

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Summary Report

April 13-14, 2015

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) met on Monday, April 13, and Tuesday, April 14, at the Hilton Garden Inn in North Charleston, South Carolina. Below are summarized comments from the AP’s discussions and motions that were approved. Please refer to the meeting minutes for a verbatim transcription of the discussions.

Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure)

Brian Chevront, Council staff, presented the Decision Document for Regulatory Amendment 16 containing the actions and alternatives as modified by the Council at the March 2015 meeting. The AP received a briefing of expected economic effects under each of the alternatives considered. The AP approved the following motions:

MOTION: THE SG AP SUPPORTS THE COUNCIL’S CHOSEN PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 9/SUB-ALTERNATIVE 9A.
APPROVED BY AP

Preferred Alternative 9. The black sea bass pot closure applies to waters inshore of points 1-18 listed below (**Table 2.1.7**); approximately Daytona Beach, Florida, to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina (**Figure 2.1.8**).

Preferred Sub-alternative 9a. The black sea bass pot closure applies to the area annually from November 1 through April 15.

Note: Federal regulations would only apply to that portion of the area within the South Atlantic EEZ. The states will be asked to implement compatible regulations for the portion of the area within state waters.

Note: In **Preferred Alternative 9**, the boundaries off Florida and Georgia are identical to the boundaries in **Alternative 5**. Off North Carolina and South Carolina, the black sea bass pot closure applies in the exclusive economic zone in waters shallower than 20 meters.

Table 2.1.7. Eastern boundary coordinates for the proposed black sea bass pot closure in **Preferred Alternative 9**.

Point	N. Latitude	W Longitude
1	35° 15'	State/EEZ Boundary
2	35° 15'	75° '20'
3	35° 05''	75° '24'
4	35° 08''	'75° 38'
5	35° 04''	'75° 52'
6	34° '51'	'76° 11'
7	34° 36''	76° 24'

Point	N. Latitude	W Longitude
8	34° 24''	76° 19'
9	34° 21''	'76° 27'
10	34° 33''	'76° 48'
11	34° 16'	77° 25'
12	33° 44'	77° 46'
13	33° 30'	77° 31'
14	33° 28'	77° 35'
15	33° 36'	77° 55'
16	33° 34'	78° 28'
17	32° 59'	78° 52'
18	32° 59'	79° 02'
19	32° 31'	79° 30'
20	31° 57'	80° 27'
11	31° '42'	80° '24'
12	31° 31'	80° 33'
13	30° 43'	80° 49'
14	30° 30'	81° 01'
15	29° 45'	81° 01'
16	29° 31'	80° 58'
17	29° 13'	80° 52'
18	29° 13'	State/EEZ Boundary

Source: Amanda Frick, NMFS SERO.

