

Summary of Scoping Comments Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 (Hogfish)

September 2015
(revised 9/4/15)

Scoping for Amendment 37 was conducted via webinar on August 10, 2015. Comments were received from July 27 until August 14, 2015. Twenty four written comments were received during the comment period and subsequently. Two people provided comments during the webinar. Below is a summary of the comments that were received pertaining to each of the proposed actions:

Action 1. Modify the Fishery Management Unit for hogfish

5 comments were in support of Alternative 2 (modify the management unit to specify two separate stocks of hogfish)
2 comments – No action

Separation of the hogfish stock is a great management decision. The GA-NC hogfish stock is strong with larger fish, more habitat, and a larger population. The southern florida hogfish stocks are currently overfished. The GA-NC hogfish stock are not overfished.

Action 2. Specify Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

10 comments – No action

Once separated from the FLA stock, the GA-NC hogfish stock will need a stock assessment (SEDAR) to determine MSY

Action 3. Specify Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST)

10 comments – No action

Once separated from the FLA stock, the GA-NC hogfish stock will need a stock assessment (SEDAR) to determine MSST.

Action 4. Annual Catch Limit for the GA-NC stock

12 comments – No Action.

Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished.

It is imperative that accurate stock assessments are conducted prior to making "knee jerk" management decisions. Especially when the stock MSY is unknown. Alternative 2 is

completely arbitrary and gives 81.91% of a fictitious ACL to the commercial fishing industry. This alternative does not accurately consider the impacts to the recreational community by only allowing 510 fish for a quota. Again, before considering a devastating alternative like this, to a fish stock with an unknown status, it is imperative that a stock assessment occur before unjustified regulations are imposed.

Action 5. Rebuilding for FLK/EFL stock

2 comments – No action

1 comment – support Alternative 3 (rebuilding strategy for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock of hogfish sets ABC equal to the yield at a constant fishing mortality rate and rebuilds the stock in 10 years with a 50% probability of rebuilding success)

Action 6. Annual Catch Limit for FLK/EFL stock

2 comments – No action

1 comment – support sub-alternative 2a (ACL = OY = ABC)

Action 7. Recreational Annual Catch Target for both stocks

3 comments – No action

Action 8. Minimum size limit for both stocks

8 comments – support sub-alternative 2c (15" FL for GA-NC stock)

1 comment – support sub-alternative 2d (16" FL for GA-NC stock)

2 comment – support sub-alternative 3c (15" FL for FLK/EFL)

1 comment – support sub-alternative 2f (18" FL for GA-NC stock)

1 comment – support sub-alternatives 3d or 3f (16" or 18" for FLK/EFL stock)

Action 9. Commercial trip limits for both stocks

9 comments – support sub-alternative 2a (250 lbs ww commercial trip limit for GA-NC stock)

The FLA hogfish stocks are overfished and currently experiencing overfishing. When proposed regulation to rebuild stocks, commercial fishermen will travel north to fish. This will increase take on the GA-NC stock. This scenario has already happened in NC where the North Carolina Dept. of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) has issued a proclamation restricting hogfish catches for both recreation and commercial interest. It is also noted that NCDMF regulations should be used in determining stock status until a stock assessment can be completed for the GA-NC hogfish stock.

3 comments – No action.

It doesn't look like a lot of Hogfish are caught on commercial trips as it is. So in my opinion I don't believe they need to be limited by trip limits. If there were to be a trip limit I believe all the options are way to small to be commercially viable with the cost of owning and operating a commercial vessel these days.

For the south florida area a commercial trip limit of anything less than 200 lbs would not be economically viable.

Action 10. Bag limit for both stocks

10 comments – support sub-alternative 2a (4 fish bag limit for GA-NC stock)

2 comment – No action

1 comment – support sub-alternative 2c (3 per person per day for GA-NC stock)

Action 11. Accountability Measures for both stocks

3 comments – No action

AM for the GA-NC hogfish stock should be determined after a hogfish stock assessment (SEDAR). Imposing an AM for an unknown fish stock would be arbitrary at best.

