

## SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL REPORT

APRIL 13-14, 2011

### COMPREHENSIVE ACL AMENDMENT

The AP received an update on the Comprehensive ACL Amendment document. The presentation focused on changes since the Council's March and recommendations made by the SSC during their April 5-7 meeting. The AP also received an update on upcoming changes to the MRIP program.

Below are motions that were approved by the AP and relevant rationale.

#### Action 1. Removal of species from the FMU

The AP expressed concerns about species proposed for removal from the FMU that have known species identifications issues. For instance, graysby and coney may be reported as hinds.

The AP expressed the following concerns regarding mutton snapper:

- Recreational sale – feeling is that a federal permit should be required to sell catch. If mutton snapper are removed from FMP, more anglers will obtain RS licenses to sell.
- Increased targeting of mutton if they are removed from FMP would increase interactions with other snapper grouper species.
- FL has protected area in the Keys for mutton snapper and much work has been done on this species. Why does the Council want to remove them now?
- Majority of mutton fishing in the Keys is in Federal waters. FL would have to extend their regulations into federal waters.

The following concerns were expressed regarding queen snapper:

- Queen snapper are in the deepwater complex; they are caught in federal waters so some AP members see no need to remove from the FMP.
- Other AP members feel that keeping species such a queen snapper would detract stock assessments resources from other, more valuable, species.
- Removing queen snapper would increase interaction with other species such as speckled hinds and snowy groupers.
- There is a very large queen snapper fishery off Marathon, FL.

MOTION: RECOMMEND RETENTION OF MUTTON SNAPPER AND QUEEN SNAPPER IN THE SNAPPER GROUPER FMP

Action 2. Species Groupings

The AP expressed concern about grouping Cubera with gray and lane snappers. Cubera are caught in deep water whereas the other two are shallow-water species.

The AP stated that Cubera snapper seem to be depleted and fishermen are concerned about their sustainability. Small individuals used to be plentiful around mangroves but, since last winter, they are no longer there.

The AP reiterated their concerns over the species groupings approach due to not enough information on how the groupings were constructed.

Action 6. Accountability Measures

The AP expressed their support for the Council's preferred approach to set AMs for the commercial sector:

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS COUNCIL'S PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR COMMERCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

However, there was concern about the applicability of the preferred AM alternative in Florida since the state does not allow combining recreational and commercial landings under FL regulations.

The AP discussed whether the Council's intent in allowing the bag limit once the commercial fishery shuts down is to avoid regulatory discards. Council staff suggest that this be clearly stated in the document.

The AP received a presentation from Council staff explaining the proposed approach to compare landings to the proposed ACLs to determine if AMs are warranted. The Council received a similar presentation from Council staff at their March meeting.

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS MODIFIED MEAN APPROACH FOR RECREATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

The AP reiterated their support for better data monitoring in the recreational sector.

The AP also discussed applying the modified mean approach or other similar approach to species covered under other Amendments, mainly Amendment 17B:

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER BRINGING THE COMMERCIAL AND REC ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES IN 17B IN LINE WITH THOSE IN THE COMPREHENSIVE ACL AMENDMENT

### Action 10. Management Measures for Wreckfish

The AP expressed concern over the Council's preferred alternative to establish a 1-wreckfish per vessel per day bag limit for the recreational fishery. They maintain that this action would increase discards.

If it is the Council's intent to create a bycatch fishery, perhaps creating a recreational allocation is not the best approach since it would encourage targeting wreckfish and thus create more discards.

Concern over creation of a directed recreational fishery for such a small number of fish.

### Action 15. Jurisdictional Allocation for Yellowtail Snapper

The AP questions the Gulf Council's rationale for wanting to cede management of yellowtail snapper to the South Atlantic Council.

The AP were provided recent landings (2005-2009) information for the South Atlantic and the Gulf. Based on those landings and their knowledge of the fishery, the AP recommended the following allocation:

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS CONSIDERING A JURISDICTIONAL ALLOCATION OF 70% SA AND 30% GULF FOR YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER

### Timing

AP is concerned that they may not have another opportunity to see this amendment before it is approved for Secretarial review.

### **REGULATORY AMENDMENT 11**

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL REVISIT THE DEEPWATER CLOSURE ESTABLISHED THROUGH AM 17B AND CONSIDER CLOSURES OF SPAWNING AGGREGATIONS

### **AMENDMENT 24**

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ADOPTING ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER THE MSST ACTION IN AMENDMENT 24.

