

SUMMARY:
PORT MEETING DISCUSSION FORM – 05/29/14

Response rate (as of 05/29/14):

- 1 unknown
- 6 Florida
- 1 Georgia
- 2 North Carolina

GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMENTS:

Issue #1 - Red snapper Management

- Find a way to have limited harvest of red snapper.
- Eliminate discard mortality of red snapper
- Find a way to increase the level of the red snapper biomass (recruitment issues)
- Commercial trip limits:
 - Consider increasing the trip limit for red snapper for commercial fishing vessels.
 - 200 pound for commercial
- Recreational bag limits:
 - Red snapper-2 fish per day over 17 inches
 - One per person/day for recreational
- Season:
 - Red snapper should be closed during the spawning season and zero catch established.
 - Open red snapper for whatever length scientifically determined to be appropriate, in the months of January and or February.
- Harvest tag program:
 - Must buy a \$5 red snapper card-stamp to write down all fish caught with vital information-size, date, place etc. close season during breeding months.

Issue #2 – Shallow water grouper closure

- Open grouper fishing in January and February, but keep it closed March and April.
- Consider a December, January, and February open season for Gag with its own ACL and a smaller commercial trip limit (between 200 and 500 pounds) and a recreational daily limit of 2 per boat.
- Consider a September through November and March through April closure of grouper and a May through August opening of grouper using all legal methods of harvesting and a separate ACL.

Issue #3 – Regional Management

- More directly target geographically hard hit areas for improvements to management measures.
- Break the samples into geographically useable areas and then decide closures.

Issue #4 – Science and Data

- Common sense, coupled with anecdotal data, coupled with scientific data, must be the component in making decisions that impact the angling community.

Issue #5: Goliath grouper

- Some limited opening for harvest both recreationally and commercially.

- A specific bag limit for both sectors and no size limit.
- Opening during the shallow grouper closure to help make up for that loss in catch.
- Open to the hook and line sector only.

Other Management Ideas:

- 1) Establish what could be called a deep sea fishing season using current bag and size limits for all snapper and grouper species including red snapper (excluding warsaw grouper and speckled hind).
 - Give each state the flexibility of setting the start and end dates of this season. For example : the state of Georgia could say deep sea fishing season is open from April 1 and will end Nov 1 .
 - Once the deep sea fishing season is closed no harvest of any snapper grouper species would be allowed.
 - Impose a depth closure to eliminate discard mortality of all snapper grouper species including red snapper during the 5 month deep sea fishing closure. (No bottom fishing in 90 to 240 feet of water for example.)
 - To limit red snapper harvest during the season, a recreational angler upon buying his salt water fishing license from his state should have the option of purchasing one red snapper tag for that season. That recreational angler would be allowed to harvest only 1 red snapper during that deep sea fishing year period.
 - By having a red snapper tag option to recreational anglers you could enhance MRIP system by refining how many recreational anglers that actually have interest or put in the effort towards trying to catch a red snapper.
 - Require the reporting of harvested red snapper with length and estimated weight.
 - To enhance the red snapper biomass, take the monies from red snapper tag sales and create red snapper habitat on sandy barren bottom in 125 to 140 feet of water and create a marine protected area around those structures with no fishing allowed.

COMMERCIAL – DISCARD COMMENTS:

- Reconsider the current encouragement for anglers to use dehooking devices and instead promote cutting the line as short as possible. (Not all fishermen understand or know how to use a dehooking device.)
- Have no size limit on red snapper for the recreational sector to reduce discard mortality.
- Manage individual quotas with split seasons, appropriate possession limits, and by-catch allowances to avoid multiple extended closures and excessive regulatory discards.
- Strive for full retention fisheries within quotas that are properly managed as mentioned in statement above. We should target fish with high limits while still keeping most of what we accidentally catch with lower limits. We should not only target the breeding stock. We should keep some of every size fish.
- Illegal fish suffering from barotrauma should be released with Descending Devices that NMFS. Properly managing quotas and releasing illegal fish so they have the best chance of survival should result in the council giving back much of the MILLION+ pounds of our quotas currently being allocated to projected dead discards.

