



MAGNUSON – STEVENS ACT/NEPA SCOPING DOCUMENT

Amendment 22 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan for the South Atlantic Region

JANUARY 2011

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405
(843) 571-4366
(843) 769-4520 (FAX)

Email (general): safmc@safmc.net

Email scoping comments: SGAmend22Scoping@safmc.net

Website: www.safmc.net



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Scoping meetings are less formal than public hearings and occur prior to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) taking any position on a management issue. When the Council is considering the need for management, scoping meetings provide an opportunity for members of the public to make suggestions BEFORE the Council has made any decisions.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is soliciting public input on possible options under consideration by the Council. For long-term management of red snapper the Council is considering:

- (1) trip limits for the commercial sector
- (2) bag limits for the recreational sector
- (3) a recreational and commercial catch share program
- (4) a recreational and commercial tagging program
- (5) a recreational and for-hire tagging program with a commercial catch share program
- (6) a recreational tagging program for all snapper-grouper species
- (7) separate catch share programs for the recreational and commercial sectors
- (8) a tagging program for the recreational sector, and catch shares for the for-hire and commercial sectors
- (9) commercial red snapper endorsements
- (10) commercial and recreational spawning season closure/area closure
- (11) gear requirements/prohibitions
- (12) red snapper special management zones

NEED FOR ACTION

As the red snapper stock rebuilds under the rebuilding plan implemented through Amendment 17A, some level of harvest may eventually be allowed. In order to maintain long-term harvest levels of red snapper at or below the ACL, the Council has requested that an amendment be developed to explore alternative management methods for the species. Below is a list of possible actions and alternatives that may be considered for analysis in Amendment 22.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS/ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1 (No Action). Continue the 20-inch minimum size limit (commercial and recreational) and the recreational 2 fish bag limit (included in the 10 snapper per person limit). Amendment 17A prohibits all commercial and recreational fishing for, harvest, and possession of red snapper year-round in the South Atlantic EEZ. Prohibition of red snapper applies in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal charter

vessel/headboat or commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters.

Alternative 2. Establish a trip limit for red snapper for the commercial sector.

Sub-Alternative 2a. Commercial trip limit would be xx, reduce the trip limit when 75% of the commercial ACL is projected to be harvested. Close the commercial fishery when the ACL is projected to be met.

Sub-Alternative 2b. Commercial trip limit would be xx, and do *not* reduce the trip limit when the commercial ACL is projected to be met. Close the commercial fishery when the commercial ACL is projected to be met.

Alternative 3. Institute a bag limit for the recreational sector.

Sub-Alternative 3a. The recreational bag limit would be xx fish.

Sub-Alternative 3b. The recreational bag limit would be xx fish.

Alternative 4. Establish a catch share program for the commercial and for-hire sectors, and establish a tag program for the recreational sector.

Sub-Alternative 4a. The ACL would be divided into a share pool for the commercial and for-hire sectors, and tag bank for the private recreational sector based on average landings. X number of red snapper tags would be made available. Tags would be made available via a lottery system the application for which would be made available on NMFS web site or through direct purchase from NMFS permits office. All tag recipients would be required to record pre-determined landings data in order to be eligible for tags the following year. Tags are non-transferable. Tags must be affixed to each legal sized red snapper when caught. Snapper-grouper shares would be issued to commercial and for-hire vessels based on landings histories between the years of [insert years]. Other qualifying criteria.....?

Catch shares are more easily applied to commercial and for-hire vessels than private recreational vessels since their landings history can be tracked.

Sub-Alternative 4b. The ACL would be divided into a share pool for the commercial and for-hire sectors, and tag bank for the private recreational sector based on average landings. X number of red snapper tags would be made available. Tags would be made available via a lottery system the application for which would be made available on NMFS web site or through direct purchase from NMFS permits office. All tag recipients would be required to record pre-

determined landings data in order to be eligible for tags the following year. Tags are transferable, but not re-sellable. Tags must be affixed to each legal sized red snapper when caught. Snapper-grouper shares would be issued to commercial and for-hire vessels based on landings histories between the years of [insert years]. Other qualifying criteria.....?

Alternative 5. Establish a tagging program for the recreational red snapper fishery, including for-hire vessels, private recreational, and the commercial sectors.

