



# Snapper Grouper Amendment 18A/EIS – Black Sea Bass

Snapper Grouper AP October 2011 –  
Charleston, SC

## Decision Document

### Background and need for this amendment:

The need for action in Amendment 18A is to reduce overcapacity and reduce the rate of harvest in the black sea bass pot component of the snapper grouper fishery. Recent amendments to the SnapperGrouper FMP have imposed more restrictive harvest limitations on snapper grouper fishermen. In an effort to identify other species to target, a greater number of fishermen have targeted black sea bass. Increased effort in the black sea bass pot component of the snapper grouper fishery has intensified the “race to fish” that already exists, which has resulted in a shortened season for the commercial sector; The recreational sector’s season has also been shortened. Furthermore, the commercial quota for black sea bass was met in 2009, 2010, and 2011 before fishermen had a chance to fish during the portion of the year (November-February) that has historically been most productive. The South Atlantic Council is concerned an increase effort on these species will deteriorate profits.

### Specific goals of the fishery management plan:

- Prevent overfishing.
- Collect necessary data.
- Promote orderly utilization of the resource.
- Provide for a flexible management system.
- Minimize habitat damage.
- Promote public compliance and enforcement.
- Mechanism to vest participants.
- Promote stability and facilitate long-run planning.
- Create market-driven harvest pace and increase product continuity.
- Minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen.
- Decrease incentives for overcapitalization.
- Prevent continual dissipation of returns from fishing through open access.

- Evaluate and minimize localized depletion.
- End overfishing of snapper grouper stocks undergoing overfishing.
- Rebuild stocks declared overfished.

Management actions proposed in this Amendment include:

- Update the MSA parameters based on the SEDAR stock assessment and consider modifications to the rebuilding strategy
- Limit participation and effort in the black sea bass pot fishery
- Limit bycatch in the black sea bass pot fishery
- Modify the current system of accountability measures
- Modify the current rebuilding strategy to account for an increasing biomass
- Consider management measures such as:
  - a spawning season closure
  - a trip limit
  - a modified bag limit
  - modified size limits
- Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of fisheries data

General Timing for this Amendment:

1. Approve for public hearings – September 2011
2. Public hearings – November/December 2011
3. Review comments and approve all actions – December 2011
4. Final review & approval for formal review – December 2011
5. Send to Secretary of Commerce – December 2011

Specific actions and alternatives being considered:

Since the SAFMC met in June 2011 in Key West, Florida, the IPT for this plan met to discuss the actions and alternatives included in this amendment. The Snapper Grouper AP made comments on Amendment 18 at their November 2010 meeting. Each of the actions with its associated alternatives is listed below, with recommendations from the staff, IPT, and AP. This amendment currently has 13 actions, some with multiple alternatives and sub-alternatives. In order to make this amendment more manageable, the Council is advised to remove any actions or alternatives at this point they no longer consider to be viable options or time critical. The Council ought to review their preferred alternatives or select preferred alternatives wherever they can. The Council ought to take action as necessary and approve the document for public hearings.

## **Action 1 (New from June Meeting). Modify Rebuilding Strategy for Black Sea Bass**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that maintains a constant catch throughout the remaining years of the rebuilding timeframe. The current commercial ACL is 309,000 pounds gutted weight (gw) (364,620 pounds whole weight (ww)), and the current recreational ACL is 409,000 pounds gw (482,620 pounds ww) for a combined ACL of 718,000 pounds gw (847,240 pounds ww).

**Alternative 2.** Establish a new constant catch rebuilding strategy with a ACL of [insert poundage resulting from the 2011 assessment and SSC review process]. This TAC would be held constant for the remaining years of the rebuilding schedule (until 2016), and would remain in effect until modified. The commercial ACL would be [insert], and the recreational ACL would be [insert].

**Alternative 3.** Define a rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that maintains a constant fishing mortality rate throughout the remaining years of the rebuilding timeframe. The TAC would remain unchanged until modified.

