

Proposed Restructuring and Consolidation of South Florida Document Actions and Alternatives

Action 1: Specify Sector Management Measures for Partial Delegation to the State of Florida

Alternative 1: No action. Do not delegate any recreational or commercial management measures for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, or black grouper to the State of Florida as described Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

Alternative 2: Delegate **recreational** management of yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper to the State of Florida for the following measures:

- Option 2a:** size limits
- Option 2b:** seasons
- Option 2c:** bag limits

Alternative 3: Delegate **commercial** management of yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper (excluding black grouper) to the State of Florida for the following measures:

- Option 3a:** size limits
- Option 3b:** seasons
- Option 3c:** trip limits

Action 2: Modifications to the Management Structure for Yellowtail Snapper, Mutton Snapper, and Black Grouper of ABC and use of sector ACLs

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the current management structure for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper as described for Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively. Maintain the current Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' **jurisdictional split of the acceptable biological catch (ABC)** for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper. Maintain use of **sector ACLs** for these species in the South Atlantic and **stock ACLs** in the Gulf.

Alternative 2: Remove the jurisdictional apportionment of the ABC and manage each species (yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper) jointly between Councils as a single unit with an overall ABC throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' jurisdictions.

Option 2a: **Do not establish sector ACLs** for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' jurisdictions.

Option 2b: **Establish sector ACLs** for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' jurisdictions and base sector allocations on the following method:

Sub-Option i: established by using 50% of the average landings from 1993-2008 plus 50% of the average landings from 2009-2013.

Sub-Option ii: average landings from 2009-2013.

Sub-Option iii: average landings from 2004-2013.

Note: Choice of preferred alternatives under Action 2 are independent of any decision with regard to delegation in Action 1. It is possible to create a multi-jurisdictional ABC, ACL, or sector ACLs whether delegation is selected as preferred or not.

Action 3. Establish a South Florida Management Area within the Gulf and South Atlantic Council Jurisdictions for Standardizing Cross-Jurisdictional Regulations

Alternative 1: No Action. Do not establish a South Florida area within the Gulf and South Atlantic Council jurisdictions for the standardization of differing regulations.

Alternative 2: Establish a South Florida management area as federal and state waters south of the 28 degrees north latitude within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Council jurisdictions.

Alternative 3: Establish a South Florida management area as federal and state waters from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point (25 degrees 23 minutes North latitude) on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Council jurisdictions.

Action 4. Modify the Mutton Snapper Recreational Bag Limit in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Alternative 1: No action. Mutton snapper is part of the aggregate 10 snapper bag limit in the Gulf of Mexico, the South Atlantic, and the State of Florida year-round.

Alternative 2: Remove mutton snapper from the recreational aggregate 10 snapper bag limit and specify a differential bag limit for mutton snapper during the regular season (July-April) and during the spawning season (May-June).

Option 2a: 10 fish/person/day in the regular season and 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Option 2b: 5 fish/person/day in the regular season and 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Option 2c: 2 fish/person/day year round

Alternative 3: Retain mutton snapper within the recreational aggregate 10 snapper bag limit and specify differential bag limits for mutton snapper during the regular season (July-April) and during the spawning season (May-June).

Option 3a: 10 fish/person/day in the regular season and 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Option 3b: 5 fish/person/day in the regular season and 2 fish/person/day during the spawning season

Option 3c: 2 fish/person/day year round

Action 5. Modify the Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit during Spawning Season in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Suggest limiting this Action to spawning season since mutton are not overfished.

Alternative 1: No action. During May-June, the commercial sector in the South Atlantic is restricted to 10 mutton snapper per day or 10 mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf, or in the South Atlantic from July through April.

Alternative 2: Specify a trip limit for mutton snapper for the vertical line component of the commercial sector during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

Option 2a: 2 fish/person/day

Option 2b: 5 fish/person/day

Option 2c: 10 fish/person/day

Alternative 3: Specify a trip limit for mutton snapper for the bottom longline component of the commercial sector during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

Option 3a: 500 pounds whole weight trip limit

Option 3b: 50 pounds whole weight trip limit

Action 6. Standardize Recreational Seasonal Closures for Grouper in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the existing respective shallow-water grouper recreational seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' areas of jurisdiction.

Alternative 2: Remove the shallow-water grouper recreational closures for all affected grouper species.

Alternative 3: Adopt the Gulf Council's recreational shallow-water grouper seasonal closure (excluding gag) of February 1 - March 31 outside the 20 fathom depth contour.

Alternative 4: Adopt the South Atlantic Council's recreational shallow-water grouper seasonal closure of January 1 - April 30.

