

# Decision Document

## Regulatory Amendment 13

### Revision of Acceptable Biological Catches, Annual Catch Limits (ACLs, including Sector ACLs), Allocations, and Annual Catch Targets

The Council is considering revising the ABC, ACL (including sector ACLs), allocations and recreational ACT for 37 un-assessed species in the Snapper Grouper FMU. This action is taking place because the original management benchmarks were developed using recreational estimates provided by MRFSS. In the future, MRFSS estimates will no longer be calculated, only MRIP recreational landings estimates will be available.

To avoid having future MRIP estimates compared to previously calculated MRFSS, the Council needs to consider revising the management benchmarks. In order to represent the best available data, commercial and headboat landings were also revised to ensure the most recent data are used. The same formula and time period as used in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment were used for this amendment.

The amendment consists of one action with two alternatives. The “no action” alternative would not change any of the management benchmark estimates. The other alternative would accept the management benchmark revisions for these 37 species.

The Council requested at their September 2012 meeting that this amendment be prepared for their December 2012 meeting. Public comments on the amendment will be held during the December meeting and the Council will be asked to vote to send the Amendment to the US Secretary of Commerce for formal review.

## What Action is Being Proposed?

Revisions to acceptable biological catches (ABCs), annual catch limits (ACLs) (including sector ACLs), allocations, and annual catch targets (ACTs) implemented through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (SAFMC 2011c) for select un-assessed species in the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Snapper Grouper FMP).

## Why is the South Atlantic Council Considering Action?

Recreational catch estimates in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (SAFMC 2011c) were computed using data generated by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). Following an independent review by the National Research Council and a mandate from Congress, NMFS has overhauled MRFSS. The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) was developed to provide more accurate recreational catch estimates. The South Atlantic Council stated in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment that they would take action as needed, via plan amendment or framework amendment, to revise the appropriate values as needed, in 2012 and beyond. MRIP methods have been used to recalculate previous MRFSS estimates dating back to 2004, and will be the basis for all new estimates moving forward.

The revisions are necessary because if the ABC, ACL, and ACT values are not updated with the new MRIP estimates, the result would be ACLs set using MRFSS data while the landings being used to track the ACLs will be estimated using MRIP data. This would result in a disconnect in the how ACLs are calculated versus how they are monitored. In addition to MRIP data, ACLs would be updated to include revisions to

commercial and for-hire landings. The changes in data impact the allocations to the commercial and recreational sectors because the underlying formula used to establish the allocations remains unchanged from what was implemented previously in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment.

### *Purpose for Action*

The purpose of Regulatory Amendment 13 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 13) is to revise the ABCs, ACLs (including sector ACLs), allocations, and ACTs implemented by the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (SAFMC 2011c). The revisions may prevent a disjunction between the established ACLs and the landings used to determine if AMs are triggered. Regulatory Amendment 13 would also ensure that the best available science is utilized, as per National Standard 2.

### *Need for Action*

To prevent unnecessary negative socio-economic impacts that may otherwise be realized in the snapper grouper fishery and fishing community, in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

## Which species are affected by this action?

Thirty-seven species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit (FMU), including 31 species in 6 species complexes, and 6 individual species are included in Regulatory Amendment 13 to the Snapper Grouper FMP (Regulatory Amendment 13) (**Table 1-1**). These species do not have stock assessments; ABC > 0; and their ABC was specified using a formula (3<sup>rd</sup> highest landings 1999-2008 or median landings 1999-2008). This formula is a component of the ABC control rule established in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment.

**Table 1-1.** List of 37 un-assessed snapper grouper species for which ABC, ACLs (including sector ACLs), and ACTs would be revised.

