

**SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL REPORT**  
**APRIL 23-25, 2013**  
**CHARLESTON, SC**

**1. Update on SSC Meeting and Developing Amendments**

Dr. Luiz Barbieri, chairman of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), briefed the AP on discussions relevant to snapper grouper held during the April 9-11, 2013, meeting of the SSC. Dr. Barbieri first gave the AP a presentation on an approach to arrive at Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) recommendations for species that have not undergone a stock assessment and for which only landings information is available. Such species are termed "Only-Reliable-Catch Species", or ORCS. Dr. Barbieri explained how the SSC had applied the methodology and the timeline for them to submit their ABC recommendations to the Council. Dr. Barbieri then briefed the AP on the recently completed update to the black sea bass stock assessment. In particular, Dr. Barbieri focused on how the SSC applied the ABC Control Rule to arrive at an Overfishing Level (OFL) and ABC recommendations.

Black sea bass were found to be neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The assessment update also indicated that the stock has been rebuilt. For the black sea bass stock in the South Atlantic, the SSC recommended setting ABC based on projections at  $P^* = 40\%$ .

**2. Update on Regulatory Amendment 19 (black sea bass ACL adjustment)**

Council staff presented the alternatives the Council is considering in Regulatory Amendment 19 to adjust the black sea bass ACL according to results from the stock assessment update and the SSC's recommendations. The AP made the following motion:

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED TO ADJUST THE BSB ACL.

**Alternative 3.** For black sea bass, revise the total ACL, sector ACLs, recreational ACT, and OY values based on results from new stock assessment (SEDAR 25 Update 2013). Retain the values until modified. Change the ACL formula to  $ACL = OY = \text{yield at } 75\%FMSY \text{ when the stock is at equilibrium}$ . The specified OY, ABC, ACLs, and recreational ACT would remain in place until modified. Retention, possession, and fishing for black sea bass is prohibited using black sea bass pot gear, annually, from November 1 through April 30.

ACL = OY = 1,756,450 lbs ww  
Commercial ACL = 755,274 lbs ww  
Recreational ACL = 1,001,177 lbs ww  
Recreational ACT = 875,229 lbs ww

Note: values represent landings only.

APPROVED  
(12 IN FAVOR 2 OPPOSED)

Council staff then updated the AP on the status of recently completed and developing amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP. Included in the update were Regulatory Amendment 13 (adjustment of ACLs with MRIP landings estimates); Regulatory Amendment 15 (adjustment of ACL for yellowtail snapper and modification to the gag commercial ACL and AM); Regulatory Amendment 16 (management measures for commercial golden tilefish longline fishery); Regulatory Amendment 17 (MPAs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper); Regulatory Amendment 18 (ACL adjustments for vermilion snapper and red porgy and removal of the recreational season closure for vermilion snapper); Amendment 27 (Nassau grouper, blue runner, etc.); Amendment 28 (red snapper); Generic Dealer Amendment; Generic Headboat Reporting Amendment; and Generic Logbook Amendment.

### **3. Presentations on Electronic Monitoring and Vessel Monitoring Systems**

Mr. Patrick O'Shaughnessy, Manager of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Program, gave a presentation to the AP to inform them on the capabilities of the various VMS systems and how they are currently used in U.S. fisheries.

Mr. Scott Baker, of the North Carolina Sea Grant Program, gave the AP a presentation on Electronic Monitoring, particularly the results of a pilot study to evaluate its use in snapper grouper bandit vessels.

### **4. Amendment 30 (consideration of VMS requirement for commercial snapper grouper vessels)**

The AP remained in the meeting room while a public hearing for Amendment 30 was underway. Hence the AP received the public hearing presentation and AP members had the opportunity to submit their formal comments on the amendment.

- Affordability of VMS units was the main concern for AP members.
- Some AP members suggested the technology is not where it needs to be for VMS (or other similar devices) to be feasible for the snapper grouper fishery at the moment.
- Some AP members were also concerned about "discrimination" because only commercial fishermen would be required to have a VMS on their vessel.
- AP members who support VMS stated increased safety and more data collection as reasons for their support.
- The AP requested that the Council to explore other methods of collecting data and protecting MPAs besides VMS.
- It was stated that if the Council needs better data on where fish are caught they could change the logbook or use electronic data loggers (it was also

mentioned that you could get the data with a small percentage of the fleet vs. the whole fleet.)

- Some AP members offered that the Council could request information on newer technology for MPA enforcement – listening buoys, satellite imaging, drones, transponders, etc.

