



DNR

Summary from Informational Survey of Federally Permitted Commercial Snapper/Grouper Fishermen in South Carolina for Proposed Vessel Monitoring System: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Snapper/Grouper Amendment 30.

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Executive Summary:

A twelve question survey was sent out 6 April, 2013 to 53 commercial fishermen in South Carolina who hold Federal Snapper/Grouper Permits in order to gauge the opinion to a proposed Vessel Monitoring System (hereafter referred to as VMS) to be utilized in the snapper/grouper fishery of the south Atlantic coast of the United States (SAFMC: Amendment 30). The primary purpose of this survey was to determine the relative level of support or opposition to the use of VMS for the snapper/grouper fishery in South Carolina only.

The following were the key findings of the survey:

- Of the 53 surveys sent out, 26 (49.1%) were returned completed.
- The majority of respondents (90%) were categorically opposed to the proposed use of VMS at all in the South Atlantic. Several respondents stated this position might shift if the costs of the system were paid for by the SAFMC or NMFS, but the majority still opposed any implementation of VMS.
- Only three respondents supported the VMS proposal citing effective regulatory enforcement and accountability as the primary reasons.
- All respondents held Unlimited Snapper/Grouper Permits with an average time in the fishery of 20 years.
- Of the 26 respondents, 82% held at least one other commercial federal permit for another species. For multiple permit holders, the most common were the Dolphin Fish & Wahoo permit (68%) and King Mackerel (52%).
- While not all respondents were active in the snapper/grouper fishery in 2012, all of them anticipated active participation in 2013.
- The primary reason given for opposition to the VMS proposal was economic (cost of the system and monthly monitoring) followed by protecting proprietary fishing information (choice locations for snapper/grouper fishing), and the imposition of burdensome regulatory measures.

SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1: What type of commercial South Atlantic Snapper/Grouper Permit do you hold?

- All survey respondents held an Unlimited S/G permit

Question 2: How long have you held this permit

- The range for the number of years fishermen had held a commercial S/G permit was 4-30 years.
- The average time for a permit was 20.9 ± 1.64 years

Question 3: Were you active in the commercial S/G fishery in 2012

- Yes = 24 (92%) respondents
- No = 2 (8%) respondents

Question 4: Do you plan to be active in the commercial S/G fishery in 2013?

- Yes = 26 (100% of respondents)

Question 5: What is the approximate length of the vessel you operate in this fishery?

- Vessel size among respondents ranged from 25-60 feet
- The average sized vessel among respondents was 40 feet with a median of 39 feet.

Question 6: How many years have you been active as a commercial fisherman?

- Number of years as a commercial fisherman among respondents ranged from 10 to 60+ years.
- Average number of years as a commercial fisherman was 30.3 ± 2.0 years

Question 7: Do you currently hold any other federal commercial fisheries permits? (List Types)

- A summary of all different permits held by survey respondents can be found in Table 1.
- 80% of respondents held at least one other federal permit, while the remaining 20% held only a S/G permit.

- Of the commercial fisherman that held multiple permits:
 - 68% held Dolphin and Wahoo permits
 - 52% held King Mackerel permits
 - 8% held either Tuna or Shark permits
- A high proportion of multiple permit holders (40%) held both a dolphin & wahoo permit and king mackerel permit as well as a S/G permit.
- The most permits held by any individual respondent was 5 (2 respondents).

Question 8: Are you federally permitted as a SA Snapper Grouper For-hire Fisherman?

- Yes = 6 (24%)
- No = 20 (76%)

Question 9: Do you have a VMS on a vessel you operate in another commercial fishery?

- 100% of respondents said No

Question 10: With (1) being strong opposition to and (5) being strong support for, do you support/oppose the requirement for VMS for the commercial South Atlantic Snapper/Grouper fishery currently being considered in Amendment 30 to the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan?

- There was not much support for the VMS proposal with 79% of respondents (20) scoring a 1.
- There were only three respondents that strongly favored VMS (score of 5) and then there was one score of 2 and two neutral scores (3) neither supporting or opposing the VMS.

Question 11: What are the primary reasons for your current level of support or opposition?

- The main reasons given (in order of importance) by respondents for opposing VMS in the south Atlantic were 1) economic hardship, 2) protection of proprietary fishing information, and 3) excessive government regulation.
- The main reasons given by respondents for supporting the VMS were 1) accountability in the fishery, 2) better regulatory enforcement, 3) protection of the commercial fisher, and 4) enforcement of coastal MPA's.
- A summary of the opposition and support of the proposed VMS requirement by category and number of responses can be found in Table 2.

Question 12: Do you feel that you have been adequately informed of the stated need for and possible benefits from required VMS as it would apply to management and regulation of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery?

- Yes = 14
- No = 9
- No Answer: 3

Table 1. Summary of all Federal Commercial Permits held by the 26 respondents to the VMS Opinion Survey.

	Federal Permit Type								
	Snapper/ Grouper	Dolphin & Wahoo	King Mackerel	Tuna	Black Seabass	Spanish Mackerel	Shark: Directed	Shark: Incidental	Migratory Pelagics
	1								
	1	1	1						
	1	1	1		1			1	
	1								
	1								
	1	1	1	1					
	1	1							
	1	1	1						
	1	1	1			1			
	1	1	1						
	1	1	1						
	1								
	1		1						
	1	1							
	1	1							
	1	1					1		
	1	1							
	1	1	1						
	1	1							
	1	1	1						1
	1	1							
	1		1						
	1	1							
	1		1						
	1	1	1	1			1		
	1	1	1		1		1	1	
Total	26	19	14	2	2	1	3	2	1

Table 2. Summary totals of the reasons for support or opposition to VMS by category.

Question 11. Primary reasons cited for support or opposition to		
Oppose	Support	Primary Reasons
23	-	Economic
4	-	Proprietary Fish Information
3	-	Excessive Regulation
	3	Provide Accountability Among Fishermen
-	3	Provide Effective Regulatory Compliance
-	2	Protect MPA's