

Summary of Scoping Comments

Snapper Grouper Amendment 41 (Mutton Snapper)

Scoping hearings for Snapper Grouper Amendment 41 were conducted the week of January 25, 2016 in Georgia and the Carolinas. Scoping in Florida took place the week of February 1, 2016. A Question & Answer webinar was held on January 21, 2016 but there were no members of the public in attendance. The South Atlantic Council also accepted written scoping comments on Amendment 41 from January 22 through February 10, 2016. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission held workshops concurrently with the scoping hearings in east Florida

Below is a summary of written comments received and those obtained during the hearings. Minutes for all the hearings and copies of all the written comments are also included herein.

- In general, the public felt that the current bag limit for mutton snapper (up to 10 within the snapper aggregate) is too high and favored a decrease in the bag limit. Opinions differed however, as to how much of a decrease and whether it should be implemented year-round or only during the spawning season.
- Most people supported a decrease in the bag limit anywhere from 5 five to 2 fish per person per day year round. Several supported 5 fish during regular season and 2 during spawning season but agreed that 3 fish year round would be simpler for fishermen and enforcement.
- There was some support for *per vessel* limits (10-12 per boat during spawning season) but the majority of commenters preferred *per person* limits.
- Suggestion of slot size in addition to the bag limit decrease. For instance, allow one fish over thirty-inches within the bag limit.
- Suggestions to consider increasing the minimum size limit to 18 inches, 20 inches, and 24 inches.
- Consider a larger size limit for “on the water” vs. “from shore” to also give shore fishermen access to the resource.
- Some support for prohibiting all fishing during the spawning months (May, June, July) or reducing bag limit to 2 per person.
- Suggestion to remove size limit but set bag limit at 2 per person per day year round. And only one fish over 25 inches.
- Close harvest in April and May. This would allow most fish to spawn at least once. If possible, close April through June.
- Fishermen who opposed a spawning season closure stated that they dive for grouper in May and expect to be able to also catch muttons at that time. If muttons were to be closed in May, those fishermen would be impacted.
- Concern that if too many older mutton snapper are harvested, the fishery may eventually follow the path of red snapper.

- Some not in favor of increasing size limit because of subsequent increase in regulatory discards. Consider regulations where a percentage of the catch can be undersize.
- Support for commercial trip limit and similar restrictions to recreational sector during the spawning months. However, there was general agreement that mutton snapper are not targeted commercially in the South Atlantic.
- Consider not specifying a “spawning season” because the fishery is dynamic and timing of spawning may shift.
- Suggestion to remove mutton snapper from the 10 snapper aggregate.
- Some for-hire captains not in favor of reducing bag limit.

I just want comment, if you want to help the fish go back to grow we not need more regulation on fishing we need regulated the government dumped millions gallons of contaminated Water in the Biscayne bay famous stinking Hole from Miami Dade Water and sewer Department, if a private company act like this the government will shut down the private company but who control the Government ?

Ps: I do not have any information of Broward county or Palm Beach but will Fantastic to find out what are they doing with the contaminated wasted water maybe they do the same. that alone will bring the fish back

Sincerely

MAGIN HERNANDEZ

- 1) Jared Guess (951 Caroline St., Key West, FL 33040; jguess26@hotmail.com)
Comment: I do not want Western Dry Rocks closed for fishing. I do not want hogfish restrictions raised or trip limits altered. I do not want mutton snapper regulations changed.
- 2) Griffin Helwig (951 Carolin St. Key West, FL 33040; captain@flatsfishingkeywest.com)
Comment: I do not want Western Dry Rocks closed for fishing. I do not want hogfish restrictions raised or trip limits altered. I do not want mutton snapper regulations changed.
- 3) Eric Evans (22 B 8th Ave., Key West, FL 33040; eevans2836@yahoo.com)
Comment: Closure of Western Dry Rocks (not needed). No trip limit on hogfish or muttons. Hogfish should not be limited but bigger than 15 inches.
- 4) Caul Massaulo (1325 Simonton St, Key West, FL 33040)
Comment: Closure to have limit of hogfish bad. "Have good data."

Myself and fellow group of Spearfishing friends would like to voice our opinion in regards to harvest of both species. I for one, am out Spearfishing one to two days a week in the Miami area. We as spear fishermen are very picky as to size and quality of fish we shoot. In regards to Mutton snapper I do feel that over the years I've seen less and less large mutton mostly in the 25"-35" range they are very scarce. We are for AM 41 being regulated and possibly seasoned to help regenerate larger populations of bigger mutton. Now in regards to Hogfish, I strongly agree that the population of hogfish is endangered at least the larger males for that matter. We do feel as a group that new regulations are very important for this species to thrive. We also feel tho that introducing a seasonal closure will hurt local captains businesses and commercial spearfisherman such as myself who target large hogfish for resale and customers during winter months, but instead it would be much more reasonable while still affective to bring size limits up from 12" to 16" or 17" with a 3 fish bag limit or maybe even adding hogfish to the snapper aggregate limit (even tho it isn't in the same species). Allowing for guys such as myself who make a living off of chartering Spearos during winter months who specifically dream of shooting large hogfish. Thank you very much for taking the time to read our message.