- Tags could be issued for a designated area, designated time of the year, and for designated gear types.
- Tags can either allow for harvest of a certain number of individuals, or they can be physical tags that have to be affixed to harvested fish.
- Price of tags can be made dependent upon residency.
- Allocation mechanisms may include direct sale, i.e.,(from the permits office), auction, or lottery.
- Tags are typically non-renewable and have only limited transferability if any.
- Number of tags issued to any one person can be fixed at a set number.
- Voluntary compliance with harvest tag programs would likely depend on the extent to which anglers accept and support tag-based mechanisms.
- Tags can be issued with conditions that the harvester provides specific data regarding their catch. Penalties for non-reporting in the form of fines or withholding the next year's tags may be required to increase reporting.

Sub-Alternative 5a. X number of red snapper tags would be made available. X% of the tags would be allocated to the commercial sector, and X % would be allocated to the recreational sector. Commercial tags would be issued based on landings history between the years of [insert years]. Recreational tags would be made available via a lottery system the application for which would be made available on NMFS web site. All tag recipients would be required to record pre-determined landings data in order to be eligible for tags the following year. Tags are non-transferable. Tags must be affixed to legal size red snapper when harvested.

Sub-Alternative 5b. X number of red snapper tags would be made available to the commercial sector for use with hook and line gear. X number of tags would be made available to the private recreational sector. X number of tags would be made available to the for-hire sector. Tags would be available for purchase from NMFS permits office for x\$ per tag. All tag recipients would be required to record pre-determined landings data in order to be eligible for tags the following year. Tags are non-transferable. Tags must be affixed to each legal sized red snapper when landed.

Sub-Alternative 5c. X number of red snapper tags would be made available. Tags may be purchased from the NMFS permits office. Tags are non-transferable. One tag must be attached to each red snapper when caught.

Alternative 6. Establish a tagging program for the recreational fishery, including for-hire vessels, and a catch share program for the commercial sector.

Sub-Alternative 6a. The ACL would be divided into a bank of commercial shares, and a recreational tag bank, based on historical landings of the two sectors. X number of tags would be made available to the private recreational fishery, and X number of tags would be made available for the for-hire sector. Tags would be made available via a lottery system. Tags would be non-transferable. One tag must be attached to each legal sized red snapper upon harvest. Red snapper shares would be allocated to commercial fishery participants based on landings histories between the years of [insert years].

Sub-Alternative 6b. The ACL would be divided into a bank of commercial shares, and a recreational tag bank, based on historical landings of the two sectors. X number of tags would be made available to the private recreational fishery, and X number of tags would be made available for the for-hire sector. Tags would be made available via direct sale from the NMFS permits office. Tags would be non-transferable. One tag must be attached to each legal sized red snapper upon harvest. Equal red snapper shares would be issued to commercial fishery participants if they meet qualifying criteria, ie., 20% of their earned income is from fishing, or they have landed [insert lbs] lbs of snapper-grouper in each of three most recent three years.

Alternative 7. Implement a tag program for *all* snapper grouper species for the recreational sector.

Alternative 8. Establish separate catch share programs for the commercial and recreational sectors.

Sub-Alternative 8a. Divide the ACL into share pools for the recreational and commercial sectors based on average landings. Issue equal shares to private recreational and for-hire fishery participants via a lottery system. Issue percentage shares to commercial participants based on landings histories between the years of [insert years].

Sub-Alternative 8b. Divide the ACL into two share pools, one for the recreational sector and one for the commercial sector based on average landings. Issue shares (one recreational share = x number of fish) to private

- A catch share program for the recreational sector could be difficult to implement especially when determining who is eligible to receive what level of shares.
- Recreational shares can be issued with conditions such as requiring the harvester to report specific data regarding their catch.
- Recreational shares can be issued in set amounts that are distributed via a lottery system. A fee could be charged for applying to the lottery in order to recover costs.

recreational participants via a lottery system or direct sale from NMFS permits office. Issue percentage shares from the recreational share pool to for-hire fishery participants based on landings histories between the years of [insert years]. Issue percentage shares to commercial participants based on landings histories between the years of [insert years].

Alternative 9. Establish catch share programs for the commercial and for-hire sectors, and require tags for private recreational harvest of red snapper *and* the top 10 co-occurring snapper-grouper species.