**Alternative 4.** *MSST equals 85% of  $SSB_{MSY}$  (4,857,175 lbs).*

MOTION: AP SUPPORTS THE COUNCIL'S PREFERRED REBUILDING SCHEDULE ALTERNATIVE IN AMENDMENT 24

**Alternative 5 (Preferred).** *Define a rebuilding schedule as the maximum period allowed to rebuild (TMAX). This would equal 10 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2020. 2011 is Year 1.*

MOTION: BASE ALLOCATION FOR RED GROUPER ON HISTORICAL LANDINGS FROM 1986-2008.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL ADOPT ALTERNATIVES 5 AND 6 (REMOVAL OF AGGREGATE RED, BLACK AND GAG ACL FOR BOTH SECTORS) AS PREFERRED UNDER THE NEW ACL ACTION IN AMENDMENT 24

**Alternative 5.** *Eliminate the commercial sector aggregate ACL of 662,403 lbs gw for black grouper, gag, and red grouper. Eliminate the in-season AM that specifies a prohibition on possession of all shallow water groupers once the commercial aggregate ACL is projected to be met.*

**Alternative 6.** *Eliminate the recreational sector aggregate ACL of 648,663 lbs gw for black grouper, gag, and red grouper. Eliminate the in-season AM that specifies a prohibition on possession of black grouper, gag, and red grouper once the ACL is projected to be met if any one of the three species is listed as overfished. Eliminate the post-season AM that specifies a reduction in a subsequent year's ACL by the amount of an overage if landings exceed the aggregate ACL. Eliminate the regulation that states that the recreational landings are evaluated relative to the ACL as follows: For 2010, only 2010 recreational landings will be compared to the ACL; in 2011, the average of 2010 and 2011 recreational landings will be compared to the ACL; and in 2012 and subsequent fishing years, the most recent 3-year running average recreational landings will be compared to the ACL.*

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

MOTION: SUPPORT RE-ASSIGNING STEVE AMICK TO THE SG AP

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON SPAWNING TIMES OF SNAPPER GROUPER SPECIES BETWEEN NC AND FL BY REGION

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF SEPARATE MANAGEMENT FOR FLORIDA SOUTH OF SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE DADE/MONROE COUNTY LINE AND JUPITER

MOTION: COUNCIL CONSIDER A SINGLE START AND END DATE FOR RECREATIONAL AND FOR-HIRE SECTORS FOR ALL SNAPPER GROUPER SPECIES BY REGION

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL REVISIT THE RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT FOR SNOWY GROUPER AND INCREASE TO 1 PER PERSON

MOTION: REQUEST THAT THE COUNCIL LOOK AT RAISING THE BAG LIMIT FOR GAG FROM 1 PER PERSON PER TRIP TO 2 GAG PER PERSON PER TRIP AND INCREASING THE AGGREGATE BAG LIMIT FROM 3 TO 4

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER LIMITING PARTICIPATION IN THE CHARTER/FOR-HIRE SECTOR. LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITY OF INCOME REQUIREMENTS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR PERMIT RENEWAL. \*\*\*INTENT IS TO BENEFIT PEOPLE WHO MAKE A LIVING IN THE BUSINESS (HISTORICAL PARTICIPATION) AS OPPOSED TO THOSE WHO USE AS TAX DEDUCTION, ETC\*\*\*

MOTION: RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER A FISHING YEAR START DATE OF MAY 1 FOR THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR FOR SNAPPER GROUPER SPECIES NORTH OF A LINE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE DADE/MONROE COUNTY LINE AND JUPITER (See table below)

**Proposed change to commercial snapper grouper fishing year for all snapper grouper species**

	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
<b>GAG</b>									Shallow water grouper closure			
<b>RED PORGY</b>									Shallow water grouper closure			
<b>VERMILION</b>	50% vermilion quota			Spawning closure and landings count	Remaining 50% of quota							
<b>BSB</b>	50% BSB quota				Remaining 50% of quota							
<b>Unassessed SG species</b>												

**Rationale:**

- Fish will be at market at the same time
- Allows for fishing when weather is good and water warm
- Allow for no fishing during spawning for all overfished species
- Less bycatch
- Conducive to a more diversified catch instead of over-supply of one species
- Downside: fishing will not be profitable Jan-April
- Start ACL on all unassessed species; this will allow for all species to be caught at the same time
- In January, the BSB trawls begin in Virginia and prices drop
- August and September closure will allow for a vermilion spawning and a landings count

## **AP Input for Snapper Grouper stocks – blueline tilefish, almaco jack, Atlantic spadefish, gray triggerfish**

The Advisory Panel was asked to provide input on four species in the snapper grouper complex to help interpret their landings trends. This exercise was useful for Council staff to begin to develop a template for a future AP annual report.