General Comments:

- Consider a seasonal closure for the GA-NC stock that mirrors the existing annual closure for shallow water grouper (Jan 1 – April 30).
- Concern over “inflated” recreational hogfish landings in FL. Request that landings estimates for 2013-2015 be examined.
- Consider delaying change in regulations for hogfish until effect of existing regulations can be evaluated.
- Noticeable decrease in the size of hogfish in Florida over the last 10 years. Mature males seem smaller and smaller each year.
- Concern over commercial vessels from FL harvesting hogfish off the Carolinas, especially when recreational harvest is closed.
- In NC, hogfish attain larger sizes than in FL. Mature male hogfish in NC are still in the 15-18 pound range.
- Consider no management changes for the GA-NC stock until better data are available.

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 1 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Am 37 Scoping

Hi. My name is Vincent Bonura. My comment to amendment 37 is, I do not think Hogfish needs a commercial trip limit in the South Atlantic. From what I'm seeing in the document here. It doesn't look like a lot of Hogfish are caught on commercial trips as it is. So in my opinion I don't believe they need to be limited by trip limits. If there were to be a trip limit I believe all the options are way to small to be commercially viable with the cost of owning and operating a commercial vessel these days. If you are thinking about a commercial trip limit at least think about the fisherman and what they need to make a living to provide for their families.

Tight

Lines,

Vincent Bonura

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished. The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Chris BRanco

Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 Scoping

Hello Michael

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment.

I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished.

The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Thanks, Tony Grogan

My name is Tony Hancock, I am a recreational and commercial fisherman who fishes the S Atlantic off NE FL, GA, SC, NC. It is my opinion backed by 20+ years of diving these waters that the hogfish population in these waters is stable and needs little further regulation. I support a minimum size increase to 16 inch FL.

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished. The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

I oppose Action 4 alternative 2. This alternative would essentially destroy the recreation fishing and dive charter fleet in the NC to Ga region.

I support Action 4 Alternative 1.

Thank you

Jackie

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I DO NOT support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for a stock status of "unknown". The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not proven to be overfished or currently not experiencing overfishing. I propose that SAFMC conduct a proper stock assessment on the GA-NC hogfish stock before imposing such restrictive regulations.

In addition, I can say that I have dove off of the Florida Keys as well as North Carolina recently and the amount of Hogfish seen was noticeable....in favor of North Carolina.

Shawn M. Naegele
Booz | Allen | Hamilton
shawn.naegele.ctr@scrb.navy.mil
301-995-6696

Mike,

I am writing in response to the proposed actions of Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. My reasoning for doing so is that I am a recreational fisherman, and as it pertains more so to hogfish, a recreational spearfisherman, living and fishing in the Florida Keys and East Florida regions.

My opinion is that the actions cited under this amendment are drastic, and the many combinations of changes in boundaries, size limits, bag limits, and annual catch limits provide too great a range of the impact of these changes. For instance, the possible actions range from no changes, to a size limit of 20" and bag limit of one fish per vessel. Both are extremes.

I am not someone who believes that no changes should be made. I have been fishing in Miami for the last 6 years and I have also fished the waters of the Bahamas. It is clear that sizes of fish are, overall, greater in the Bahamas. I believe that to be directly correlated to fishing pressure and the current size limit of hogfish. From my own very unscientific observations, there are many hogfish present on shallow reefs which I dive (10'-50'), but it is rare to see the big males. Further, the males present are often barely 12" or only slightly larger. I would presume this is due to a high kill rate of that size fish caused by the number of fisherpersons, primary by spear, within those depths of water.

Therefore, I would propose **ONLY Action 8, Alternative 3, 2c** (increasing size limit to 15"). This would effectively reduce 75% of the current FLK/EFL aggregate take (based on the SEDAR data within Amendment 37 documentation), allow for the maturation of the hogfish to slow (the longer the male is present, the slower the change from female to male, thus the longer the reproduction capability of the current stock), and thus result in both higher stocks of all size fish.

From what I have received from most spearfishermen, the sentiment is that we are all very much in favor of protecting our resources. A 12" hogfish doesn't provide much meat anyway and the quality of fish is sacrificed by quantity under the current conditions. Increasing the size limit, and increasing the enforcement of that change, will allow for both the conservation of the stock, and continued enjoyment of the sport and catch by recreational fishermen.