Alternative 5: Establish a gag recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

Option 5a: January

Option 5b: February

Option 5c: March

Alternative 6: Establish a black grouper recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

Option 6a: January

Option 6b: February

Option 6c: March

Alternative 7: Establish a red grouper recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

Option 7a: January

Option 7b: February

Option 7c: March

Action 7. Recreational Grouper Bag Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.

Note: Multiple Alternatives and Options may be selected as preferred.

Alternative 1: No Action. Maintain currently established bag limits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, with black grouper included as a component of the shallow-water grouper and reef fish aggregate bag limits.

Alternative 2: Standardize black grouper recreational bag limits.

Option 2a: 1 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic bag limit (black or gag)

Option 2b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit (part of shallow-water grouper aggregate bag limit)

Alternative 3: Standardize gag recreational bag limits.

Option 3a: 1 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic bag limit (black or gag)

Option 3b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit

Alternative 4: Standardize red grouper recreational bag limits.

Option 4a: 3 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic aggregate bag limit

Option 4b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit

Alternative 5: Standardize scamp, yellowmouth, and yellowfin grouper recreational bag limits.

Option 5a: 3 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic aggregate bag limit

Option 5b: 4 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico aggregate bag limit

Action 8: Modify Recreational Grouper Size Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.

Note: Multiple Alternatives may be selected as preferred.

Alternative 1: No action – Retain the current respective jurisdictional size limits for species in shallow-water grouper complexes.

Alternative 2: Adopt one of the following recreational minimum size limits for black grouper.

Option 2a: 24 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit

Option 2b: 22 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Alternative 3: Adopt one of the following recreational minimum size limits for gag.

Option 3a: 24 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit

Option 3b: 22 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Alternative 4: Maintain red grouper recreational minimum size limits or consider another size limit.

Option 4a: 20 inches TL – current South Atlantic limit

Option 4b: 20 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico limit

Alternative 5: Standardize scamp, yellowmouth, and yellowfin grouper recreational size limits.

Option 5a: 20 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit for all three species

Option 5b: 16 inches TL for scamp – current Gulf of Mexico size limit;

20 inches TL for yellowfin – current Gulf of Mexico size limit;

No size limit for yellowmouth – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Action 9. Changes to the Circle Hook Requirement for Yellowtail Snapper Commercial Fishing in Gulf of Mexico Council Jurisdictional Waters.

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the current hook requirements in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico. Circle hooks are required when fishing with natural bait for all reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico.

Alternative 2: Remove the requirement to use circle hooks when commercial fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper south of 28° North latitude in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico.

Alternative 3: Remove the requirement to use circle hooks when commercial fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point (25 degrees 23 minutes North latitude) on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida.

Action 10: Specify Accountability Measures for South Florida Species

Note: Only one alternative may be selected as preferred for each species listed in the accompanying options.

Alternative 1: No action. Maintain the current recreational and commercial accountability measures (AMs) for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper based on the Reef Fish Resources and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

South Atlantic: Commercial AM – In-season closure when the commercial ACL is expected to be met and ACL reduced in following fishing season if species is overfished and ACL is exceeded. Recreational AM – if the recreational ACL is exceeded, monitor landings in following season for persistence in landings and reduce the length of the following fishing season, if necessary.

Gulf: Recreational and Commercial AMs – If the combined commercial and recreational landings exceed the stock ACL for yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, in-season AMs are in effect for the following year. If the combined landings reach or are projected to reach the stock ACL, both sectors will be closed for the remainder of that fishing year.

The IFQ program for groupers and tilefishes in the Gulf of Mexico serves as the AM for black grouper. The commercial ACL for other shallow-water grouper is equal to the applicable quota. Recreational AM – If the sum of the commercial and recreational landings reaches or is expected to reach the ACL the Assistant Administrator will close the fishery for the remainder of the year. This AM applies to the ACL for the other shallow-water grouper aggregate (i.e., black grouper, scamp, yellowmouth grouper, and yellowfin grouper).

Alternative 2: (GMFMC Approach) If the **combined commercial and recreational landings** exceed the overall ACL, then during the following fishing year if the combined landings reach or is projected to reach the overall ACL, then both sectors will be closed for the remainder of that fishing year.

Option 2a: yellowtail snapper

Option 2b: mutton snapper

Option 2c: black grouper

Alternative 3: (SAFMC Approach) If **commercial landings** reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL, NMFS would close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year and NMFS would reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

Option 3a: yellowtail snapper

Option 3b: mutton snapper

Option 3c: black grouper

Alternative 4: (SAFMC Approach) If **recreational landings** exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored the following year and if necessary, NMFS would reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished **and** the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

Option 4a: yellowtail snapper

Option 4b: mutton snapper

Option 4c: black grouper