

Possible Snapper Grouper Amendment 22 Actions

November, 2010

Purpose and need

The purpose of Amendment 22 is to establish a long-term red snapper fishery management program in the South Atlantic to optimize yield and rebuild the stock, while minimizing socioeconomic impacts. There is a need to adjust management as the red snapper stock rebuilds. As the stock rebuilds, some level of harvest may eventually be allowed and the closed area may be incrementally reduced in size or eliminated. 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.

Actions and Alternatives

*Please note that more than one alternative and sub-alternative can be chosen.

The following table summarizes the alternatives.

Alternative	Action-type	Species Applied To
1	No action.	n/a
2	Trip limits for the commercial sector.	Red snapper
3	Bag limits for rec sector	Red snapper
4	Rec and commercial catch share program	Red snapper
5	Rec, and commercial tagging program	Red snapper
6	Rec and for hire tagging, commercial catch shares	Red snapper
7	Rec tag program	All snapper grouper
8	Separate catch share programs for rec and commercial sectors	Red snapper
9	Catch shares for commercial and for-hire, tag program for rec sector	Red snapper and top 10 co-occurring snapper grouper
10	Commercial red snapper endorsements	Red snapper
11	Commercial and rec. spawning season closure/area closure	Red snapper
12	Gear requirements/prohibitions	Red snapper/all snapper grouper
13	Establish a red snapper special management zone	Red snapper/all snapper grouper

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, if fully approved, would prohibit 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. Prohibit commercial and recreational fishing for, harvest, and possession of all species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit (FMU) year-round in an area that includes commercial logbook grids 2880, 2980, and 3080 from 98 feet (16 fathoms; 30 m) to 240 feet (40 fathoms; 73 m).

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.

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

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 xxxx-xxxx. Other qualifying criteria.....?

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 xxxx-xxxx. Other qualifying criteria.....?

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

- Tags could be issued for a designated area, designated time of the year, and for designated gear types.
- Tags can either allowances for harvest of a certain number of individual, 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, ie.,(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 year of xxxx-xxxx. 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 xxxx and xxxx.

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 xxx 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.

- 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.

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 xxxx and xxxx.

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 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 xxxx and xxx. Issue percentage shares to commercial participants based on landings histories between the years of xxxx and xxxx.

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.

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

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.....?

Alternative 10. Establish an endorsement program for the commercial sector of the red snapper fishery.

- 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 xxx 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 xxx 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).