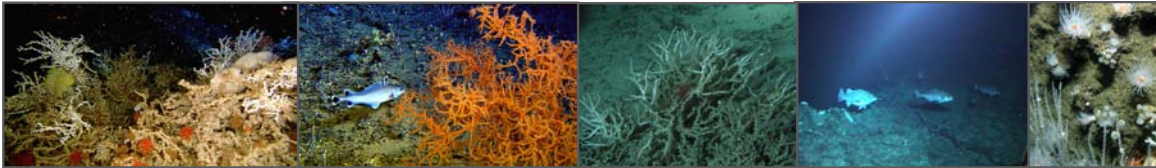


Revised Decision Document

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3



AMENDMENT 26 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER
FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION
AMENDMENT 3 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE DOLPHIN AND WAHOO
FISHERY OF THE ATLANTIC
AMENDMENT 21 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COASTAL MIGRATORY
PELAGIC RESOURCES IN THE GULF OF MEXICO AND ATLANTIC REGION
AMENDMENT 7 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE GOLDEN CRAB
FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION



November 26, 2012

South Atlantic Comprehensive
Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

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What Actions is the South Atlantic Council Proposing in CE-BA 3?

Actions in CE-BA 3 would:

- Modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels
- Modify data reporting for commercial vessels
- Modify bycatch and discard reporting
- Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

Which Fisheries Would be Affected by CE-BA 3?

Actions in CE-BA 3 would affect fisheries for Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagics (**in the South Atlantic Council area only**), and Golden Crab. Actions that would amend the Coastal Migratory Pelagic FMP would apply only to fishermen fishing in South Atlantic waters.

What Data are Currently Being Collected?

Landings information from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the NOAA Fisheries Headboat Survey provide information on landed and discarded catch in the recreational sector (for-hire and private). The commercial landings monitoring system, which was implemented in June 2012, provides commercial landings data for species in the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Golden Crab fishery management plans.

Logbook data from fishermen are used to provide information on bycatch associated with these fisheries. Logbook data are also used to track landings history associated with a permit, provide increased spatial resolution associated with catch, analyze effects of proposed management measures, and provide catch per unit effort estimates in stock assessments. Logbook data are not currently used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they form a critical part of verification of commercial data as required by the ACCSP. Some bycatch data are also collected through cooperative research projects.

What are the Current Coverage Levels for Data Collection Programs?

For-hire vessels (charter and headboat)

For-hire vessels selected to report by the Science and Research Director (SRD) must maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the Science and Research Director, and on forms provided by the Science and Research Director. Furthermore, the owner

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or operator of a vessel for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director must participate in the National Marine Fisheries Service-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring reporting program as directed by the Science and Research Director. Completed records for charter vessels must be submitted to the Science and Research Director weekly, postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each trip (Sunday) (Snapper Grouper Amendment 4; SAFMC 1991). Completed records for headboats must be submitted to the Science and Research Director monthly and must either be made available to an authorized statistical reporting agent or be postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each month (Snapper Grouper Amendment 4; SAFMC 1991).

Currently, harvest and bycatch in the private and for-hire charter vessel sector is monitored by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey and the Marine Recreational Information Program. A 10% sample of charter vessel captains is called weekly to obtain trip level information. In addition, the standard dockside intercept data are collected from charter vessels and charter vessel clients are sampled through the standard random digital dialing of coastal households. Other improvements have been and will be made that should result in better estimating recreational catches and the variances around those catch estimates. Currently, landings data are provided 45 days following the end of a two-month wave.

Harvest from headboats is monitored by NOAA Fisheries at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's Beaufort Laboratory. Collection of discard data began in 2004. Daily catch records are obtained for all trips and are filled out by the headboat operators, or in some cases by NOAA Fisheries approved headboat samplers based on personal communication with the captain or crew. Headboat trips are sub-sampled for data on species lengths and weights. Biological samples (scales, otoliths, spines, reproductive tissues, and stomachs) are obtained as time permits. Lengths of discarded fish are occasionally obtained but these data are not part of the headboat database.

For-Hire Pilot Projects

There have been two data collection projects in the Gulf of Mexico to evaluate programs with the goal of improving accuracy and timeliness of fisheries data from for-hire vessels. In September 2010, a one-year For-Hire Electronic Pilot Study was conducted in the Gulf of Mexico to test the feasibility of a mandatory electronic logbook reporting system, as well as methods to independently verify self-reported catch and effort data in the for-hire fishery. The expectation with a mandatory reporting system was that a complete census of effort and catch among all participants would be obtained. However, methods to independently validate self-reported fisheries data are needed to certify whether a true and accurate census of catch and effort is actually achieved, and to account for instances when it is not. Tracking methods are also important with any mandatory reporting requirement so that late or missing reports can be identified and participants in the fishery can be contacted in a timely manner. The full report from this project is expected to be completed in early 2013.

The iSnapper Electronic Logbook Project was conducted in the Gulf of Mexico using charter vessels and headboats during the 2011 and 2012 recreational red snapper fishing seasons. This pilot program distributed iPhones/iPads pre-loaded with the iSnapper application to charter and headboat captains in the for-hire sector in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. These for-hire fishing vessels targeted both reef fish (e.g., red snapper) and a variety of other pelagic species (e.g., king mackerel). In 2011, 16 captains participated from June 1 through July 18, 2011. Collectively, the group reported catch data from 327 trips, harvested more than 10,000 fish of five major species, and provided information on discard rates and fish size.

Voluntary Angler Surveys, such as those used in the iSnapper application, can provide useful data but there are concerns about such data being susceptible to bias. The Mid-Atlantic Council, in cooperation with the Marine Recreational Information Program, brought together a group of people involved in such programs in February 2012. They concluded that “Opt-in angler data may be useful for certain kinds of data that are not likely to be susceptible to bias, although it is difficult to anticipate what these data may be. However, the unique characteristics of self-selected participants are likely to introduce bias into certain kinds of data, especially catch and effort data. Managers must be made aware of such biases, and the likely extent of such biases should be examined when implementation of these programs is considered.” The Summary of the February 2, 2012 Workshop is included as **Appendix O**.

The Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) received FY2012 funding from the MRIP Operations Team for; *Pilot Project, Phase II: Survey-Wide Implementation of Electronic Logbook Reporting on Headboats Operating in the U.S. South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico*. The objective of this project is to develop and implement a web-based portal for electronic logbook data entry in the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico headboat sector. This project will include development by a software contractor of additional features of the web-based data form useful to users and scientists (e.g., depth, location, on-demand fish identification catalogue, etc). SRHS staff will provide data validation via review of submitted data, helping to clear up any confusion that any of the participants may be having with data elements. These procedures will be tested for the first 60 days of the project, with an estimated roll-out date of early 2013. Senior SRHS staff at the Beaufort Laboratory will work with NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) legal staff and Council staff to ensure that the proper legal framework exists or can be put in place to ensure that electronic logbook reporting becomes the accepted procedure, as well as to ensure that timely and complete reporting is linked to the ability to possess and keep a for-hire permit in the applicable fisheries.

