Summary of Public Scoping Comments on Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure)

- 10 written comments (as of Feb 6, 2014).
- Humane Society supported No Action and suggested two additional alternatives for analysis.
- The NPS suggested a combination of Alternatives 4 and 5 as presented in the scoping document combined with the addition of all National Park areas.
- North Carolina fishermen strongly support removing the black sea bass pot closure since the winter fishery is their most profitable.
- Pot fishermen feel they are already complying with ALWTRP measures that protect whales and the annual closure on pots is unnecessary.
- Measures implemented through Snapper Grouper Amendment 18A have minimized the potential of interaction between whales and pot gear. These measures have not been taken into consideration.
- General support for constraining the closure spatially as proposed in Alternatives 4-6.
- The quality of the black sea bass harvested during winter months is superior to that of fish caught in the summer. There is more demand and better price for winter-caught fish.
- Support for maintaining the closure outside of the Right Whale Critical Habitat (Alternative 4).
- The Council should consider establishing an area where the use of black sea bass pots is allowed (15 to 20 miles offshore). For-hire fleet has a 13-inch minimum size limit and they claim that pots are catching most of the 13-inch fish before the for-hire fleet has access to them.
- Concern about restriction on black sea bass pots possibly affecting a future pot fishery for lionfish.
- The Council should address threats to migrating whales separately from threats to calving. The November 1 to April 30 closure encompasses a longer period than what has been documented to be the primary calving season for right whales.