**Table 2-1** ACLs with Constant F rebuilding strategy.

<b>Constant Fishing Mortality Rate Options</b>	<b>Combined ACL pounds gw.</b>	<b>Com. ACL (43%) pounds gw.</b>	<b>Recreational ACL (57%) pounds gw.</b>
Option 1. $F = 65\% F_{MSY}$			
Option 2. $F = 75\% F_{MSY}$			
Option 3. $F = 85\% F_{MSY}$			
Option 4. $F = F_{MSY}$			

**Sub-Alternative 3a.** An increased TAC would be set for the 2012/2013 season and would increase annually over a period of three years as follows:

**Table 2-2** Annually increasing ACLs based on Constant F.

<b>Constant Fishing Mortality Rate Options</b>	<b>Fishing Season</b>	<b>Combined ACL pounds gw.</b>	<b>Com. ACL (43%) pounds gw.</b>	<b>Recreational ACL (57%) pounds gw.</b>
Option 1. $F = 65\% F_{MSY}$	2012/2013			
	2013/2014			
	2014/2015			
	2015/2016			
Option 2. $F = 75\% F_{MSY}$	2012/2013			
	2013/2014			
	2014/2015			
	2015/2016			
	2012/2013			

	2013/2014			
	2014/2015			
	2015/2016			
Option 4. $F = F_{MSY}$	2012/2013			
	2013/2014			
	2014/2015			
	2015/2016			

**Alternative 4.** Define a rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that modifies the fishing mortality rate throughout the remaining fishing seasons of the rebuilding timeframe. After the 2015/2016 fishing season the fishing mortality rate would be held constant until modified.

**Table 2-3** ACLs based on annually modified F.

Fishing Season	Fishing Mortality Rate	Combined ACL pounds gw.	Commercial ACL (43%) pounds gw.	Recreational ACL (57%) pounds gw.
2012/2013	$F = \text{xx}\% F_{MSY}$			
2013/2014	$F = \text{xx}\% F_{MSY}$			
2014/2015	$F = \text{xx}\% F_{MSY}$			
2015/2016	$F = \text{xx}\% F_{MSY}$			

\*Note: Sector ACLs are based on the allocation formula used in Amendment 13C (SAFMC 2006) whereby the commercial quota is 43% of the TAC and the recreational allocation is 57% of the TAC.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 1:**

1. The Council accepted the recommended language to restructure Action 1 as four separate Actions 1a through 1d.
2. The Council is urged to make decisions on their preferred rebuilding plan as this will affect analyses that need to be completed.
3. Update MSY, MFMT, MSST, etc. from SEDAR assessment and SSC review process by adding the new values at the front of this action.
4. The staff recommends this action be reworded as follow:

**Action 1. Modify Rebuilding Strategy, ABC, ACLs, ACTs for Black Sea Bass**

**Action 1a. Modify Rebuilding Strategy and Set ABC for Black Sea Bass**

**Alternative 1 (No-Action).** Retain rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that maintains a constant catch throughout the remaining years of the rebuilding timeframe. Currently, there is no ABC for black sea bass. Based on the current regulations in place the commercial ACL is 309,000 pounds gutted weight (gw) (364,620 pounds whole weight (ww)), and the recreational ACL is 409,000 pounds gw (482,620 pounds ww) for a combined ACL of 718,000 pounds gw (847,240 pounds ww).

**Alternative 2.** Establish a new constant catch rebuilding strategy with an ABC from the 2011 assessment and SSC review process

**Alternative 3.** Define a rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that maintains a constant fishing mortality rate throughout the remaining years of the rebuilding timeframe.

**Table 2-X** ABC with Constant F rebuilding strategy.

Constant Fishing Mortality Rate Options	ABC pounds gw.
Option 1. $F = 65\%F_{MSY}$	
Option 2. $F = 75\%F_{MSY}$	
Option 3. $F = 85\%F_{MSY}$	
Option 4. $F = F_{MSY}$	
Option 5. $F = F_{rebuild}$ (by 2016)	<b>Preferred</b>

**Alternative 4.** Define a rebuilding strategy for black sea bass that modifies the fishing mortality rate throughout the remaining fishing seasons of the rebuilding timeframe. After the 2015/2016 fishing season the fishing mortality rate would be held constant until modified.

