

Summary Report

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

Crowne Plaza
4381 Tanger Outlet Boulevard
North Charleston, SC

November 3-4, 2015

Status of Amendments under Development and Recently Implemented

Council staff presented an overview of recent amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan including amendments that are still under development and those that have been recently implemented.

Update on Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Meeting

The South Atlantic SSC met in Charleston on October 20-22, 2015. The SSC discussed several topics of interest to the AP including specification of recreational ACLs in numbers of fish instead of pounds, the Council's Citizen Science Project, recreational catch estimates for species that are infrequently encountered in the MRIP survey, and possible revisions to the ABC Control Rule. In addition, as requested by the Council, the SSC re-evaluated their ABC recommendation for the GA-NC stock of hogfish. Council staff gave the AP an update of SSC discussions and answered questions.

Amendment 37 (hogfish)

Actions in Amendment 37 include modifying the Fishery Management Unit for hogfish to specify two stocks in the Council's area of jurisdiction; revising biological benchmarks (Maximum Sustainable Yield, Minimum Stock Size Threshold, Overfishing Level), Acceptable Biological Catch, Annual Catch Limits, Accountability Measures, and recreational Annual Catch Target, as appropriate, for the two stocks; establish a rebuilding plan for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock, and commercial and recreational management measures for each stock. The amendment was approved for scoping in June 2015. Scoping was held via webinar in August 2015. In September 2015, the Council reviewed scoping comments and reviewed actions/alternatives in the document. The Council requested revised projections from FWRI in September due to high recreational landings (recreational sector closed on August 24, 2015). Projections apply to the Florida Keys/East Florida stock as the GA-NC stock's ABC is being set using the ORCS approach. At their September 2015 meeting, the Council requested that the SSC reconsider their ABC recommendation for the GA-NC stock and that a letter be sent to MRIP requesting an evaluation of hogfish landings in 2015. Council staff presented an overview of the amendment. The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER ACTION 4 AS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Action 4. Establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for the GA-NC stock of hogfish

Alternative 2. Establish an ACL for the GA-NC stock. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs using re-calculated sector allocations based on proposed modifications to the management unit (81.91% 69.1% commercial and 18.09% 30.9% recreational). The ABC for the GA-NC stock = 28,161 35,716 pounds whole weight (lbs ww).

Sub-alternative 2a. ACL = OY = ABC

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SUPPORT THE COUNCIL'S PREFERRED FOR ACTION 7.

Action 7. Establish a recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish an annual catch target (ACT) for the GA-NC stock of hogfish for the recreational sector.

Sub-alternative 2a. ACT = recreational ACL*(1-PSE) or ACL*0.5, whichever is greater.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. ACT =85% recreational ACL.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 8.

Action 8. Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish.

Preferred Alternative 2. Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the GA-NC stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

Sub-alternative 2b. 17 inches FL

APPROVED BY AP (6 TO 5)

MOTION: RECOMMEND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3E AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 8

Action 8. Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish.

Preferred Alternative 3. Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

Sub-alternative 3e. Increase the minimum size limit from 12" to 14" in year 1 and to 16" in year 3.

APPROVED BY AP

****RECOMMENDATION TO LOOK AT SLOT LIMIT FOR HOGFISH (12 TO 16 INCHES) FOR FLORIDA HOGFISH.****

****RECOMMENDATION: FOR THE NC-GA STOCK, THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER REGULATING COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL HOGFISH BASED ON TWO SEPARATE GEARS (HOOK-AND-LINE AND SPEAR). MAINTAINING SEPARATE ACLs FOR COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL BUT NOT BASED ON GEAR. INTENT IS TO BETTER MANAGE USING DIFFERENT SIZE LIMITS, ETC.****

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ADDITIONAL SUB-ALTERNATIVES FOR 150 AND 200 POUND COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT FOR GA-NC (ACTION 9).

Action 9. Establish a commercial trip limit for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT FOR THE GA-NC STOCK OF 2 FISH PER PERSON PER DAY (SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A).

