

Amendment 41 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region



Options Paper (8/21/15)



Amendment 41 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 41) would address fishing level specifications for mutton snapper in response to the new stock assessment and revise management measures.

Why is the Council Considering Action?

Snapper Grouper Amendment 11 (SAFMC 1999) and the Generic Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures Amendment (GMFMC 2011) specified $F_{30\%}$ as a proxy for F_{MSY} and the corresponding yield as a proxy for Maximum Sustainable Yield, and specified the yield at $F_{40\%}$ as a proxy for the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC). The SEDAR 15A (2008) Assessment Workshop panel did not recommend changing any of the management criteria for mutton snapper at that time.

An update to the stock assessment for mutton snapper in the southeastern U.S. (SEDAR 15A Update 2015) was conducted in 2015 with data through 2013. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the results at their April 28-30, 2015 meeting and made the following fishing level recommendations:

Mutton Snapper recommendations from SEDAR 15A Update (2015).

Criteria	Deterministic	Probabilistic
Overfished evaluation	Not overfished: $SSB/SSB_{F_{30\%}}=1.13$	
Overfishing evaluation	Not overfishing: $F/F_{30\%SPR}=0.65$	
MFMT ($F_{30\%SPR}$)	0.18	
$SSB_{30\%SPR}$ (lbs females)	4,649,200	
MSST (lbs females)	4,137,788	
Y at $F_{30\%SPR}$ (MSY proxy, lbs)	912,500	
Y at $F_{40\%SPR}$ (lbs)	874,000	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment		20%
P-Star		30%

OFL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed (lbs)	Discards (lbs)	Landed (numbers)	Discards (numbers)
2014	664,876	30,708	113,300	17,341
2015	664,877	44,496	125,245	25,215
2016	713,492	54,005	148,995	29,298
2017	751,711	55,962	164,150	29,660
2018	793,823	56,994	173,656	30,071
2019	835,318	58,170	180,716	30,430
2020	850,077	58,857	184,868	30,780

ABC RECOMMENDATIONS (P* = 0.03)				
Year	Landed (lbs)	Discards (lbs)	Landed (numbers)	Discards (numbers)
2014	664,900	30,700	113,300	17,300
2015	664,900	44,800	125,800	25,400
2016	692,000	52,800	145,400	28,600
2017	717,200	53,700	157,500	28,400
2018	746,800	53,900	164,500	28,300
2019	774,400	54,400	169,300	28,300
2020	798,300	54,500	172,700	28,300

The Comprehensive ACL Amendment (SAFMC 2011) established a jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils for the mutton snapper ABC based on the Florida Keys (Monroe County) jurisdictional boundary between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils: the South Atlantic Council was allocated 82% of the ABC and the Gulf Council received 18% of the ABC (established using 50% of average landings from 1990-2008 + 50% of average landings from 2006-2008). The following parameters (pounds whole weight; lbs ww) were implemented for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment:

Parameter	Value
OFL	1,515,300
ABC	926,600
ACL	926,600
Comm ACL	157,707
Rec ACL	768,893
Rec ACT	668,937

The current commercial annual catch limit (ACL) (17.023851%) is 157,743 lbs ww and the recreational ACL (82.976149%) is 768,857 lbs ww (*NOTE: The commercial allocation in the Comp ACL was 17.02% and the recreational allocation was 82.98%. However the ACLs that were implemented were calculated using this allocation to 6 decimal places instead of 2).*

The Council needs to take action to implement biological benchmarks and fishing levels recommended by the latest stock assessment update/SSC review. In addition, the Council may modify existing management measures for mutton snapper to achieve the desired level of harvest.

Possible Actions and Alternatives

Action 1. Specify Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for mutton snapper

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the current definition of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for mutton snapper. Currently, MSY equals the yield produced by F_{MSY} . $F_{30\%SPR}$ is used as the F_{MSY} proxy.

Alternative 2. Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) equals the yield produced by F_{MSY} or the F_{MSY} proxy. MSY and F_{MSY} are recommended by the most recent SEDAR/SSC.

Alternatives	Equation	F_{MSY}	MSY Values (lbs whole weight)
Alternative 1 (No Action)	Do not modify the current definition of MSY for mutton snapper. Currently, MSY equals the yield produced by F_{MSY} . $F_{30\%SPR}$ is used as the F_{MSY} proxy.	$F_{30\%SPR}$	Unknown
Alternative 2	MSY equals the yield produced by F_{MSY} or the F_{MSY} proxy. MSY and F_{MSY} are recommended by the most recent SEDAR/SSC.	$F_{30\%SPR}$	912,500

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 1 IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 1 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 1 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 1 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 1 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Action 2. Specify Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) for mutton snapper

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the current definition of minimum stock size threshold (MSST) for mutton snapper. $MSST = SSB_{MSY} ((1-M) \text{ or } 0.5, \text{ whichever is greater})$.