I urge you to consider my opinion, and the opinion of others, in consideration of incremental changes within this amendment.

Regards,

Jeremy Nawyn
Homestead, FL

To whom it concerns,

I would like to voice my concern over Action 4 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished. The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Thanks,
Steve

ACTION 1 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION.

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Thank you for reading my comments.

Oakwood Community

I do not support Action 4 alternative 2 of the proposed scoping of Amendment 37. Alternative 2 would destroy a great fishery that has existed for years in a stable environment. I do not support cutting the recreational harvest of hogfish to 459 to 510 fish per year as proposed in Alternative 2. Especially when such restrictive management measures are not needed for an unknown stock. The GA-NC hogfish stock has existed in a stable manner for many years. These regulations simply are not needed when a fish stock is not overfished. The following are my comments for the other action items of Amendment 37.

ACTION 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

My name is Pete Stafford and I am from Clayton, NC. I am a biologist and Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS). I have the following comments for the **Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 - Hogfish**

Action 1 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2 - Separation of the hogfish stock is a great management decision. The GA-NC hogfish stock is strong with larger fish, more habitat, and a larger population. The southern florida hogfish stocks are currently overfished. The GA-NC hogfish stock are not overfished.

Action 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION - Once separated from the FLA stock, the GA-NC hogfish stock will need a stock assessment (SEDAR) to determine MSY.

Action 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION - Once separated from the FLA stock, the GA-NC hogfish stock will need a stock assessment (SEDAR) to determine MSST.

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION - It is imperative that accurate stock assessments are conducted prior to making "knee jerk" management decisions. Especially when the stock MSY is unknown. Alternative 2 is completely arbitrary and gives 81.91% of a fictitious ACL to the commercial fishing industry. This alternative does not accurately consider the impacts to the recreational community by only allowing 510 fish for a quota. Again, before considering a devastating alternative like this, to a fish stock with an unknown status, it is imperative that a stock assessment occur before unjustified regulations are imposed.

ACTION 5 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 3 - Alternative 3 is the most feasible of the proposed alternatives.

ACTION 6 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a - Alternative 2a is the most feasible of the proposed alternatives.

ACTION 7 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - Alternative 1 is the most feasible of the proposed alternatives.

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C - Alternative 2C is the most feasible of the proposed alternatives.

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A - The FLA hogfish stocks are overfished and currently experiencing overfishing. When proposed regulation to rebuild stocks, commercial fishermen will travel north to fish. This will increase take on the GA-NC stock. This scenario has already happened in NC where the North Carolina Dept. of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) has issued a proclamation restricting hogfish catches for both recreation and commercial interest. The following is an NCDMF for North Carolina recreational fishermen noting the NC regulation of 5 hogfish per day at 12 inches fork length. Subsection VIII
http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/proclamation-ff-39-2015?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_k9Jb&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-2&p_p_col_count=2&page=2

In addition to the recreational regulations, NCDMF has installed the following commercial hogfish regulations. Subsection VII - 12 inch fork length minimum, 150 lbs single day trip limit,

and a 750 lbs week limit. (http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/proclamation-ff-38-2015?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_tHr3&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-2&p_p_col_count=2&page=2)

It is also noted that NCDMF regulations should be used in determining stock status until a stock assessment can be completed for the GA-NC hogfish stock.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a - With exceptions to Southern Florida and North Carolina, the South Atlantic hogfish stocks do not have a bag limit. Without a bag limit, this fishery is susceptible to overfishing. Alternative 2a would impose a 4 hogfish limit for the GA-NC stock that would cut harvest by XX%

ACTION 11 - AM for the GA-NC hogfish stock should be determined after a hogfish stock assessment (SEDAR). Imposing an AM for an unknown fish stock would be arbitrary at best.

Thank you for reading my comments.

Pete Stafford - Biologist
Phone # - 919 - 621 - 6045
Address - 168 Scarlet Oak Run, Clayton NC, 27520

Action 1 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2

Action 2 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

Action 3 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 4 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

ACTION 8 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2C

ACTION 9 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2A.