In addition, the AP made the following motion:

MOTION: SNAPPER GROUPER AP OPPOSES AMENDMENT 30 AND ANY REQUIREMENT FOR VMS ON THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY AND STRONGLY URGES THE SAFMC TO VOTE “NO” ON AM 30.  
APPROVED BY AP (11 IN FAVOR, 3 OPPOSED, 3 ABSTENTIONS)

#### **5. Presentation on Fishery-Independent Reef Fish Surveys**

Dr. Marcel Reichert, of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, gave a presentation on the three fishery-independent surveys currently operating in the South Atlantic region. Those surveys are: the Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction (MARMAP), the South East Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP), and the South East Fishery Independent Survey (SEFIS). The primary goals of these surveys are to monitor the abundance of reef fishes using various gears (including traps and video), provide life history information, conduct research and provide data and analyses in support of stock assessments and fisheries management, and investigate and map bottom habitat. The presentation included an overview catch-per-unit effort trends over time for snapper grouper species of interest. AP members had the opportunity to ask questions regarding how the survey data were used in stock assessments and how fishermen could contribute to obtaining information.

#### **6. Regulatory Amendment 14** (includes changes to management measures for greater amberjack, hogfish, black sea bass, gag, and vermilion snapper)

Council staff reviewed the actions and alternatives in the amendment. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: THE SNAPPER GROUPER AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) FOR ACTION 1  
APPROVED BY AP

Action 1. Modify the commercial fishing year for greater amberjack

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 2.

APPROVED BY AP

Action 2. Change the measurement method for gray triggerfish to have consistency between state and federal waters

Alternative 3. Specify a minimum size limit for gray triggerfish of 12 inches FL in federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and east Florida.

NOTE: Council staff explained that, as currently written, Alternative 3 would also specify a new minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off states that don't currently have one. Council staff stated that it was their intent to recommend that the Council consider re-wording of the action to focus solely on consistency in measurement. However, the AP reiterated that they are recommending specification of a minimum size limit for this species.

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 3 AS THE PREFERRED  
APPROVED BY AP

Action 3. Increase the minimum size limit for hogfish

Alternative 3. Increase the minimum size limit for hogfish in federal waters to 14 inches FL.

MOTION: RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL THAT THEY CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 4 AS THE PREFERRED:

Action 4. Modify the fishing year for the black sea bass recreational sector

Alternative 3. Modify the recreational fishing year for black sea bass to begin on April 1 and end on March 31.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 5 AS THE PREFERRED BUT CHANGE THE TRIP LIMIT FROM 50 TO 100 POUNDS.

APPROVED BY AP

Action 5. Modify the fishing year for the black sea bass commercial sector

Alternative 3. Open the black sea bass commercial season only to the hook and line sector on January 1, with a trip limit of 50 pounds. The trip limit ends with the opening of the black sea bass pot season.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS THE COUNCIL CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) UNDER ACTION 6 AS THE PREFERRED

APPROVED BY AP

Action 6. Modify the commercial fishing seasons for vermilion snapper

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 7

APPROVED BY AP (10 IN FAVOR; 3 OPPOSED)

Action 7. Modify the aggregate grouper bag limit

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 8 AS THE PREFERRED

APPROVED BY AP

Action 8. Modify the accountability measure for the commercial sector for gag  
Alternative 2. Modify the commercial AM for gag. Reduce the trip limit to 300  
lbs when 75% of the gag commercial ACL is landed.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 9  
APPROVED BY AP (9 IN FAVOR; 4 OPPOSED)

Action 9. Modify the recreational accountability measure for vermilion snapper  
Alternative 4. If recreational landings, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are  
projected to reach the recreational ACL, the AA will file a notification to close  
the recreational fishery for the remainder of the fishing year. Payback of a  
recreational overage would only take place if vermilion snapper are  
overfished and the Total ACL is exceeded.

### **7. Regional Recreational Fishing Year Start Dates for Black Sea Bass**

At their March 2013 meeting, the Council requested that the AP discuss alternatives for modifying the recreational fishing year for black sea bass in a way that would address regional needs. However, the AP agreed that an April 1<sup>st</sup> start date would benefit everyone and recommended that the Council chose that alternative in Regulatory Amendment 14. The AP took the opportunity to engage in discussion regarding state-by-state allocations, however, since this has been a topic of discussion at Council meetings in the past. Council staff provided information on landings by mode and by state and allocation percentages based on landings. The AP made no motions pertaining to this issue.

### **8. Vision and Strategic Planning for the Snapper Grouper Fishery**

Council staff reviewed the guidance the Council provided at their March 2013 meeting regarding a vision statement and a strategic plan for the snapper grouper fishery. Staff also presented the existing objectives in the Snapper Grouper FMP and requested that the AP provide feedback on whether the objectives are still applicable as written or changes need to be made.

