stock assessment
- Revision to the composition of the Jacks Complex
- Removal of size limits for deepwater species (silk snapper, queen snapper, and blackfin snapper)
- Commercial trip limit for almaco jack
- Adjustment to spawning season closure for red grouper
- Adjustment of size limit for red grouper

Short-term items from Visioning Project

The South Atlantic Council (Council) kicked off the Visioning Project for the snapper grouper fishery in December 2012. The Council agreed that the outcome of the project should be a strategic plan that is understandable to the fishing community, easy to read, and clearly lays out the management actions the Council plans to undertake to manage the snapper grouper fishery into the future. To date, the Council has held several workshops during scheduled Council meetings, held a special Visioning Workshop in October 2014, and conducted a series of 27 port meetings throughout coastal communities in the South Atlantic region to obtain stakeholder input. The Council is now nearing completion of the Visioning Project and a draft Vision Blueprint now exists that lays out possible actions to manage the snapper grouper fishery according to strategic goals and objectives that capture how stakeholders would like to see the fishery managed.

Among the many possible actions the Council will eventually take to affect management are some short-term items that would not require a significant amount of time to accomplish. It is these items that the Council intended to address in Amendment 37. However, based on the revised timeline below, the Council may wish to address short-term items from Visioning in a different amendment in 2016.

Revised Timeline for Vision Blueprint:

- March 2015 Council meeting: Review of draft strategic goals (Science & Governance) for Vision Blueprint; further revise Management & Communication strategic goals; plan public input activities.
- June 2015 Council meeting: Finalize strategic goals and draft Vision Blueprint; prep for public input activities.
- June-September 2015: Collect public input on draft Vision Blueprint
- September 2015: Review public input and plan for October Council Visioning Workshop
- October 2015 Council Visioning Workshop to develop and prioritize short-term and long-term items and further refine for development of SG Amendment X.
- December 2015 Council meeting: Review and approve prioritized items to be scoped under SG Amendment X.

Hogfish

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission completed a stock assessment for hogfish in 2014. The South Atlantic Council's SSC reviewed the assessment and provided fishing level recommendations in October 2014. The Council received the SSC's recommendations at their December 2014 meeting. Based on genetic evidence, and after much discussion, the SSC supported treating hogfish in the South Atlantic as two stocks: Georgia-North Carolina and South Florida-Florida Keys. Each assessment was then evaluated with regard to fishing level recommendations. The SSC recommended that catch level recommendations for the GA-NC hogfish stock be developed using the Only Reliable Catch Stocks (ORCS) approach, as outlined in the Council's ABC control rule. For the South Florida-Florida Keys stock, the SSC considered the benchmark assessment to represent the best available science and recommended it for use in management. The assessment results indicated hogfish in the South Atlantic region is undergoing overfishing and is overfished. The SSC then applied the ABC Control Rule and recommended a P^* of 27.5%, and a $P_{REBUILD}$ of 72.5%.

The ABC for the Atlantic stock (GA-NC) is 28,161 lbs ww. Additional guidance from the Council is required to calculate the ABC for the Florida stock (South Florida/Florida Keys):

1. Rebuilding time - Preliminary projections indicate the stock can be rebuild within 10 years with $F=0$ so the maximum rebuilding time for projections is 10 years.
2. Rebuilding fishing mortality rates (F) and rebuilding time period.
 - a. $F = 0$
 - b. $F = F_{current}$
 - c. Constant F projection at $F=75\%F_{msy}$
 - d. Constant F projection at $F=F_{msy}$ (This provides the OFL value)
 - e. Constant F projection that rebuilds in 10 years
 - f. Constant F projection that rebuilds in X years (where X is less than 10; Council to specify)
3. Probability of success
 - a. Prebuild = 72.5%
 - b. Prebuild = 50%
4. Interim landings – 2012 is the last year of data in the assessment and changes in regulations will impact 2016 landings. For projections, use the most recent catch data for 2013 and 2014 and that 2015 landings be set equal to 2015 catches or the average of 2014 and 2015 (Council to specify).

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE THE HOGFISH PROJECTION CRITERIA SHOWN ABOVE AND SPECIFY X FOR 2F.

OPTION 2. MODIFY THE HOGFISH PROJECTION CRITERIA AND APPROVE.

OPTION 3. OTHERS??

An Options Paper containing ABC recommendations based on P* projections (under development) and management measures to end overfishing will be presented to the Council at the June 2015 meeting. In addition, the South Atlantic Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) need to agree on a boundary that would separate the South Florida stock from the Gulf of Mexico stock. It is anticipated that the Gulf Council would then prepare an amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan in 2015 to address changes in hogfish fishing levels for the Gulf of Mexico stock.