ACTION 10 - I SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 2a

Thank you

William

Wilmington NC

I am writing in response to the proposed actions of Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. My reasoning for doing so is that I am a recreational fisherman, and as it pertains more so to hogfish, a recreational spearfisherman, living and fishing in the Florida Keys and East Florida regions.

My opinion is that the actions cited under this amendment are drastic, and the many combinations of changes in boundaries, size limits, bag limits, and annual catch limits provide too great a range of the impact of these changes. For instance, the possible actions range from no changes, to a size limit of 20" and bag limit of one fish per vessel. *Both are extremes.*

I am not someone who believes that no changes should be made. I have been fishing in Miami for the last 15 years. It is clear that sizes of fish are, overall, greater in the Bahamas. I believe that to be directly correlated to fishing pressure and the current size limit of hogfish. From my own very unscientific observations, there are many hogfish present on shallow reefs which I dive (10'-50'), but it is rare to see the big males. Further, the males present are often barely 12" or only slightly larger. I would presume this is due to a high kill rate of that size fish caused by the number of fisherpersons, primary by spear, within those depths of water.

Therefore, I would propose **ONLY Action 8, Alternative 3, 2c** (increasing size limit to 15"). This would effectively reduce 75% of the current FLK/EFL aggregate take (based on the SEDAR data within Amendment 37 documentation), allow for the maturation of the hogfish to slow (the longer the male is present, the slower the change from female to male, thus the longer the reproduction capability of the current stock), and thus result in both higher stocks of all size fish.

From what I have received from most spearfishermen, the sentiment is that we are all very much in favor of protecting our resources. A 12" hogfish doesn't provide much meat anyway and the quality of fish is sacrificed by quantity under the current conditions. Increasing the size limit, and increasing the enforcement of that change, will allow for both the conservation of the stock, and continued enjoyment of the sport and catch by recreational fishermen.

I urge you to consider my opinion, and the opinion of others, in consideration of incremental changes within this amendment.

Regards,
Michael Zambrano
Homestead, FL

Sir, in reasearching your site for the past 3 years landings of hogfish in the recreational sector the TAC was half of what you have it for 2015 and the quota was never met. Somehow the new catch landings for 2015 have been highly inflated to the point we here in the keys caught an additional 250 % over the new quota that was increased from 45,000 last year to 85,000 this year. You are shutting down the recreational sector August 24th using this so called inflated data. Could you please get someone to look at 2013,2014,and the inflated 2015 numbers. I charter fish here in the keys and believe me that many fish have not been caught this year. If it is left alone we will not even be allowed to keep hogfish in 2016 recreationally. Thanks Capt Tad Grubbs Marathon FI

I was asked to send a letter regarding proposed regulations in Amendment 37. This amendment along with all other actions and projects should be tabled as we review existing regulations to see what is working well and what isn't. We have decade's worth of fishery laws on the books that are sufficient to meet all Congressional deadlines. Many of those rushed or outdated laws violate revised Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates. We need to Stop and Review current management measures so changes can be made as necessary before rushing to write more laws based on "fatally flawed data".

Sincerely,

Chris McCaffity

Hello,

I would like to voice my comments on the Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 – Hogfish.

I am a long time resident of Florida and avid fisherman. I grew up fishing and spearfishing. Over the last 10 years, I have seen a noticeable decrease in the size of Hogfish. We still see plenty of them... but each year the mature males seem smaller and smaller.

I believe that a size limit increase would be the best method. Unlike other species that are targeted by hook and line, Hogfish is almost entirely speared. This makes size limits very very effective. I would support a minimum size increase to 16 or even 18 inches. This will give the Hogfish a greater chance to reach larger mature sizes and rebreed to replenish the stock. It would be nice to see larger fish within the stock.

Simply reducing the number per person or imposing a closing... would just concentrate the hunting into smaller time windows... small fish will still be killed and will not get a chance to grow larger and replenish the stock. It is important to let these fish get closer to their full size before allowing hunting of them. Imposing a higher minimum length would greatly reduce the numbers taken in the next few years.

A 12 inch hog is way too small.