Action 10. Modify and/or establish recreational bag limits for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

Alternative 2. Establish a recreational bag limit for the GA-NC stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

Sub-alternative 2a. 2 fish per person per day.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3B (2 FISH PER PERSON PER DAY) FOR THE FLK/EFL STOCK OF HOGFISH

Action 10. Modify and/or establish recreational bag limits for the GA-NC and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

Alternative 3. Modify the recreational bag limit for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

Sub-alternative 3b. 2 fish per person per day.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A SPAWNING SEASON CLOSURE FOR GA-NC (MAY-JUNE) AND KEEP THE CALENDAR YEAR AS THE FISHING YEAR FOR THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR.

APPROVED BY AP

NOTE: Under “Other Business”, the AP approved the following motion regarding the fishing year for hogfish. After the meeting, the AP Chair corroborated the AP’s preference for a July 1 start date for both sector.

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL START THE HOGFISH COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING YEAR ON JULY 1.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND AN ADDITIONAL SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3C UNDER ACTION 11 FOR A RECREATIONAL SEASON FOR FL HOGFISH MAY 1 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30.

Action 11. Establish a recreational fishing season for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

Alternative 3. Establish a recreational fishing season for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

Sub-alternative 3a. May-June

Sub-alternative 3b. July-August

APPROVED BY AP

Update on October 2015 Council Visioning Workshop (Attachment 3)

A workshop for Council members was held in Charleston on October 14-15 to continue development of the Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery. Council staff assisted in facilitating discussions. Council members reviewed results of a survey of Council members aimed at establishing the Council's priority objectives under each of the main goals. Council members also edited the draft Blueprint by moving certain actions into an Appendix for possible consideration at a later time (beyond 2020) and adding new actions based on input received from stakeholders in 2015. In addition, Council members discussed approaches for applying the Blueprint to amendments currently under development, future amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP, a plan for periodic review of the Blueprint, and the appropriate format for the Vision Blueprint document. Council staff updated the AP on the outcomes of the workshop and requested AP input on priority action items and amendment ideas based on prioritized actions in the Blueprint. The AP provide the following input during the discussion:

- Considerations for permit stacking: maximum number of permits (maybe just 2); once stacked they can't be unstacked; maximum harvest allowed should be specified (i.e., half the trip limit amount for each additional trip); set a control date to notify industry of intent to allow permit stacking; evaluate latent effort before moving forward; consider lessons learned in the NC summer flounder fishery regarding permit stacking; allowing permit stacking would result in low barrier of entry and could disrupt the fishery.
- Latent effort in the Snapper Grouper fishery must be addressed. Evaluate permits with less than 1,000 pounds
- Staggered spawning season closures could result in shifts in effort that would not benefit the fishery.
- Council needs to have specific path for the snapper grouper fishery.
- Consider allowing entrants in the black sea bass pot fishery or giving back endorsements to those who used to participate.
- Consider disallowing retention of recreational bag limit on commercial trips.
- Requirement for a recreational stamp is a good idea and the Council should pursue as a means to improve data collection. Requirement to reporting gear type would be useful.
- The AP supports state-by-state quotas but it will require a lot of work and agency coordination. Quota should be made transferrable (state-to-state) and Council should seek NMFS support or it will not work. State-by-state quotas may also result in effort shifts, however.

- AP supports stakeholder survey: consider separate surveys for commercial and recreational. Utilize organizations like RFA and CCA to reach private anglers and reach out to publications that could include info on web-based survey.

Regulatory Amendment 25 (blueline tilefish, black sea bass, and yellowtail snapper; Attachment 4)

At their September 2015 meeting, the Council approved development of Regulatory Amendment 25 to address revisions to blueline tilefish fishing levels and management measures in response to a new ABC recommendation. The amendment would specify the blueline tilefish ABC in the South Atlantic based on various percentages of the coast wide ABC and revise ACLs and OY accordingly. Alternatives are designed to account for landings in the area north of the Council’s jurisdiction. In addition, the amendment includes actions to revise existing commercial and recreational management measures for blueline tilefish. Actions to modify the fishing year and commercial accountability measures for yellowtail snapper are also included, as well as an action that would increase the bag limit for black sea bass. Public hearings were held via webinar in November 2015 and the Council intends to approve the amendment for secretarial review at their December 2015 meeting. Council staff presented an overview of the actions and alternatives in the amendment and any analyses completed to date. The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED

Action 1. Adjust the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and Optimum Yield (OY) for the South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish Stock

Alternative 2. $ACL=OY=98\%(\text{stock ABC})$

NOTE: This alternative uses the current ABC equation implemented through Amendment 32 but applied to the new ABC recommendation

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3 (300 POUND COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT) UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action 2. Revise the Commercial Trip Limit for Blueline Tilefish

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish to 300 lbs gw

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED

Action 3. Adjust the Bag Limit for Blueline Tilefish for the Recreational Sector

Alternative 4. Establish a blueline tilefish bag limit of 1 fish/person/day May through August within the aggregate grouper bag limit. Prohibit retention the rest of the year.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) UNDER ACTION 4 (BSB BAG LIMIT)

Action 4. Increase the Recreational Bag Limit of Black Sea Bass

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL LOOK AT DECREASING THE RECREATIONAL SIZE LIMIT FOR BLACK SEA BASS AND MAKING THE SIZE LIMIT FOR BOTH SECTORS THE SAME.

APPROVED BY AP

*****INTENT IS TO ADDRESS RECREATIONAL SECTOR AND EFFECT OF DECREASING THE SIZE LIMIT TO THAT SECTOR. TARGET SIZE LIMIT FOR BOTH SECTORS WOULD BE 12 INCHES*****

MOTION: ANALYZE A 12-INCH MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR COMMERCIAL BLACK SEA BASS

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 5 (FISHING YEAR FOR YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER)

Action 5. Modify the Fishing Year for Yellowtail Snapper

Alternative 2. Modify the fishing year for the commercial sector for yellowtail snapper.

Sub-alternative 2c. August 1 through July 31

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3C AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 5 (FISHING YEAR FOR YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER)

Action 5. Modify the Fishing Year for Yellowtail Snapper

Alternative 3. Modify fishing year for the recreational sector for yellowtail snapper.

Sub-alternative 3c. August 1 through July 31

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 6 AS PREFERRED

Action 6. Revise Commercial Accountability Measures for Yellowtail Snapper

Alternative 2. If commercial yellowtail snapper landings in the South Atlantic, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, reach or are projected to reach the combined (South Atlantic + Gulf of Mexico) commercial yellowtail snapper ACL, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to close the South Atlantic commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase is prohibited and harvest or possession in or from the Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limit. This bag and possession limit applies in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter/headboat permit for South Atlantic Snapper Grouper has been issued, without regard to where the species was harvested, that is, state or federal waters.

APPROVED BY AP

Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs; Attachment 5)

Amendment 36 proposes using Spawning SMZs to provide additional protection to species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper. The Council reviewed public input and approved the amendment for more public hearings at the June 2015 meeting. A second round of hearings was held August 10-25, 2015. The Council reviewed public comments at their September 2015 meeting and approved all actions with preferred

alternatives with the exception of the Sunset Provision. The Council will review the AP comments, choose the remaining preferred alternative(s), and approve all actions in December 2015. The Council is scheduled to approve the amendment for formal review in March 2016. Council staff provided an overview of the actions and alternatives in the amendment and an overview of the System Management Plan. The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 5 FOR ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
Action 3. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZ) off North Carolina

Preferred Alternative 5. Establish a Spawning SMZ in the South Cape Lookout (5 square miles) that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 6
Action 6. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Florida

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Warsaw Hole area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. Warsaw Hole (1 square mile)

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B FOR ACTION 9 AS PREFERRED

Action 9. Establish a Sunset Provision for the Spawning SMZs

Alternative 2. The Spawning SMZs will sunset 10 years after implementation if not reauthorized.

Sub-alternative 2b. Apply the sunset provision to all Spawning SMZs except Area 51 and Area 53.

APPROVED BY AP

System Management Plan for Deepwater MPAs

The Council is developing a System Management Plan (SMP) to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Eventually, the SMP will be expanded to encompass all the Council's managed areas, with sections for MPAs, Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs), SMZs, and Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). The Council reviewed a draft at the June and September meetings and directed staff to continue work with the goal of having a document ready for the December 2015 meeting.