Sub-Alternative 9a. The ACL would be divided into a share pool for the commercial and for-hire sectors, and a tag bank for the private recreational sector based on average landings. X number of snapper grouper tags would be made available. Tags would be made available via a lottery system the application for which would be made available on NMFS web site. All tag recipients would be required to record pre-determined landings data in order to be eligible for tags the following year. Tags are non-transferable. Tags must be affixed to fish when caught. Snapper-grouper shares would be issued to commercial and for-hire vessels based on landings histories between the years of xxxx-xxxx. Other qualifying criteria.....?

Requiring tags for co-occurring species would reduce bycatch mortality of red snapper because fishermen would need to stop targeting red snapper *and* co-occurring species when their tags run out.

Alternative 10. Establish an endorsement program for the commercial sector of the red snapper fishery. *Note: This would probably require a control date for the red snapper component of the snapper grouper fishery.

Sub-Alternative 10a. Issue a red snapper endorsement to vessels holding a snapper grouper unlimited or 225 lb federal permit if they have landed more than [insert lbs] lbs of red snapper between [insert years].

Sub-Alternative 10b. Issue a red snapper endorsement to vessels holding a snapper grouper unlimited or 225 lb federal permit if they have landed more than [insert lbs] lbs of red snapper between [insert alternate set of years].

Alternative 11. Establish a red snapper spawning season closure from July through September annually, where all harvest (recreational and commercial) would be prohibited within the EEZ and in state waters for vessels holding a snapper grouper permit.

Sub-Alternative 11a. Establish a red snapper spawning season closure from July through September annually within the area bounded by [insert coordinates]. Within this area all harvest (recreational and commercial) would be prohibited within the EEZ and in state waters for vessels holding a snapper grouper permit.

Alternative 12. Implement a gear prohibition or requirement that would either reduce bycatch mortality or limit harvest overall. (Request the Snapper-Grouper AP offer suggestions for this alternative if possible).

Alternative 13. Establish a red snapper special management zone (SMZ), within which certain restrictions such as, endorsement requirements, tags, or seasonal prohibitions on take, could apply. Such restrictions could be modified and applied through framework actions (regulatory amendments).

**SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 22
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING SITES AND DATES**

Scoping meetings will be held from 3:00 P.M – 7:00 P.M. at the following locations. Written comments must be received by 5 P.M on February 14, 2011. The Council accepts comments sent by mail, fax, or e-mail (SGAmend22Scoping@safmc.net).

<p><u>January 24, 2011</u> Hilton New Bern/Riverfront 100 Middle Street New Bern, NC 28560 Phone: 252-638-3585</p>	<p><u>January 31, 2011</u> Jacksonville Marriott Hotel 4670 Salisbury Rd. Jacksonville, FL 32256 Phone: 904-296-2222</p>
<p><u>January 26, 2011</u> Crowne Plaza Charleston Airport 4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd. North Charleston, SC 29418 Phone: 843-744-4422</p>	<p><u>February 1, 2011</u> International Palms Resort 1300 N. Atlantic Ave. Cocoa Beach, FL 32931 Phone: 321-783-2271</p>
<p><u>January 27, 2011</u> Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum 175 Bourne Ave. Pooler, Georgia 31322 Phone: 912-748-8888</p>	<p><u>February 3, 2011</u> Key Largo Grande Resort 97000 Overseas Hwy Key Largo, FL 33037 Phone: 305-852-5553</p>

Council staff and local Council representatives (see Appendix A for Council Members and responsible staff members) will be on hand to answer questions concerning Amendment 22 and other topics covered during this series of scoping meetings. Members of the public will have the opportunity to provide comments on the record at any time during the hours posted above.

What Next?

Written comments must be received by 5 P.M. on February 14, 2011. All comments will be considered by the Council in drafting Snapper Grouper Amendment 22. There will be a number of opportunities to provide public input if the Council moves forward to develop an amendment. A simplified schematic of the Council process is presented in Appendix C.