—Anthony Segrich

From: beck@griffinestep.com [<mailto:beck@griffinestep.com>] **Sent:** Wednesday, August 26, 2015 5:23 PM **To:** Mike Collins <mike.collins@safmc.net> **Subject:** Hogfish closure & future ACL questions

Mike,

Myself and most others in the Wilmington NC diving community were blindsided by SAMFC amendment 37 learning to little to late to feel we had any input. We feel like no one at SAMFC has any idea about our until recently all but untouched Hogfish fishery. We as a community have for years enjoyed the abundance of Hogfish off our coast. Our shallow water offshore habitat sustains far more large demersal fish than our neighbors to the south. They are an important part of our diving lifestyle. Until recently, commercial pressure on the species in our area had been all but nonexistent until commercial spearfishing boats from florida migrated up to greener pastures equipped with onboard compressors for multi day trips. They will spend days working ledge after ledge taking every last hogfish off before moving on to the next one. We as a community could not be more steadfastly opposed to this and it is with great confusing that we see local recreational fisherman thrown under the bus in favor of commercial interests. I think the recreational ACL allotments in your proposal of 459-510 fish for our management area is ridiculous. I don't think anyone really cares anything about the interest of a handful of out of state commercial guys unloading thousands of pounds off at the dock and sleeping on their boat. This has been a concern of ours for the last few years but now we learn that the recreational season has been abruptly shut down for the year during our prettiest time of season to get offshore as recreational divers. The Hogfish are still there in bigger numbers than most other gamefish I can assure you. Its not going to be a hundred or so local divers that cripple the fishery, rather the commercial interests that are increasing their presence every year.

I do not want to speak out of turn here but want to be sure our true feelings and knowledge on this issue is conveyed. Seeing as SAMFC has little or no knowledge about recreational harvest or stock density/numbers off the cape fear coast I'm sure we could prove to be an asset for you. I can

probably account for most of the offshore spear fisherman in the area and would be able to drum up support moving forward for common sense and sustainable measures. I look forward to hearing back from you at some point.

Respectfully,

Beck Smith

Subject: FW: Hogfish
Date: Friday, September 4, 2015 at 8:37:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Myra Brouwer
To: Myra Brouwer

From: "beck@griffinestep.com" <beck@griffinestep.com>
Date: Thursday, August 27, 2015 at 3:19 PM
To: Myra Brouwer <myra.brouwer@safmc.net>
Subject: Re: Hogfish

Myra, thank you for providing the information in a concise manner. I will be sure to share and have any responses include common sense suggestions for management. Mine would be if action must be taken: Season closure to mirror Federal Grouper (Jan 1st until April 30th), 3 fish per person per day, minimum fork length 18 inches. No season closure due to ACL allotment until more reliable data for GA-NC can be attained from the source. More policing on the commercial harvest of fish using compressed gas and spear or gigging. When used commercially I believe this method is not sustainable. If it continues to be allowed I believe special limits, restrictions, and or seasons need to be in acted. If you could forward this on as well that would be great.

I forgot to ask: Is commercial harvest still allowed in federal waters? If so the Florida Commercial boats will have our offshore grassy bottoms all to themselves. My other concern: Shallow water habitat in south Florida where this catch data is gathered resides in state controlled waters correct? The continental shelf is only a few miles off the beach so this season closure won't even affect the offenders?

Thanks,

Beck

[GriffinEstep Website](#)

W. Beck Smith III GBDS, DIA 2528 Independence Blvd. Ste 104 | Wilmington, NC 28412
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Subject: Re: minutes of Council discussion re commercial trip limits for hogfish
Date: Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 1:43:57 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Pete Stafford
To: Myra Brouwer

Ms. Brouwer - I GREATLY appreciate the time you took in finding this info in the meeting minutes. It actually means a lot to know you thought about my question the day after.

The S/G Amendment 37 has some great ideas and some bad ones. I think division of the stock makes great sense. The southern florida hogfish stocks are in need of help. The GA-NC hogfish stock is stable and has been a great resource for both recreational and commercial fishermen for a long time. My data sources for my claim of a stable stock is based upon my personal catch logs and the NC DMF commercial catch records located here:

<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/statistics/comstat/hogfish>

Since the NC hogfish regulations were installed in 2010, our fishery has been very consistent.