The AP provided the following feedback regarding the objectives in the FMP:

**Objective 1. Prevent overfishing.** – THE AP REASONED THAT THE OBJECTIVE IS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S MANDATE UNDER THE MAGNUSON ACT AND SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF OBJECTIVES.

**Objective 2. Collect necessary data** – CONSIDER RE-WORDING TO: "IMPROVE AND EXPAND DATA COLLECTION." CONSIDER THINGS LIKE RECREATIONAL REEF FISH STAMP, ELECTRONIC REPORTING FOR ALL PERMITTED VESSELS OPERATING IN THE EEZ? GIVE AUTHORITY TO RA TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES?

**Objective 3. Promote orderly utilization of the resource** – ADDED WHEN WRECKFISH ITQ PROGRAM WAS PUT IN PLACE. IT IS NO LONGER APPLICABLE.

**Objective 4. Provide for a flexible management system** – INSERT THE WORD “MORE” BEFORE “FLEXIBLE”. DOES FLEXIBLE INCLUDE MANAGEMENT SUCH AS STATE-BY-STATE QUOTAS OR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT? THIS IS DEPENDENT ON IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION.

**Objective 5. Minimize habitat damage.** – IS THERE ANY DAMAGE CURRENTLY HAPPENING??

**Objective 6. Promote public compliance and enforcement** – THIS OBJECTIVE SHOULD ADDRESS CONSISTENCY BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS (STATES SHOULD BE AT LEAST AS RESTRICTIVE AS FEDS), LACK OF FAIRNESS OF PENALTIES FOR DIFFERENT SECTORS, CONSIDER RE-WORDING: “PROMOTE COMPLIANCE THROUGH PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION”

**Objective 7. Mechanism to vest participants** – NOT APPLICABLE TO RECREATIONAL SECTOR, CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO ITQs OR CATCH SHARES THAT ARE NOT BASED ON MONETARY VALUE, CONSIDER WAYS TO VEST RECREATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

**Objective 8. Promote stability and facilitate long-run planning** – AIM TO END OVERLAPPING SEASONS FOR THE FOR-HIRE SECTOR, CONSIDER REGULATIONS THAT WILL ALLOW BUSINESS OWNERS TO HAVE BUSINESS PLAN

**Objective 9. Create market-driven harvest pace and increase product continuity** – IS THIS WITHIN THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSIBILITIES?

**Objective 10. Minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen** – NOT MUCH OF GEAR CONFLICT ANYMORE.

**Objective 11. Decrease incentives for overcapitalization** – DOES NOT APPLY TO RECREATIONAL SECTOR...

**Objective 12. Prevent continual dissipation of returns from fishing through open access.**

**Objective 13. Evaluate and minimize localized depletion** – PERHAPS STATES SHOULD BE THE ONES TO DO? STATE-BY-STATE QUOTAS, REGIONAL STOCK EVALUATION?

**Objective 14. End overfishing of snapper grouper stocks undergoing overfishing** – COUNCIL HAS ALREADY ADDRESSED OVERFISHING...

**Objective 15. Rebuild stocks declared overfished** -- ALREADY MANDATED BY MSA

- CONSIDER EXCLUDING OBJECTIVES/GOALS THAT ARE ALREADY PART OF THE COUNCIL'S MANDATE.
- SPECIFY THE ITEMS THAT THE COUNCIL IS ALREADY DOING AND THOSE THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD FOCUS ON ACHIEVING
- SHORTEN THE LIST OF OBJECTIVES

## 9. Other Business

The AP approved the motions below for the Council's consideration:

MOTION: HAVE THE ALLOCATION FOR SNOWY GROUPER ADJUSTED TO 90/10 COMM/REC WITH A 1 FISH PER PERSON PER DAY BAG LIMIT.  
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: REQUEST THAT THE COUNCIL EXPLORE A SNAPPER GROUPER STAMP/ENDORSEMENT FOR THE PRIVATE REC SECTOR TO OBTAIN DATA TO IMPROVE RECREATIONAL CATCH INFORMATION  
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF UTILIZING A PROGRAM (SAFIS) SIMILAR TO THE ONE BEING USED IN NEW YORK FOR RECREATIONAL ANGLERS  
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER A MORATORIUM ON ALL FOR-HIRE SNAPPER GROUPER PERMITS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE MORATORIUM FOR THE FOR-HIRE VESSELS IN THE GULF (8 IN FAVOR; 3 OPPOSED) APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER A PERMIT REVIEW LIKE WHAT WAS DONE IN 1998 (10 IN FAVOR; 3 OPPOSED) APPROVED BY AP