**Table 2-X** ABCs based on annually modified F.

Fishing Season	Fishing Mortality Rate	ABC pounds gw.
2012/2013	$F = xx\%F_{MSY}$	
2013/2014	$F = xx\%F_{MSY}$	
2014/2015	$F = xx\%F_{MSY}$	
2015/2016	$F = xx\%F_{MSY}$	

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 1a:**

1. Move Alternative 3, options 1,3, and 4 to the “considered, but rejected appendix.”
2. Move Alternative 4 to the “considered, but rejected appendix.”
3. The Council’s intent in Action 1a is that during rebuilding,  $OY = F_{Rebuild}$ , and then after the stock is rebuilt,  $F = F_{OY}$ .

**Action 1b.** Set an ACL for Black Sea Bass Fishery.

**Alternative 1.** (no action). Do not change the existing ACL for black sea bass.

**Alternative 2.** Set  $ACL = ABC = OY$ . This results in sector ACLs based on the existing allocations.

**Alternative 3.** Set  $ACL = 90\%ABC$ . This results in sector ACLs based on the existing allocations.

**Alternative 4.** Set  $ACL = 80\%ABC$ . This results in sector ACLs based on the existing allocations.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 1b:**

1. The Council selected Alternative 2 as the preferred Alternative.

**Action 1c. Set Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) for the Commercial Black Sea Bass Fishery.**

**Alternative 1. No action.** Do not set an ACT for the commercial black sea bass fishery.

**Alternative 2.** Set the commercial ACT = 90% of the commercial sector ACL.

**Alternative 3.** Set the commercial ACT = 80% of the commercial sector ACL.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 1c:**

1. The Council selected Alternative 1 as the preferred Alternative for this action. The logic behind this is that commercial activity is already quota monitored and commercial fishing activity can be ended when the commercial ACL is projected to be met.

**Action 1d. Set Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) for the Recreational Black Sea Bass Fishery.**

**Alternative 1. No action.** Do not set an ACT for the recreational black sea bass fishery.

**Alternative 2.** Set the recreational ACT = 85% of the recreational sector ACL.

**Alternative 3.** Set the recreational ACT = 75% of the recreational sector ACL.

**Alternative 4.** The ACT equals  $ACL \cdot (1 - PSE)$  or  $recreational\ ACL \cdot 0.5$ , whichever is greater.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 1d:**

1. The Council set Alternative 4 as the preferred Alternative for this Action. The recreational ACL is more difficult to monitor in season as it relies on MRIP. The selection of Alternative 4 over Alternatives 2 or 3 was done because it takes into account the accuracy of the MRIP landings estimates for the species in determining the size of the ACT reduction from the ACL as opposed to setting it to a single fixed level.

## **Action 2. Limit Participation in the Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery Through an Endorsement Program.**

Note: There are four 225 permits with BSB landings who fished pots. We do not have the 2010 or 2011 data yet, but none of these permits have landings in recent years, and their landings were very small.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not limit participation in the black sea bass pot fishery with the establishment of an endorsement program.

**Alternative 2 (New from June Mtg.).** Limit endorsement and tag distribution to black sea bass pot fishermen with valid or renewable commercial snapper grouper permits as of the effective date of the final rule whose *average annual* black sea bass landings, using black sea bass pot gear, between 12/8/98 and 12/31/10 were at least:

**Sub-Alternative 2a** - 500 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2b** - 1,000 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2c** - 2,000 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2d** - 5,000 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2e** - 10,000 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2f** – 3,500 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2g** – 2,500 lbs whole weight. Exclude fishermen who had no reported commercial landings of black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2010.

**Alternative 3.** No state shall have less than two Unlimited Snapper Grouper Permits that qualify, provided that no permit qualifies whose minimum average landings are:

**Sub-Alternative 3a** - 1,000 lbs whole weight

**Sub-Alternative 3b** - 2,000 lbs whole weight

### **Summary of Council Activity for Action 2:**

1. Council clarified that in order to be eligible for a black sea bass pot endorsement, fishermen must also possess an unlimited snapper grouper permit.