Commercial Vessel Reporting Requirements

Snapper Grouper:

Snapper Grouper Amendment 4 (SAFMC 1991) established the following reporting requirements for commercial vessels:

1. The owner or operator of a vessel permitted to fish with a black sea bass trap in the South Atlantic EEZ (federal waters) or who fishes black sea bass traps in adjoining state waters must, if selected, maintain a fishing record on a form available from the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative. These forms must be submitted to the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative so as to be received not

later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. If no fishing occurred during a month, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms to be received not later than 7 days after the end of each month. If fishing occurred, the following information must be reported:

- a. Name and official number of vessel.
 - b. Permit number.
 - c. Pounds of each of fish by species.
 - d. Date(s) of trip, depth fished and fishing locations(s) by statistical area(s).
 - e. Number of trap hauls resulting in the catch.
 - f. Duration (days and hours) traps were fished before each haul.
 - g. Mesh size of traps.
 - h. Any other fishery management data requested by the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative.
2. The owner or operator of a vessel that is permitted to fish with gear other than black sea bass traps in the South Atlantic EEZ (federal waters), or that fishes in adjoining state waters, and is selected by the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative, must maintain a fishing record for each fishing trip on a form available from the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative. [Note: this refers to fishing for species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit.] These forms must be submitted to the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative on a monthly basis (or more frequently, if requested by the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative) so as to be received not later than the 7th day of the end of each reporting period. If no fishing occurred during a month, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms to be received not later than 7 days after the end of each month. If fishing occurred, the following information must be reported:
- a. Name and official number of vessel.
 - b. Permit number.
 - c. Pounds of each of fish by species for each type of gear used.
 - d. Date(s) of trip, depth fished and fishing locations(s) by statistical area(s).
 - e. Type and quantity of gear fished.
 - f. Duration (days and hours) of vessel fishing effort.
 - g. Duration (hours) gear was fished before each haul.
 - h. Any other fishery management data requested by the NMFS Science and Research Director or an authorized representative.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics:

Amendment X to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP states that the specifics of the reporting system are to be developed by NMFS and the Regulatory Measures Committee. Forms must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. If no fishing occurred during a calendar month, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month.

Dolphin Wahoo:

In the Atlantic, require reporting of vessel permit holders (commercial and for-hire) and include the reporting requirements as specified in the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) (Dolphin Wahoo FMP; SAFMC 2003). It is the Councils' intent that existing logbook

requirements continue until the cooperating partners meet to determine whether these efforts will continue under ACCSP. NMFS is to provide an annual summary of available data and research results for dolphin and wahoo. This Annual SAFE Report is to be written and provided to the South Atlantic Council at least three weeks prior to the Council's annual June meeting. Currently logbooks must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. If no fishing occurred during a calendar month, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month.

Golden Crab:

Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked not later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. If no fishing occurred during a calendar month, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month.

Why is the South Atlantic Council taking Action?

In **Action 1**, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) is considering alternatives that could increase the reporting frequency by charter and headboat fishermen, and require electronic reporting by for-hire fishermen in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fisheries. The South Atlantic Council concluded that improving data reporting in these fisheries could reduce the chance that the recreational annual catch limits are exceeded and accountability measures are triggered. The for-hire sector contributes to recreational landings that count towards the recreational annual catch limit. Catches from charter vessels are captured in the Marine Recreational Information Program but headboat catches are monitored separately. Delays in receiving and processing headboat data may contribute to the recreational annual catch limit being exceeded. Electronic reporting via computer/internet could reduce delays and result in fewer recreational annual catch limit overruns. However, a recently completed pilot study in the Gulf of Mexico to test the feasibility of a mandatory electronic logbook reporting system in the for-hire sector has indicated that there may be problems with using self-reported data to track landings. A final report on this pilot project will be completed in 2013. **Note: See Section 4.1.1 of Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 for more details on this pilot study and concerns about voluntary (Opt-In Angler Panels) data.**

The Council considered reporting changes for the charter sector but decided to defer this to a future joint amendment with the Gulf Council to allow the details to be worked out with MRIP and for the SEFSC to obtain funding to proceed. It is the Council's intent that this joint amendment be completed during 2013 with regulations in place beginning in 2014. The Council is interested in evaluating requiring the charter sector submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director weekly via electronic reporting similar to what is being proposed for headboats in this amendment. This would allow NMFS to focus the limited funding through MRIP on private recreational anglers and thereby improve those estimates. If the entire for-hire

sector was providing weekly electronic reports, NMFS could use those estimates to track the for-hire component of the recreational ACLs. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the headboat landings from the weekly electronic reporting specified in this amendment to track headboat landings to help ensure the recreational ACL is not exceeded.

Action 2 considers alternatives that would modify the timing of reporting requirements for commercial logbooks in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries, and provide an option for logbooks to be submitted electronically. Currently, logbook reports from commercial fishermen targeting snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip, and not later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center has indicated that a large percentage of logbook reports for coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and snapper grouper fisheries are submitted late and many are not submitted until a fishermen needs to renew a permit (**Figures S-1 and S-2**). Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. Action 2 considers an alternative that would require that the components of the commercial logbooks (landings, economic, and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip. This would increase the timeline for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fishermen to complete logbooks, and decrease the timeline for golden crab fishermen. Snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fishermen have indicated that 7 days is not a sufficient amount of time to obtain information needed to complete economic logbooks. However, the instructions on the economic logbook (Appendix M) instruct the captain to use current market prices at the time of landing and to use the average crew and captain shares to estimate the payout to crew. Therefore, fishermen should be able to complete the economic information in the same time required as for the catch information. The long-term positive effect of better reporting quality defined as accuracy and timeliness of the reports would be to provide better information for comparing with the dealer reports for tracking ACLs to ensure data are accurate and to improve scientific advice used in stock assessments and management decisions.

Commercial electronic logbooks, as proposed in Action 2, would not be used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they could serve as a means to verify dealer reports and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program standards that require two sources for verification of quota-monitored species. Although logbook (and dealer trip ticket data) are self-reported and have some biases (see **Appendix O** for more details), this type of verification can lead to better monitoring of commercial catches and reduce the likelihood of commercial annual catch limit overruns. Furthermore, improved logbook data could provide increased spatial resolution using the vessel's global positioning system or if tied to a vessel monitoring system, improved scientific information for analyzing effects of proposed management measures, and catch per unit effort estimates in stock assessments. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the commercial logbook landings, with the new timing and compliance requirements specified in this amendment, to compare with commercial trip ticket landings to help ensure the commercial ACLs are not exceeded.

Action 3 considers improvements to bycatch reporting in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab by adopting the ACCSP bycatch module. Annual catch limits and acceptable biological catch estimates for South Atlantic species are based on landed catch only and do not include fish that are discarded. However, the magnitude and composition of bycatch is an important component of total fishing mortality and stock assessments for these species.