COMMERCIAL – ALLOCATIONS COMMENTS:

- Consider the percentage of grouper harvested by each state based on migratory patterns of fish and how the seasonal closures affect the ability of some states to harvest grouper when the fish are available.
- Do not advance any catch share scheme requiring unfair current or future allocations using landings or anything else. Instead, manage the quotas as detailed in discussion above under reducing discards.
- Any catch share scheme should have to be approved by a 2/3 majority of permit holders. Permit holders should be allowed to decide how our quotas will be managed with a 2/3 majority vote. This website should have a secure page set up to allow permit holders to sign in with our permit number to discuss how we want our quotas to be managed and hold votes."

COMMERCIAL – REPORTING COMMENTS:

- Make all dealers report electronically .
- Online reporting would make collecting landings data much quicker and would streamline reporting.
- Mandatory VMS and video monitoring schemes should never be considered again.

COMMERCIAL – SPATIAL MANAGEMENT COMMENTS:

- The South Atlantic Council should consider dividing the fishery into zones. It's not the same off North Carolina as it is off Jacksonville or off Fort Pierce.
- Separate the total allowable catch into separate commercial zones or sectors
- Use spawning closures only when the species is actually spawning.
- Determine whether closed areas that have been in existence for a while, such as the Oculina Bank closed area, are actually working.
- Do not use the ""fatally flawed data"" currently being used to justify the proposed MPAs in RA17. Properly managing quotas and releasing illegal fish suffering from barotrauma with Descending Devices so they have the best chance of survival negates the need for further restricting the public's freedom to access our public resources.
- Consider a few small MPAs of no more than 4 square miles on proven breeding grounds could be helpful. These closures should be offset with equal areas of new artificial reef habitat and marked with data buoys capable of monitoring poachers.
- Create small MPAs around new artificial reef habitat. This habitat should be built with appropriate material that is designed and placed in appropriate areas to support the marine life you want to protect. This is a great way to enhance our fisheries without further restricting our freedom to access traditional fishing grounds. "

COMMERCIAL – OTHER COMMENTS:

- Consider lowering trip limits lowered on snapper/grouper species that are closing before the end of the commercial season.
- Consider step-down in trip limits when a percentage of the ACL is met for all snapper grouper species.
- Pay more attention to fishermen and their information from each port and inlet.
- Need to address illegal sale of recreational catches.

RECREATIONAL – DISCARDS COMMENTS:

- No size limit--what you catch you keep. Consider 2 fish per day for each species.
- Suggest that anglers be given the opportunity to purchase one or two "out of season" harvest tags per year. These tags would be single use non-removable tags limited to use for specific species. For example, one might buy a red snapper tag that could be used should one be caught but either too deeply hooked or too bloated to survive. That single fish could then be retained with the tag rather than wasted by throwing it back dead.
- Fish tags issued to recreational fisherman for grouper fishing. Issues a set number of tags per fishermen that they can use to harvest throughout the year. Once the tags are gone they can't harvest any more grouper.

RECREATIONAL – ALLOCATIONS COMMENTS:

- Better information on how to share catch data with the appropriate agency for recreational fisherman.
- Priority should be given to the sector that provides the most economic and social benefit to the general economy. The estimate should fully consider all elements and develop a rigorous, defensible representation of them; Use both past allocations or catch data as well as future projections of usage and value.

RECREATIONAL – REPORTING COMMENTS:

- Consider putting video cameras on headboats to monitor catch.
- Charter boats should maintain accurate logs and recreational fisherman should be provided an easy web site to report catch data.

RECREATIONAL – SPATIAL MANAGEMENT COMMENTS:

- Artificial reefs should continue to be established.