2. Council stated its intent that NMFS administratively prohibit transfers of unlimited snapper grouper permits for the necessary amount of time, not to exceed 45 days, until the new endorsements are required.
3. The Council added sub-Alternatives 2f and 2g and selected sub-Alternative 2f as their preferred. These alternatives were added based on the information provided in the tables below. The Council's intent was to see if they could increase the number of fishermen with endorsements to over the 5,000 pound, but keep the number fewer than indicated by the 2,000 pound cutoff.
4. The Council added Alternative 3.

Number of fishermen with snapper grouper permits who fished pots with minimum black sea bass landings of 500, 2,000, 1,000, 5,000, and 10,000 pounds ww in during 12/8/98 to 12/31/10. Excludes fishermen who did not have landings in 2008, 2009, or 2010.

Landings (ww)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
500 lbs	50	74
1,000 lbs	41	68
2,000 lbs	34	62
5,000 lbs	18	52
10,000 lbs	9	44

Number of vessels that fished pots and caught black sea bass during 1992 to 2010, and the number of vessels that currently have permits.

Year	# of Vessels*	# Active Permits
1992	52	
1993	71	
1994	86	
1995	68	
1996	80	
1997	92	
1998	76	
1999	71	54
2000	70	54
2001	59	50
2002	53	46
2003	52	50
2004	56	54
2005	51	49
2006	50	45
2007	55	53
2008	50	49
2009	62	56
2010	51	51

\*Source: NMFS logbook data 5-12-2011



## **Action 3. Establishment of an Appeals Process for Fishermen Excluded From the Black Sea Bass Pot Endorsement Program**

**Alternative 1.** No Action. Do not specify provisions for an appeals process associated with the black sea bass endorsement program.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** A period of 90 days will be set aside to accept appeals to the black sea bass endorsement program starting on the effective date of the final rule. The Regional Administrator (RA) will review, evaluate, and render final decisions on appeals. Hardship arguments will not be considered. The RA will determine the outcome of appeals based on NMFS' logbooks. If NMFS' logbooks are not available, the RA may use state landings records. Appellants must submit NMFS' logbooks or state landings records to support their appeal.

**Alternative 3.** A period of 90 days will be set aside to accept appeals to the black sea bass endorsement program starting on the effective date of the final rule. The RA will review, evaluate, and render final decisions on appeals. Hardship arguments will not be considered. A special board composed of state directors/designees will review, evaluate, and make individual recommendations to RA on appeals. Hardship arguments will not be considered. The special board and the RA will determine the outcome of appeals based on NMFS' logbooks. If NMFS' logbooks are not available, the RA may use state landings records. Appellants must submit NMFS' logbooks or state landings records to support their appeal.

### **Summary of Council Activity for Action 2:**

1. The Council selected Alternative 2 as its preferred Alternative.

## **Action 4. Allow for Transferability of Black Sea Bass Pot Endorsements**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Black sea bass pot endorsements (and tags) would not be allowed to be transferred if such a system were implemented.

**Alternative 2.** Black sea bass pot endorsements can be transferred between any two individuals or entities that hold a valid federal commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit. The endorsement and associated landings history of black sea bass can be transferred regardless of whether or not the federal commercial snapper grouper permit is transferred.

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** Transferability allowed upon program implementation.

**Sub-Alternative 2b.** Transferability not allowed during the first 2 years of the program.

**Sub-Alternative 2c.** Transferability not allowed during the first 3 years of the program.

**Sub-Alternative 2d.** Transferability not allowed during the first 5 years of the program.

**Alternative 3.** Black sea bass pot endorsements can be transferred between any two individuals or entities that hold a valid federal commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit. The endorsement and associated landings history of black sea bass be transferred only if the federal commercial snapper grouper permit is transferred.

**Sub-Alternative 3a.** Transferability allowed upon program implementation.

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** Transferability not allowed during the first 2 years of the program.