Action 4 considers improvements to fishing/catch location data and compliance for the snapper grouper fishery. This action would require VMS for all commercial snapper grouper vessels. The initial cost of the VMS unit would be paid by the National Office of Law Enforcement VMS reimbursement office. Installation, maintenance, and communication fees would be the responsibility of the permit holder. This action would result in significant, indirect positive impacts on law enforcement/compliance and for data used in stock assessments.

The IPT recommends that the Purpose and Need be modified as shown below.

The current wording is as follows:

Purpose for Action

The ***purpose*** of Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3) is to improve data collection methods to better verify dealer reports to help ensure annual catch limit overages do not occur in the South Atlantic fisheries.

CE-BA 3 would modify commercial and charter/headboat vessel reporting requirements and bycatch requirements to enhance data collection throughout the South Atlantic.

Need for Action

The ***need*** for action in CE-BA 3 is to improve data collection methods, limit overages in annual catch limits, and improve bycatch reporting in South Atlantic fisheries.

Staff proposed wording:

Purpose for Action

The ***purpose*** of Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3) is to:

1. Improve for-hire data collection methods to help ensure recreational annual catch limit overages do not occur in South Atlantic fisheries.
2. Improve commercial data collection methods to help ensure commercial annual catch limit overages do not occur in the South Atlantic fisheries.
3. Improve bycatch/discard data collection methods to better quantify all sources of fishing mortality in South Atlantic fisheries.
4. Improve commercial data collection methods to better quantify fishing locations and to improve compliance in South Atlantic fisheries.

Need for Action

The ***need*** for CE-BA 3 is to improve data collection methods and timeliness to limit overages of annual catch limits, to improve stock assessments, and to improve compliance in South Atlantic fisheries.

IPT proposed revision to wording for bullets 1 & 2 and Need:

1. Improve for-hire data collection methods to better monitor recreational annual catch limits in South Atlantic fisheries.
2. Improve commercial data collection methods to compare with trip ticket data to better monitor commercial annual catch limits in the South Atlantic fisheries.

The ***need*** for CE-BA 3 is to improve data collection methods and timeliness to better monitor annual catch limits, to improve stock assessments, and to improve compliance in South Atlantic fisheries.

What Are the Alternatives for Actions Being Considered?

Action 1. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain existing permits and data reporting systems for the for-hire sector. Currently, the owner or operator of a vessel for which a charter vessel / headboat permit for Gulf coastal migratory pelagic fish, South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic fish, Gulf reef fish, South Atlantic snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, or whose vessel fishes for or lands such coastal migratory pelagic fish, reef fish, snapper-grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable Gulf, South Atlantic, or Atlantic EEZ, and who is selected to report by the SRD, must maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the SRD, on forms provided by the SRD. Completed records for charter vessels must be submitted to the Science and Research Director weekly, postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each trip (Sunday). Completed records for headboats must be submitted to the Science and Research Director monthly and must either be made available to an authorized statistical reporting agent or be postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each month.

Alternative 2. Require that vessels submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director (SRD) weekly via electronic reporting (via computer or internet). Weekly = 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday).

Sub-Alternative 2a. Charter

Sub-Alternative 2b. Headboat

Alternative 3. Require that vessels submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director (SRD) daily via electronic reporting (via computer or internet). Daily = by noon of the following day.

Sub-Alternative 3a. Charter

Sub-Alternative 3b. Headboat

Preferred Alternative 4. Require that vessels submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director (SRD) weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via computer or internet). Weekly = 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday).

Sub-Alternative 4a. Charter

Preferred Sub-Alternative 4b. Headboat

Proposed Actions in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

1. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels
2. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for commercial vessels
3. Modify Bycatch and Discard Reporting
4. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

What's currently in place for charter and headboat vessels in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo?

Charter vessels are required to maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of each trip as specified by the Science and Research Director (at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center), on forms that are provided. Forms include instructions, indicate all of the required information and must be postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each week (on Sunday).

Harvest and bycatch from charter and private vessels are monitored by the Marine Recreational Information Program. A 10% sample of charter vessel captains is called weekly to obtain trip level information. Additionally, standard dockside intercept data are collected from charter vessels and vessel clients are randomly sampled.

Headboat vessels are also required to report important information about their fishing trips. Vessels must complete and mail reporting forms to the Science and Research Director. The forms are due on a monthly basis, and must either be made available to a fisheries statistics reporting agent or be postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each month.

Harvest and bycatch data from the recreational sector are monitored by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Headboat trips are sub-sampled for data on species lengths and weights. Biological samples are obtained as time permits, and lengths of discarded fish are occasionally obtained.

The owner or operator of a vessel for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director must participate in the NMFS-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring reporting program as directed by the Science and Research Director.

[Note: More details are included in the Summary beginning on page S-2.]

Summary of Effects

Biological: Alternative 1 (No Action) would retain existing data reporting systems for the for-hire sector. Currently, for-hire vessels for the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fisheries selected to report by the Science and Research Director need to maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the Science and Research Director, and on forms provided by the Science and Research Director. Furthermore, the owner or operator of a vessel for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director must participate in the NMFS-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring reporting program as directed by the Science and Research Director. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** does not apply to or-hire vessels for coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo. Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** for-hire vessels in fisheries for coastal migratory pelagic and dolphin wahoo would not be required to submit their data via electronic reporting (computer/internet). **Alternatives 2-4** would require that data be submitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center more frequently

via computer/internet. Assuming compliance and accurate reporting by for-hire participants, all of the action alternatives would result in positive indirect biological effects, as the data would be reported in a timelier and efficient manner resulting in better monitoring of recreational annual catch limits. However, a recently completed pilot study in the Gulf of Mexico to test the feasibility of a mandatory electronic logbook reporting system in the for-hire sector has indicated that there may be problems with using self-reported data to track landings. **Alternative 3** would require daily electronic reporting resulting in the greatest positive indirect biological effects among the action alternatives. **Alternative 2** would require weekly reporting, which is the same as the status quo (**Alternative 1**) for charter vessels; however, **Alternative 2** would require data be submitted electronically. Further, **Alternative 2** would increase the reporting frequency for headboat vessels. Therefore, **Alternative 2** would have the least amount of biological benefits among the alternatives being considered. **Preferred Alternative 4** would initially require weekly reporting, with the additional requirement for data to be submitted via computer. **Preferred Alternative 4** would allow the Science and Research Director to require faster data submissions in the future without the South Atlantic Council having to prepare an additional amendment. **Preferred Sub-Alternative 4b** would implement this new reporting for headboats which is not as biologically beneficial as including reporting for charterboats also, however, the funding and program is not ready to be expanded to include charterboats at this time.

