



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 FABER PLACE DRIVE; SUITE 201

NORTH CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA 29405

TEL 843/571-4366

FAX 843/769-4520

Toll Free 866-723-6210

Email: safmc@safmc.net

Website: www.safmc.net

Ben Hartig, Chair
Dr. Michelle Duval, Vice Chair

Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director
Gregg T. Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

Summary Report Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

Crowne Plaza Hotel
4381 Tanger Outlet Boulevard
North Charleston, SC

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) met in North Charleston, South Carolina, on April 8-10, 2014. The AP welcomed four new members: David Moss, Jim Freeman, David Snyder, and Jimmy Hull.

The AP discussed the following items on the agenda and made motions as indicated below:

Election of Advisory Panel Chair and Vice-Chair

After two years as chair of the AP, Captain Robert Johnson yielded the seat to Jim Attack, former AP vice-chair. Jim Attack and Kenny Fex were elected chair and vice-chair of the Snapper Grouper AP, respectively:

MOTION: SELECT JIM ATTACK AS SNAPPER GROUPE AP CHAIR AND KENNY FEX AS VICE CHAIR. NOMINATIONS CLOSED AND SELECTION BY ACCLAMATION.
APPROVED BY AP

Overview of Council process

Kim Iverson gave the AP an overview of the Council process, mandates dictating Council actions, the role of the advisory, panels, etc.

Presentation on Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST)

In February 2014, the AP reviewed Regulatory Amendment 21 and submitted comments to the Council via email. The amendment proposes redefining the Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) for snapper grouper species with low natural mortality. The Scientific and Statistical Committee concurred that the MSST for such stocks could be set at $75\%SSB_{MSY}$ in order to avoid a stock shifting from an "overfished" determination to "not overfished" simply due to natural variations in recruitment, etc. Unfortunately, the timing of the amendment did not allow for the AP to receive an overview of the document and the opportunity to ask questions prior to the amendment being submitted for formal Secretarial review.

John Carmichael, Council staff, presented an overview of the concept of MSST, how it is derived, and its significance in stock assessment.

Presentation of descending devices

Mr. Chris McCaffity requested time on the AP’s agenda to give a brief presentation on the use of descending devices to release snapper grouper species brought up from depth and increase release survival.

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER REQUIRING THE USE OF DESCENDING DEVICES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO LESSEN THE DISCARD MORTALITY RATE FOR BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SECTORS.
APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure)

Myra Brouwer, Council staff, led the AP on a discussion of the alternatives currently included in Regulatory Amendment 16. The amendment addresses the annual closure on the use of black sea bass pots to minimize risk of entanglement of right whales and large migratory whales. The AP provided a recommendation to the Council on this amendment during their November 2013 meeting. The AP recommended that the closure on the use of pots be limited to designated Right Whale Critical Habitat in the South Atlantic region. The AP made no further recommendations on the amendment but reiterated that vertical lines in the northeast lobster fishery pose a much more severe threat to whales than black sea bass pots and questioned why there are no restrictions in place for the northeast lobster fishery

Regulatory Amendment 17 (designation of MPAs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper)

At their December 2013 meeting, the Council requested that the same suite of presentations that they received on the existing MPAs and those proposed by the MPA Expert Workgroup be given to the AP. The AP received a number of presentations, as indicated below:

- Outreach in existing MPAs – Kim Iverson (Council staff)
- Law enforcement in existing MPAs – Lt. Mike Mastrianni (USCG) & Myra Brouwer
- SEFSC research efforts in existing MPAs – Stacey Harter (SEFSC Panama City)
- MARMAP/SERFS research efforts in existing MPAs – Tracey Smart (MARMAP/SERFS)
- MPA Expert Workgroup Recommendations – Joey Ballenger (MARMAP/SERFS)
- SEFSC research efforts in candidate sites – Stacey Harter
- MARMAP/SERFS Research efforts in candidate sites – Tracey Smart
- Protecting spawning aggregations/areas in Belize – Will Heyman (LGL Ecological Research) Associates Inc.
- Protecting spawning aggregations in Riley’s Hump I – Michael Burton (SEFSC Beaufort)
- Protecting spawning aggregations in Riley’s Hump II – John Hunt (FL FWC)
- Artificial Reef Program in SC – Mel Bell (SCDNR)