The Joint Council Committee on South Florida Management Issues discussed the hogfish assessment at their January 2015 meeting and directed staff to prepare an Options Paper applying the same approach used for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper. A very preliminary version is attached and guidance is needed.

Revision to composition of the Jacks Complex and management measures

The Council held a brief discussion at the December 2012 meeting regarding possible re-structuring of the Jacks Complex and the Deepwater Complex. One of the factors mentioned to support such a revision involved the productivity levels of both Almaco jack and banded rudderfish. From the perspective of the commercial industry, the productivity of these two species is much higher than the established annual catch limit for the Jacks Complex. At that time, the reason for suggesting a re-structuring of the Deepwater Complex involved high levels of yellowedge grouper discards when fishermen target snowy grouper.

At the March 2013 Council meeting, the Council approved the following motion: THE SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER RE-STRUCTURING OF THE SNAPPER GROUPER FMU TO REMOVE JACKS.

However, due to timing and priorities, the Council has not yet taken action.

In June 2014, discussion ensued regarding the composition of the Jacks Complex. The Complex currently includes Almaco jack, banded rudderfish, and lesser amberjack. The Council approved the following motion: DIRECT STAFF TO DETERMINE THE BEST VEHICLE TO SEPARATE ALMACO JACK FROM THE JACKS COMPLEX.

In December 2014, the Council approved the following motion: DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES FOR AN ALMACO TRIP LIMIT. BRING TO AP FOR THEIR INPUT IN 2015. DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR YEAR-ROUND FISHERY.

While discussing this motion, Council members agreed that the ACL for Almaco jack is being caught very early. Also, the species is encountered very frequently when fishing commercially for other snapper grouper species. A trip limit would allow the ACL to last longer and fishermen would benefit economically, especially once the ACLs for other, more popular species, are met.

Removal of size limits for deepwater species

Numerous snapper grouper species were placed in Complexes through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, which implemented ACLs for all unassessed snapper grouper species. Complexes were formed based on a suite of criteria, including biological factors and co-occurrence with other species. Species in the Deepwater Complex tend to be found in deep water and therefore are typically associated with high discard mortality. Three species currently included in the Deepwater Complex – silk snapper, queen snapper, and blackfin snapper – have a 12” minimum size limit. These size limits were put in place long ago, before estimates of discard mortality were available and long before the creation of the various Complexes. To curb discard losses, the Council could take action to eliminate minimum size limit requirements for these deepwater species.

Adjustment to spawning season closure and size limit for red grouper

During stakeholder meetings held as part of the Council's Visioning Project in 2014, fishermen in North Carolina stated that the current annual 4-month spawning season closure does not fit the spawning periodicity of red grouper at that latitude. Fishermen maintain that red grouper harvested off North Carolina are frequently in spawning condition when they are allowed to be harvested starting on May 1. In addition, stakeholders maintained that the size limit for this species is not adequate and should be revised. At the December 2014 meeting, the Council gave direction to staff to include addressing red grouper issues in Amendment 37.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

ITEMS TO INCLUDE

OPTION 1. MOVE SHORT-TERM VISIONING ITEMS FROM SG AMENDMENT 37 INTO A FUTURE AMENDMENT.

OPTION 2. DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP SG AMENDMENT 37 WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- **HOGFISH**
- **JACKS COMPLEX**
- **ALMACO TRIP LIMITS**
- **RED GROUPEL ITEMS**
- **REMOVAL OF SIZE LIMIT FOR DW SPECIES**
- **OTHERS??**

TIMING

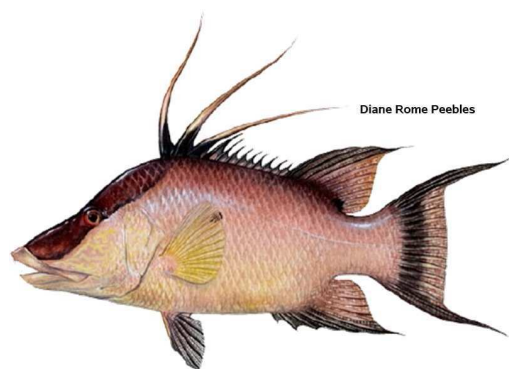
OPTION 1. DEVELOP OPTIONS AND APPROVE FOR SCOPING AT DECEMBER 2015 MEETING

OPTION 2. DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP SG AMENDMENT 37 WITH THE FOLLOWING TIMELINE:

- **SCOPING – VIA WEBINAR IN APRIL 2015**
- **SG AP INPUT – APRIL 2015 MEETING**
- **STAFF/IPT DEVELOP OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO REVIEW IN JUNE 2015**
- **STAFF/IPT DRAFT AMENDMENT – JUNE-AUGUST 2015**
- **COUNCIL REVIEW AND APPROVE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS – SEPT 2015**
- **PUBLIC HEARINGS – OCT/NOV 2015**
- **COUNCIL REVIEW AND APPROVE FOR FORMAL REVIEW – DEC 2015**

OTHERS??