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I am a mutton snapper fisherman, and a very good one at it. I have learned to conserve thru out the years but it is not the same case for many of the fishermen out there. For us who target mutton snappers with the right technique it comes very easy to catch them. Although, not as easy as before I might add. But anyways, we can harvest them year around. Once Mutton Spawning season comes by it becomes a massacre, and we are protected by the law since we never go over our limit of 10 mutton snappers per fisherman. I say spawning season because nature does not go by months like we do, so the months change from year to year but are more or less from April-July, and then again from November-February when the real big spawners are caught. These seasons are too much of a temptation for any fishermen and the fishing does not stop until the limit has been reached. The pictures attached show the big catches, these are recent ones. The pictures also show the big Egos and are always a hit on the social websites with many Likes and so on. By the way, these are recreational catches, not commercial catches. Hook and line, manual and electric reels.

If we as fishermen cannot restrain ourselves from this huge kills of spawning fish, then we need help with laws and enforcement. We need to act now and be forced to stop this free for all before is too late. Thank you all for your dedication in this matter.

Sincerely, a Mutton Snapper addict. looking at himself in the mirror.













Regarding Amendment 41 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, I attended the Key West Workshop this past week and have the following comments:

I would support a spawning season designation of May - August.

I would support a regular season recreational aggregate bag limit of 4 fish/person/day for Mutton.

I would support a spawning season recreational aggregate bag limit of 2 fish/person/day for Mutton.

I would support a recreational vessel trip limit for Mutton of 4 fish per vessel per day during the spawning months and 8 per vessel per day during the regular season.

As an alternative, I would also support a recreational bag limit of 3 fish/person/day year round for Mutton for simplicity.

I would support a commercial trip limit for Mutton of 5 fish per vessel per day during the spawning months.

I would support making Mutton catch and release only at the Western Dry Rocks during the designated spawning season (versus closing the area).

In closing I'd also like to see an elimination of commercial long lining for Mutton Snapper as a legal means for harvesting the fish.

Please let me know if you have any questions about my statements.

Thank you, the hard work your doing in protecting our fisheries is much appreciated.

Respectfully Yours,
Mr. Stefan C Blache
Industrial Sector Portfolio Leader
IBM Global Technology Infrastructure Services
Phone: 313-407-7208
E-Mail: sblache@us.ibm.com

I am on the Board of Directors of the Islamorada Charter Boat Association, as well as an active For Hire Charter Captain in the South Atlantic fishery. I would like to submit the following comment on Proposed Snapper Grouper Amendment 41:

I support the new amendment as proposed.

Regards,

Capt. Jeffrey Dickman
jjd16@me.com

As the President of the Islamorada Charter boat association, on behalf of the members of the Islamorada Charter Boat Association, and as an active For Hire Charter multiple permit holder in the South Atlantic fishery I submit the following comments on Proposed Snapper Grouper Amendment 41.

We support the new Amendment as Proposed.

Thanks,

Capt. Greg Eklund
President Islamorada Charter Boat Association

Love fishing esp targeting mutton snapper but they are pretty scarce now in Juno Beach relative to a few years ago. I'm good with reducing numbers/day permitted (never reach that even close) but actually would like to see 15" (vs 16"), say max 3/person/day max 12boat/day for 6-pack boats. For larger boats, 2/ person/day with 24 /boat.

My wife's picture is in "wiki mutton snapper" in notes at bottom holding mutton!

-- Norman Hirsch

As a commercial fisherman who is active catching mutton snapper, I agree with the assessment that this fishery is not currently over fished. The commercial sector only has eighteen percent of the allowable quota, with 82% to recreational fishers.

This is an important part of most commercial fisherman in the South Florida area, since lobster season closes March 31 and stone crab season closes May 15. Most commercial fisherman turn to snapper fishing in the summer to survive economically. The summer months are much safer than the winter as there are many days where the seas are rough due to heavy winds and ground seas.

I have mentioned that I see plenty of mutton snapper while commercially diving for spiny lobster. I catch mutton snapper as by catch while surf fishing for pompano from Hollywood to Vero Beach. It is important to note that the shark population is an issue, I often lose fifteen or more fish a day due to sandbar and bull sharks. There is also a problem with goliath grouper eating the fish. It is felt by many fisherman that our stocks are influenced by the spawning fish to our south, Mexico, Belize and Cuba, also the Bahamas since we are on the northern part of their range.

In regard to action 7, I recommend alternative 1, no change in the current size restrictions. Lastly, some consideration should be given to opening up the shark fishery to cull out some of the shark population.

Thank you for your consideration,

Robert Neale
954-224-6026

Hello,

My name is Chase Tole. I live in Fort Lauderdale, FL born and raised and I am also a local spearfisherman. I completely support lowering daily bag limits on mutton snappers to a maximum of 2 per harvester per day max. I also completely support a closed season for their spawn from April through June. I have personally witnessed the decrease in mutton snapper populations both juvenile and adults in the areas that I dive. I dive in Palm Beach all the way down to Key West.

Best Regards,

Chase Tole