Alternative 2. Minimum stock size threshold (MSST) = 50% of SSB_{MSY}

Alternative 3. Minimum stock size threshold (MSST) = 75% of SSB_{MSY}

Alternatives	MSST Equation	M	MSST Values (lbs whole weight)
1 (No Action)	Do not change the current definition of MSST for mutton snapper. MSST equals $SSB_{MSY} ((1-M) \text{ or } 0.5, \text{ whichever is greater})$.	0.11	4,137,788
2	$MSST = 50\% \text{ of } SSB_{MSY}$	0.17	2,324,600
3	$MSST = 75\% \text{ of } SSB_{MSY}$	0.17	3,486,900

Discussion:

Regulatory Amendment 21, effective November 6, 2014, changed the definition for MSST for select snapper grouper species with low natural mortality (M) from $MSST = SSB_{MSY} ((1-M) \text{ or } 0.5, \text{ whichever is greater})$ to $MSST = 75\% SSB_{MSY}$. Other snapper grouper amendments changed MSST to 75% SSB_{MSY} for snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and red grouper (Amendments 15A, 15B, and 24, respectively). When the natural mortality rate is low, less than 0.25, even small fluctuations in biomass due to natural variations not related to fishing mortality may cause a stock to vary between an overfished or rebuilt condition. When a species is identified as overfished, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires that a plan be implemented to rebuild the stock. The snapper grouper species with low natural mortality rates addressed in Regulatory Amendment 21 were red snapper, blueline tilefish, gag, black grouper, yellowtail snapper, vermilion snapper, red porgy, and greater amberjack. Redefining MSST for these species was done to help prevent unnecessary overfished designations when small drops in biomass are due to natural variation in recruitment or other environmental variables, and ensure that rebuilding plans are applied to stocks when truly appropriate. The SEDAR 15A Update (2015) estimated natural mortality for mutton snapper at 0.17, which is within the range of natural mortality values for species addressed in Regulatory Amendment 21 (0.08 – 0.23).

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 2 IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 2 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 2 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 2 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 2 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Action 3. Revise Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Optimum Yield (OY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region

Alternative 1 (No action). Do not adjust annual catch limits (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic. The current ABC and OY for mutton snapper is 926,600 lbs ww. The current commercial ACL is 157,743 lbs ww and the recreational ACL is 768,857 lbs ww. *(NOTE: The commercial allocation in the Comp ACL was 17.02% and the recreational allocation was 82.98%. However the ACLs that were implemented were calculated using this allocation to 6 decimal places instead of 2).*

Alternative 2. The jurisdictional allocation for the South Atlantic is 82% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Specify annual catch limits (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for the South Atlantic using the existing sector allocations (17.02% commercial and 82.98% recreational) and specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish:

Sub-alternative 2a. ACL = OY = ABC.

Sub-alternative 2b. ACL = OY = 95% ABC.

Sub-alternative 2c. ACL = OY = 90% ABC.

ACL = OY = ABC (Sub-alternative 2a)						
Year	ABC (SA and Gulf)	SA ABC (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)	comm ACL (lbs ww)	rec ACL (lbs ww)	rec ACL (numbers)
2015	664,900	545,218	545,218	92,796	452,422	109,545
2016	692,000	567,440	567,440	96,578	470,862	114,010
2017	717,200	588,104	588,104	100,095	488,009	118,162
2018	746,800	612,376	612,376	104,226	508,150	123,039
2019	774,400	635,008	635,008	108,078	526,930	127,586
2020 onwards	798,300	654,606	654,606	111,414	543,192	131,523
ACL = OY = 95% ABC (Sub-alternative 2b)						
2015	664,900	545,218	517,957	88,156	429,801	104,068
2016	692,000	567,440	539,068	91,749	447,319	108,310
2017	717,200	588,104	558,699	95,091	463,608	112,254
2018	746,800	612,376	581,757	99,015	482,742	116,887
2019	774,400	635,008	603,258	102,674	500,583	121,207
2020 onwards	798,300	654,606	621,876	105,843	516,032	124,947
ACL = OY = 90% ABC (Sub-alternative 2c)						
2015	664,900	545,218	490,696	83,516	407,180	98,591
2016	692,000	567,440	510,696	86,920	423,776	102,609
2017	717,200	588,104	529,294	90,086	439,208	106,346
2018	746,800	612,376	551,138	93,804	457,335	110,735
2019	774,400	635,008	571,507	97,271	474,237	114,827
2020 onwards	798,300	654,606	589,145	100,273	488,873	118,371

Note: An average weight of 4.13 lbs was used to convert the recreational ACL from pounds to numbers of fish. Source: M. Errigo, SAFMC staff.

Discussion

Regardless of the annual catch limit (ACL) selected, catches in 2012 and 2013 (**Table 3**) show that the ACL is likely to be harvested once implemented. The Council is considering changes to the recreational bag limit to spread out the harvest and prevent a recreational closure.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 3 IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 3 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 3 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 3 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 3 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Action 4. Revise Recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the annual catch target (ACT) for mutton snapper for the recreational sector. The current ACT is 668,906 lbs ww and applies to mutton snapper throughout the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction. The ACT = recreational ACL*(1-PSE) or ACL*0.5, whichever is greater, and where Percent Standard Error (PSE) = 13% = average PSE 2005-2009 (for South Atlantic only).

Alternative 2. Revise the annual catch target (ACT) for mutton snapper for the recreational sector and specify the recreational ACT in numbers of fish.

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

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

Sub-alternative 2c. ACT = 75% recreational ACL.

Year	PSE
2010	10.2
2011	15.2
2012	21.2
2013	15.1
2014	17.9
Average	15.9

Note: PSE = Percent Standard Error. The PSE is a measure of precision presented for recreational estimates. The higher the PSE, the less precise the estimate.