Appendix A. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council 2010-2011 Membership

Council Chairman:

David M. Cupka
P.O. Box 12753
Charleston, SC 29422
843/795-8591 (hm)
843/870-5495 (cell)
palmettobooks@bellsouth.net

843/953-9304
843/953-9159 (fax)
boylesr@dnr.sc.gov

Council Vice-Chairman:

Dr. Brian Chevront
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/726-7021 (ext. 105) (ph)
252/762-0254 (f)
brian.chevront@ncdenr.gov

Dr. Wilson Laney
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
N.C. State University, Dept. of Zoology
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
919/515-5019
919/515-44515(fax)
wilson_laney@fws.gov

George J. Geiger
566 Ponoka Street
Sebastian, FL 32958
772/388-3183
georgejgeiger@bellsouth.net

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727/824-5301
727/824-5320 (fax)
roy.crabtree@noaa.gov

Deirdre Warner-Kramer
Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228
202/736-7350 (fax)
warner-kramerDM@state.gov

Benjamin M. "Mac" Currin
801 Westwood Drive
Raleigh, NC 27607
919/881-0049
mcurrin1@bellsouth.net

Robert H. Boyles, Jr.
S.C. Department of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division
P.O. Box 12559 (217 Ft. Johnson Road)
Charleston, SC 29422-2559

Tom Burgess
(N.C. Obligatory Seat)
P.O. Box 33
Sneads Ferry, NC 28460
910/327-3528 (ph)
tburgess@embarqmail.com

John Vince O'Shea
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
202/289-6400
202/289-6051(fax)
voshea@asmfc.org

Mark Robson
Director, Division of Marine Fisheries
Florida Fish & Wildlife
Conservation Commission
620 S. Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850/487-0554
850/487-4847 (fax)
mark.robson@myfwc.com

Charles Duane Harris
(GA Obligatory Seat)
105 Demere Retreat Lane
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
912/638-9430 (ph)
seageorg@bellsouth.net

Tom Swatzel
P.O. Box 1311
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/357-1673
tom@capticks.com

LTJG Matthew Lam
U.S. Coast Guard
Brickell Plaza Federal Building
909 S.E. First Ave.
Room 876/DRE
Miami, FL 33131
305/415-6768
Mathew.R.Lam@uscg.mil

Charles Phillips
Phillips Seafood/Sapelo Sea Farms

1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-3149
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541
bhartig@bellsouth.net

Doug Haymans
Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520
912/264-7218
Doug.Haymans@dnr.state.ga.us

Council Staff Responsible for Amendment 22:

Myra Brouwer
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
843/571-4366
Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10
843/571-4520 (fax)
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Appendix B. Species Managed By the Council.

SNAPPER GROUPER COMPLEX

Sea basses and Groupers (Serranidae) - 21 species

Gag	<i>Mycteroperca microlepis</i>
Red grouper	<i>Epinephelus morio</i>
Scamp	<i>Mycteroperca phenax</i>
Black grouper	<i>Mycteroperca bonaci</i>
Rock hind	<i>Epinephelus adscensionis</i>
Red hind	<i>Epinephelus guttatus</i>
Graysby	<i>Cephalopholis cruentata</i>
Yellowfin grouper	<i>Mycteroperca venenosa</i>
Coney	<i>Cephalopholis fulva</i>
Yellowmouth grouper	<i>Mycteroperca interstitialis</i>
Tiger grouper	<i>Mycteroperca tigris</i>
Goliath grouper	<i>Epinephelus itajara</i>
Nassau grouper	<i>Epinephelus striatus</i>
Snowy grouper	<i>Epinephelus niveatus</i>
Yellowedge grouper	<i>Epinephelus flavolimbatus</i>
Warsaw grouper	<i>Epinephelus nigritus</i>
Speckled hind	<i>Epinephelus drummondhayi</i>
Misty grouper	<i>Epinephelus mystacinus</i>
Black sea bass	<i>Centropristis striata</i>
Bank sea bass	<i>Centropristis ocyurus</i>
Rock sea bass	<i>Centropristis philadelphica</i>
Wreckfish (Polyprionidae) - 1 species	
Wreckfish	<i>Polyprion americanus</i>
Snappers (Lutjanidae) - 14 species	
Queen snapper	<i>Etelis oculatus</i>
Yellowtail snapper	<i>Ocyurus chrysurus</i>
Gray snapper	<i>Lutjanus griseus</i>
Mutton snapper	<i>Lutjanus analis</i>
Lane snapper	<i>Lutjanus synagris</i>
Cubera snapper	<i>Lutjanus cyanopterus</i>
Dog snapper	<i>Lutjanus jocu</i>
Schoolmaster	<i>Lutjanus apodus</i>
Mahogany snapper	<i>Lutjanus mahogoni</i>
Vermilion snapper	<i>Rhomboplites aurorubens</i>
Red snapper	<i>Lutjanus campechanus</i>
Silk snapper	<i>Lutjanus vivanus</i>
Blackfin snapper	<i>Lutjanus buccanella</i>