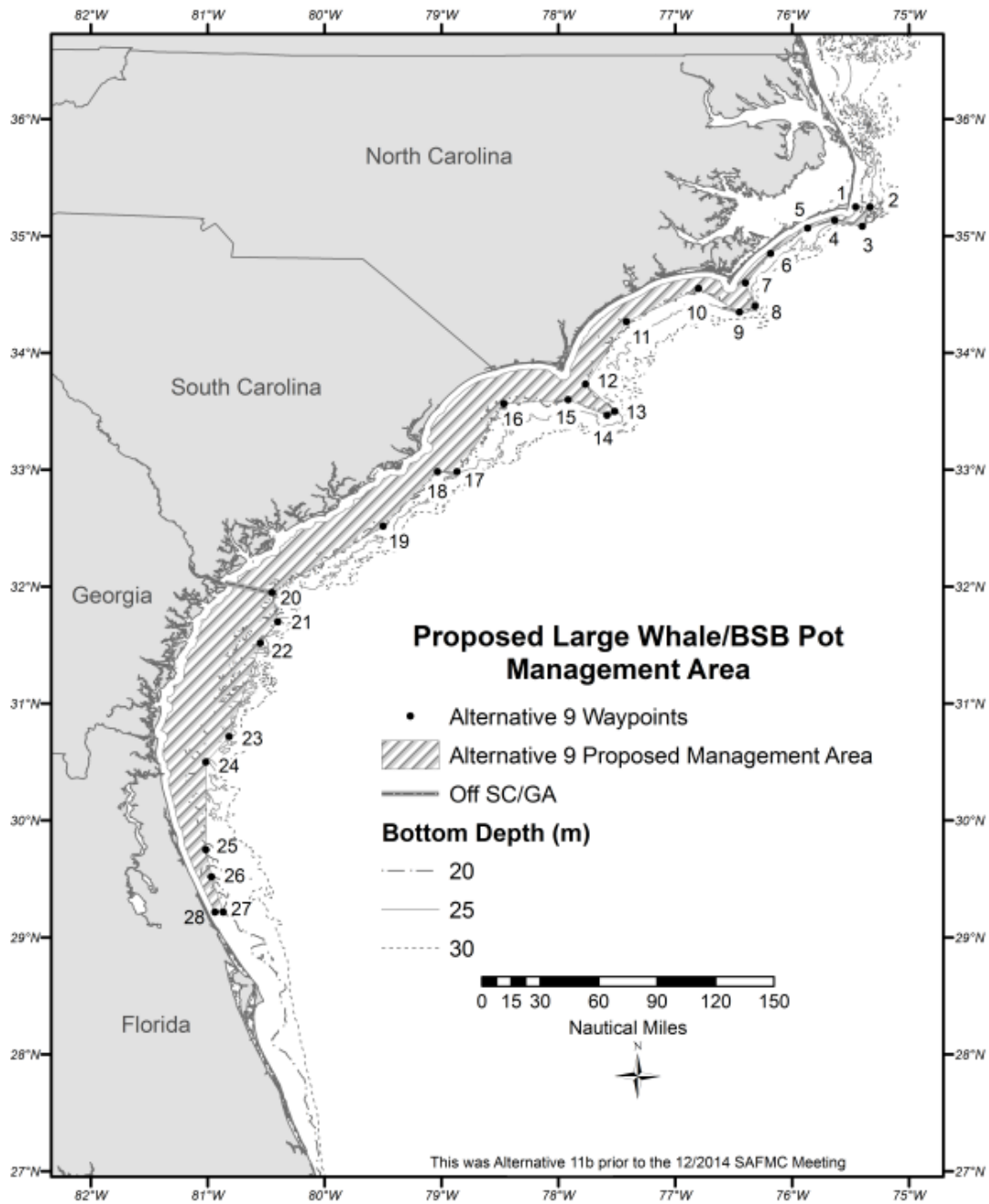


Figure 2.1.8. Area for the proposed black sea bass pot closure in **Preferred Alternative 9**.
Source: Amanda Frick, NMFS SERO.

MOTION: SG AP RECOMMENDS COUNCIL REQUIRE BLACK SEA BASS POT GEAR MARKING BE A SEPARATE COLOR FROM ANY OTHER VERTICAL LINE FISHERY IN THE REGION YEAR AROUND.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SG AP RECOMMENDS RESEARCH BE DONE TO DETERMINE PROPER VERTICAL LINE AND WEAK LINK STRENGTH FOR THE BLACK SEA BASS POT FISHERY IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC IN ORDER TO MAKE FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL RESEARCH DIFFERENT MESH SIZES FOR BLACK SEA BASS POTS.

APPROVED BY AP

- The AP's suggested a mesh size modification for black sea bass pots to 2 1/4" or 2 3/8" to minimize or eliminate discards if the minimum size for commercially harvested black sea bass were to increase from 11" to 12".

Amendment 37 (multiple species)

The Council approved development of this amendment at their March 2015 meeting. The amendment currently includes actions pertaining to hogfish as a result of the recent stock assessment and actions addressing the Jacks Complex, the annual spawning season closure for shallow water groupers, modification of size limits for red grouper and three deepwater species, and modification of the bag limit for black sea bass. Myra Brouwer, Council staff, briefed the AP on recommendations from the Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) for each of the actions, as appropriate, and assisted in the APs deliberations for each of the actions. The AP made the following comments and motions:

Hogfish

- Recreational minimum size limit considerations for this species need to account for the fact that harvest is primarily by spearfishing (e.g., no catch and release).
- In Florida, hogfish are being impacted by the annual spawning season closure for shallow water grouper (Jan 1 to Apr 30).