Modifications to Gulf Reef Fish and South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans



PRELIMINARY DRAFT **HOGFISH OPTIONS PAPER** **February 11, 2015**

Prepared by: Gregg Waugh

Background

The Joint Council Committee on South Florida Management Issues met January 13-15, 2015 in Key West, Florida. The reviewed the information on hogfish and approved the motion shown below. This document is a first draft of an Options Paper responding to the direction to staff.

The Keys/EFL Hogfish Stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing; preliminary projections indicate can be rebuilt within 10 years; guidance on risk needed by FWC to run final projections; SAFMC to discuss at March and hopefully get final projections for June meeting. The percentage of the Keys/EFL Hogfish Stock that has been harvested from Gulf jurisdiction has ranged from 4.3%-13.3%. This seems too high to ignore from a biological perspective.

Options for management authority presented to the Joint Committee:

1. **SAFMC true lead with SA Amendment** – would only manage in SAFMC area and miss 4.3-13.3% of landings (**Table 1**). Not viable and would create a loophole in an area that is already prone to such things, which is also the area of the most catch, thereby severely undermining the rebuilding.
2. **Gulf Council delegate management of hogfish in the Gulf Council's area of Monroe County to the SAFMC** – Gulf Council may have concerns and would require a plan amendment on their part to do this. However, given the low level of landings, particularly as compared to the WFL stock, they may not object and they could do this when dealing with the WFL stock fishing level recommendations.
3. **Move hogfish back into the Joint Council Amendment** – seems the most reasonable approach as it keeps FL well involved and makes coordinating the recommendations more efficient.

The Joint Committee discussed the issue and approved the following motion:

MOTION: ADD AN ACTION/ACTIONS RELATED TO HOGFISH BACK INTO THE AMENDMENT AND GIVE DIRECTION TO STAFF TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES SIMILAR TO THOSE DEVELOPED FOR THE OTHER SPECIES
MOTION WITHDRAWN

MOTION: DEVELOP AN OPTIONS PAPER RELATED TO HOGFISH AND GIVE DIRECTION TO STAFF TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES SIMILAR TO THOSE DEVELOPED FOR THE OTHER SPECIES FOR REVIEW AT THE JUNE JOINT COUNCIL MEETING
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY GMFMC COMMITTEE

Action 1: Modify the Fishery Management Unit for Hogfish

***Note:** The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils can develop some of these actions through separate amendments. Some actions will be developed through a joint amendment, possibly the Joint South Florida Amendment.*

Alternative 1: No action. There is a Gulf stock and South Atlantic stock of hogfish separated at the Council boundary.

Alternative 2: Modify the FMU to specify an Atlantic stock of hogfish to include:

Sub-alternative a. Georgia through North Carolina.

Sub-alternative b. Georgia through New York

Sub-alternative c. Georgia through Maine.

Alternative 3: Modify the FMU to specify a Florida stock of hogfish to include the Florida/Georgia state line south to:

Sub-alternative a. Council boundary.

Sub-alternative b. Monroe/Collier County line.

Sub-alternative c. Shark Point on Florida southwest coast.

Alternative 4: Modify the FMU to specify a Gulf stock of hogfish to include Western Florida to Texas.

Sub-alternative a. Council boundary.

Sub-alternative b. Monroe/Collier County line.

Sub-alternative c. Shark Point on Florida southwest coast.

Discussion

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils need to establish the three new stocks through a plan amendment. The Gulf Council would manage the Gulf Stock and the South Atlantic Council would manage the Atlantic Stock. The two Councils need to determine who will manage the Florida stock.

The South Atlantic Council is considering hogfish in Amendment 37 and could specify the new stock structure and specify measures for the Atlantic stock through Amendment 37. The Gulf Council will determine how to specify the new stock structure and measures for the Gulf stock. The Florida stock could be managed through the Joint South Florida Amendment or through Amendment 37.

Action 2: Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Florida Hogfish to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

***Note:** Action 2 would delegate certain management measures to the State of Florida but the Councils would set the ABC, ACL, and AMs. The State of Florida is to submit an implementation plan for those species for which management has been delegated from the Councils prior to the Councils recommending such action to the Secretary of Commerce.*

Alternative 1: No action. Do not delegate management of hogfish in the Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

Alternative 2: Determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the State of Florida for hogfish:

Option 2a: Size limits

Option 2b: Seasons

Option 2c: Bag limits

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear (e.g., circle hook requirement)

Alternative 3: Determine specific commercial management items for delegation to the State of Florida for hogfish:

Option 3a: Size limits

Option 3b: Seasons

Option 3c: Commercial trip limits

Option 3d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear (e.g., circle hook requirement)

Action 3: Establish Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limits for Atlantic Hogfish

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for hogfish (FL to NC) based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. The Current ABC = 137,824 lbs ww and ACL = ABC. The commercial ACL = 49,469 lbs ww (36.69%) and the recreational ACL = 85,355 lbs ww (63.31%).