Black snapper	<i>Apsilus dentatus</i>
Porgies (Sparidae) - 9 species	
Red porgy	<i>Pagrus pagrus</i>
Sheepshead	<i>Archosargus probatocephalus</i>
Knobbed porgy	<i>Calamus nodosus</i>
Jolthead porgy	<i>Calamus bajonado</i>
Scup	<i>Stenotomus chrysops</i>
Whitebone porgy	<i>Calamus leucosteus</i>
Saucereye porgy	<i>Calamus calamus</i>
Grass porgy	<i>Calamus arctifrons</i>
Longspine porgy	<i>Stenotomus caprinus</i>
Grunts (Haemulidae) - 11 species	
White grunt	<i>Haemulon plumieri</i>
Black margate	<i>Anistotremus surinamensis</i>
Margate	<i>Haemulon album</i>
Tomtate	<i>Haemulon aurolineatum</i>
Sailor's choice	<i>Haemulon parra</i>
Porkfish	<i>Anistotremus virginicus</i>
Bluestriped grunt	<i>Haemulon sciurus</i>
French grunt	<i>Haemulon flavolineatum</i>
Cottonwick	<i>Haemulon melanurum</i>
Spanish grunt	<i>Haemulon macrostomum</i>
Smallmouth grunt	<i>Haemulon chrysargeryum</i>
Jacks (Carangidae) - 8 species	
Greater amberjack	<i>Seriola dumerili</i>
Crevalle jack	<i>Caranx hippos</i>
Blue runner	<i>Caranx crysos</i>
Almaco jack	<i>Seriola rivoliana</i>
Banded rudderfish	<i>Seriola zonanta</i>
Bar jack	<i>Caranx ruber</i>
Lesser amberjack	<i>Seriola fasciata</i>
Yellow jack	<i>Caranx bartholomaei</i>
Tilefishes (Malacanthidae) - 3 species	
Tilefish	<i>Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps</i>
Blueline tilefish	<i>Caulolatilus microps</i>
Sand tilefish	<i>Malacanthus plumier</i>
Triggerfishes (Balistidae) - 3 species	
Gray triggerfish	<i>Balistes capriscus</i>
Ocean triggerfish	<i>Canthidermis sufflamen</i>

Queen triggerfish	<i>Balistes vetula</i>
Wrasses (Labridae) - 2 species	
Hogfish	<i>Lachnolaimus maximus</i>
Puddingwife	<i>Halichoeres radiates</i>
Spadefishes (Eppiphidae) - 1 species	
Atlantic spadefish	<i>Chaetodipterus faber</i>

Seafans, *Gorgonia flabellum* or *G. ventalina*. Coral in a coral reef, except for allowable octocoral. Coral in an HAPC, including allowable octocoral. Live rock - living marine organisms, or an assemblage thereof, attached to a hard substrate, including dead coral or rock (excluding individual mollusk shells).

COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS

Cero	<i>Scomberomorus regalis</i>
Cobia	<i>Rachycentron canadum</i>
King mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus cavalla</i>
Little tunny	<i>Euthynnus alletteratus</i>
Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus maculatus</i>

DOLPHIN WAHOO

Dolphinfish	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>
Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>

GOLDEN CRAB

Golden crab	<i>Chaceon fenneri</i>
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SHRIMP

White shrimp	<i>Litopenaeus setiferus</i>
Pink shrimp	<i>Farfantepenaeus duorarum</i>
Brown shrimp	<i>Farfantepenaeus aztecus</i>
Rock shrimp	<i>Sicyonia brevirostris</i>
Royal red shrimp	<i>Pleoticus robustus</i>

SPINY LOBSTER

Spiny lobster	<i>Panulirus argus</i>
Slipper lobster	<i>Scyllarides</i> spp.

SARGASSUM

Sargassum fluitans

Sargassum natans

CORAL, CORAL REEFS AND LIVE/HARD BOTTOM HABITAT

Coral belonging to the Class Hydrozoa (fire corals and hydrocorals). Coral belonging to the Class Anthozoa, Subclass Hexacorallia, Orders Scleractinia (stony corals) and Antipatharia (black corals).

Appendix C. A Simplified Schematic of the Council Process.