Economic: In summary, all alternatives except **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would change how the for-hire sector reports landings. The other alternatives would require weekly (**Alternative 2**) or daily (**Alternative 3**) electronic reporting. **Alternative 4 (Preferred)** would require weekly electronic reporting, but would shift to daily electronic reporting as necessary and determined by the SRD. The sub-alternatives for **Alternatives 2 – 4 (Preferred)** would differentiate whether the alternative would apply to just the charter boat sector (**Sub-Alternative a**) or to just the headboat sector (**Preferred Sub-Alternative b**). **Alternatives 2 – 4 (Preferred)** would incur costs of time and perhaps for computer equipment and staff time, but each alternative other than **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would provide managers with data in a more timely basis allowing for increased precision for recreational sector ACL management and help prevent sector overruns that would trigger AMs.

Social: In general, negative social effects of for-hire reporting requirements would likely be associated with any added time and financial burden for permit holders to meet the requirements. Increased frequency in reporting under **Alternatives 2-Preferred Alternative 4** may have some negative effects on vessel owners and captains because businesses will need to allocate additional time or staff to submit reports. The daily reporting requirement under **Alternative 3** and the potential for daily reporting requirement under **Preferred Alternative 4** will be more burdensome for for-hire permit holders than the weekly reporting in **Alternative 2**. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would not be expected to negatively impact the for-hire sector in terms of additional time and money requirements. Charterboat owners and captains would not be impacted under **Sub-alternative 2b**, **Sub-alternative 3b** and **Preferred Sub-alternative 4b**, but requirements for only headboats may not improve quota monitoring and accuracy to the extent that inclusion of the same requirements for charterboats under **Sub-alternatives 2a, 3a, and 4a**.

The requirement for electronic reporting under **Alternatives 2- Preferred Alternative 4** would affect vessel owners who do not already use computer systems in their businesses. Some fishermen are not familiar with computers or internet, and some may simply be more comfortable with paper fishing records. There may also be an increased risk of errors for electronic reporting by fishermen who typically do not use computers and internet in their businesses.

However, requiring all for-hire permit holders to report electronically and more frequently (**Alternatives 2- Preferred Alternative 4**) is expected to result in broad social benefits. More frequent and timely reporting would be expected to contribute to improved quota monitoring, with which it will be less likely that an annual catch limit will be exceeded and the associated accountability measures (AMs) will negatively impact the for-hire fishermen and associated communities and businesses. AMs can have significant direct and indirect effects on the fishermen because they usually impose some restriction on harvest, either during the current season or the next. Early closures and paybacks (which in turn increase the likelihood of an earlier closure in the following year) are directly linked to the NMFS quota monitoring system and limitations in the agency's ability to close fisheries quickly enough to avoid AMs. While the negative effects of AMs are usually short-term, they may at times induce other indirect effects through changes in fishing behavior or business operations that could have long-term social effects. Some of those effects are similar to other thresholds being met and may involve switching to other species or discontinuing fishing altogether. Although additional reporting requirements may not prevent AMs from being triggered, these requirements would be expected to provide additional information to better forecast early closures and minimize post-season AMs, such as "pay-backs." Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, there would be no improvements to monitoring as a result of more timely reporting, and it would be more likely that AMs would continue to impact for-hire businesses, communities, and customers.

Administrative: The administrative effects of changing reporting requirements for the for-hire sector will most likely be associated with rule-making, outreach, and implementation of the revised reporting scheme. In general, increased frequency in reporting under **Alternatives 2- Preferred Alternative 4** would increase the administrative burden on the agency. As the number of vessels affected increases, and reporting frequency increases (under the sub-alternatives), so do the administrative impacts.

Action 2. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for commercial vessels

Alternative 1. (No Action) Retain existing data reporting systems for the commercial sector. Snapper grouper logbooks for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo are required to be submitted 7 days after the end of each trip. Golden crab logbooks must be submitted not later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. If no fishing occurred during a calendar month for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, or golden crab, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month. The owner or operator of a vessel for which a commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper has been issued, who is selected to report by the SRD must participate in the NMFS-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring reporting program as directed by the SRD.

Preferred Alternative 2. Require NMFS to develop a system for commercial permit holders to submit their logbook entries electronically via an electronic version of the logbook made available via computer or internet. Fishermen are encouraged to submit their logbook reports electronically but would be allowed to submit paper logbooks. Commercial landings and catch/effort data are to be submitted in accordance with ACCSP standards. Require that logbooks (landings/economic and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip.

The IPT recommends the timing be considered separately and Council staff provided the following language for sub-alternatives.

Sub-alternative a. Require that logbooks (landings/economic and bycatch) be submitted within 7 days after the end of each trip.

Preferred Sub-alternative b. Require that logbooks (landings/economic and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip.

Preferred Alternative 3. Require “No fishing forms” must be submitted at the same frequency [currently submitted monthly], via the same process, and for all species as is currently specified for snapper grouper species. A fisherman would only be authorized to sell commercially harvested species if the fisherman’s previous reports have been submitted by the fisherman and received by NMFS in a timely manner. Any delinquent reports would need to be submitted by the fisherman and received by NMFS before a fisherman could sell commercially harvested species from a federally permitted U.S. vessel.

Proposed Actions in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

1. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels
2. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for commercial vessels
3. Modify Bycatch and Discard Reporting
4. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

The SEFSC proposes the following alternative and Council staff have included the wording with the addition of sub-alternatives as discussed above. The IPT will review this wording prior to the South Atlantic Council's December briefing book:

New Proposed Alternative 4. Require NMFS to define file specifications and transmission methods for an output file from an electronic logbook, which will enable permit holders to enter logbook entries electronically via an electronic version of the logbook made available via computer or internet. Fishermen are required to submit their logbook reports electronically via a computer or via internet web-entry based on vessel attributes as defined by the SRD. Commercial catch and effort data are to be submitted in accordance with ACCSP standards. Require that catch and bycatch logbooks be completed before the vessel ties up at the end of the trip and are submitted by the reporting deadline specified below. Economic logbook information must be completed and sent by the deadline specified below, along with the catch/discard logbook.

Sub-alternative a. Require that logbooks (landings/economic and bycatch) be submitted within 7 days after the end of each trip.

Sub-alternative b. Require that logbooks (landings/economic and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip.

Note: It is the Council's intent that Action 2 alternatives apply to all vessels with a king or Spanish mackerel commercial permit fishing for Atlantic migratory groups of king and/or Spanish mackerel or cobia.

Discussion

Under Preferred Alternative 3, "previous reports" refers to the reports from trips taken prior to the current trip. In other words, a fishermen must have submitted either a fishing or a no fishing report from their prior trips before they are authorized to sell commercially harvested species.

One point of confusion in terms of reporting ability has to do with reporting economic data. Fishermen have stated that they require approximately 19 days to get the price information for the economic logbook. However, the instructions on the economic logbook instruct the captain to use current market prices at the time of landing and to use the average crew and captian shares to estimate the payout to crew. Therefore, fishermen should be able to complete the economic information in the same time required as for the catch information. The sub-alternatives under Alterantive 2 would give some flexibiity in the amount of time given to turn in the reporting forms.

What's currently in place for commercial vessels?

Logbook reports from commercial fishermen targeting snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked not later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. If no fishing occurred during a calendar month for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, or golden crab, a report so stating must be submitted on one of the forms postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month.