<b>Deepwater Complex</b>
Yellowedge grouper Blueline tilefish Silk Snapper Misty grouper Sand tilefish Queen snapper Black snapper Blackfin snapper
<b>Jacks Complex</b>
Almaco jack Banded rudderfish Lesser amberjack
<b>Snappers Complex</b>
Gray snapper Lane snapper Cubera snapper Dog snapper Mahogany snapper
<b>Grunts Complex</b>
White grunt* Sailors choice Tomtate Margate
<b>Shallow-Water Groupers Complex</b>
Red hind Rock hind Yellowmouth grouper Yellowfin grouper Coney Graysby
<b>Porgies Complex</b>
Jolthead porgy Knobbed porgy Saucereye porgy Scup Whitebone porgy
<b>Individual Species</b>
Atlantic spadefish
Blue runner
Bar jack
Gray triggerfish**
Scamp
Hogfish

\*White Grunt includes unclassified grunts because only one state identifies white grunt to the species level. \*\*Includes unclassified triggerfishes because commercial landings of gray triggerfish are not identified to the species level.

Note: Nassau grouper, goliath grouper, speckled hind, and warsaw grouper are not included since their ABC = 0 landings.

Seventeen species in the snapper grouper FMU with stock assessments (including those in Amendments 17A and 17B to the Snapper Grouper FMP); species with ABC=0 landings; and those species not utilizing a formula to calculate their ABC in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment are excluded from Regulatory Amendment 13 (**Table 1-2**). The MRIP calibration workshop (**Appendices C and D**) recommended that assessed species be handled separately, and that the adjustments to the landings data be made during assessment updates/revisions. ABCs, ACLs (including sector ACLs), allocations, and ACTs for the 17 species in **Table 1-2** will be revised in future amendments (or regulatory notices) to the Snapper Grouper FMP. Also excluded are six ecosystem component species (EC), which were exempt from the requirement of establishing ACLs in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment. The EC species are: Schoolmaster, cottonwick, longspine porgy, ocean triggerfish, bank sea bass, and rock sea bass.

**Table 1-2.** List of the 17 species for which ABCs, ACLs (including sector ACLs), and ACTs would *not* be revised in Regulatory Amendment 13.

Species
Red snapper
Black sea bass
Gag
Golden tilefish
Snowy grouper
Red porgy
Vermilion snapper
Greater amberjack
Yellowtail snapper
Mutton snapper
Black grouper
Red grouper
Nassau grouper
Goliath grouper
Speckled hind
Warsaw grouper
Wreckfish

## **What are the data sources considered in this amendment?**

The Comprehensive ACL Amendment established preferred methods for the computation of ABC, allocations of ABC to sectors for the establishment of sector ACLs, and recreational ACTs. The Comprehensive ACL Amendment contained computations of these values using datasets from 15 September 2010 (Recreational ACL Data) and 8 October 2010 (Commercial ACL Data), both provided by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The commercial ACL dataset provided additional quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) on commercial data obtained from the Accumulated Landings System, which assimilates landings data obtained from dealer-reporting and assigns catch to region based on fisher-reported catch area. The recreational ACL dataset provided additional QA/QC on recreational catch data reported by the SEFSC Headboat Survey (HBS) and MRFSS. One of the major features of this QA/QC is that the MRFSS survey periodically provides no poundage for landings estimates for fish if there is insufficient biological sampling; whereas, the SEFSC methodology backfills these gaps using statistically-robust weight estimation methods.

Since the implementation of the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, there have been substantial improvements in the data collection and catch estimation methodologies that are used to generate the data for the computation of ABCs, allocations, ACLs, and ACTs.

Regulatory Amendment 13 presents ABCs, allocations, ACLs, and ACTs computed using methods identical to those used in the

Comprehensive ACL Amendment to update these management parameters with the data that will be used to monitor ACLs in the future. The same computational methodologies are used so that the new values reflect the South Atlantic Council and Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) intent as specified in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment. All changes are due to improvements in the underlying data only.