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER MINIMUM SIZE LIMITS AND BAG LIMITS FOR THE NC-GA STOCK AND TRIP LIMITS FOR THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR

APPROVED BY AP

Intent to make commercial trip limits same as NC state limits

North Carolina state regulations for hogfish:

- A. It is unlawful to possess hogfish less than 12 inches fork length.
- B. For a single day trip, it is unlawful to possess more than 150 pounds (gutted weight) of hogfish per vessel, regardless of the number of persons onboard.

C. For trips of more than one day, it is unlawful to possess more than 100 (gutted weight) pounds of hogfish per vessel, regardless of the number of persons onboard, for each additional day up to seven days. It is unlawful to possess more than 750 pounds (gutted weight) of hogfish in seven days. It is unlawful for vessels targeting hogfish to fail to call Marine Patrol Communications at 800-682-2632 and report date of departure prior to leaving the dock.

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER MINIMUM SIZE LIMITS AND BAG LIMITS FOR THE EAST FLORIDA-FLORIDA KEYS STOCK AND TRIP LIMITS FOR THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR
APPROVED BY AP

- The AP has made recommendations previously to consider phasing in a minimum size limit for Florida hogfish starting at 14” and increasing to 18”.

Jacks Complex & trip limit for almaco jack

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 3 TO DISAGGREGATE THE JACKS COMPLEX AND TRACK ACLs INDIVIDUALLY

Alternative 3. Disaggregate the Jacks Complex and track individual ACLs and recreational ACTs for each species in the Jacks Complex separately.

Almaco jack:

Commercial ACL=147,322 lbs ww (48.70%)
Recreational ACL=155,195 lbs ww (51.30%)
Recreational ACT=109,288 lbs ww
Total ACL=302,517 lbs ww

Banded rudderfish:

Commercial ACL=37,829 lbs ww (26.01%)
Recreational ACL=107,605 lbs ww (73.99%)
Recreational ACT=53,802 lbs ww
Total ACL = 145,434 lbs ww

Lesser amberjack:

Commercial ACL=4,270 lbs ww (46.07%)
Recreational ACL=5,000 lbs ww (53.93%)
Recreational ACT=2,500 lbs ww
Total ACL=9,270 lbs ww

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMITS OF 300-500 POUNDS FOR ALMACO JACK
APPROVED BY AP (3 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT OF 1 FISH PER PERSON FOR ALMACO JACK
APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR ALMACO JACK
APPROVED BY AP (3 OPPOSED)

Minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS REMOVING MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR ALL THREE SPECIES
APPROVED BY AP

Adjustment to annual spawning season closure for shallow water grouper

- Rolling closures would result in effort shifts and, therefore, not be beneficial.
- Extending the spawning season closure for red grouper off North Carolina would likely lead to an increase in regulatory discards. Moreover, effort has declined on red grouper off NC in recent years.
- In Florida, there is no need to modify the spawning season closure for red grouper since peak spawning activity is in March and April.
- Some AP members supported the removal of the spawning season closure for the recreational (charter) sector.
- AP members would support removal of the spawning closure if Spawning SMZs were to be identified and put in place for shallow water groupers.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, ON REMOVING THE SPAWNING SEASON CLOSURE FOR SHALLOW WATER GROUPERS.
APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: THE AP RECOMMENDS THE COUNCIL MOVE FORWARD WITH IDENTIFYING SPAWNING AREAS FOR SHALLOW WATER GROUPERS THAT MAY BE APPROPRIATE, AT SOME POINT, TO DESIGNATE AS SPAWNING SMZs.

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

INTENT IS TO EVENTUALLY REMOVE THE SPAWNING SEASON CLOSURE ONCE SPAWNING AREAS ARE IDENTIFIED AND PROTECTED

Adjustment to minimum size limit for red grouper

MOTION: AP RECOMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, ON MODIFYING THE MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR RED GROUPER
APPROVED BY AP

Adjustment to recreational bag limit of black sea bass

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 3. Increase the recreational bag limit of black sea bass to 7 fish per person per day.