If selected by NMFS, a snapper grouper vessel fishing in the EEZ must carry an observer and install an electronic logbook and/or video monitoring equipment provided to them. Participants in the fishery may also be selected by the Science and Research Director to maintain and submit a fishing record on provided forms.

Currently, commercial landings are monitored through the commercial landings monitoring system, which was implemented in June 2012. The commercial landings monitoring system takes into account: different boundaries for each stock based on fishing area where available; variable quota periods; overlapping years; multiple periods per year; and overlapping species groups (single species, aggregated species). The commercial landings monitoring system draws from multiple data sources including the dealer trip reports submitted to the Standard Atlantic Information System in Georgia and South Carolina, and Florida and North Carolina dealer trip ticket reports via Bluefin Data's file upload system. One system is used for all stocks managed by the South Atlantic Council. Compliance monitoring, as well as projections and expansions for non-reporting dealers is built into the commercial landings monitoring system. There is built-in quality control, which checks the landings reports against ACCSP and GulfFIN master code lists. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center identifies which dealers with reporting requirements have not reported and expands landings for non-reporting and compiles compliance monitoring reports. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center provides reports to NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office every two weeks, and landings are posted on NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office's Web site. In addition, timing of possible closures is estimated through the commercial landings monitoring system.

At the June 2012 Council meeting, the SEFSC provided an update on the timeliness of logbook reporting (**Appendix L**). The SEFSC indicated between 20 and 40% of logbooks from fisheries for coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and snapper grouper are submitted on time. However, a large percentage of the logbook reports are submitted 1-49 days late, and a small percentage are greater than 50 days late with logbook reports (**Figures S-1 and S-2**).

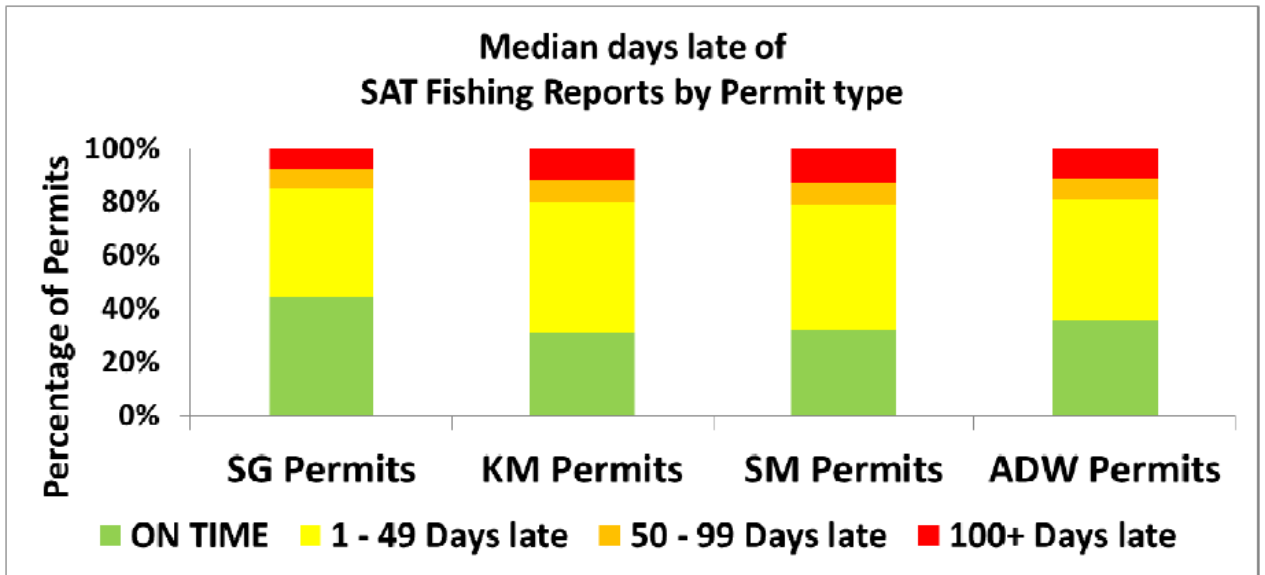


Figure S-1. Percentage of snapper grouper (SG), king mackerel (KM), Spanish mackerel (SM), and Atlantic dolphin/wahoo (ADW) permits that submit logbook reports, on time, 1-49 days late, 50-99 days late, and greater than 100 days late.

Source: SEFSC, June 2012 South Atlantic Council briefing book, Appendix L.

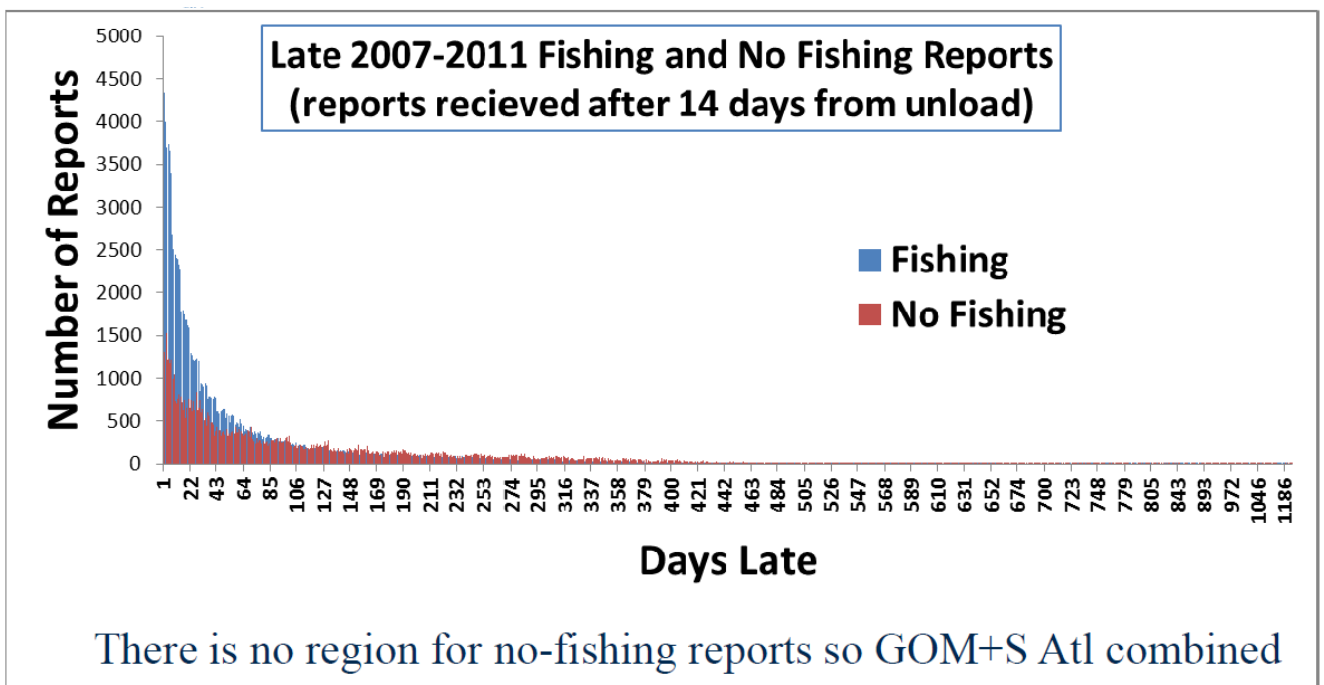


Figure S-2. Dates fishing and no fishing reports received by SEFSC.

