Management – Strategic Goal for Draft Vision Blueprint

Background:

In December 2012, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) began its Visioning Project to construct a long-term vision for the snapper grouper fishery through development of a strategic plan for the fishery that would guide management actions into the future. This strategic plan, called the *Vision Blueprint*, consists of four strategic goals – *Science, Communication, Management, and Governance*. Each strategic goal will have specific goals, objectives and action strategies that will be used by the Council to guide future management of the snapper grouper fishery.

Following an approach similar to what the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council used to draft a strategic plan for its managed fisheries, the Council sought stakeholder input early in the process and held a series of 26 informal meetings to solicit stakeholder input in coastal communities throughout the South Atlantic region. Because stakeholder needs and perceptions can vary widely, the Council has been careful not to exclude any input pertaining to the management of the snapper grouper fishery. Therefore, at this stage of the process, items that have been considered in the past as possible management tools but have not been developed further, will continue to be included among the many tools the Council may consider for long-term management of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region. As such, the table below encompasses management actions/strategies as suggested by stakeholders in the fishery as well as those brought forth by the Council members themselves. The goals and objectives are not in order of priority and are all considered draft at this time. As the draft Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery takes shape in 2015, the Council will provide their rationale for management strategies that are eventually excluded from further consideration.

MANAGEMENT

GOAL: Adopt management strategies that rebuild and maintain fishery resources, adapt to regional differences in the fishery, and consider the social and economic needs of fishing communities.		
Objective 1. Develop management measures that consider sub-regional differences and issues within the fishery.	**Strategy 1.1**	**Consider development of different types of quota-based management systems.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider species specific quota-based management such as, • *state-by-state commercial quotas for vermilion snapper* • *state-by-state quota-based management system for the recreational sector.* • *state by-state recreational quotas for black sea bass.* • *sub-regional management for deepwater species to include but not limited to snowy grouper, blueline tilefish and golden tilefish.*

		B. Consider voluntary sector share management, community-based quota management (commercial and for-hire), and individual fishing quota management systems. **NOTE:** Action B also applies to objectives 2 (access to the fishery) and 4 (reducing discards).
	Strategy 1.2	**Identify the design elements needed for development of different types of quota-based management systems.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider different design elements for quota-based management systems such as, • *quota transfer by subregion* • *using average landings over a certain time period as a system design element;* • *developing criteria for species to consider.* **B.** Consider different management elements for quota-based management systems such as, • *allowing the sub-region (however defined) to set landings limits and openings/closures;* • *managing sub-regions by effort.* **C.** Set management boundaries based on the biogeography of the fishery (i.e., species or categories).
	Strategy 1.3	**Consider use of alternative sub-regional management strategies that are not quota-based.**
	Actions:	**A.** Use staggered spawning season closures to address latitudinal differences in spawning activity. **B.** Set regulations based on designated sub-regions (areas/zones), not on quota allocations. **C.** **Set state-by-state regulations for the either sector. **D.** Apply sub-regional management strategies seasonally based on fish availability. **E.** Establish alternating 2-week windows for fishing (by sub-region) *****added after December 2014 workshop***
Objective 2. **Develop innovative management measures that allow consistent access to the fishery for all sectors.**	**Strategy 2.1**	**Support development of management approaches that address retention of snapper grouper species.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider bag limit and trip limit adjustments such as, • *Use a step-down approach when a species is approaching the ACL for either sector;* • *Consider smaller trip limits and bag limits for certain species.* • *Institute commercial trip limits and recreational bag limits for those snapper grouper species that do not have limits.* • *Use a bag limit step down as a post-season accountability measure for the recreational sector.* **B.** Re-evaluate the grouper aggregate and manage based on area. **C.** Consider number of days allowed to fish vs. bag limits for the recreational sector **D.** Consider an aggregate daily bag limit for the recreational sector with no size limit.*

