

Appendix A. Alternatives the Council considered but eliminated from detailed study, and a brief discussion of the reasons for their elimination.

This section describes alternatives to the proposed actions that the Council considered in developing this amendment, but decided not to pursue. The description of each alternative is followed by a summary statement of why it was eliminated from more detailed study.

Management Measures for Gag

Rejected Alternative 1. Establish a boat limit for gag.

Rationale for elimination: The Council believes that a boat limit could reduce a fishermen's satisfaction received from a fishing trip. Some people might feel rushed to catch fish before the aggregate limit is met. Furthermore, this alternative could be considered unfair to some individuals on larger party boats if some fishers were able to retain a larger portion of the boat limit compared to others.

Rejected Alternative 2. Implement four separate commercial quotas in the South Atlantic, one for each state (Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina).

Rationale for elimination: There are regional differences to the primary fishing season in the South Atlantic. Some feel that state-by-state quotas would ensure that the retention of gag is allowed during a region's primary fishing season. The Council examined the seasonal trend in landings and determined there was not a great deal of difference between the states. Furthermore, the Council and NOAA Fisheries feel that there are significant administrative impacts (particularly in terms of monitoring) with state-by-state quotas. The Council is considering an alternative that would divide the directed commercial quota into two larger geographic regions North Carolina/South Carolina and Georgia/Florida.

The Council considered allowing each state to monitor and administrate their own quotas as a way to mitigate the potential effects to NOAA Fisheries. Such a system is used by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, in conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, for summer flounder and black sea bass. In the South Atlantic, however, it would not be possible to develop and implement a system that utilizes state-monitored quotas before the mandate to end overfishing of vermilion snapper expires.

Rejected Alternative 3. Specify an annual catch limit for gag.

Rationale for elimination: Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) are numerical target catch levels that must be set each year by the Council for each managed stock at a level that ensures overfishing does not occur. ACLs must be implemented in fishing year 2010 for fisheries determined to be subject to overfishing and in fishing year 2011 for all other species. The Council chose not to specify ACLs in Amendment 16 because the needed guidelines are not available. In addition, the Council is developing Amendment 17, which will specify ACLs for all snapper grouper species experiencing overfishing.

Rejected Alternative 4. Establish a shallow water grouper unit.

Rationale for elimination: The Council initially considered establishing a shallow water grouper unit to reduce bycatch of gag and other species. However, the Council deferred this action to Amendment 17 as it was felt the action would slow down Amendment 16 and actions intended to end overfishing of gag and vermilion snapper.

Management Measures for Vermilion Snapper

Rejected Alternative 5. Prohibit recreational retention of vermilion snapper during summer months (May through September).

Rationale for elimination: The Council believes that an extensive closure during the summer months would have significant, adverse impacts to commercial and recreational fishermen. The Council identified June through August as a core fishing season, especially amongst the for-hire sector. The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel advised the Council that prohibiting harvest of vermilion snapper during the summer months would have significant impacts to the headboat industry. Between 2001 and 2006, 55% and 45% of the recreational and commercial vermilion harvest, respectively, occurred during May through September. Allowing fishing to occur year-round with reductions would mitigate hardships associated with more restrictive management regulations.

Rejected Alternative 6. Implement commercial trip limits for vermilion snapper.

Rationale for elimination: The primary purpose of a trip limit would be to extend the fishing season. However, the Council believes that trip limits could impose significant hardship to fishermen, particularly with the high cost of fuel. Instead, the Council is considering splitting the year into two quotas as a method to extend the fishing season. The two quota system also has the added benefit of ensuring that retention of vermilion would be allowed later in the fishing season when a large portion of the catch has historically been taken. The Council also chose not to consider establishing a trip limit for the 225 pound trip-limited permit holders because their catch is a very small portion of the overall catch. Amendment 15B proposes to prohibit all bag limit sales and this is not expected to affect the proportion caught by trip-limited permit holders.

Rejected Alternative 7. Implement four separate commercial quotas in the South Atlantic, one for each state (Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina).

Rationale for elimination: There are regional differences to the primary fishing season in the South Atlantic. Some feel that state-by-state quotas would ensure that the retention of vermilion snapper is allowed during a region's primary fishing season. However, the Council and NOAA Fisheries feel that there are significant administrative impacts (particularly in terms of monitoring) with state-by-state quotas. The Council is considering dividing the year into two quotas as a method to extend the fishing season that would mitigate the effects of some of these regional differences in fishing seasons.