ACL = OY = ABC								
Year	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Rec ACL (lbs ww)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2a)	Rec ACT (#s) (2a)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2b)	Rec ACT (#s) (2b)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2c)	Rec ACT (#s) (2c)
2015	545,218	452,422	380,487	92,128	384,559	93,114	339,316	82,159
2016	567,440	470,862	395,995	95,883	400,232	96,908	353,146	85,508
2017	588,104	488,009	410,415	99,374	414,807	100,438	366,007	88,622
2018	612,376	508,150	427,354	103,476	431,927	104,583	381,112	92,279
2019	635,008	526,930	443,148	107,300	447,890	108,448	395,197	95,689
2020 onwards	654,606	543,192	456,825	110,611	461,713	111,795	407,394	98,643
ACL = OY = 95%ABC								
2015	517,957	429,801	361,462	87,521	365,331	88,458	322,351	78,051
2016	539,068	447,319	376,195	91,088	380,221	92,063	335,489	81,232
2017	558,699	463,608	389,895	94,406	394,067	95,416	347,706	84,190
2018	581,757	482,742	405,986	98,302	410,331	99,354	362,057	87,665
2019	603,258	500,583	420,990	101,935	425,496	103,026	375,437	90,905
2020 onwards	621,876	516,032	433,983	105,081	438,628	106,205	387,024	93,710

ACL = OY = 90%ABC								
Year	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Rec ACL (lbs ww)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2a)	Rec ACT (#s) (2a)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2b)	Rec ACT (#s) (2b)	Rec ACT (lbs ww) (2c)	Rec ACT (#s) (2c)
2015	490696	407,180	346,103	83,802	346,103	83,802	305,385	73,943
2016	510696	423,776	360,209	87,218	360,209	87,218	317,832	76,957
2017	529294	439,208	373,327	90,394	373,327	90,394	329,406	79,759
2018	551138	457,335	388,734	94,124	388,734	94,124	343,001	83,051
2019	571507	474,237	403,101	97,603	403,101	97,603	355,678	86,121
2020 onwards	589145	488,873	415,542	100,615	415,542	100,615	366,655	88,778

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 4 IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 4 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 4 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 4 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 4 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Note: the following actions were originally included in the Joint South Florida Amendment. Council guidance (SA and Gulf) at the June 2015 was to move them to Amendment 41. Proposed changes are shown to apply to SA only.

Action 5. Modify Mutton Snapper Recreational Bag Limit in Gulf of Mexico and in the South Atlantic

Alternative 1 (No Action). Mutton snapper is part of the aggregate 10 snapper bag limit in the Gulf of Mexico, the South Atlantic, and the State of Florida. In the Gulf of Mexico, the 10 snapper-per-person aggregate includes all snapper species in the reef fish management unit except red snapper, vermilion snapper, and lane snapper (Table 9). In the South Atlantic, the 10 snapper-per-person aggregate includes all snapper species in the snapper grouper management unit except red snapper and vermilion snapper (Table 9). Cubera snapper less than 30 inches total length (TL) are included in the 10 fish bag limit. The aggregate 10 snapper bag limit includes a maximum of 2 cubera snapper per person (not to exceed 2 per/vessel) for fish 30 inches TL or larger off Florida. Note: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the State of Florida regulations include mutton snapper in the 10 snapper bag limit.

Alternative 2. Remove mutton snapper from the recreational 10 snapper aggregate bag limit and change the recreational bag limit for mutton snapper during the regular season (July-April) and during the spawning season (May-June).

Sub-alternative 2a. 10 fish/person/day in the regular season, 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Sub-alternative 2b. 5 fish/person/day in the regular season, 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Sub-alternative 2c. 4 fish/person/day in the regular season, 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Alternative 3: Retain mutton snapper within the aggregate recreational 10 snapper aggregate bag limit in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, but specify bag limits for mutton snapper within the snapper-recreational aggregate bag limit during the regular season (July-April) and during the spawning season (May-June).

Sub-alternative 3a. Within the aggregate recreational snapper bag limit, no more than 10 fish/person/day in the regular season and no more than 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season may be mutton snapper.

Sub-alternative 3b. Within the aggregate recreational snapper bag limit, no more than 5 fish/person/day in the regular season and no more than 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season may be mutton snapper.

Sub-alternative 3c. Within the aggregate recreational snapper bag limit, no more than 4 fish/person/day in the regular season and no more than 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season may be mutton snapper.

Discussion:

There is concern by the public regarding fishing effort on mutton snapper spawning aggregations during the May-June peak spawning season in the Florida Keys despite the healthy status of the mutton snapper stock. In 2010, the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) recommended that the South Atlantic Council consider a spawning area closure or a seasonal closure in May and June of each year. Furthermore, the AP recommended that the mutton snapper bag limit be reduced to 3 fish per person per day. The most recent stock assessment of mutton snapper in the southeastern United States (SEDAR 15A Update 2015) indicated that mutton snapper are neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Currently, mutton snapper is part of the 10 snapper aggregate (**Table 1**). Current regulations for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Species composition of the 10-snapper aggregate in the South Atlantic.

South Atlantic
Gray snapper
Mutton snapper
Yellowtail snapper
Cubera snapper
Queen snapper
Blackfin snapper
Silk snapper
Dog snapper*
Lane snapper
Mahogany snapper*

*Proposed for removal from the Fishery Management Unit (Amendment 35).

