

**Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**  
**Black Grouper Fishery Performance Report**  
**Discussion Questions**  
**April 2026**

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) is being asked to provide information to develop a fishery performance report (FPR) for black grouper (view other FPRs [HERE](#)). The purpose of the FPR is to assemble information from AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. The FPR for black grouper will be provided to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SEP) and used to inform future management.

The questions listed below are intended to provoke thoughts about the current state and changes to the black grouper stock and fishery. However, some questions may not be applicable at this time. The scope of the FPR is not limited to the questions listed below, as the intent is to incorporate all relevant observational information that can help with assessing and developing management measures for black grouper.

Notes from the current black grouper FPR are listed under each of the question categories. The AP is asked to review these notes to determine whether they are still applicable and respond with any updates that should be made.

**Questions for Advisory Panel:**

The AP is asked to provide the following information about black grouper based on their expertise, as appropriate:

- 1) Have there been **substantial changes** in the black grouper fishery since 2021? If so, describe the timing, location, and what you think caused the change?

**2) Fishing Behavior and Catch Levels**

**Update Questions:**

- When/where are the fish available? Has this changed?
- Has the size of fish you are catching changed? If so, please describe the trend.
- Have there been effort shifts to/from black grouper? If so, please describe, including the time frame for when these shifts occurred.
- Have there been considerable changes in fishing techniques and/or gears used to target black grouper? If so, please describe, including the time frame for when these changes occurred.
- How much fishing for black grouper typically occurs during the day versus at night? Has this changed?
- Do you actively avoid fishing for black grouper in certain areas to avoid catching undersized fish or highly regulated fish (e.g., red snapper) to lessen bait loss and how feasible is it to avoid black grouper?
- What do you see in terms of discards in the commercial sector? In the recreational

sector?

- How often are black grouper discarded? What are the reasons they are discarded?
- Do you encounter black grouper as bycatch when fishing for other species? If so, what species are being targeted on these trips?
- Do you think discard mortality is a significant factor for this species? Has this changed? If so, please describe, including the time frame when the change occurred.

### **3) Social and Economic Influences**

#### **Update Questions:**

- For the commercial sector, how has price and demand for black grouper changed?
  - Is there increased demand for a specific size of black grouper (e.g. plate sized)?
- How has demand for charter/headboat trips targeting black grouper changed?
- Among the species you target, how important are black grouper to your overall business (charter or commercial)?
- What communities are dependent on the black grouper fishery?
- Have changes in infrastructure (docks, marinas, fish houses) affected fishing opportunities for black grouper?
- How have fishermen and communities adapted to changes in the black grouper fishery?

### **4) Management measures**

#### **Update Questions:**

- Are there new management measures that the Council should consider or are there existing management measures (such as size limit, trip limit, bag limit, season, etc.) that should be changed?
- Are the current ACL and allocations appropriate for each sector?

### **5) Environmental, Ecological, and Habitat Concerns**

#### **Update Questions:**

- Do you perceive that the abundance of black grouper has changed over the past ten years? If so, how has it changed?
- When/where are the fish available, and has this changed? For instance, has there been any shift in catch (annually/seasonally) inshore/offshore or north/south? If so, please describe.
- Has the size of the fish that you typically encounter changed? If so, could you briefly describe the trend?
- Have you noticed any unique effects of environmental conditions on black grouper? If so, please describe.

- What are your observations on the timing and length of the black grouper spawning season in your area (time periods when fish are observed with large ovaries or eggs spilling out externally or while venting)?
- What do you see now in terms of recruitment? Where are the small fish? Are large and small fish found in the same locations?
- Have you observed changes in catch depth or apparent bottom type fished on?
- How have sea conditions (monthly/seasonally) affected fishable days?
- Have you noticed any change in the species caught with black grouper over the years or seasonally?

## 6) Other

### Update Question:

- What else is important for the Council to know about black grouper?

### Stock Risk Rating

Under the ABC Control Rule, the Council incorporates an evaluation of how much risk of overfishing it should be willing to accept based on biological, fishery (human interaction), and environmental factors affecting each stock. Input on these factors will be provided ahead of each assessment by the appropriate advisory panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Council will consider this input in determining the appropriate risk level (conveyed as a Stock Risk Rating of High, Medium, or Low) to apply in the ABC Control Rule. Risk Ratings will be used with relative biomass levels estimated through a stock assessment to determine the probability of overfishing that would be acceptable for that stock (P\*).

Final Risk Scores (numeric) for all South Atlantic snapper grouper species and dolphin and wahoo are ranked and apportioned into thirds to determine the final Stock Risk Ratings. Based on current scores, stocks are considered High Risk if their Final Risk Score is less than 2.00, Medium Risk if their Final Risk Score is between 2.00 and 2.35, and Low Risk if their Final Risk Score is greater than 2.35.

### AP Action:

- Review initial scores for each attribute. Comment whether any scores seem unreasonable, providing input on why and how scores should be adjusted.
- Comment on any special circumstances that should be considered in addition to the included information when evaluating attributes of the black grouper fishery.