APPROVED BY AP

Red porgy commercial management measures

- The AP supports the idea of a commercial split season for red porgy that coincides with those for vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish (once Amendment 29 is approved) with the commercial ACL equally split between the two. This would help reduce red porgy discards.
- A suggestion was made for reducing the commercial trip limit from 120 fish to 80 fish.
- The intent is for the spawning season closure to be removed for the commercial sector and a split season implemented instead.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A COMMERCIAL SPLIT SEASON FOR RED PORGY (SIMILAR TO VERMILION SNAPPER) AS WELL AS COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMITS

APPROVED BY AP

Workshop on Spawning SMZs (Amendment 36)

A public workshop was conducted during the AP meeting the evening of April 13, beginning at 5:30 pm. Gregg Waugh, Council staff, gave an overview of the approach for identifying candidate sites for Spawning SMZ designation and updated the AP (and members of the public in attendance) on progress to date and next steps. Following Gregg's presentation, Dr. Will Heyman, LGL Ecological Research Associates, Inc., further elaborated on the biological benefits of the approach and summarized research that has been conducted to date in the region in collaboration with Pew, the Marine Resources Monitoring and Prediction Program (MARMAP), local fishermen, and the South Atlantic Council. Roger Pugliese met with individuals to demonstrate the Council's GIS system and how they can provide input. AP members and members of the public in attendance then had the opportunity to use laminated charts provided to provide input on areas for consideration. The input received will be presented to the Council in June.

Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs) & System Management Plan for Deepwater MPAs

Gregg Waugh, Council staff, reviewed the Decision Document for Amendment 36 so that the AP could see how their input was presented to the Council and the Council's responses. Gregg then guided the AP through the Public Hearing Document to obtain their input. The AP approved the following motions:

North Carolina

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER 2B AND 3C OFF NC AS SPAWNING SMZs.
APPROVED BY AP (7/3)

Action 3. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off North Carolina

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the MALCHASE WRECK area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2b. Malchase Wreck (1 square mile)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the 780 BOTTOM area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3c. 780 Bottom (3 square miles)

MOTION: INCLUDE AN AREA NORTH OF THE 780 BOTTOM (40,005.5 ON THE NORTH AND 26,905.5 ON THE SOUTH) AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE 780 BOTTOM.

APPROVED BY AP (11/0)

South Carolina

MOTION: SUPPORT THE GEORGETOWN HOLE AREA BUT NO LARGER THAN 3.1 SQUARE MILE AND ADD ALTERNATIVE FOR AREA 51 AND 53.

APPROVED BY AP (10/0)

Note: The specific location of this area was provided to Council staff and will be added as another Sub-alternative.

Action 4. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off South Carolina

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the DEVIL'S HOLE area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Devil's Hole 3 (13.5 square miles)

Sub-alternative 2b. Devil's Hole 3 (4 square miles)

Sub-alternative 2c. Devil's Hole (1 square mile)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the AREA 51 area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.58 square miles).

Alternative 4. Establish Spawning SMZs in the AREA 53 area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.58 square miles).

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER AN AREA ADDING TO THE NORTHERN SC MPA TO THE SOUTH AND OFFSHORE TO BE EVALUATED AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE GEORGETOWN HOLE.

APPROVED BY AP (10/0)

Georgia

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER AREA BETWEEN 25 AND 35 MILES EAST OF ST. SIMONS (LAT/LONG TO BE PROVIDED)

APPROVED BY AP (6/0)

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER 2C OFF GA AND REMOVE 18 SQUARE MILES FROM THE EXISTING GEORGIA MPA

APPROVED BY AP (6/0)

Action 5. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Georgia

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the GEORGIA MPA RECONFIGURATION area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2c. Georgia MPA Reconfiguration (18 square miles)

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER ALL ALTERNATIVES 3A-3C AS WELL AS 3D (SMALLER)

APPROVED BY AP (5/0)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the ST. SIMONS area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3a. St. Simons 2 Area (23.5 square miles)

Sub-alternative 3b. St. Simons 2 Area (14.1 square miles)

Sub-alternative 3c. St. Simons 2 Area (9.4 square miles)

Florida

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER 2A FOR WARSAW HOLE AS A SPAWNING SMZ AS PREFERRED.