I am especially concerned about Action 4, Alternative 2. Pending which sub alternative is favored, this would mean that the recreational harvest for the GA-NC stock would be 459 to 510 fish respectively. Based upon my recreational fishing experience, my commercial fishing experience, and my profession as a biologist. Alternative 2 of Action 4 would grossly retard our fishing from current conditions... Which are stable and currently support WAY more harvest in both the recreational and commercial sectors.

I do support an increased length limit to 15 inches. I do support an recreational bag limit of 4 fish. These are acceptable regulations. To limit the recreational harvest to 459-510 fish without a proper stock assessment is not necessary.

Thank you again for your time and effort on responding to my question. I hope to provide more input on this Amendment in the future.

Pete Stafford

On Tue, Aug 11, 2015 at 12:45 PM, Myra Brouwer <Myra.Brouwer@safmc.net> wrote:

Mr. Stafford,
Attached please find the minutes of the Snapper Grouper Committee discussions from the June 2015 meeting in Key West, FL. The discussion pertaining to trip limits for hogfish mirroring the NC regulations starts on pdf page 78. I have highlighted the beginning of the pertinent portion of the discussion to make it easier for you to find. I hope this will answer your question as to why the Council did not consider a similar regulation as is currently in place for NC.
Kind regards,

Myra

Myra Brouwer
Fishery Scientist
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive; Ste 201
Charleston, SC 29405
[\(843\) 571-4366](tel:(843)571-4366)
www.safmc.net

Subject: Hogfish Closure

Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2015 at 12:58:27 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: JJCiulla .

To: Myra Brouwer

Hi Myra,

It's my understanding that you are looking into a possible amendment to the recent Hogfish closure, possibly one which would treat the NC-GA and Florida populations separately.

I appreciate your consideration of input from those of us affected by the closure. In my case, I can provide input on both populations of fish -- I have a boat in NC and regularly spearfish offshore here, and I often travel to FL and spearfish out of Jupiter and Islamorada. I agree with your assessment, that the populations are very different. In Florida, the Hogfish are easy to get to, often less than a 15-minute boat ride away, and sometimes even accessible from shore. In NC, the closest to shore I've seen them is about 25 miles. Hogfish in FL are scarce, and I've never seen one down there more than maybe 18 inches in length. In NC, I have seen the population go down a bit over the past 5 years or so, but they are still plentiful, with nice males still in the 15-18 pound (or more) range. Most of us here wouldn't even think about shooting a 14" Hogfish, we leave them to grow.

If you can treat the populations separately, I'd suggest further study of the NC-GA population before changing anything. The current limit is 5 Hogfish. We seldom use up that limit anyway, as do most divers, as folks here are selective about the fish we take. If there is an absolute need to change something from the regs we had before, then consider increasing the size limit to perhaps 16 inches. Almost all Hogfish are taken by spearfishermen. They don't swim very fast, and it is very easy for us to gauge size, so the risk of under-sized fish mortality is extremely low..

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact me if I can provide any further information.

Joe Ciulla

(919) 434-1681

Subject: FW: SAFMC - Contact Form

Date: Thursday, September 3, 2015 at 9:29:22 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Myra Brouwer

From: Amber Vonharten <Amber.Vonharten@safmc.net>

Date: Wednesday, September 2, 2015 at 1:59 PM

To: Myra Brouwer <myra.brouwer@safmc.net>

Subject: FW: SAFMC - Contact Form

Can't remember if I forwarded you this one?? Not really a comment but related to hogfish.

From: noreply@nassauwebdesign.com [mailto:noreply@nassauwebdesign.com]

Sent: Saturday, August 29, 2015 9:21 AM

To: Amber Vonharten; webadmin@nassauwebdesign.com

Subject: SAFMC - Contact Form

SAFMC - Contact Form

NAME: Wills Campbell

PHONE: 305 896 0330

EMAIL ADDRESS: buddycampbelljr@gmail.com

MESSAGE:

I would like to know how you get your figures you quote in the news paper. I've been fishing for about 60years and no one has ever stoped me and asked how many fish do I have and what are they. I live in Key Largo Fl. and in 20 years not one person has ever asked about how many hogfish have I cought.