Table 2. Current recreational mutton snapper fishing regulations in State waters off Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, and the South Atlantic (June 2015).

Species	Regulations	State Waters Gulf and South Atlantic	Federal Waters Gulf of Mexico	Federal Waters South Atlantic
Mutton Snapper	Size Limit	16" TL		
	Bag Limit (per person/day)	10 snapper aggregate (per person/day)		
	Season	Year round		

The peak of mutton snapper recreational landings occurred during the May-June spawning season (Wave 3) in the South Atlantic during 2012 and 2013 (**Table 3**). Impacts of various bag limits for 2011-2013 are shown in **Table 4**.

The main difference between **Alternatives 2** and **3** is that **Alternative 2** removes mutton snapper from the snapper recreational aggregate bag limit, while **Alternative 3** retains mutton snapper within the snapper recreational aggregate bag limit. Both **Alternatives 2** and **3** establish specific bag limits for mutton snapper during the regular and spawning seasons, respectively. For both alternatives, **Sub-alternatives 2a** and **3a** consider maintaining the recreational bag limit

of 10 fish/person/day during the July-April regular season, and reducing the recreational bag limit to 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season. **Sub-alternatives 2a and 3a** would be expected to reduce recreational harvest during the May-June (Wave 3) spawning season by 22% for the headboat sector and 20% for the private/charter sector; however, there would be no reduction in recreational harvest during July-April (**Table 4**). **Sub-alternatives 2b and 3b** would specify a 5 fish/person/day for the recreational sector during July-April, and 2 fish/person/day during the May-June spawning season. **Sub-alternatives 2b and 3b** would be expected to reduce recreational harvest during the regular season by 6% for the headboat sector, and 4% for the private/charter sectors. **Sub-alternatives 2c and 3c** would specify a 4 fish/person/day for the recreational sector during July-April, and 2 fish/person/day during the May-June spawning season. **Sub-alternatives 2c and 3c** would be expected to reduce recreational harvest during the regular season by 9% for the headboat sector, and 5% for the private/charter sectors. A 2 fish/person/day spawning season recreational bag limit would be expected to reduce harvest by 22% and 20% for the headboat and private/charter sectors, respectively during the May-June spawning season (**Table 4**).

Table 3. South Atlantic recreational (private, charter, and headboat) mutton snapper landings by wave.

Year	1 (J/F)	2 (M/A)	3 (M/J)	4 (J/A)	5 (S/O)	6 (N/D)	Total
2012	46,282	102,210	182,880	77,015	27,275	34,366	470,028
2013	50,961	36,208	175,774	91,913	90,689	36,186	481,731

Source: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/index.html.

Table 4. Percent reductions in landings for various bag limits generated from South Atlantic recreational landings for the years 2011-2013. The reductions were calculated in terms of mutton snapper numbers with respect to dataset (MRIP and headboat) and non-spawning (July to April) and spawning (May-June) season.

Bag Limit	MRIP			Headboat		
	Jul-Apr	May-Jun	All Year	Jul-Apr	May-Jun	All Year
10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
9	0.2	1.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3
8	0.4	2.5	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.7
7	1.3	3.8	1.8	1.3	2.0	1.5
6	2.3	5.1	2.9	2.9	3.8	3.1
5	3.5	6.3	4.1	5.5	6.2	5.7
4	5.1	8.4	5.8	9.4	9.7	9.5
3	8.5	12.7	9.3	15.3	14.7	15.2
2	14.1	20.3	15.3	25.0	21.7	24.2
1	29.3	34.2	30.3	37.5	32.4	36.3

The distribution of mutton snapper catch-per-angler is shown in **Figure 2**, which shows that most anglers catch three or fewer mutton snapper. Furthermore, most of the mutton snapper landings are from the Southeast (**Figure 3**) data collection area, which is in the South Atlantic Council jurisdiction.