		E. Consider aggregate trip limits for the commercial sector (# of boxes with no size limit)* **F.** Implement a charter boat limit instead of a per person limit on charter trips.* **G.** Consider in-season bag limit reduction to avoid closures.* ***NOTE:** These actions also apply to Objective 4 (reducing discards).
	Strategy 2.2	**Support development of management approaches that address the amount of effort in the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider a recreational stamp/license for the snapper grouper fishery. **B.** Implement a limited number of days for fishing for deepwater species. (R, FH) **C.** Manage effort/permits in the commercial and for-hire sectors. ***D.*** ********Evaluate the 2-for-1 permit requirement in the commercial sector* **E.** Evaluate the use of days-at-sea for the commercial sector. **F.** Evaluate the level of overcapitalization in the fishery (carrying capacity); *What are actual profits? How much resource is available? What is the gap?* ********added after December 2014 workshop*
	Strategy 2.3	**Support development of management approaches that account for the seasonality of the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	**A.** Establish a recreational season for harvest of deepwater species by region. **B.** Establish a "time-out" period of no fishing for the recreational fishery. **C.** Expand the use of split seasons for the commercial fishery. **D.** Establish seasons for co-occurring species and stagger the seasons (use depth as a criteria – mid-shelf and deepwater). **E.** Adjust the seasonal spawning closure for shallow water grouper and consider; shortening by 1-month; allow fishing but reduce bag limit; or a rolling closure throughout the region. **F.** Shift the red snapper season outside of their known spawning season.
	Strategy 2.4	**Support development of management approaches that consider flexibility in setting Annual Catch Limits.**
	Actions:	**A.** Shift sector allocations in–season. **B.** Use adaptive management for almaco jack and rudderfish to slowly increase the ACL. **C.** Use multi-year ACLs that use blocks of years to manage the ACL for a species (multi-year catch specifications). **D.** Ensure more data-poor species use alternative data-poor assessment approaches.

	Strategy 2.5	**Consider development of alternative management approaches to expand access to the fishery.**
	Actions:	**A.** Investigate expansion of fisheries for under-utilized species. **B.** Evaluate applicability and develop policies for aquaculture of snapper grouper species in the region. **C.** Evaluate the use of harvest tags for specific snapper grouper species. **D.** Use depth to set zones for recreational harvest of snapper grouper species. **E.** Consider measures to simplify regulations for both sectors. (i.e. limits, aggregates, etc.)
Objective 3. **Ensure that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors.**	**Strategy 3.1**	**Consider development of management approaches that assist fishery-dependent businesses to operate efficiently and profitably.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider market availability when making management decisions. **B.** Consider predictability in for-hire business planning when making management decisions. **C.** Consider non-traditional stakeholders/ businesses when making management decisions (chefs, eco-tourism operators, bait/tackle shops, marinas)
	Strategy 3.2	****Consider development of management approaches that support recreational fishing opportunity.**
	Actions:	**A. NEED ACTIONS** ********added after December 2014 workshop*
Objective 4. **Develop management measures that reduce and mitigate discards.**	**Strategy 4.1**	**Consider management approaches that consider catch limits, seasons, and the biology of the fishery in order to minimize bycatch of snapper grouper species.**
	Actions:	**A.** Use spawning Special Management Zones. **B.** Use time-area closures (either by region or a specific area). **C.** Consider a spawning closure for all snapper grouper species with a low ACL. **D.** Set a fishing season at the beginning of the fishing year with known open and close dates. **E.** Set a recreational fishing season for co-occurring species. **F.** Set a season for deepwater species and shallow water species by area. **G.** Consider time/area closure for all snapper grouper species (whole region or area specific)
	Strategy 4.2	**Consider management approaches that address the impact of depth on bycatch of snapper grouper species.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider full retention of deepwater species. **B.** Establish a season for deepwater species. **C.** Consider removal of size limits for deepwater species. **D.** Consider alternate electronic monitoring methods for all sectors to obtain data on depth to monitor catch composition and location. **E.** Use zone-based management that is set by depth.