The first updated dataset referred to as the "New MRFSS & Commercial" data contains updated HBS and MRFSS data (1986-2008) and updated commercial data (1986-2008). The 30 August 2012 recreational ACL and the 3 July 2012 commercial datasets were used to generate these combined data. In addition to minor revisions of historical catch data generated by removal of duplicate records and other QA/QC activities, these data features two major differences from the datasets used in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment: (1) A more statistically robust MRFSS weight backfill procedure and (2) an improved charter calibration method for MRFSS (1986-2004) data (see SEDAR-25 Data Workshop Report 2011 in SEDAR-25; 2011, for details). The updated ABCs, allocations, ACLs, and ACTs computed from these data are shown simply to facilitate a more direct comparison with the impacts of switching from MRFSS-based to MRIP-based recreational data.

**The final dataset, referred to herein as the "MRIP & New Commercial" data, replaces the MRFSS-based recreational data with MRIP-based recreational data. These are the data that will be used in Regulatory Amendment 13 to generate the final ABC, allocation, ACL, and ACT values.** These data are based upon the 3 July 2012 commercial ACL and the 1 October 2012 recreational ACL datasets. The updated recreational ACL dataset

contains MRIP official re-estimates (2004-2008) and recalibrated MRFSS data (1986-2003). The MRIP process was begun in 2004 to address issues identified by the National Research Council (NRC) in the existing MRFSS program. The goal of MRIP is to provide more detailed, timely, and reliable estimates of marine recreational fishing catch and effort. One step in this process was to take old MRFSS data (2004-2011) and re-estimate it using MRIP methods that remove sources of bias identified by the NRC. Using these official MRIP estimates, the Southeast Regional MRIP Recalibration Working Group developed recalibration methods to address regional needs, following the procedures

recommended by the MRIP Ad-Hoc Working Group (**Appendix D**). The MRFSS data (1986-2003) are recalibrated to be more appropriately scaled to MRIP using a ratio of mean landings in numbers at the stock, sub-region, and mode level (when available), based upon the MRFSS (2004-2011) and MRIP (2004-2011) data. These ratios were then applied at each stratum (stock, sub-region, year, wave, state, mode, and area) to the catches to develop the recalibrated MRFSS dataset. Average weights were then assigned to strata using the SEFSC's statistically robust weight estimation procedure, and total landings in pounds were computed.

**Action 1: Revise the acceptable biological catches (ABCs), annual catch limits (ACLs, including sector ACLs), allocations, and annual catch targets (ACTs) for select un-assessed species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit (FMU).**

**Alternative 1.** No action. Do not revise ABCs, ACLs (including sector ACLs), allocations, and ACTs for select un-assessed species in the snapper grouper FMU. Data would not be updated with data from Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), commercial, and for-hire landings.

**Alternative 2.** Revise the ABCs, ACL, (including sector ACLs), allocations and ACTs for select un-assessed species in the snapper grouper FMU. Data will be updated with data from MRIP, commercial, and for-hire landings.

**Comments:**

The Council needs to review, revise and accept the purpose and need as shown on page 2.

The Council needs to choose a preferred alternative for the one action in Regulatory Amendment 13.

The detailed tables of the changes that would be made if **Alternative 2** is selected as the preferred can be seen in the main amendment document on pages 5 – 18. The following table summarizes the changes that would be made.

**Table 2-5.** New ABCs, ACLs (including sector ACLs), allocations and recreational ACTs for 37 un-assessed snapper grouper species as per **Alternative 2** in Regulatory Amendment 13. “MRIP & New Commercial” reflect data from MRIP official re-estimates (2004-2008), recalibrated MRFSS data (1986-2003), and updated commercial data (1986-2008). ABCs, ACLs, and recreational ACTs are in pounds whole weight (lbs ww); allocations are presented in percent (%).