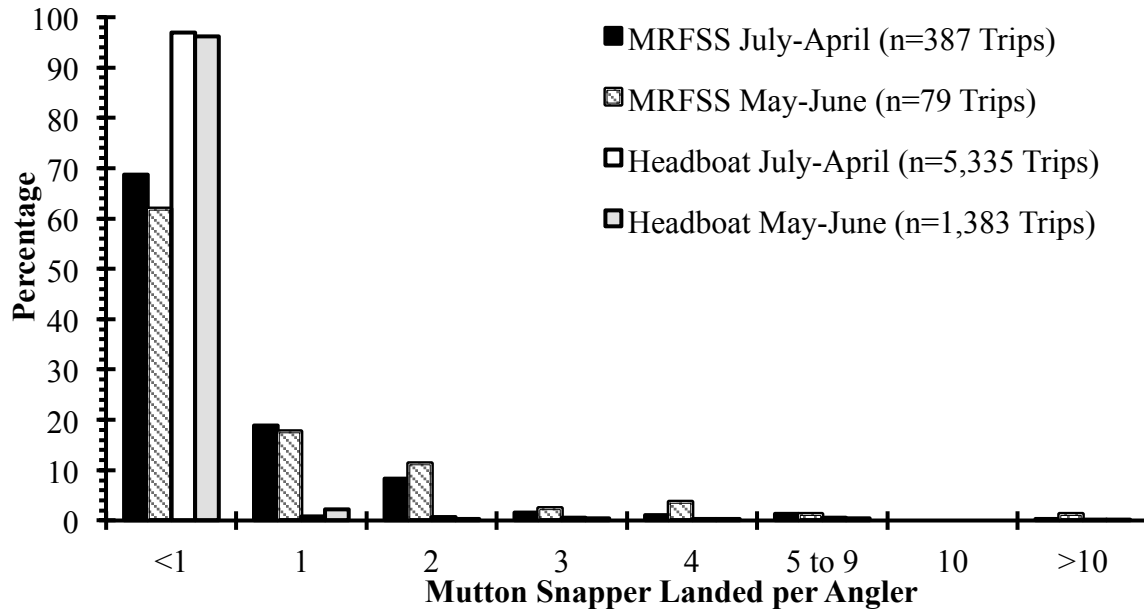


Figure 2. Distribution of South Atlantic mutton snapper landed per angler by season from the two recreational datasets (MRIP and Headboat) from 2011 to 2013. The regular season is from July to August and the spawning season is from May to June.

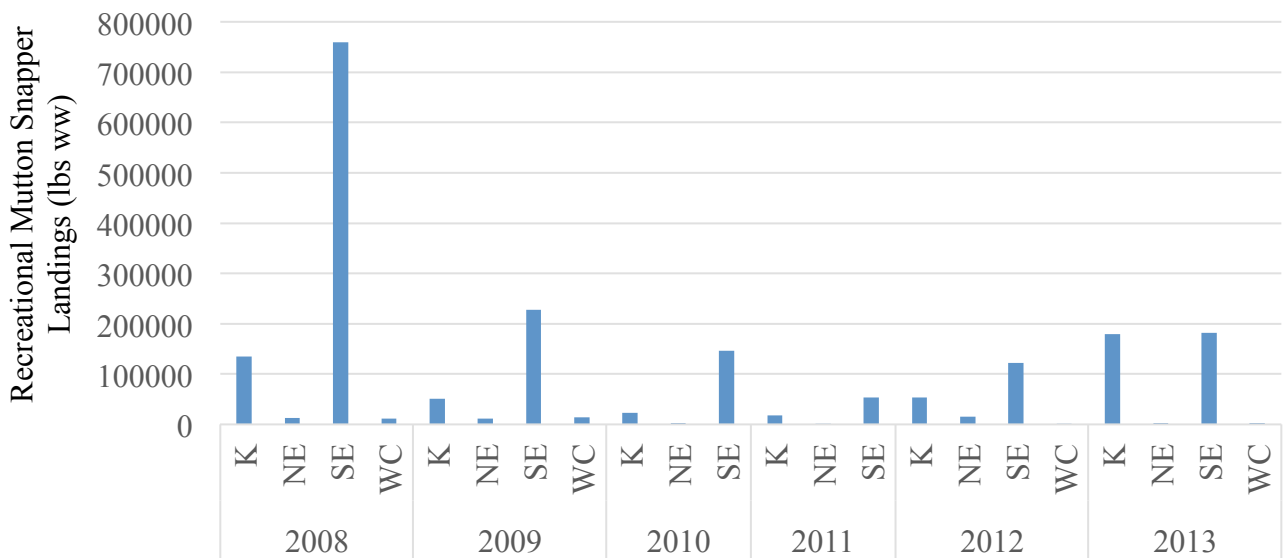


Figure 3. Total recreational landings (lbs ww) of mutton snapper from Florida waters from 2008-2013 by reporting region: K = Keys (Monroe County), NE = Northeast (Nassau County to Brevard County), SE = Southeast (Indian River County to Dade County), WC = West Central (Collier County to Citrus County). The Panhandle of Florida (otherwise denoted as "P"; Levy County to Escambia County) is not represented here due to the absence of mutton snapper landings in the Panhandle region.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 5, AS MODIFIED, IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 5 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 5 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 5 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 5, AS MODIFIED, IN AMENDMENT 41 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE X AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE Y AS PREFERRED.

OPTION 4. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 5 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 5. OTHERS??

Action 6. Modify Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic

Alternative 1 (No action). During May-June (spawning season), the commercial sector in the South Atlantic is restricted to 10 mutton snapper per day or 10 mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and sale is allowed. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf or South Atlantic from July through April.

Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the regular season (July through April) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

Sub-alternative 2a. 10 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 2b. Some higher bag or trip limit

Alternative 3: Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

Sub-alternative 3a. 2 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 3b. 5 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 3c. 10 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 3d. No bag or trip limit

Alternative 4: Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper that is identical to the recreational bag limit during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. **Note:** the recreational bag limit is Action 5.

~~**Alternative 5:** Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper for the handline sector during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.~~

~~**Option 5a:** 2 fish/person/day~~

~~**Option 5b:** 5 fish/person/day~~

~~**Option 5c:** 10 fish/person/day~~

~~**Option 5d:** Some other trip limit~~

~~**Alternative 6:** Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper for the longline sector during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.~~

~~**Option 6a:** 500 pounds whole weight (450 pounds gutted weight) trip limit~~

~~**Option 6b:** Some other trip limit~~

Discussion:

Some members of the public have expressed concerns regarding fishing effort on mutton snapper spawning aggregations during the May-June peak spawning season in the Florida Keys despite a healthy status of the mutton snapper stock. This action considers alternatives for mutton snapper commercial trip limits in the South Atlantic. Current commercial fishing regulations for mutton snapper are detailed in **Table 5**. During May and June, the commercial sector in the South Atlantic is restricted to 10 mutton snapper per day or 10 mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and sale is allowed. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf or South Atlantic during the July-April regular season.