APPROVED BY AP (5/4)

Action 6. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Florida

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the WARSAW HOLE area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Warsaw Hole (2 square miles)

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER 3C OFF DAYTONA STEEPLES AS PREFERRED.

APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the DAYTONA STEEPLES area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3c. Daytona Steeples (6 square miles)

Other Actions

MOTION: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 2, MOVING THE EXISTING CHARLESTON DEEP ARTIFICIAL REEF MPA 1.4 MILES TO THE NORTHWEST, AS PREFERRED

APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Action 7. Move the Existing Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the Northwest to Match the Boundary of the Permitted Site

Preferred Alternative 2. Move the Existing Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the northwest to match the boundary of the permitted site.

MOTION: AP SUPPORT TRANSIT PROVISION AND ANCHORING PROHIBITION IN THE SPAWNING SMZs AS PREFERRED (ALTERNATIVES 2 AND 3).

APPROVED BY AP (14/0)

Action 8. Establish Transit and Anchoring Provisions

Alternative 2. Establish the following transit provisions:

§ 622.183 Area and seasonal closures. Modified for Spawning SMZs.

(a) Area closures--(1) Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs).

(i) No person may fish for a South Atlantic snapper-grouper in an MPA, and no person may possess a South Atlantic snapper-grouper in a Spawning SMZ. However, the prohibition on possession does not apply to a person aboard a vessel that is in transit with fishing gear appropriately stowed as specified in paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section. In addition to these restrictions, see § 635.21(d)(1)(iii) of this chapter regarding restrictions applicable within these MPAs for any vessel issued a permit under part 635 of this chapter that has longline gear on board.

(ii) For the purpose of paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section, transit means direct, non-stop progression through the MPA. Fishing gear appropriately stowed means--

(A) A longline may be left on the drum if all gangions and hooks are disconnected and stowed below deck. Hooks cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear; however, buoys may remain on deck.

(B) A trawl or try net may remain on deck, but trawl doors must be disconnected from such net and must be secured.

(C) A gillnet, stab net, or trammel net must be left on the drum. Any additional such nets not attached to the drum must be stowed below deck.

(D) Terminal gear (i.e., hook, leader, sinker, flasher, or bait) used with an automatic reel, bandit gear, buoy gear, handline, or rod and reel must be disconnected and stowed separately from such fishing gear. A rod and reel must be removed from the rod holder and stowed securely on or below deck. (Note: May want to modify the rod and reel requirement to track what is proposed for dolphin/wahoo and snapper grouper fillet amendment: that is For the purpose of this paragraph, fishing gear appropriately stowed means that terminal gear (i.e., hook, leader, sinker, flasher, or bait) used with an automatic reel, bandit gear, buoy gear, handline, or rod and reel must be disconnected and stowed separately from such fishing gear. Sinkers must be disconnected from the down rigger and stowed separately.

(E) A crustacean trap, golden crab trap, or sea bass pot cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear; however, buoys may remain on deck.

Note: MPA should be changed to Spawning SMZ in the draft wording above.

Alternative 3. Prohibit anchoring by fishing vessels in Spawning SMZs.

Regulatory Amendment 23 (golden tilefish)

At their March 2015 meeting, the Council instructed staff to begin developing an amendment to address issues in the commercial golden tilefish fishery. In particular, the Council wants to again explore ways to lengthen the fishing season for the longline sector and change the fishing year start date for the hook-and-line sector (as was suggested by the AP). Myra Brouwer, Council staff, provided the overview. The AP offered the following motions:

MOTION: AP REQUESTS THAT THE COUNCIL ALSO CONSIDER A START DATE FOR THE HOOK AND LINE SECTOR OF MARCH 15

APPROVED BY AP

Action 1. Modify the fishing year start date for the hook-and-line sector of the commercial golden tilefish fishery

Alternative 2. Change the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector of the commercial golden tilefish fishery to:

Sub-alternative 2a. March 1 – February 28/29.