Gregg Waugh, Council staff, presented an overview of the scoping document for Regulatory Amendment 17 and updated the AP on timing for the amendment. In addition, Gregg gave the AP an overview of a potential alternative approach to the siting and designation of protected areas for snapper grouper species. The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL TAKE THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO SCOPING IN AUGUST REGARDLESS OF THE RA 11 LAWSUIT OUTCOME, AND

PRESERVING THE ABILITY TO LIMIT FISHING ON MORE SPECIES OTHER THAN JUST SNAPPER AND GROUPER SPECIES.

APPROVED BY AP

The following motions pertain to changes to the document that presents the alternative approach:

MOTION: ADD #10 THAT WOULD INCLUDE CONSIDERING USE OF DECENDING DEVICES TO AID IN THE RELEASE OF DEEPWATER SPECIES AND HELP REDUCE RELEASE MORTALITY

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS OPTION C FOR THE PURPOSE AND NEED

Purpose: Identify important spawning habitat for snapper grouper species that can be designated for protection to enhance spawning and increase recruitment. Reduce bycatch of snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper.

Need: Protect spawning habitat; promote recruitment; and reduce bycatch mortality of economically and ecologically important snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, social and economic impacts to snapper grouper fishermen.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: REMOVE #6 (JANUARY THROUGH APRIL SPAWNING CLOSURE FOR SHALLOW WATER GROUPER) FROM THE DOCUMENT

APPROVED BY AP

(2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL REQUEST THE SEFSC CONDUCT RESEARCH ON DECENDING DEVICES FOR ALL SNAPPER GROUPER SPECIES

APPROVED BY AP

Amendment 29 (ABC adjustments for unassessed species and management measures for gray triggerfish)

The AP received an overview of the actions and alternatives included in the amendment. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS THE WORK OF THE SSC AND THE ORCS WORKGROUP AND SUPPORTS THE COUNCIL'S PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED

Action 3. Establish ACLs for select unassessed snapper grouper species

Alternative 2. ACL=OY=Proposed ABC

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVES 2 AND 3 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 4 (FOR BOTH SECTORS)

Action 4. Modify the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish

Alternative 2. Specify a minimum size limit for gray triggerfish of 12 inches fork length (FL) in federal waters off east Florida.

Sub-alternative 2a. The minimum size limit applies to the commercial sector.

Sub-alternative 2b. The minimum size limit applies to the recreational sector.

Preferred Alternative 3. Specify a minimum size limit for gray triggerfish of 12 inches fork length (FL) in federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Sub-alternative 3a. The minimum size limit applies to the commercial sector.

Sub-alternative 3b. The minimum size limit applies to the recreational sector.

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED; 1 ABSTENTION)

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS THE COUNCIL'S PREFERRED FOR ACTION 5

Action 5. Establish a commercial split season for gray triggerfish

Preferred Alternative 2. Allocate the directed commercial gray triggerfish ACL into two quotas: 50% to the period January 1 through June 30 and 50% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from season 1 would transfer to season 2. Any remaining quota from season 2 would not be carried forward.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SUPPORT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B AS PREFERRED AND SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3B AS AN ADDITIONAL PREFERRED FOR ACTION 6

Action 6. Establish a commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish in the South Atlantic region.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. 1,000 lb ww

Alternative 3. When 75% of the gray triggerfish commercial seasonal quota is met or is projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to:

Sub-alternative 3b. 500 lb ww

APPROVED BY AP (1 ABSTENTION)

Amendment 32 (blueline tilefish)

The AP received an overview of the actions and alternatives currently included in the document. Council staff explained that a temporary rule will be implemented soon to reduce the blueline tilefish ACL in accordance with the results of the stock assessment. In addition, the SSC is scheduled to review additional projections at their upcoming meeting. The amendment will continue to be developed based on the recommendations of the SSC. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED

Action 1. Re-define Maximum Sustainable Yield for Blueline Tilefish

Alternative 2. MSY equals the yield produced by FMSY or the FMSY proxy. MSY and FMSY are recommended by the most recent SEDAR/SSC

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND ADDING AN ACTION TO AMENDMENT 32 TO SEPARATE BLUELINE TILEFISH FROM THE DEEPWATER COMPLEX
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED
Action 2. Establish an Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and Optimum Yield (OY) for Blueline Tilefish and Revise the ACL and OY for the Deep-Water Complex

Alternative 3. Separate blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex and establish annual catch limits for blueline tilefish. The blueline tilefish $ACL = OY = 98\%ABC$. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs based on existing sector allocations (50.07% commercial and 49.93% recreational). The deep-water complex ACL would remain at current levels with the current blueline tilefish portion removed.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 3
Action 3. Establish a Recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for Blueline Tilefish and Revise the Recreational ACT for the Deep-Water Complex

Alternative 2. The recreational ACT for blueline tilefish equals the recreational $ACL \cdot (1 - PSE)$ or $ACL \cdot 0.5$, whichever is greater. Adjust the recreational ACT for the Deep-water Complex to exclude blueline tilefish.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER ACTION 4 AS PREFERRED:
Action 4. Specify Accountability Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Commercial Sector

Sub-alternative 2c. If the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER ACTION 5 AS PREFERRED
Action 5. Specify Accountability Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Recreational Sector

Sub-alternative 2c. If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3 AS AN ADDITIONAL PREFERRED FOR ACTION 5

Alternative 3. If recreational landings for blueline tilefish reach or are projected to reach the recreational annual catch limit, National Marine Fisheries Service will file a

notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for blueline tilefish for the remainder of the fishing year.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER ACTION 6 AS PREFERRED:

Action 6. Establish Management Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Commercial Sector

Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish from January to April of 100 pounds.

Sub-alternative 2a. Establish a commercial trip limit from May onwards of 1,500 pounds until 80% of the ACL is projected to be met. Then reduce the trip limit to 100 pounds for the remainder of the fishing year until the ACL is met or projected to be met.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 7 AS PREFERRED:

Action 7. Establish Management Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Recreational Sector

Alternative 3. Establish a bag limit of blueline tilefish of 1/person/day.

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

Regulatory Amendment 20 (Snowy Grouper)

The AP received an overview of the actions and alternatives currently in the amendment. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS THE PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1.

Action 1. Adjust the Rebuilding Strategy for Snowy Grouper

Preferred Alternative 3. Define a rebuilding strategy for snowy grouper that maintains a constant fishing mortality rate ($F = 75\%F_{MSY}$) throughout the rebuilding timeframe. Year 1 remains 2006 and the yield at $75\%F_{MSY}$ and ABC projections will change with each assessment. ABC would change each year until 2019; the ABC for 2019 would remain in effect until modified.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 2 S PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2.

Action 2. Adjust Annual Catch Limits for Snowy Grouper

Alternative 2. Specify that $ACL = ABC = OY$.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 3

Action 3. Split the Commercial Fishing Season for Snowy Grouper

Alternative 2. Split the commercial snowy grouper fishing season with an equal split of the commercial ACL into seasonal commercial quotas between January through April and May through December with the following trip limits for each of the seasons. Any remaining commercial quota from season 1 carries over into season 2; any remaining commercial quota from season 2 does not carry over into the next year.

Sub-alternative 2c. 200 pounds gutted weight (lb gw).

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 3 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Alternative 4. Modify the commercial snowy grouper trip limit of 100 pounds whole weight (lb ww) January through April for all areas; for May through August from North Carolina through Cape Canaveral, Florida and south of Marathon, Florida as shown below; and 100 pounds whole weight (lb ww) May through August for the rest of the area. From September through the end of the year, or until the ACL is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be set at 100 pounds whole weight (lb ww).

Sub-alternative 4a. 200 pounds gutted weight (lb gw).