Table 5. Current commercial mutton snapper fishing regulations in State waters off Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, and the South Atlantic (June 2015).

Species	Regulations	State Waters Gulf and South Atlantic	Federal Waters Gulf of Mexico	Federal Waters South Atlantic
Mutton Snapper	Size Limit	16" TL		
	Trip Limit	None		
	Closed Season	None		
	Bag Limit	May-June: Restricted to 10 fish/person/day or trip	None	May-June: Restricted to 10 fish/person/day or trip

Table 6 shows commercial landings of mutton snapper by gear type from 2004-2013 in the South Atlantic. The predominant gear for harvesting mutton snapper in South Atlantic waters has been vertical line gear (**Table 6**). Trap gear was phased out in the Gulf in 2007; however, trap landings of mutton snapper are still reported in the South Atlantic and are likely bycatch from the spiny lobster fishery (Matthews et al. 2005).

Note: Longline gear is prohibited in the South Atlantic south of Port St. Lucie. Tables and figures will be revised after the September Council meeting to remove data pertaining to longline gear.

Table 6. Commercial landings of mutton snapper by gear in the South Atlantic for 2004-2013. Landings are reported in pounds whole weight. Confidential landings are labeled as "NA".

Year	Vertical	Longline	Traps	Diving	Other
2004	98,513	36,609	6,225	3,805	709
2005	81,551	4,626	2,662	5,023	2,436
2006	59,071	8,774	3,427	2,959	608
2007	59,955	17,564	5,918	3,770	1,343
2008	61,836	8,692	2,296	3,052	829
2009	69,088	2,827	1,873	3,429	915
2010	66,464	644	4,048	2,759	822
2011	54,997	NA	7,111	3,599	372
2012	66,912	NA	3,875	6,156	NA
2013	60,586	NA	3,321	8,865	NA

Source: Commercial ACL dataset. South Atlantic vertical line includes: hook-and-line by hand, hook-and-line power assisted (bandit) and hook-and-line troll. "Other" includes landings from the following gears: gill nets, lift nets, seine nets, and unclassified gear.

The commercial landings of mutton snapper for all Florida counties are highest during the May-June peak spawning period (**Figure 4**). Overall Florida landings of mutton snapper were highest in 2008 and decreased through 2011. Landings increased in 2012 and 2013 (**Figure 5**). An examination of the monthly distribution of mutton snapper landings from commercial logbook and dealer reports shows similar trends (**Tables 7 and 8**). In addition, commercial landings of mutton snapper in the South Atlantic are highest during the May-June spawning season despite the current 10-fish/person/day bag limit.