STOCK OR STOCK COMPLEX NAME	MRIP & NEW COMMERCIAL					
	ABC (lbs ww)	COMM ALLOCATIONS	COMM ACL (lbs ww)	REC ALLOCATIONS	REC ACL (lbs ww)	REC ACT (lbs ww)
<b>DEEPWATER</b>	<b>711,025</b>		<b>376,469</b>		<b>334,556</b>	<b>197,100</b>
Yellowedge grouper	30,221	90.77%	27,431	9.23%	2,790	1,395
Blueline tilefish	631,341	50.07%	316,098	49.93%	315,243	187,443
Silk Snapper	25,104	73.95%	18,564	26.05%	6,541	3,270
Misty grouper	2,863	83.42%	2,388	16.58%	475	237
Sand tilefish	7,983	22.17%	1,770	77.83%	6,213	3,107
Queen snapper	9,466	92.50%	8,756	7.50%	710	355
Black snapper	382	95.92%	366	4.08%	16	8
Blackfin snapper	3,665	29.91%	1,096	70.09%	2,569	1,284
<b>JACKS</b>	<b>457,221</b>		<b>189,422</b>		<b>267,799</b>	<b>165,590</b>
Almaco jack	302,517	48.70%	147,322	51.30%	155,195	109,288
Banded rudderfish	145,434	26.01%	37,829	73.99%	107,605	53,802
Lesser amberjack	9,270	46.07%	4,270	53.93%	5,000	2,500
<b>SNAPPERS</b>	<b>944,239</b>		<b>215,662</b>		<b>728,577</b>	<b>624,197</b>
Gray snapper	795,743	24.23%	192,830	75.77%	602,913	534,422
Lane snapper	119,984	14.75%	17,695	85.25%	102,289	78,087
Cubera snapper	24,680	19.57%	4,829	80.43%	19,851	9,925
Dog snapper	3,285	8.31%	273	91.69%	3,012	1,506
Mahogany snapper	548	6.49%	36	93.51%	512	256
<b>GRUNTS</b>	<b>806,652</b>		<b>218,539</b>		<b>588,113</b>	<b>442,970</b>
White grunt	674,033	31.59%	212,896	68.41%	461,136	363,283
Sailors choice	22,674	0.00%	0	100.00%	22,674	11,663
Tomtate	80,056	0.00%	0	100.00%	80,056	54,887



STOCK OR STOCK COMPLEX NAME	MRIP & NEW COMMERCIAL					
	ABC (lbs ww)	COMM ALLOCATIONS	COMM ACL (lbs ww)	REC ALLOCATIONS	REC ACL (lbs ww)	REC ACT (lbs ww)
Margate	29,889	18.88%	5,643	81.12%	24,246	13,137
<b>SHALLOW WATER GROUPERS</b>	<b>96,432</b>		<b>49,776</b>		<b>46,656</b>	<b>23,595</b>
Red hind	24,867	73.60%	18,303	26.40%	6,564	3,282
Rock hind	37,953	60.90%	23,115	39.10%	14,838	7,419
Yellowmouth grouper	4,040	1.10%	44	98.90%	3,995	1,998
Yellowfin grouper	9,258	52.70%	4,879	47.30%	4,379	2,190
Coney	2,718	24.45%	665	75.55%	2,053	1,026
Graysby	17,597	15.74%	2,771	84.26%	14,827	7,680
<b>PORGIES</b>	<b>143,263</b>		<b>36,348</b>		<b>106,914</b>	<b>59,319</b>
Jolthead porgy	37,885	4.15%	1,571	95.85%	36,315	22,537
Knobbed porgy	67,441	51.18%	34,515	48.82%	32,926	16,509
Saucereye porgy	3,606	0.01%	0	99.99%	3,606	1,803
Scup	9,306	0.00%	0	100.00%	9,306	4,653
Whitebone porgy	25,024	1.05%	262	98.95%	24,762	13,817
<b>INDIVIDUAL STOCKS</b>						
Atlantic spadefish	189,460	18.53%	35,108	81.47%	154,352	96,470
Blue runner	1,125,729	15.77%	177,506	84.23%	948,223	723,684
Bar jack	24,780	21.25%	5,265	78.75%	19,515	9,758
Gray triggerfish	626,518	43.56%	272,880	56.44%	353,638	284,325
Scamp	509,788	65.34%	333,100	34.66%	176,688	94,316
Hogfish	134,824	36.69%	49,469	63.31%	85,355	59,390