Sub-alternative 2b. April 1 – March 31.

Sub-alternative 2c. May 1 – April 30.

- The AP did not support inclusion of Alternative 3, but did not make a motion to that effect.

Alternative 3. Allow the start date of the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector to coincide with closure of the longline sector.
- AP members stated that the intent of modifying the fishing year start date for the hook-and-line sector is to bring back the fall fishery.
- AP members stated that a third-party stock assessment, funded by the industry, is being conducted. Council staff reminded the AP that any third-party stock assessments need to be vetted through the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee through a process designed and approved for that purpose.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 2 UNTIL A NEW STOCK ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED AND THE SSC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ABC ARE ACCEPTED.

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

Action 2. Extend the fishing season for the longline sector of the commercial golden tilefish fishery in the South Atlantic.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not take action to extend the fishing season for the longline sector of the commercial golden tilefish fishery. Vessels with golden tilefish longline endorsements are limited to 4,000 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) per trip with no step-down trip limit.

Joint SAFMC/GMFMC Amendment on South Florida Issues (yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, black grouper)

Gregg Waugh, Council staff, briefed the AP on the current status of the amendment and timing. The amendment focuses on issues pertinent to South Florida and, therefore, is being developed jointly with the Gulf Council. The intent is to consider options that would streamline the management process and simplify regulations. Both Councils will discuss the amendment during a joint meeting in June 2015 in Key West, FL. The AP approved the following motions:

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 1.
APPROVED BY AP

Action 1: Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Yellowtail Snapper to the State of Florida for Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

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

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER MOVING THE MANAGEMENT BOUNDARY FOR SNAPPER GROUPEL SPECIES FROM THE GULF/SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL BOUNDARY NORTH TO SHARK POINT FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY MANAGEMENT UNIT.

APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

MOTION: SG AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 2.

APPROVED BY AP (12/1)

Action 2: Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Yellowtail Snapper

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for yellowtail snapper based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and maintain the current total ACL for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf based on the Reef Fish FMP.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 3.

APPROVED BY AP (11/0)

Action 3: Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Mutton Snapper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida.

Alternative 1. No action. Retain management of Mutton Snapper in the Reef Fish Resources and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 4.
APPROVED BY AP (11/0)

Action 4: Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Mutton Snapper

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for mutton snapper based on the South Atlantic Councils Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and maintain the current total ACL for mutton snapper in the Gulf based on the Reef Fish Resources FMP.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 2, OPTION 2B, FOR ACTION 5.
APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Action 5. Modify Mutton Snapper Recreational Bag Limit in Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Alternative 2: Remove mutton snapper from the recreational aggregate bag limit and change the recreational bag limit for mutton snapper during the regular season (July-April) and during the spawning season (May-June).

Option 2b: 5 fish/person/day in the regular season, 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 6.
APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Action 6. Modify Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Alternative 1: No action. During May-June, the commercial sector in the South Atlantic is restricted to 10 mutton snapper per day or 10 mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf or South Atlantic from July through April.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 7.
APPROVED BY AP (14/0)

Action 7: Partial Delegation of Recreational Management of Black Grouper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

Alternative 1: No action. Retain recreational management of black grouper in the Reef Fish Resources and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 8.
APPROVED BY AP (14/0)

Action 8: Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Black Grouper

Alternative 1. No action. Maintain the current recreational ACLs based on the Reef Fish Resources and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

Note: The AP did not approve a motion on Action 9. Accountability Measures. They chose to wait until the Councils address these alternatives in June 2015.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 10.
APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Action 10. Modify Shallow-water Grouper Species Compositions and Seasonal Closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the existing respective shallow-water grouper species compositions and seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 11.
APPROVED BY AP (13/0)

Action 11. Modify Black Grouper Fishery Closures and Bag Limits in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

Alternative 1: No Action. Do not modify black grouper recreational closures in the Gulf of Mexico or recreational and commercial closures in the South Atlantic. Maintain currently established seasonal bag limits in both the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, with black grouper included as a component of the shallow-water grouper and reef fish aggregate bag limits.