I have seen pictures of very large hogfish spearfished off S.C. and Ga. and from the Bahamas, but never here in the Keys. What an I to do when I bring up a hogfish from 150 ft. and he's dead from the presure??? I do catch hogfish that deep on rod and reel, which is the only way I fish.

SAFMC - Contact Form

NAME: Wills Campbell

PHONE: 305 896 0330

EMAIL ADDRESS: buddycampbelljr@gmail.com

MESSAGE:

YOU people are painting with a very wide brush!! DO you know the difference between a spearfisherman and a rod and reel fisherman, I don't think so, I consider myself a recreational fisherman but I fish with a rod and reel not a speargun. Because of spearfisherman I'm being penalized on catching HOGFISH, because YOU don't know that hogfish can be caught on hook and line. I am a 77year old man and my wife and we catch a few hogfish from time to time on rod and reel, but now because of spearfisherman, we can't. Need new category.

MESSAGE:

You need to know the difference between a spearfisherman and a rod and reel fisherman. The spearfisherman are the ones killing all the HOG FISH, but because YOU call them recreational fisherman, you are keeping me from catching the HOG FISH on a hook and line because YOU don't know that someone can catch them on a hook and line.

You as a management council should know the difference. The hogfish is very easy , as you say to spear, then that should be the ones regulated. Don't paint with a broad brush!!!!#

SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 23 AND 37 SCOPING WEBINAR
August 10, 2015

PUBLIC COMMENT: All of us that are spear fishermen underwater know that there is a great quantity of hogs and such that are captured down in Florida Keys and South Florida and stuff. It kind of seems like the middle part of Florida, going all the way north there is a much less quantity of hogfish that is around there being caught. My question is why are we turning around and making the dividing line the Florida border when in reality it really should be more like around West Palm to the Boynton area, because that is where most of those hogfish are being caught.

MS. BROUWER: That's an interesting question. The reason I think is because the genetic evidence that was used to determine the various stocks indicated that was an appropriate dividing line. I think that separation was made based on that as opposed to abundance. I would be more than happy to – I don't have that paper in front of me and I can't remember off the top of my head, but I would be glad to either provide it to you or check with my colleagues and get back to you on that.

PUBLIC COMMENT: I appreciate that. I think what we're looking at is when we looked at SEDAR 37 and looked at the data and such that was there, it was very difficult to determine from the landings where they turn around there and coming off from. They were lumping everything for Florida into one. That is when we're looking at quantities. I understand your point about looking at DNA and the types of hogfish and stuff. But when actually looking at the numbers of what's coming through, in the spearfishing community there is no question that anything south of Boynton is a much, much higher catch rate.

MS. BROUWER: I understand. Okay, I would be happy, like I said, to look into this some more and get back to you. I don't have any additional information that would help you at this point. We have a question that was sent in and I'm going to read this. Have the North Carolina DMF regulations been considered in the scoping process? The regulations are as follows: North Carolina Department of Marine Fisheries has issued a proclamation restricting hogfish catches for both recreational and commercial interests. The following is a North Carolina DMF for North Carolina recreational fishermen, noting the North Carolina regulation of five hogfish per day at 12 inches fork length, subsection 8; and then there is a link that is provided. Then it says in addition to the recreational regulations, the North Carolina DMF has installed the following commercial hogfish regulations; 12 inch fork length minimum, 150 pounds single day trip limit, and a 750 pound per week limit. Again, there is a link provided.

Yes, Mr. Stafford, the council did consider the regulations that are currently in place in North Carolina, and in fact the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel made a recommendation that the council consider these as well. When the council met in June, they opted to not mirror the same regulations that are currently in place at the state level for the federal management. The answer to your question is, yes, they did talk about this. I would be happy to go through the minutes and provide the rationale that they used. Obviously, I can't remember off the top of my head what the rationale was, but they did discuss it. Are there additional questions? If there are no additional questions for Amendment 37, then we'll go ahead and get into the presentation for Regulatory Amendment 23, which is much shorter.

Transcribed By:
Graham Transcriptions, Inc.
August 2015

SG ANNO 37 + REG ANNO 23 SCOPINH AUG 10, 2015

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