The Council considered allowing each state to monitor and administrate their own quotas as a way to mitigate the potential effects to NOAA Fisheries. Such a system is used by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, in conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, for summer flounder and black sea bass. In the South Atlantic, however, it would not be possible to develop and implement a system that utilizes state-monitored quotas before the mandate to end overfishing of vermilion snapper expires.

Rejected Alternative 8. Specify an annual catch limit for vermilion snapper.

Rationale for elimination: Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) are numerical target catch levels that must be set each year by the Council for each managed stock at a level that ensures overfishing does not occur. ACLs must be implemented in fishing year 2010 for fisheries determined to be subject to overfishing and in fishing year 2011 for all other species. The Council chose not to specify ACLs in Amendment 16 because the needed guidelines are not available. In addition, the Council is developing Amendment 17, which will specify ACLs for all snapper grouper species experiencing overfishing.

Measures Rejected from the March 2008 Meeting - Vermilion Snapper

Rejected Alternative 9. Allow the Regional Administrator to make adjustments to the management measures based on outcome of new benchmark assessment.

Alternative 9a. Change measures in the following order: (1) Reduce or eliminate closed season, (2) reduce size limit, and (3) increase the bag limit.

Alternative 9b. Change measures in the following order: (1) Reduce or eliminate closed season, (2) increase the bag limit, and (3) reduce size limit.

Alternative 9c. Change measures in the following order: (1) Reduce size limit, (2) REDUCE or eliminate closed season, and (3) increase the bag limit.

Table 1. Reductions from size limit, bag limit, and seasonal closures.
Assumes 25% release mortality, non compliance with size limit, and excludes captain and crew. Vermilion Snapper 12” TL size limit; 88% effectiveness of seasonal closure

closure	open	9 fish	8 fish	7 fish	6 fish	5 fish	4 fish	3 fish	2 fish	1 fish
sept-may	June-Aug	65.99%	66.87%	68.37%	69.82%	71.54%	73.44%	75.82%	78.63%	82.31%
sept-april	May-Aug	57.69%	58.78%	60.65%	62.46%	64.59%	66.95%	69.92%	73.42%	77.99%
oct-april	May-Sept	52.06%	53.29%	55.41%	57.46%	59.88%	62.55%	65.91%	69.88%	75.06%
nov-april	May-Oct	46.14%	47.53%	49.90%	52.21%	54.93%	57.93%	61.70%	66.16%	71.98%
nov-mar	April-Oct	40.86%	42.39%	45.00%	47.53%	50.51%	53.81%	57.96%	62.85%	69.24%
dec-mar	April-Nov	38.11%	39.70%	42.43%	45.08%	48.21%	51.66%	55.99%	61.11%	67.80%
dec-feb	Mar-Nov	34.77%	36.45%	39.33%	42.12%	45.41%	49.05%	53.62%	59.02%	66.06%
jan-feb	Mar-Dec	33.30%	35.02%	37.96%	40.82%	44.18%	47.90%	52.58%	58.09%	65.30%
jan-mar	Apr-Dec	36.64%	38.27%	41.07%	43.78%	46.98%	50.51%	54.95%	60.19%	67.04%
jan-apr	May-Dec	41.91%	43.41%	45.97%	48.46%	51.39%	54.63%	58.70%	63.50%	69.78%
sept-oct	nov-aug	40.97%	42.49%	45.09%	47.62%	50.60%	53.89%	58.03%	62.91%	69.29%
no closure	All year	29.41%	31.23%	34.35%	37.37%	40.93%	44.87%	49.81%	55.65%	63.28%

Table 2. Reductions from size limit, bag limit, and seasonal closures.
Assumes 25% release mortality, non compliance with size limit, and excludes captain and crew. Vermilion Snapper 13” TL size limit; 88% effectiveness of seasonal closure.