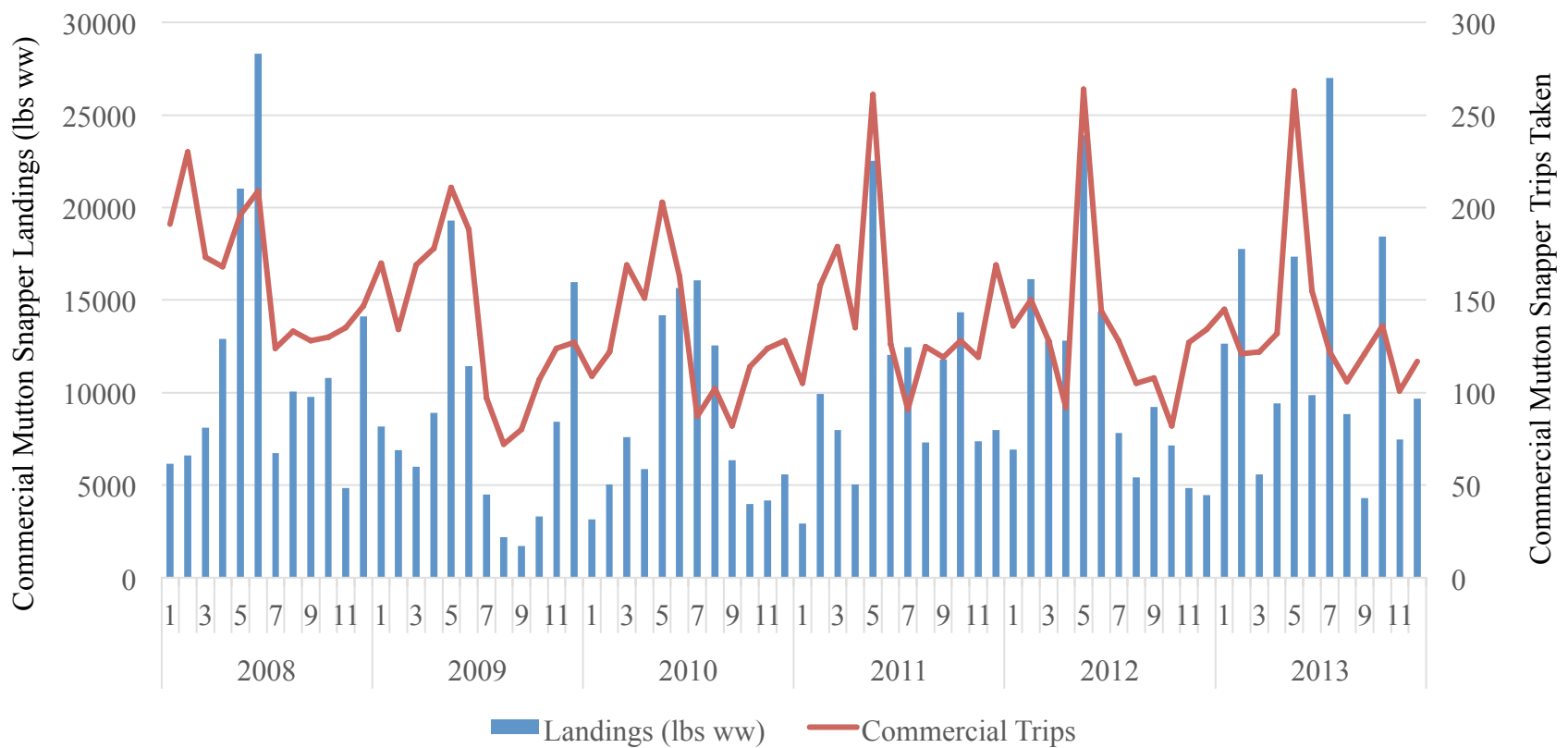


Figure 4. Commercial mutton snapper landings and trips by month from 2008 to 2013. Left y-axis (blue bars) is total commercial mutton snapper landings (lbs ww) for all Florida counties. Right y-axis (red line) is total commercial mutton snapper trips taken.

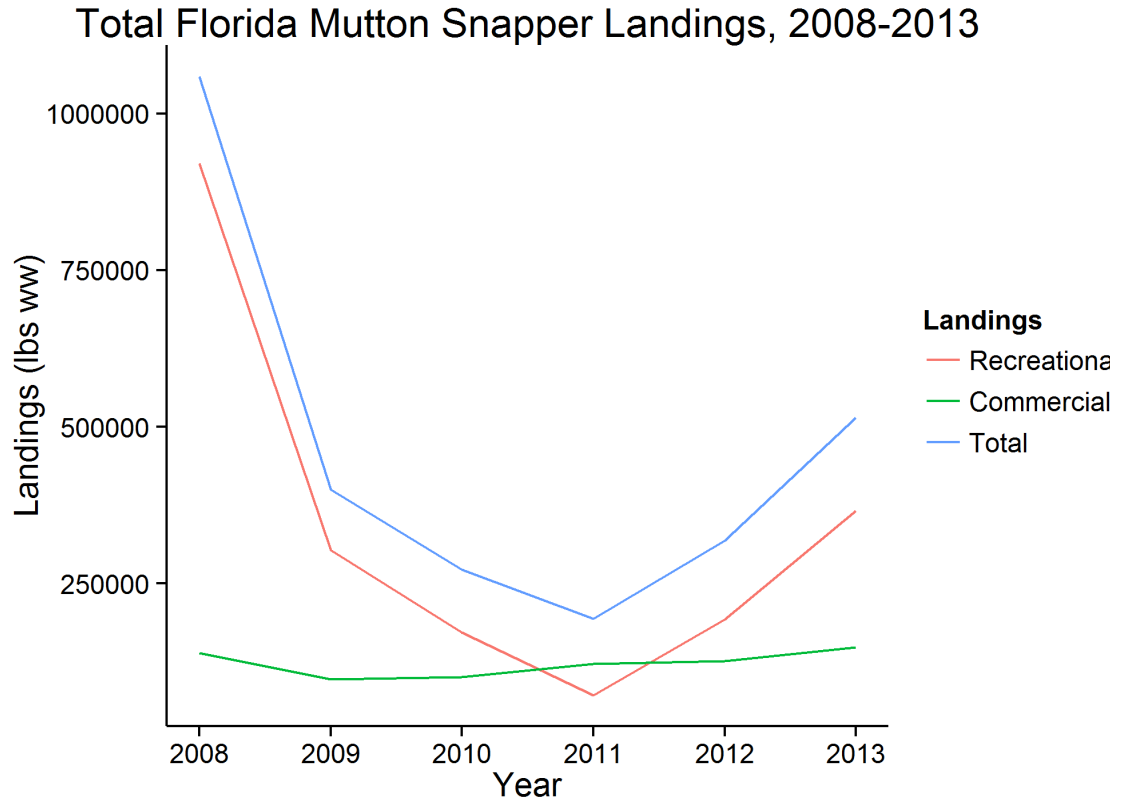


Figure 5. Total landings of mutton snapper in Florida (lbs ww). Data are from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recreational landings and commercial trip ticket programs.

Table 7. Monthly distribution of mutton snapper landings from commercial logbook in the Gulf and Atlantic during 2009-2013.

Month	Total	South Atlantic	Gulf
1	5.8%	5.5%	6.1%
2	9.0%	6.5%	11.3%
3	6.4%	5.6%	7.1%
4	7.2%	6.1%	8.2%
5	16.9%	22.6%	11.6%
6	10.4%	14.0%	7.1%
7	11.8%	9.8%	13.7%
8	7.5%	8.3%	6.7%
9	6.1%	5.5%	6.7%
10	6.9%	5.4%	8.3%
11	5.6%	5.6%	5.7%
12	6.3%	5.1%	7.5%

Table 8. Monthly distribution of mutton snapper landings from dealer reported landings (Accumulative Landings System) in the Gulf and South Atlantic during 2009-2013.