Source: SEFSC, June 2012 South Atlantic Council briefing book, Appendix L.

Summary of Effects

Biological: Alternative 1 (No Action) would not make any improvements to the accountability of fishermen to submit logbooks in a timely manner or provide fishermen a means to report their information electronically via an electronic form, although currently the SRD can require submission using electronic monitoring for the snapper grouper and golden crab fisheries; however, this requirement has not been implemented to date. **Preferred Alternative 2** would give fishermen the option to submit their logbooks electronically and would change the deadline for submission of logbooks to 21 days after the trip. **Preferred Alternative 3** would require “no fishing forms” when fishermen don’t fish and would authorize fishermen to sell fish only when the previous reports have been submitted and received by NOAA Fisheries.

Electronic reporting of commercial logbook data has the potential to provide more complete logbook data, and make it easier to verify dealer reported landings in a timely manner. With electronic reporting, hail weights can be reported before the vessel hits the dock; thereby reducing error associated with filling out the effort and trip information a month later. Improvements expected from electronic vessel logbooks would include improved quality control using drop down lists, capturing effort information during the trip, and increased spatial resolution using the vessel’s global positioning system. Another positive effect would be to reconcile vessel and dealer reports at weekly intervals or even daily depending on the flexibility of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. However, electronic logbooks would not be expected to replace dealer reporting as landings are more accurately recorded at the dealer level.

Economic: While the status quo will not change the economic effects, **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would not necessarily maximize economic returns for these businesses because of the AM consequences that could as a result of exceeding an ACL using less efficient methods of data collection. **Preferred Alternative 2** could reduce the potential negative impacts compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)** by leading to timelier reporting of their catch, thus reducing the possibility of exceeding an ACL. ACLs are tracked using dealer trip tickets, however, commercial logbooks can be used to verify dealer reports. Not exceeding an ACL has the potential to increase economic return for these businesses. Electronic reporting is efficient because the information provided is directly integrated into an electronic system that allows combination of records and tabulation of harvests. With electronic reporting, data does not have to be manually input from paper forms, faxes, or scanned documents. The economic effects of **Preferred Alternative 2** have the potential to incur costs for commercial fishermen who choose to file electronically. However, the use of computers, the internet, and other forms of electronic connections and communication is commonplace in the business environment, so the differences in the costs associated with the use of electronic versus paper reporting method may be minimal. The economic impacts of complying with **Preferred Alternative 3** would be minimal. Fishermen would simply be required to report to NMFS when they are not fishing so that it will be known whether or not they are delinquent in turning in landings reports.

Social: Similar to effects on for-hire permit holders (**Action 1**), changes in frequency of reporting requirements for commercial vessels may also have some negative effects on commercial vessel owners and captains by imposing additional time and money requirements.

Alternative 1 (No Action) would be expected to not result in impacts on commercial fishermen but would reduce long-term social benefits associated with more accurate and timely data that would be expected under **Preferred Alternatives 2 and 3**, such as improved monitoring and more accurate forecast of potential in-season closures when landings are approaching an ACL. Because accountability measures (AMs) such as early closures, lowered trip limits, or pay-backs in the subsequent year can have significant impacts on the commercial fleet, it is imperative that landings are tracked in real-time to minimize unexpected implementation of AMs. Although reporting requirements and the resulting improved quota monitoring does not mean AMs will not be triggered at all, at minimum a better system to track and forecast AMs will help commercial fishermen and fish houses plan for closures and other regulations. **Preferred Alternatives 2 and 3** would extend reporting requirements for snapper grouper permit holders to all commercial permit holders, which will increase the burden on fishermen who do not currently hold snapper grouper permits. The option for paper or electronic reporting under **Preferred Alternative 2** would provide flexibility to fishermen who currently do not own the equipment necessary for electronic reporting or are not familiar with electronic reporting.

Administrative: The design and implementation of electronic logbooks under **Preferred Alternative 2** would result in increased administrative impacts to the agency and fishermen. Fishermen in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab are currently required to submit a “no fishing form” which is under **Preferred Alternative 3** postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of that month. However, **Preferred Alternative 3** would prohibit fishermen from selling snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, or golden crab species if they did not submit logbooks in a timely manner. This could result in moderate administrative impacts to both the agency and the fishery participants related to compliance and processing.

Action 3. Modify bycatch and discard reporting

Alternative 1 (No Action). Adopt the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Release, Discard and Protected Species Module as the preferred methodology. Until this module is fully funded, require the use of a variety of sources to assess and monitor bycatch including: observer coverage on vessels; logbooks; electronic logbook; video monitoring; MRFSS; state cooperation; and grant funded projects. After the ACCSP Bycatch Module is implemented, continue the use of technologies to augment and verify observer data. Require that commercial vessels with a snapper grouper permit, for-hire vessels with a for-hire permit, and private recreational vessels if fishing for snapper grouper species in the EEZ, if selected, shall use observer coverage, logbooks, electronic logbooks, video monitoring, or any other method deemed necessary to measure bycatch by NOAA Fisheries.

Note: This was adopted for the snapper grouper fishery.

Alternative 2. Adopt the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Release, Discard and Protected Species Module as the preferred methodology. Require that vessels with a commercial permit, for-hire vessels with a for-hire permit, and private recreational vessels if fishing for species in the EEZ under the authority of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, if selected, shall use observer coverage, logbooks, electronic logbooks, video monitoring, or any other method deemed necessary to measure bycatch by NOAA Fisheries.

Alternative 3. Bycatch data will be collected to meet or exceed the ACCSP standards.

IPT Recommendations

The IPT (interagency planning and review team that compiles the documents and develops analyses) has recommended the Council consider the following changes to the language of Action 3 and the alternatives at their next meeting (September 2012):

- Change language of action to state: **Action 3. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify bycatch and discard reporting.**
- Remove “adopt” from the language in Alternative 1 (No Action) and indicate these are the current requirements in place.

Proposed Actions in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

1. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels
2. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for commercial vessels
3. Modify Bycatch and Discard Reporting
4. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

- Change the language of Alternative 2 to state: **Alternative 2.** Implement the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Release, Discard and Protected Species Module as the preferred methodology.
- Remove Alternative 3 from consideration. Include new Alternative 3 to state: **Alternative 3.** Implement aspects of ACCSP that are not currently being done.

What’s currently in place to monitor bycatch and discard reporting?