Alternative 2: Acceptable biological catch (ABC) is the catch level recommended by the SSC based on the most recent stock assessment. (ABC = 28,161 lbs ww)

Alternative 3: Annual catch limit (ACL):

Sub-alternative 1. $ACL = ABC$

Sub-alternative 2. $ACL = X\%ABC$

Alternative 4: Specify sector ACLs:

Sub-alternative 1. Use current recreational/commercial allocations.

Sub-alternative 2. $ACL = X\%ABC$

Action 4: Establish Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limits for Hogfish for Florida Stock

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for hogfish based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and maintain the current total ACL for hogfish in the Gulf based on the Reef Fish FMP. **Need to check wording.** Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for hogfish (FL to NC) based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. The Current ABC = 137,824 lbs ww and ACL = ABC. The commercial ACL = 49,469 lbs ww (36.69%) and the recreational ACL = 85,355 lbs ww (63.31%).

Alternative 2: Manage hogfish as a single unit with an overall combined multijurisdictional acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit (ACL).

Alternative 3. Use both Councils' agreed upon ABC for hogfish and allocate the commercial and recreational ACLs for the Gulf and South Atlantic:

Option 3a: Use the following sector allocation formula: divide the sector allocations based on the ratio of landings with 50% of the weighting given to the mean of the landings from 1993-2008, and 50% on the mean of the landings from 2009-2013.

Option 3b: Base sector allocations on average landings from 200x-20xx. (most recent 5 years of data; cap landings at the sector ACL if it was exceeded)

Option 3c: Base sector allocations on average landings from 200x-20xx. (most recent 10 years of data; cap landings at the sector ACL if it was exceeded)

DIRECTION TO STAFF/IPT:

1. ADD WORDING THAT NMFS WOULD MONITOR/ADMINISTER THE ABC/ACLs
2. PROCEDURALLY HOW THIS ACTION WOULD WORK AND THAT ABC=ACL
3. ADD DISCUSSION RECOGNIZING THE CURRENT APPROACH USES ONLY LANDINGS TO ALLOCATE IN THIS AMENDMENT. THE COUNCILS ARE CONSIDERING OTHER CRITERIA (E.G., SOCIOECONOMIC DATA) FOR FUTURE ALLOCATIONS.

Action 5: Establish Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limits for Hogfish for Gulf Stock

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current total ACL for hogfish in the Gulf based on the Reef Fish FMP. **Need to check wording.**

Alternative 2: Gulf specifies rest.

Table 1. Hogfish Landings (pounds; lbs) from Keys/FL East Coast Stock.

	Commercial Landings (lbs)			Recreational Landings (lbs)			Com & Rec Landings	
	Partial Monroe C. (Gulf jurisdiction)	East Florida (So. Atl. jurisdiction)	Total Commercial	Partial Monroe C. (Gulf jurisdiction)	East Florida (So. Atl. jurisdiction)	Total Recreational	Total Landings	% Gulf Jurisdiction
2004	4,106	23,170	27,276	11,065	200,968	212,033	239,309	6.3%
2005	3,667	12,380	16,047	12,766	175,757	188,523	204,570	8.0%
2006	2,522	11,337	13,859	13,593	93,542	107,135	120,994	13.3%
2007	2,634	11,693	14,327	17,207	251,994	269,201	283,528	7.0%
2008	1,672	11,375	13,047	21,398	290,839	312,237	325,284	7.1%
2009	1,908	12,014	13,922	17,767	174,535	192,302	206,224	9.5%
2010	1,261	10,181	11,442	8,855	118,019	126,874	138,316	7.3%
2011	1,897	10,384	12,281	2,762	77,689	80,451	92,732	5.0%
2012	1,827	11,866	13,693	13,605	331,934	345,539	359,232	4.3%

Source: Florida Hogfish Landings provided by FL FWCC

SG RA 13 (July 2013) established a South Atlantic commercial ACL = 49,469 lbs whole weight

SG RA 13 (July 2013) established a South Atlantic recreational ACL = 85,355 lbs whole weight

Landings of South Atlantic Hogfish (NC-FL) from NMFS Quota Monitoring Website:

	Com. Landings	Com ACL	Rec Landings	Rec ACL	Total Landings from ACL Tracking
2012	32,775	48,772	103,610	98,866	136,385
2013	33,268	49,469	65,085	85,355	98,353
2014	34,106	49,469	95,033	85,355	129,139

Rec 2014 thru August & no Headboat