**Sub-Alternative 3c.** Transferability not allowed during the first 3 years of the program.

**Sub-Alternative 3d.** Transferability not allowed during the first 5 years of the program.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 4:**

1. The Council did not choose a preferred alternative for this action, preferring to wait until public comment came in to make their selection.

## **Action 5. Limit Effort in the Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery Each Permit Year**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not annually limit the number of black sea bass pots deployed or pot tags issued to holders of snapper grouper commercial permits.

**Alternative 2.** Require that each black sea bass pot in the water or at sea on a vessel in the South Atlantic EEZ have an attached valid identification tag issued by NOAA Fisheries Service. Limit the black sea bass pot tags to *100* per vessel each permit year. NOAA Fisheries Service will issue new identification tags each fishing year that will replace the tags from the previous fishing year.

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Require that each black sea bass pot in the water or at sea on a vessel in the South Atlantic EEZ have an attached valid identification tag issued by NOAA Fisheries Service. Limit the black sea bass pot tags to *50* per vessel each permit year. NOAA Fisheries Service will issue new identification tags each fishing year that will replace the tags from the previous fishing year.

**Alternative 4.** Require that each black sea bass pot in the water or at sea on a vessel in the South Atlantic EEZ have an attached valid identification tag issued by NOAA Fisheries Service. Limit the black sea bass pot tags to *25* per vessel each permit year. NOAA Fisheries Service will issue new identification tags each fishing year that will replace the tags from the previous fishing year.

**Preferred Alternative 5.** Require that each black sea bass pot in the water or at sea on a vessel in the South Atlantic EEZ have an attached valid identification tag issued by NOAA Fisheries Service. Limit the black sea bass pot tags to *35* per vessel each permit year. NOAA Fisheries Service will issue new identification tags each fishing year that will replace the tags from the previous fishing year.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 5:**

1. The Council selected Alternative 5 as its preferred Alternative.

## **Action 6. Implement Measures to Reduce Bycatch in the Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not implement additional regulations stipulating when black sea bass pots must be removed from the water. Currently, fishermen are required to remove all pots once the quota has been reached.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Black sea bass pots must be brought back to shore at the conclusion of each trip.

**Alternative 3.** Allow fishermen to leave pots in the water for no more than 72 hours.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 6:**

1. The Council made no changes from their previously chosen preferred alternative.

## **Action 7. Modify Accountability Measures for Black Sea Bass**

Note: IPT suggested wording changes are highlighted.

### **Alternative 1 (No Action).**

#### ***Commercial***

If a commercial ACL is met or is projected to be met, all subsequent purchase and sale is prohibited and harvest and/or possession is limited to the bag limit for the species covered by that ACL.

#### ***Recreational***

If black sea bass *is overfished* and the sector ACL is projected to be met, prohibit the harvest and retention of the species. Compare the recreational ACL with recreational landings over a range of years. For 2010, use only 2010 landings. For 2011, use the average landings of 2010 and 2011. For 2012 and beyond, use the most recent three-year running average. If the ACL is exceeded, independent of stock status, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice, at or near the beginning of the following fishing year, to reduce the sector ACL in the following season by the amount of the overage.

**Alternative 2.** If the combined commercial and recreational ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce length of the following season for both sectors. The current commercial quota closure provision would not be affected under this alternative.

#### **Alternate Alternative 2 language suggested by the IPT:**

**Alternative 2.** If the combined commercial and recreational ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of the following season as follows:

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** If both sectors ACLs are exceeded then both sector's season would be reduced as necessary.

**Sub-Alternative 2b.** If only one sector ACL is exceeded, and the combined ACL is also exceeded, then that sector's season would be reduced as necessary.

**Alternative 3.** If black sea bass *is overfished* and the combined commercial and recreational ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce each sector's ACL in the following season by the amount of the relevant sector's overage. The current commercial quota closure provision would not be affected under this alternative.

Alternate Alternative 3 language suggested by the IPT:

**Alternative 3.** If black sea bass is overfished and the combined commercial and recreational ACL is exceeded the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce each sector's ACL in the following season by the amount of the overage as follows:

**Sub-Alternative 3a.** If both sectors exceed their ACL, then both sector's ACLs would be reduced by the sector overage.