MOTION: ADOPT ALTERNATIVES 2 & 3 IN ACTION 12 WITH THE WORDING:
IN FEDERAL WATERS ADJACENT TO MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA.
APPROVED BY AP (14/0)

Action 12: Harmonize bag and size limits for species in shallow water grouper complex seasonal closures in Federal Waters Adjacent to Monroe County, Florida.

Alternative 2: Harmonize the bag limits for species included in the shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in Federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida. ~~the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.~~

Alternative 3: Harmonize the size limits for species included in the shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in Federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida. ~~the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.~~

Update on blueline tilefish

Myra Brouwer, Council staff, provided an update on issues pertaining to blueline tilefish. The SEDAR 32 (2013) stock assessment, conducted with data through 2011, determined the blueline tilefish stock was undergoing overfishing. In December 2013, the Council requested temporary emergency action from NOAA Fisheries to reduce harvest and began development of Amendment 32. The amendment proposes further reduction of the annual catch limit (ACL) for blueline tilefish to 35,632 pounds for 2015, a commercial trip limit of 100 pounds (gutted weight), and a recreational bag limit of one blueline tilefish per vessel per day from May through August with no retention for the rest of the year. The new regulations became effective on March 30, 2015, from the NC/VA border southward through the east coast of FL.

Although the blueline tilefish the stock is currently treated as one unit along the entire East Coast, the new regulations would only apply to vessels in the South Atlantic

Council's area of jurisdiction. Concerns about rapidly increasing commercial and party/charter landings of bluefin tilefish north of the NC/VA boundary, particularly in New Jersey, prompted the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in February to request emergency action to implement a commercial trip limit of 300 pounds (whole weight) and a recreational possession limit of 7 fish per person within its jurisdiction. Commercial landings from Virginia and farther north increased on average from 11,000 pounds to 217,000 pounds in 2014 and party/charter vessel landings increased on average from 2,400 fish per year to over 10,000.

Representatives from the Mid-Atlantic Council attended the South Atlantic Council's March 2015 meeting in St. Simons Island, GA and discussed concerns about applying the 2013 bluefin tilefish stock assessment results throughout the species' range. The South Atlantic Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), along with participating members from the Mid-Atlantic Council SSC, will review the stock assessment during its April 28-30, 2015 meeting in N. Charleston, SC and provide recommendations. If the SSC determines that the stock assessment should be applied north of the NC/VA boundary, the South Atlantic Council will request an emergency action to apply the more restrictive measures north of the boundary as well. The final decision to implement emergency actions would be made by the Secretary of Commerce.

Update on Electronic Reporting in the South Atlantic Region

Gregg Waugh, Council staff, gave a brief overview of the Electronic Reporting Implementation Plan for the southeast and encouraged the AP to look over the comments that the Council provided. Gregg also briefed the AP on progress to date on the Charterboat Reporting Amendment, which will be discussed during the Joint SA/GM Council meeting in June 2015 in Key West. In addition, Gregg informed the AP about a proposal recently submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to conduct a pilot study for charterboats in the South Atlantic using a prototype electronic logbook developed by Harborlight Software.

Update on Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery

Amber Von Harten, Council staff, brought the AP up to date on development of the Council's Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery. The Council will collect public input on the draft strategic goals from June through September, review public input and finalize the draft goals and objectives in September, and prioritize short- and long-term action items during a Council workshop in October 2015.

Other Business

The AP discussed ways to reduce regulatory discards for deepwater snapper grouper species in the recreational fishery. The AP made the following motion:

MOTION: COUNCIL LOOK AT WAYS TO LOOK AT RECREATIONAL GEAR SPECIFIC (#HOOKS, 1 OR 2/LINE) WAYS TO REDUCE DISCARDS DEEPER THAN 350 FEET.

APPROVED BY AP (12/0)