Month	Total	South Atlantic	Gulf
1	5.5%	5.7%	5.4%
2	8.6%	6.8%	10.3%
3	6.5%	5.5%	7.5%
4	7.1%	6.5%	7.6%
5	16.3%	20.8%	11.9%
6	10.9%	14.7%	7.4%
7	11.5%	9.0%	13.9%
8	7.4%	8.3%	6.5%
9	6.0%	5.3%	6.7%
10	7.4%	5.5%	9.2%
11	5.9%	6.0 %	5.7%
12	6.9%	5.9%	7.9%

Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2a would establish a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the regular season (July-April) of 10 fish/person/day. Currently, there are no commercial bag or trip limits in effect for commercial harvest of mutton snapper during the regular season. Using commercial trip interview program landings for the Southeastern U.S., the average weight of a landed mutton snapper from 2009-2013 ranges from 8.1-8.8 lbs ww or 7.3-7.9 pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) depending on the region. A 10-fish/person/day bag limit would correspond to about an 81 lbs ww (73 gw) trip limit in the South Atlantic. **Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2a** would correspond to a 20% reduction in commercial landings in the South Atlantic (**Table 9**). **Sub-alternative 2b** would establish a commercial bag or trip limit in excess of 10 fish per person per day. **Table 9** used 12-fish per person per day as an example which is estimated to result in an increase in mutton snapper landings of 26% in the South Atlantic.

Table 9. Percent increases and decreases in landings for various proposed commercial trip limit alternatives. Percent increases are positive numbers and percent decreases are negative numbers. Both the percent increases and decreases came from mutton snapper commercial logbook data from 2011 to 2013.

Alternative	Option	Season	South Atlantic
Alt 2	Sub-alternative 2a: 10 fish	July-April	-20%
	Sub-alternative 2b: 12 fish		26%
Alt 3	Sub-alternative 3a: 2 fish	May-June	-27%
	Sub-alternative 3b: 5 fish		-20%
	Sub-alternative 3c: 10 fish		0
	Sub-alternative 3d: No limit		NA
Alt 4	10 fish	May-June	0
Alt 5	Option 5a: 2 fish, Vertical line Sector	May-June	-25%
	Option 5b: 5 fish, Vertical line Sector		-18%
	Option 5c: 10 fish, Vertical line Sector		0%
Alt 6	Option 6a: 500 lbs ww, Longline sector	May-June	0
	Option 6b: 50 lbs ww, Longline sector		0

Alternative 3, Sub-alternatives 3a through **3c** would specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the spawning season (May-June) of 2, 5, or 10 fish/person/day. **Sub-alternative 3d** would not specify a commercial bag limit or trip limit for mutton snapper during the spawning season. A 2 fish/person/day commercial bag limit would be expected to reduce harvest in the South Atlantic by 27% during the May-June spawning season; a 5 fish/person/day commercial bag limit would be expected to reduce harvest by 20%; and a 10 fish/person/day would have no effect on reducing commercial harvest of mutton snapper during the spawning season (**Table 9**).

Alternative 4 would specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper that is identical to the recreational bag limit during the spawning season (May and June). This alternative is estimated to reduce commercial mutton snapper landings in the Gulf of Mexico by 12% and provide no reduction in landings for the South Atlantic Council (**Table 9**).

Alternative 5 would specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper for vertical line gear during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. **Option 5a** would set a vertical line trip limit of 2 fish/person/day corresponding to 3% reduction in commercial mutton snapper landings in the Gulf and 25% reduction in commercial landings in the South Atlantic (**Table 9**). **Option 5b** would set a vertical line trip limit of 5 fish/person/day corresponding to 3% reduction in commercial mutton snapper landings in the Gulf and 18% reduction in commercial landings in the South Atlantic. **Option 5c** would set a vertical line trip limit of 10 fish/person/day corresponding to 2% reduction in commercial mutton snapper landings in the Gulf and no reduction in commercial landings in the South Atlantic. **Option 5d** would set some other vertical line trip limit. Until the Councils' determine what that limit would be, this option cannot be analyzed.

Alternative 6 **Option 6a** would set a longline gear trip limit of 500 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) corresponding to a 4% reduction in commercial mutton snapper landings the Gulf and no reduction in commercial mutton snapper landings in the South Atlantic. **Alternative 6, Option 6b** would set some other trip limit. Until the Councils' determine what that limit would be, this option cannot be analyzed. For example if a 50 lbs ww longline gear trip limit was established, a 12% reduction in landings is estimated for the Gulf and no reduction in landings is estimated for the South Atlantic (**Table 9**).

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 6, AS MODIFIED, IN AMENDMENT 41 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 6 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 2. ADD/MODIFY ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 6 (COMMITTEE TO SPECIFY) AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 6 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

OPTION 3. APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 6, AS MODIFIED, IN AMENDMENT 41 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE X AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE Y AS PREFERRED.

OPTION 4. DO NOT APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 6 IN AMENDMENT 41.

OPTION 5. OTHERS??

Timing

- Approve for scoping – September 2015
- Scoping – November 2015
- Approve for public hearings – December 2015
- Public Hearings – January 2016

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. APPROVE AMENDMENT 41 AS MODIFIED FOR SCOPING.

OPTION 2. DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP DOCUMENT MORE FULLY PRIOR TO SCOPING AND CONSIDER IN DECEMBER 2015.

OPTION 3. OTHERS?