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** If only one sector's ACL is exceeded and the combined ACL is also exceeded than that sector's ACL would be reduced by the amount of the total overage (the amount the combined commercial and recreational ACL is exceeded).

**Alternative 4.** If the recreational ACL is exceeded, the following year's landings will be monitored for persistence in increased landings. The Regional Administrator will publish a notice to reduce the length of the fishing season as necessary.

**Alternative 5.** If black sea bass is overfished and the recreational ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the ACL in the following season by the amount of the recreational sector's overage.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 7:**

1. The Council voted to simplify Action 7 to eliminate the use of multiyear averages in the recreational accountability measures.

**Action 8. (NEW from IPT Suggestion after June Mtg.) Establish a Spawning Season Closure for Black Sea Bass**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not implement a spawning season closure for black sea bass.

**Alternative 2.** Implement a March 1-April 30th spawning season closure for black sea bass, would apply to commercial and recreational sectors.

**Alternative 3.** Implement an April 1st-May 31st spawning season closure for black sea bass, would apply to commercial and recreational sectors.

**Alternative 4.** Implement a March 1st- May 31st spawning season closure for black sea bass, would apply to commercial and recreational sectors.

**Alternative 5.** Implement a May 1st- May 31st spawning season closure for black sea bass, would apply to commercial and recreational sectors.

Percentage of monthly landings for black sea bass during 2006-2009 fishing years.

Month	MRFSS	HB	Comm	Total
6	15%	15%	6%	11%
7	11%	15%	5%	9%
8	11%	11%	6%	9%
9	4%	7%	5%	5%
10	4%	6%	7%	5%
11	10%	4%	13%	10%
12	10%	4%	16%	11%
1	4%	3%	14%	7%
2	4%	3%	12%	7%
3	8%	8%	8%	8%
4	8%	12%	5%	7%
5	13%	12%	3%	9%

Data for the January-May 2010 portion of the 2009 are estimated as the average of the 4 preceding years for MRFSS and Headboat (HB) and assumed to be 0 for the commercial sector because the quota was met on December 20, 2010.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 8:**

1. The Council did not pass any motions related to Action 8.

**Action 9. Establish a Commercial Trip Limit for Black Sea bass (for all gear types)**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish a commercial trip limit for black sea bass.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a 500 pounds gw (590 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Alternative 3.** Establish a 750 pounds gw (885 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Alternative 4.** Establish a 1,000 pounds gw (1,180 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Preferred Alternative 5.** Establish a 1,250 pounds gw (1,475 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Alternative 6.** Establish a 1,000 pounds gw (1,180 pounds ww) trip limit; reduce to 500 pounds gutted weight (590 pounds ww) when 75% of the **COMMERCIAL** ACL (quota) is met.

**Alternative 7.** Establish a 2,000 pounds gw (2,360 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Alternative 8.** Establish a 2,500 pounds gw (2,950 pounds ww) trip limit.

**Alternative 9.** Establish a 250 pounds gw (295 pound ww) trip limit.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 9:**

1. The Council selected Alternative 5 as its preferred alternative. This alternative was selected as it felt that by limiting trip poundage, the trip could still be profitable and have some effect in extending the season.

Average catch per trip (pounds gutted weight) and percentage of landings from pots during fishing years (June – May) for 2006-2010. Other category is 99% hook and line gear. NMFS logbook data (05/12/11).

Year	All Gear	Pots	Other	% Pot Landings
2006	214	554	31	90.62%
2007	165	501	25	89.15%
2008	198	621	28	89.81%
2009	188	643	31	87.83%
2010	307	954	57	86.79%

**Action 10. (NEW from Aug. Mtg.) Modify the Recreational Bag Limit for Black Sea bass**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not modify the current recreational 5-fish bag limit for black sea bass.

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational bag limit

Sub-Alternative 2a. 5 to 4 black sea bass per person per day.

Sub-Alternative 2b. 5 to 3 black sea bass per person per day.

Sub-Alternative 2c. 5 to 2 black sea bass per person per day.