Sub-alternative 4b. 250 pounds gutted weight (lb gw).

Sub-alternative 4c. 300 pounds gutted weight (lb gw).

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: ADJUST THE SNOWY GROUPER ALLOCATION TO HISTORICAL LEVELS BY RE-EXAMINING ALLOCATIONS FOR SNOWY GROUPER BASED ON INCLUDING MONROE COUNTY LANDINGS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC LANDINGS
APPROVED BY AP (4 OBJECTIONS)

MOTION: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 5

Action 5. Modify the Recreational Bag Limit for Snowy Grouper

Alternative 4. Modify the recreational snowy grouper bag limit from 1/vessel/day year round to 1/vessel/day during May with no retention during the remainder of the year.

APPROVED BY AP

Amendment 33 (Transporting of fillets from The Bahamas)

At their December 2013 meeting, the Council directed staff to develop an action to consider modifying how fishermen may bring snapper grouper fillets back from The Bahamas into the U.S. EEZ. Currently, fishermen are allowed to bring back up to 60 lbs of snapper grouper fillets. However, there is no way to identify what species those fillets came from.

Brian Chevront, Council staff, gave the AP an overview of the amendment and the actions and alternatives within. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVES 2 AND 3 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 3.

Action 3. Require fillets of dolphin, wahoo, and snapper grouper species brought into the U.S. EEZ from The Bahamas to have the skin intact.

Preferred Alternative 2. Snapper grouper fillets brought into the U.S. EEZ from The Bahamas must have the skin intact on the entire fillet.

Preferred Alternative 3. Dolphin and wahoo fillets brought into the U.S. EEZ from The Bahamas must have the skin intact on the entire fillet.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 4 AS PREFERRED.

Action 4. In addition to possessing valid Bahamian cruising and fishing permits, require stamped and dated passports to prove that vessel passengers were in The Bahamas if the vessel is in possession of snapper grouper fillets in the U.S. EEZ.

Alternative 2. Vessels bringing snapper grouper fillets into the U.S. EEZ from The Bahamas are required to have stamped and dated passports to prove that the vessel passengers were in The Bahamas, as well as valid current Bahamian cruising and fishing permits onboard the vessel.

APPROVED BY AP

Amendment 34 (Accountability Measures)

Brian Chevront provided an overview of the document

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2C 3C & 4B AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 1.

Action 1. Revise accountability measures (AMs).

Sub-alternative 2c. If the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

Sub-alternative 3c. If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

Alternative 4. If recreational landings reach or are projected to reach the recreational annual catch limit, National Marine Fisheries Service will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year, unless, using the best scientific information available, the Regional Administrator determines that a closure is unnecessary.

Sub-alternative 4b. Regardless of stock status.

APPROVED BY AP

Visioning and Strategic Planning

Amber Von Harten, Council staff, gave the AP an overview of the activities to date, focusing in particular on port meetings. Amber stated that 22 out of 27 scheduled meetings have been conducted thus far. Amber proceeded to highlight some of the most common concerns expressed by fishermen during the port meetings. Concerns included “one-size-fits-all” management approach, redundancy in reporting for the commercial sector, uncertainty and mistrust of recreational landings estimates, etc.

Other Business

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER CHANGING THE START DATE OF THE FISHING YEAR FOR THE COMMERCIAL HOOK AND LINE SECTOR OF THE GOLDEN TILEFISH FISHERY TO MAY 1

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL REMOVING ALMACO JACK AND BANDED RUDDERFISH FROM THE JACKS COMPLEX AND ESTABLISHING INDIVIDUAL ACLs FOR THEM. IN ADDITION, SEEK TO CONDUCT STOCK ASSESSMENTS FOR THOSE SPECIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING AWAY THE 2 FOR 1 REQUIREMENT ON SG PERMITS
APPROVED BY AP (TIE BROKEN IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION BY AP CHAIR)

MOTION: FOR DEEPWATER SPECIES, THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER REQUIRING ONLY ONE HOOK PER LINE FOR THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR IN ORDER TO REDUCE DISCARD MORTALITY.
APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)