Closure	open	9 fish	8 fish	7 fish	6 fish	5 fish	4 fish	3 fish	2 fish	1 fish
sept-may	June-Aug	74.51%	75.16%	75.16%	77.38%	78.67%	80.09%	81.87%	83.98%	86.74%
sept-april	May-Aug	68.28%	69.10%	69.10%	71.86%	73.46%	75.23%	77.45%	80.07%	83.50%
oct-april	May-Sept	64.06%	64.99%	64.99%	68.11%	69.93%	71.93%	74.45%	77.42%	81.30%
nov-april	May-Oct	59.62%	60.67%	60.67%	64.18%	66.21%	68.46%	71.29%	74.63%	79.00%
nov-mar	April-Oct	55.67%	56.82%	56.82%	60.67%	62.91%	65.38%	68.48%	72.15%	76.94%
dec-mar	April-Nov	53.61%	54.80%	54.80%	58.84%	61.18%	63.76%	67.01%	70.85%	75.86%
dec-feb	Mar-Nov	51.10%	52.36%	52.36%	56.61%	59.08%	61.81%	65.23%	69.28%	74.56%
jan-feb	Mar-Dec	50.00%	51.29%	51.29%	55.64%	58.16%	60.95%	64.45%	68.59%	73.99%
jan-mar	Apr-Dec	52.50%	53.73%	53.73%	57.86%	60.25%	62.90%	66.23%	70.16%	75.29%
jan-apr	May-Dec	56.46%	57.58%	57.58%	61.36%	63.56%	65.99%	69.04%	72.64%	77.35%
sept-oct	nov-aug	55.75%	56.89%	56.89%	60.74%	62.97%	65.44%	68.54%	72.20%	76.98%
no closure	All year	47.09%	48.45%	48.45%	53.05%	55.72%	58.67%	62.38%	66.76%	72.47%

Table 3. Reductions from size limit, bag limit, and seasonal closures. Assumes 25% release mortality, non compliance with size limit, and excludes captain and crew. Vermilion Snapper 14” TL size limit; 88% effectiveness of seasonal closure.

Closure	open	9 fish	8 fish	7 fish	6 fish	5 fish	4 fish	3 fish	2 fish	1 fish
sept-may	June-Aug	80.09%	80.60%	80.60%	82.33%	83.34%	84.45%	85.84%	87.49%	89.64%
sept-april	May-Aug	75.23%	75.87%	75.87%	78.02%	79.27%	80.65%	82.39%	84.44%	87.11%
oct-april	May-Sept	71.93%	72.65%	72.65%	75.09%	76.51%	78.08%	80.04%	82.36%	85.40%
nov-april	May-Oct	68.47%	69.28%	69.28%	72.02%	73.61%	75.37%	77.58%	80.19%	83.60%
nov-mar	April-Oct	65.38%	66.27%	66.27%	69.28%	71.03%	72.96%	75.39%	78.25%	81.99%
dec-mar	April-Nov	63.77%	64.70%	64.70%	67.85%	69.68%	71.70%	74.24%	77.23%	81.15%
dec-feb	Mar-Nov	61.81%	62.79%	62.79%	66.11%	68.04%	70.17%	72.85%	76.01%	80.13%
jan-feb	Mar-Dec	60.95%	61.96%	61.96%	65.35%	67.32%	69.50%	72.24%	75.47%	79.68%
jan-mar	Apr-Dec	62.90%	63.86%	63.86%	67.09%	68.96%	71.03%	73.63%	76.69%	80.70%
jan-apr	May-Dec	65.99%	66.87%	66.87%	69.83%	71.54%	73.44%	75.82%	78.63%	82.31%
sept-oct	nov-aug	65.44%	66.33%	66.33%	69.33%	71.08%	73.00%	75.43%	78.29%	82.02%
no closure	All year	58.68%	59.74%	59.74%	63.33%	65.42%	67.72%	70.62%	74.04%	78.50%

Alternative 10 has a range of commercial quotas from which the regional administrator can make a selection based on the outcome of the new benchmark assessment.

Rejected Alternative 10. Allow the Regional Administrator to make adjustments to the commercial quotas based on outcome of the new vermilion snapper benchmark assessment.

The directed commercial quota would be calculated using the 68% commercial, 32% recreational allocations specified in Alternative 2; the same estimate of post quota bycatch mortality (PQBM) is to be used.

Alternative 10a. Allocate the directed commercial quota 50% to the period January 1st through June 30th and 50% to the period July 1st through December 31st (Table 2-13). Any remaining quota from period 1 would transfer to period 2. Any remaining quota from period 2 would not be carried forward.

Alternative 10b. Allocate the directed commercial quota 40% to the period January 1st through June 30th and 60% to the period July 1st through December 31st (Table 2-14). Any remaining quota from period 1 would transfer to period 2. Any remaining quota from period 2 would not be carried forward.

Alternative 10c. Allocate the directed commercial quota 50% to the period January 1st through August 31th and 50% to the period September 1st through December 31st (Table 2-15). Any remaining quota from period 1 would transfer to period 2. Any remaining quota from period 2 would not be carried forward.

Rationale for elimination: The Council replaced Alternatives 9 and 10 with a table that specifies the actual management regulations that would be implemented based on various percentage reductions from the new SEDAR assessment. The new alternative better reflects the Council’s intent and sets forth exactly what the Council wants done depending on the outcome of the new SEDAR assessment.