Sub-Alternative 2d. 5 to 1 black sea bass per person per day.

~~**Alternative 3.** Increase the recreational bag limit~~

~~Sub-Alternative 2a. 5 to 8 black sea bass per person per day.~~

~~Sub-Alternative 2b. 5 to 10 black sea bass per person per day.~~

~~Sub-Alternative 2c. 5 to 15 black sea bass per person per day.~~

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 10:**

1. The Council voted to send Alternative 3 to the “considered, but rejected” appendix because it was felt that give the speed with which the recreational ACL is being taken up in the 2011/2012 season, it would not be prudent to consider a bag limit increase at this time.

## **Action 11. Modify Commercial and/or Recreational Black Sea Bass Size Limits**

Alternative 1 (No Action).

Alternative 2. Modify the recreational size limit.

Sub-Alternative 2a. Increase the recreational size limit from 12" TL to 13" TL.

~~Sub-Alternative 2b. Decrease the recreational size limit from 12" TL to 11" TL.~~

Alternative 3. Modify the commercial size limit.

Sub-Alternative 3a. Increase the commercial size limit from 10" TL to 11" TL.

Sub-Alternative 3b. Increase the commercial size limit from 10" TL to 12" TL.

Sub-Alternative 3c. Increase the commercial size limit from 10" TL to 11" TL in year 1 and then to 12" TL in year 2 onwards.

### **Summary of Council Activity for Action 11:**

1. The Council voted to send sub-Alternative 2b to the "considered, but rejected" appendix.
- 2.

## **Action 12. Allocate the Black Sea Bass Commercial ACL to Pot and Hook-and-Line Sectors**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The black sea bass commercial ACL is not allocated to sectors within the commercial sector.

**Alternative 2.** Allocate the black sea bass commercial ACL to pot and hook-and-line sectors as follows:

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** Boyles Law – historical = 1986 through 2010; recent = 2008 through 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 2b.** Modified Boyles Law – historical = 1986 through 2007; recent = 2008 through 2010.

**Sub-Alternative 3c.** Others???

### **Summary of Council Activity for Action 12:**

1. The Council chose not to add this action to the amendment.

## **Action 13. Improvements to Commercial Data Reporting**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain existing data reporting systems for the commercial sector. Refer to **Table 4-33** for a complete list of current data reporting requirements.

Under this alternative, as implemented by Amendment 15B to the Snapper Grouper FMP, a private recreational vessel that fishes in the EEZ, if selected by NOAA Fisheries Service, is required to maintain and submit fishing records; requires a vessel that fishes in the EEZ, if selected by NOAA Fisheries Service, to carry an observer and install an electronic logbook (ELB) and/or video monitoring equipment provided by NOAA Fisheries Service.

**Alternative 2.** Require all vessels with a Federal snapper grouper commercial permit to have an electronic logbook tied to the vessel's GPS onboard the vessel.

(Note: Alternative 2 would require 100% of vessels to have an electronic logbook; whereas, current data reporting programs only require electronic logbooks if selected.)

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Provide the option for fishermen to submit their logbook entries electronically via an electronic version of the logbook made available online.

**Alternative 4.** Require that commercial landings and catch/effort data be submitted in accordance with ACCSP standards, using the SAFIS system.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 13:**

1. The Council made no changes to this action.

## **Action 14. Improvements to For-Hire Data Reporting**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain existing data reporting systems for the for-hire sector. Refer to **Table 4-33** for a complete list of current data reporting requirements.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Require *selected* vessels with a Federal For-Hire Permit to report electronically; NOAA Fisheries Service is authorized to require weekly or daily reporting as required.

**Alternative 3.** Require vessels operating with a Federal For-Hire permit to maintain a logbook for discard characteristics (e.g., size and reason for discarding), *if selected*.

**Alternative 4.** Require that for-hire landings and catch/effort data be submitted in accordance with the ACCSP standards, using the SAFIS system.

**Summary of Council Activity for Action 14:**

1. The Council made no changes to this action.

The Council voted to send Snapper Grouper FMP Amendment 18A out for public hearings.