Bycatch and discard reporting is currently being done through a variety of different means for the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries (see Section 4 for a complete description). The table below (**Table 1**) shows the degree to which ACCSP standards have been met for the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fisheries.

Summary of Effects

Biological: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) states that fishery management plans shall: Establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery, and include conservation and management measures that, to the extent practicable and in the following priority: (A) minimize bycatch; and (B) minimize the mortality of bycatch which cannot be avoided; assess the type and amount of fish caught and released alive during recreational fishing under catch and release fishery management programs and the mortality of such fish, and include conservation and management measures that, to the extent practicable, minimize mortality and ensure the extended survival of such fish.

With regard to bycatch reporting National Standard 9 at § 600.350 states:

(1) *Promote development of a database on bycatch and bycatch mortality in the fishery to the extent practicable.* A review and, where necessary, improvement of data collection methods, data sources, and applications of data must be initiated for each fishery to determine the amount, type, disposition, and other characteristics of bycatch and bycatch mortality in each fishery for purposes of this standard and of section 303(a)(11) and (12) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, a standardized reporting methodology is in place to collect bycatch information in the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries (see Section 4). Furthermore, actions have been taken in amendments to fishery management plans to these fisheries to reduce bycatch (**Appendix H**). **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would continue programs in place to collect information on bycatch in South Atlantic fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab. The U.S. National Bycatch Report (NMFS 2011) has reviewed bycatch programs currently in place in the Southeast Region as well as through the United States and has made recommendations for improvement. When funding is available, **Alternative 1** would implement the ACCSP bycatch module. In contrast to **Alternative 1**, **Alternative 2** would immediately implement the ACCSP bycatch module, which would improve bycatch reporting if funding were available and have positive biological effects.

Table S-1. The degree that the ACCSP bycatch standards have been met in the South Atlantic in terms of bycatch reporting for the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fisheries.

| ACCSP Standards | Fulfilled? | Method |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Reporting Requirements (Discards) | | |
| <i>Commercial</i> | Partial | Supplemental Discards logbook (20% permit holders/year) |
| <i>For Hire</i> | Full | MRFSS & Headboat Survey |
| <i>Private/Recreational</i> | Full | MRFSS |
| Required Reporting (Protected Species Interactions) | | |
| <i>Commercial</i> | Partial | -Supplemental Discards logbook (20% permit holders/year) |
| <i>For-Hire (All vessels)</i> | Partial | Reporting of protected resources interactions not mandatory. |
| <i>Private/Rec</i> | Partial | Reporting of protected species resources interactions only one year (2006) |
| Target Sampling -Bandit (h/l) 5% of trips -BSB Pots 3.5% of trips -For-Hire (h/l) 5% of trips | Full | -Supplemental Discards logbook (20% permit holders/year) |
| Commercial Fishermen reporting system must have standardized data elements | Full | |
| Mandatory reporting of threatened species and protected finfish species | Partial | -Supplemental Discards logbook (20% permit holders/year) |
| Observer Coverage* | | |
| <i>Pilot program to determine appropriate coverage</i> | Completed | Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation has a project to implement a pilot observer program in the vertical hook and line fishery. |
| <i>Commercial</i> | Partial | Cooperative Research Program (only 2006-2007) |
| <i>For-Hire</i> | None | |
| <i>Private/Rec</i> | None | |
| Outreach/Training: | | |
| <i>Programs on Reporting</i> | None | |
| *Note: If selected, both the commercial and for-hire sectors in the snapper grouper fishery are required to utilize observers, fishermen reporting, and port interviewing to qualitatively and quantitatively describe release, discards, and protected resources interactions. | | |

Note: Current observer costs are \$850/day in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery (Frank Helies, personal communication) and \$675/day in the headboat fishery (Ken Brennan, personal communication).

Collecting bycatch data according to ACCSP standards would enhance the level of sampling and improve bycatch reporting in the Southeast. The main elements of the ACCSP bycatch module that would apply to the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries are summarized below:

1. Reporting of protected species interactions (including threatened species and protected finfish species) would be mandatory.
2. The module would utilize at-sea observer coverage to collect bycatch and effort information from commercial fisheries. Vessels would carry at-sea-observers as a condition of permitting in commercial fisheries.
3. The minimum level of sampling would vary between 2% to 5% of total trips depending on the priority assigned to the respective fishery. For fisheries with a high bycatch potential, it is recommended that the target sampling level be set at 5% of total trips or at a level that achieves a 20-30% proportional standard error. In addition, data would be collected at the haul level on each observer trip.
4. Pilot surveys can be used to determine the appropriate level of observer coverage to meet relevant management objectives.
5. Minimum data elements, an extensive set of sampling protocols and quality control/assurance procedures developed by the ACCSP would be used for at-sea observer programs.
6. Training programs, as well as certification of qualifications, would be provided for all new at-sea observers by the ACCSP and program partners.
7. Observer data would be utilized in combination with information obtained from fishermen.
8. ACCSP approved standardized data elements, sampling strategies, priorities and data management would be included in the commercial fishermen reporting system.
9. Required reporting of protected species interactions information is mandatory for the ACCSP commercial reporting system and is mandatory for the for-hire vessels that fall under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) requirements. Reporting of discards or releases through the catch and effort reporting system is strongly encouraged, although voluntary for non-protected discards or releases of other marine organisms.
10. The ACCSP qualitative release, discard and protected species interactions monitoring program for commercial fisheries would include interviews by state and federal port agents to verify finfish reporting in the fishermen trip report as well as stranding and entanglements data.
12. All partners would develop outreach and training programs to improve reporting accuracy by fishermen.

The ACCSP standards and the degree to which those standards are met through existing data collection programs for the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin wahoo fisheries are identified in **Summary Table 3**.

However, funding is currently not available to implement the ACCSP. As **Alternative 2** would use only ACCSP to collect bycatch information, presumably no bycatch data could be collected for any of the fisheries in the South Atlantic unless funds became available. Further, it is possible that if the bycatch module was funded that monies would be taken from other data collection projects in the South Atlantic. Therefore, if ACCSP bycatch module was implemented under **Alternative 2**, positive indirect biological effects could be expected for

fisheries in the South Atlantic; however, if funds were taken from other programs in the Southeast, implementation of the ACCSP bycatch module could have negative biological effects. **Alternative 3** would allow data to be collected using any means as long as the resulting data meet or exceed the ACCSP standards. The indirect biological benefits would be greater than those under **Alternative 2** if the data exceed ACCSP standards and equal to the indirect biological benefits if the data meet ACCSP standards.

Economic: The alternatives under Action 3 are not expected to have significant, negative economic impacts to the fishermen unless the methods selected to implement bycatch and discard reporting resulted in something other than minimal time commitments. When NMFS/NOAA Fisheries implements the ACCSP standards (**Alternative 1 (No Action)** and **Alternative 2**), significant, negative impacts could result if the fishery participants are required to fund the cost of at-sea observers or other data collection costs. The impact of the cost would be determined by the frequency with which fishermen would have to pay for observers, or other measures. Until the ACCSP standards are implemented, it is impossible to know the potential impact to individual fishermen or overall. However, if requiring fishermen to pay for observers or other expensive data collection measures become requirements, it is possible the increased cost will cause some fishermen to leave the fishery.

