

DRAFT Allocation Review Report for Vermilion Snapper



**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
June 2026**

Introduction

At the December 2023 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) approved their [Allocation Review Guidelines](#) (guidelines) and updated their [Allocation Review Trigger Policy](#) (policy). The guidelines specify how the Council's sector allocations will be reviewed and documented while the policy specifies when allocations reviews will occur. One of the criteria that the Council chose to trigger an allocation review is time-based, noting that each species will have its sector allocations reviewed at least once every seven years.

Sector allocations for Vermilion Snapper met the Council's time-based trigger policy and were discussed at the March 2026 meeting. The allocations were last reviewed by the Council through Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework 2, which became effective April 9, 2019, and were originally established via Snapper Grouper Amendment 16. In accordance with the Council's guidelines, the Council was presented with the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Goals and Objectives, the current sector allocations and rationale for those allocations, the landings and annual catch limit (ACL) usage by sector for the most recent 5-years of available data, and the most recent fishery performance report. Information on the total ACL, regulations, accountability measures, and recent harvest closures for Vermilion Snapper was also provided. The information supplied to the Council for the allocation review is included in the appendix.

Council's comments and decision on current sector allocations for Vermilion Snapper

Generally, the Council felt that the existing sector allocations for Vermilion Snapper are sufficient for the current fishery. The Council noted that neither sector has harvested its respective sector ACL in recent years, indicating that neither sector is fully utilizing its current allocation. Incremental allocation towards either sector would not likely lead to a change in harvest or benefits in the fishery. Additionally, it was stated that the existing recreational allocation is working well for both the private and for-hire components of the recreational fishery. Thus, Goal 2 (Management) of the Snapper Grouper FMP is adequately addressed under the existing allocations.

The Council also noted that the current ACL for the recreational sector includes Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates and revisions are currently underway to update landing estimates for the recreational sector. As such, revising sector allocations at this time and without a new stock assessment would be problematic. Finally, the Innovation Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery and Snapper Grouper

Amendment 60 (Commercial Permits and Trip Efficiency) are being developed and may influence the Council's future allocation decisions once implemented. The Council felt that sector allocations for Vermilion Snapper should be revisited when the next stock assessment for the species has been completed and recreational landings from the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES) are integrated into the catch level recommendations.

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE THE ALLOCATION REVIEW REPORT FOR VERMILION SNAPPER.

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Appendix. Information provided to the Council when reviewing sector allocations for Vermilion Snapper.

Table 1. Goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Goal 1 (Science): Management decisions for the snapper grouper fishery are based upon robust, defensible science that considers qualitative and quantitative data analyzed in a timely, clear, and transparent manner that builds stakeholder confidence.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Promote collection of quality data to support management plans and programs considered by the Council.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Encourage development of mechanisms to effectively engage and collaborate with stakeholders on cooperative research, data collection and analysis.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve knowledge about the social and economic elements of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Support improved and expanded monitoring and reporting programs for the snapper grouper fishery.
<i>Objective 5</i>	Promote data collection and analysis to support ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.
Goal 2 (Management): Adopt management strategies for the snapper grouper fishery that rebuild and maintain fishery resources, adapt to regional differences in the fishery, and consider the social and economic needs of fishing communities.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Develop management measures that consider sub-regional differences and issues within the fishery.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Develop innovative management measures that allow consistent access to the fishery for all sectors.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Ensure that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Develop management measures that reduce and mitigate discards.
<i>Objective 5</i>	Support management measures that incorporate ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.
<i>Objective 6</i>	Develop management measures that support optimal sector allocations for the snapper grouper fishery.
Goal 3 (Communication): Employ interactive outreach strategies that encourage continuous participation and support two-way engagement between managers and snapper grouper fishery stakeholders while building a greater understanding of science and management.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Develop communication approaches that provide streamlined and timely information to increase awareness and engage stakeholders.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Ensure that Council communication encourages and supports engagement with a diverse audience of stakeholders.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of fishery science and research and how these inform management.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of how social and economic issues are linked to fisheries management measures.

Goal 4 (Governance): Commit to a transparent, balanced, and timely decision-making process that allows flexible yet well-defined protocols and strategies for managing the snapper grouper fishery.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Create an accountable and flexible decision-making process for development and evaluation of management measures.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Build capacity to streamline management efforts and better coordinate with management partners.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve communication with stakeholders to ensure the needs of the fishery are understood and considered throughout the Council process.

Table 2. Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, regulations, and accountability measures for Vermilion Snapper in the South Atlantic Region.

Total ACL	Currently 1,336,000 pounds whole weight (lbs ww). This ACL put in place via Snapper Grouper (SG) Abbreviated Framework Amendment 2 (effective April 9, 2019).
Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL	32% of the Total ACL (427,520 lbs ww)
Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL	68% of the Total ACL (908,480 lbs ww)
Rationale for Allocation	Used breakdown of landings by sector from 1986-2005 (SG Amendment 16).
Recreational Retention Regulations	• 5 fish per person bag limit. • 12-inch total length minimum size limit. • No season.
Commercial Retention Regulations	• 1,000 lbs gw trip limit. • 12-inch total length minimum size limit. • Split season (Jan – Jun and July to Dec).
Accountability Measures	• In-season closure once the sector ACL is met (applicable to both sectors). • Payback provision for an overage only if overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

Table 3. Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for Vermilion Snapper in the South Atlantic Region, 2020-2024.

Year	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Landed	Recreational Closure?	Commercial Landings (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Landed	Commercial Closure?
2020	340,233	72%	No	825,955	82%	No
2021	507,090	113%	No	659,406	69%	No
2022	304,071	70%	No	693,863	75%	No
2023	360,275	84%	No	701,582	77%	No
2024	240,338	56%	No	552,899	61%	No
<i>Average</i>	350,401	79%	-	686,741	73%	-

Table 4. Total landings and ACL utilization for Vermilion Snapper in the South Atlantic Region, 2020-2024.

Year	Total Landings (lbs ww)	% of Total ACL Landed
2020	1,166,188	79%
2021	1,166,496	83%
2022	997,934	73%
2023	1,061,857	79%
2024	793,237	59%
<i>Average</i>	1,037,142	75%

Fishery Performance Report

The most recent Fishery Performance Report for Vermilion Snapper can be found on the Council’s website at the following [LINK](#). The report was compiled during the Snapper Grouper’s Advisory Panel’s (AP) November 2017 meeting. In summary, the AP noted the following:

- Stock Observations: AP members generally agreed that Vermilion Snapper are abundant throughout the region and the stock is healthy.
- Commercial Observations: Vermilion Snapper were referred to as the “meat and potatoes” of the commercial snapper grouper fishery.
- Recreational Observations: Charter captains from throughout the region agreed that Vermilion Snapper are not a species that is normally targeted by clients, but it is considered a reliable catch year-round.
- Observations on Management Measures: Minimum size limits are appropriate. Try to ensure that the commercial season is open during the holiday season.
- Environmental and Ecological Observations: Major storms disrupt the commercial season region-wide and can notably impact effort. Cold water intrusions strongly affect the Vermilion Snapper catch off Florida.