Council staff provided the AP with an overview of the Council's System Management Plans (SMPs) for the eight, existing deepwater Marine Protected Areas established in 2009 through Snapper Grouper Amendment 14 and proposed spawning Special Management Zones currently in development by the Council through Snapper Grouper Amendment 36. Under the resource monitoring section, the fishermen discussed the current patrolling of the MPAs and an AP

member mentioned having a drone fly overhead. In outreach, the fishermen requested files be developed for GPS units that can be downloaded from the website. For the reviews of the SMP, it was suggested to have a SMP AP for each state. The meetings could be held in conjunction with the Council meeting in each state. The fishermen mentioned having the Loran C lines along with the GPS coordinates would be helpful for some fishermen.

Update on Joint South Atlantic/Gulf of Mexico Amendment on South Florida Issues

Many items have been moved from the Joint South Florida Amendment to individual Gulf and South Atlantic Council amendments. Council staff reviewed the remaining items in the Joint Amendment and discussed the potential timing for any likely action on those remaining items.

Update on ACCSP proposal for electronic reporting for charter fleet

The Council submitted a proposal to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to conduct a pilot project. The proposal was reviewed by the Operations Committee and the Advisory Committee and received very high marks. The Coordinating Council made the final funding decision at their November 2, 2015 meeting in St. Augustine, Florida and the proposal was accepted. Council staff gave an update to the AP.

Charterboat Electronic Reporting Amendment

At the September 2015 meeting, the South Atlantic Council voted to develop a separate amendment for the South Atlantic Council's area. The Gulf Council approved a similar motion at their October 2015 meeting. This separation was approved so the Gulf Council could move forward with trip level reporting and the South Atlantic Council could match the current weekly reporting as required for headboats. In addition, the Gulf Council is considering requiring VMS whereas the South Atlantic Council is not considering VMS. The South Atlantic Council's intent is to approve the amendment for public hearings at the December 2015 meeting, hold public hearings in January/February 2016, review hearing comments and choose any remaining preferreds in March 2016, and approve for formal review at the June 2016 meeting. Council staff reviewed the amendment and the AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: MAKE ALTERNATIVE 2 THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 1

Action 1: Modify Frequency and Mechanism of Data Reporting for Charter Vessels

Alternative 2. Require that federally permitted charter vessels submit fishing records to the SRD weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Weekly = Tuesday following each fishing week.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: MAKE ALTERNATIVE 2 THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 2

Action 2: Modify Frequency and Mechanism of Data Reporting for Headboats

Alternative 2. Require that headboats submit fishing records to the SRD weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Weekly = Tuesday following each fishing week.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: MAKE ALTERNATIVE 2 THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 3
Action 3: Modify Electronic Reporting Requirements to Require Vessel or Catch Location Reporting

Alternative 2. Require federally permitted charters vessels to report location manually by latitude/longitude in degrees and minutes or by clicking on a headboat grid.

APPROVED BY AP

Fishing portfolios of black sea bass pot endorsement holders

Council staff provided a presentation of information from black sea bass pot endorsement holders on their fishing portfolios, alternatives to the winter pot fishery, and other input obtained during the public comment period and meetings with black sea bass pot fishermen. This presentation was delivered to the Council at the September meeting. The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

MOTION: CONSIDER A PROGRAM TO ALLOW FISHERMEN BACK INTO THE BLACK SEA BASS POT FISHERY AS THE BLACK SEA BASS STOCK REBUILDS.

APPROVED (1 OPPOSED).

CLARIFICATION: FOR FISHERMEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE POT FISHERY BEFORE THE ENDORSEMENTS, WITH SPECIFIC LEVEL OF LANDINGS.

Other Business

The AP made the following motions and recommendations:

AP REQUESTS THAT A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF PERMITS IN THE SG FISHERY BE ADDED TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT SG AP MEETING.

THE AP REQUESTS THAT APPROPRIATE BRIEFING MATERIALS BE PROVIDED TO THE AP TO FACILITATE THE AP'S DISCUSSIONS.

MOTION: THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ADDING AFRICAN POMPANO TO THE SG FMP AND ADDING RECREATIONAL BAG LIMITS AND COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMITS.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL START THE HOGFISH COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING YEAR ON JULY 1.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: REQUEST THE COUNCIL TO ALLOW POWERHEADS IN THE EEZ OFF SOUTH CAROLINA.
APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)