Social: While there are reporting requirements currently in place under **Alternative 1**, if these methods are not the most effective methods for bycatch monitoring and reporting this may result in considerable social action to publicize bycatch in a fishery, resulting in increased social conflict and polarization of the different perspectives. **Alternatives 2** and **3** are expected to improve the collection of bycatch data, thereby improving the quality of stock assessments and subsequent fishery decisions. Each alternative has the potential of imposing costs on individual fishery participants that could be excessive and result in fishery exit, which would be expected to result in additional personal, family, and community and associated industries stress and change.

Administrative: Under the status quo (**Alternative 1**), modules of the ACCSP are implemented as funding allows. **Alternative 2** could increase the administrative impacts relative to **Alternative 1 (No Action)** as it could require funding to be shifted from various existing sources such as fishery-independent monitoring, stock assessments, and collection of fishery-dependent data to implement the ACCSP bycatch reporting module. Under **Alternative 3**, the agency would have more flexibility in how bycatch information is collected and would be able to modify the collection to have the least amount of impacts on the agency while maintaining the standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. At this point, it is difficult to determine the administrative impacts of the action on fishery participants for **Alternative 3** because it is unclear which bycatch reporting methods would be selected.

Action 4. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

Alternative 1. No Action. Currently snapper grouper vessels are not required to be equipped with VMS.

Alternative 2. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS. The purchase, installation, and maintenance of VMS equipment must conform to the protocol established by NMFS in the Federal Register. The purchase of VMS equipment will be reimbursed by the National Office of Law Enforcement VMS reimbursement account if funding is available. Installation, maintenance, and communication costs will be paid for or arranged by the permit holder.

IPT Recommendations

The IPT (interagency planning and review team that compiles the documents and develops analyses) has recommended the Council consider the following changes to the language of Action 4 and the alternatives at their next meeting (December 2012):

- Change language of action to state: **Action 4. Amend the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan to require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS**
- Change the language of Alternative 2 to state: **Alternative 2.** Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels *with a Federal unlimited or trip-limited permit* to be equipped with VMS. The purchase, installation, and maintenance of VMS equipment must conform to the protocol established by NMFS in the Federal Register. Purchase of VMS equipment will be reimbursed by the *NOAA Office of Law Enforcement* *from the VMS reimbursement account* if funding is available. Installation, maintenance, and communication costs will be paid for or arranged by the permit holder.

Summary of Effects

Biological: **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would not require commercial vessels with a snapper grouper permit to use VMS. **Alternative 2** would provide more detailed information on fishing and catch location that could be incorporated into future stock assessments; this would give a much finer resolution to the time/area strata where fishing mortality takes place. Indirect positive biological impacts would result from greater law enforcement, especially for placed-based management (e.g., MPAs, Oculina Experimental Closed Area, **South Atlantic Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3**

Proposed Actions in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

1. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels
2. Amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for commercial vessels
3. Modify Bycatch and Discard Reporting
4. Require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels to be equipped with VMS

Decision Document

etc.).

Economic: Alternative 1 (No Action) would not have an economic impact on the snapper grouper fleet. **Alternative 2** would require the 693 South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Permit holders (both the Unlimited and 225-lb Limited Permits) to have VMS onboard. The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement has a fund that would pay for VMS hardware (**Table S-2**). Installation of VMS units is estimated to be approximately \$300 per unit. All installation, maintenance, and communications charges would be paid by the permit holders. Economic impacts for individual vessels implementation of VMS (**Alternative 2**) is described in **Table S-3**.

Table S-2. NMFS-approved VMS units and costs.

| Brand and Model | Cost |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Boatrac FMCT-G | \$3,095 |
| Thrane and Thrane TT-3026D | \$2,495 |
| Faria Watchdog KTW304 | \$3,295 |
| CLS America Thorium TST | \$3,095 |

Source: Data provided by NMFS Office of Law Enforcement, July 2012.

Table S-3. NMFS-approved VMS communications costs.

- 1. Qualcomm (for Boatrac units)**
\$30/mo satellite fee, \$.30/message, \$.006 per character for messaging (average price Estimated to be \$35/month which includes 24/7 operations center support)
- 2. Telenor (for Thrane units)**
\$.06 per position report or \$1.44 per day for 1 hour reporting. If in the “In Harbor” mode, then \$.36 per day. Messaging costs \$.24 per e-mail. (\$30/mo average)
- 3. Iridium/Cingular Wireless (for Faria units)**
\$50.25 per month that includes 12,000 Iridium bytes and 35,000 GSM bytes for email and e-forms reporting.
- 4. Iridium (for CLS America units)**
\$45 per month for hourly reporting, \$1.75 per Kbyte for e-mail or forms submission.

Source: Data provided by NMFS Office of Law Enforcement, July 2012.

Social: VMS on all commercial vessels is expected to improve data collection and indirectly, enforcement and compliance with reporting requirements, area closures, seasonal closures, and other management measures. A VMS mandate for all commercial vessels will eliminate the unfair advantage to fishermen who do not comply with regulations and fish when and where it is not allowed. Overall, the benefits to the entire fleet would be expected to outweigh the negative impacts of the VMS requirement in **Alternative 2**.

Administrative: Administrative impacts associated with **Alternative 2** would be significant and relate to rule making, enforcement, monitoring, and education and outreach. Establishing a VMS provision is a complicated administrative task for the agency and would result in considerable burden. It is expected that **Alternative 2** would be a considerable burden for the

fishery participants. However, indirect positive law enforcement impacts would result from **Alternative 2**.

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel input

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) has recommended on numerous occasions that the South Atlantic Council consider a requirement to carry VMS for both recreational and commercial vessels in the South Atlantic. In April 2010, the Snapper Grouper AP approved a motion to recommend mandatory VMS for all vessels that interact with snapper grouper species in the EEZ and AMs that would prevent fishing in the absence of VMS. Again, in April 2012, the Snapper Grouper AP approved a motion to recommend the South Atlantic Council require VMS for any vessel harvesting fish in South Atlantic waters.

APPROVAL OF CE-BA 3

OPTION 1. APPROVE CE-BA 3 FOR FORMAL REVIEW AND GIVE STAFF/CHAIRMAN EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES

OPTION 2. DO NOT APPROVE CE-BA 3 FOR FORMAL REVIEW

OPTION 3. OTHERS??

APPROVAL OF CODIFIED TEXT FOR CE-BA 3 (available at the meeting)

OPTION 1. APPROVE CE-BA 3 CODIFIED TEXT AS BEING NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE; GIVE STAFF/CHAIRMAN EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES AND GIVE THE CHAIR AUTHORITY TO RE-DEEM ANY REVISIONS

OPTION 2. DO NOT APPROVE CE-BA 3 CODIFIED TEXT

OPTION 3. OTHERS??