	Strategy 4.3	**Reconsider management strategies that use size limits to reduce bycatch.**
	Actions:	**A.** Re-evaluate and change size limits on a species by species basis. **B.** Consider no-size limits for snapper grouper species. **C.** Use differential size limits by area.
	Strategy 4.4	**Develop management approaches that support "Best Fishing Practices" to help avoid bycatch and reduce discard mortality.**
	Actions:	**A.** Promote opportunities for research, development, and evaluation of gear and technology to reduce bycatch (i.e., hook type/use, gear competitions, descending devices). **B.** Consider gear requirement using "weak gear" or degrading hooks. **C.** Create an incentive program for avoiding bycatch in the recreational sector and consider development of a Bycatch Avoidance Network for the commercial sector (to communicate "bycatch hot spots").
	Strategy 4.5	**Support development of management approaches that consider the use of bycatch quotas and allowances.**
	Actions:	**A.** Allow a bycatch set-aside limit per commercial trip. **B.** Consider a bycatch allowance of up to 5% for species with a low ACL (C, FH) **C.** Consider multi-year catch specifications (averaged for accountability measures).
Objective 5. Support management measures that incorporate ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.	**Strategy 5.1**	**Support the enhancement of habitat for the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	**A.** Create new habitat using artificial reefs. **B.** Evaluate the use of artificial reefs as a mechanism to improve fishery production. **C.** Consider artificial reefs with limited or no fishing allowed.
	Strategy 5.2	**Evaluate biologicial, economic, and social impacts when developing ecosystem and habitat management approaches.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider the impacts of human population growth and distribution on habitats.
	Strategy 5.3	**Consider management approaches that support monitoring and enforcement of managed areas established to protect and conserve ecosystems and habitat.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider the use of alternative electronic monitoring systems or other innovative technology (surveillance buoys, drones, etc.) to monitor fishing activity in all sectors.

	Strategy 5.4	**Consider spatial management approaches to protect and conserve ecosystems and habitats for the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider development of managed areas (MPAs, spawning SMZs) that allow no harvest of snapper grouper species. **B.** Consider additional restrictions on existing managed areas (MPAs, etc.). **C.** Evaluate areas that may be suitable for spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs). **D.** Establish clear goals for creation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). **E.** Create no-anchor zones to protect fragile habitat.
Objective 6. Develop management measures that support optimal sector allocations for the snapper grouper fishery.	**Strategy 6.1**	**Support management approaches that consider the mechanics of designing allocation strategies (who, what, how, and social/economic considerations).**
	Actions:	**A.** Consider separate allocation for charter/headboat sectors. **B.** Evaluate existing sectors and current harvest to help determine allocation strategies. **C.** Truncate the recreational allocation time series from 2007 onwards due to the economy. **D.** Manage by economic levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) in the fishery (1-harvesters, 2-dealers, 3-support industries). **E.** Incorporate fairness and economics as part of the allocation equation. **F.** Evaluate use of a mutual allocation pool (allocation is shared between sectors) for possible use for certain species. **G.** After evaluation of existing sectors and current harvest consider options to: i. set multiple ACLs/allocation ii. set only 1 ACL/allocation **H.** Consider setting ACLS/allocations for multiple years. **I.** Consider individual quotas based on individual allocations or harvest levels (C, FH). **J.** Consider revising allocations on a species-by-species basis. **K.** Consider longer timeframe for developing allocations. **L.** Consider allocations by gear type.
	Strategy 6.2	Identify alternative methods for determining allocation shifts and managing allocations within the fishery.
	Actions:	**A.** Consider sub-allocation shifts (for example, golden tilefish sectors). **B.** Establish allocation shifts for species not reaching Optimal Yield (gag, vermilion, etc.). **C.** Establish framework for in-season allocation shifts. **D.** Consider establishing allocations by permit (each permit holder gets an allocation that fluctuates based on the ACL). **E.** Examine reallocation for species with low ACLs.

		F. Consider reallocation for commercially important species. **G.** Specify the allocation focus for each sector (Commercial-offshore; Recreational-nearshore). **H.** Examine recreational harvest for species that are not reaching their recreational ACL. **I.** Consider other methods for establishing sub-allocations (IFQs, EFPs, sectors, etc.). **J.** Before reallocation, consider increasing bag limits or other management measures first for the recreational sector. **K.** Increase the bag limit if the recreational sector does not reach their ACL.