### Almaco Jack

- Misrepresentation of landings – species identification issues.
- Now that the quota of greater amberjack is in place, almacos are being labeled as such.
- Almacos are targeted in Florida, especially in the spring.
- When the greater amberjack trip limit was put into place, the fishermen started targeting almacos.
- It is a bycatch fishery for the for-hire sector.
- There is a directed fishery in FL, especially when greater amberjack is closed
- No size limit on almacos – suggestion to place a size limit on almacos (they can grow up to 60 pounds)
- Need info on when these fish reach sexual maturity
- Increase in landings mostly in SC and NC
- Between 2004-2006, the price per pound dropped about 50% for NC
- Dealers in SC – several years ago, they started not grouping the jacks together because there was more emphasis from the biologists in trying to differentiate them
- Prices have gone up in the last few years – almacos are smaller and easier to market than larger jacks
- Recommendation for a 16 inch FL to give smaller fish a chance to make the stock come back
- NC – they average 20 inches
- Commercially not targeted off GA
- For hire – landings spiked in 1999. Why? Mid to late 90s there was an increase in effort with amount of charterboats trying to get into the business.
- Last 3 years have seen increase in commercial and private but for-hire has gone down.
- Also, vermilion snapper has been better in the last few years so headboats and charterboats have been targeting beeliners more and have not gone to places where almacos are caught
- Dec 1998 – people got more charterboat permits to allow them to sell snapper and groupers because lots of licenses were revoked at that time
- Lack of effort in charterboat sector
- Bad publicity for charter business – people don't try to go fishing anymore
- Reduced effort, high fuel prices
- Methodology of data collection in 1990s. Did it change?
- Private landings showed large increase between 2005 and 2007 and overall increase since early 1990s. This may be due to an increase in saltwater licenses.

- Not many private rec fishermen can identify an almaco jack, so where did the landings info come from?

### Atlantic spadefish

- Not targeted in Florida
- Targeted some in GA charters
- Castnet fleet catches them in the Gulf
- Decrease in for-hire from 1996-1998? Influx in the mid to late 1990s of people getting into the business. Look for a spike in the permits
- Peak in 2001 for private landings in SC and sharp decrease in other states?
- In FL there are several private boats that spear large schools of spadefish and come in with 30-40 fish
- Limit is 20 per day with no size limit

### Blueline tilefish

- Commercial – quick increase in 2007
- Targeted off NC, significant increase in effort
- For-hire increase in 2007 – bad data?
- FL – lots of deep-dropping for tilefish
- Maybe bluelines are being counted as golden tilefish – the landings should be higher
- There are a lot more people catching blueline tilefish than the data are showing
- Very regionalized fishery – large portions of the SA do not participate in this fishery
- Large spike in commercial landings represent an emerging fishery north of Cape Hatteras
- In 1970s they were used as bait for snowy – there was not market for them back then
- Change in bag limit during the time series, so that results in lowering of recreational catches

### Gray triggerfish

- Commercial landings show drop off after 1996 and also for the for-hire sector
- In Florida, they are not targeted
- Amendment 8 took away ~2,800 grouper permits. Many people pulled out of the fishery during that time
- When groupers close Jan-April, fish houses stockpile triggerfish to replace the grouper. Last couple of years have seen increases in triggerfish landings
- For hire – have started targeting them much more since other grouper regulations have gone into place
- For-hire target triggerfish quicker than they used to – hard to avoid the fish
- Little bit of a downward trend in sizes that fishermen are seeing them but they are abundant
- Minimum size should be placed on gray triggerfish



- Private – increase is opposite than commercial and for-hire – landings decreased in late 1990s and have gone back up since 2001
- People have changed their perception on triggerfish – people are realizing they are a good food fish
- Data that show an increase in private landings may not be accurate because economy has affected effort
- In FL there has been a sharp increase in the fishery for gray trigger due to regulations in other species
- Not more trips being made off NC overall but effort has shifted to other species. Better publicized in the marketplace