



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Amendment 44

Reef Fish Amendment 55

Revising stock catch levels and jurisdictional allocation for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper

Decision Document, September 2025

Background

Both mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper are considered a single stock in the South Atlantic and Gulf Fishery Management Council (Gulf). Both the Gulf and South Atlantic are considered a single stock for both species and are managed by both the Councils under their respective fishery management plans. Mutton snapper was assessed through Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) 15A Update (2015) (terminal year: 2013) and yellowtail snapper was last assessed through SEDAR 64 Interim Analysis (2022) (terminal year: 2020). Recently [SEDAR 79 \(2024\)](#) (terminal year: 2022) and [SEDAR 96 \(2025\)](#) (terminal year: 2023) were completed for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper respectively. Neither stock was determined to be overfished or experiencing overfishing.

In December 2024, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) decided on a management approach in anticipation of obtaining catch level recommendations for both stocks from the Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) early in 2025. A joint amendment (Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55), led by the Gulf Council, would revise the stock acceptable biological catch (ABC) and overfishing limit (OFL) for both mutton and yellowtail snapper based on their respective assessments. This joint

amendment would also revise the jurisdictional allocation of the stock ABCs so that each Council can modify their regional ABCs for mutton and yellowtail snapper.

In February 2025 a [joint meeting](#) of South Atlantic and Gulf Scientific SSCs reviewed the results of both assessments and recommended catch levels.

Following the completion of this amendment and the apportionment of the ABCs, the South Atlantic Council plans to revise the total annual catch limits (ACL), sector allocations, and consider modifications to management measures for both species in a subsequent South Atlantic amendment.

At Your Last Meeting

- During the [June 2025](#) meeting, the SG Committee moved to resume work on SG Amendment 44/RF Amendment 55.
- This amendment will modify the **stock OFL, ABC, and jurisdictional allocation of the ABC only** for both species.
 - A separate South Atlantic-only amendment will need to be initiated immediately after completion of SG Amendment 44 to update the total ACL and sector allocations for both species. Since it would include an action to consider modification to sector allocations, it would be a full plan amendment.

Objectives for this Meeting (September 2025)

- Review the proposed actions and alternatives
- Review August Gulf discussion
- Provide guidance for any additional alternatives

Tentative Amendment Timing

✓February 2025	Joint SSC to review both assessments
✓June 2025	Reinitiate work on the amendment
✓August 2025	Gulf Council reviewed action and proposed alternatives
September 2025	South Atlantic will review action and proposed alternatives
November 2025	Gulf Council will review draft document
December 2025	South Atlantic Council will review draft document
January 2026	Gulf Council will review public hearing draft with preliminary analysis, select preferreds, and approve for public hearings
March 2026	South Atlantic Council will review public hearing draft with preliminary analysis, confirm preferreds, and approve for public hearings
June 2026	Both Councils review public hearing comments and consider final action
Summer 2026	Amendment submission

Acceptable Biological Catch

Mutton Snapper

Table 1 shows the stock ABC and OFL recommendations from the joint SSCs for **mutton snapper** for 2024 through 2028 based on SEDAR 79 (2024). The SSCs used the geometric mean of the most recent five years of recruitment (2019-2023) for informing OFL and ABC. The OFL is set at $F_{30\%SPR}$, and the ABC is set at 75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$, for the years 2026 – 2028, as derived from the provided projections for 2024 – 2028. The final report for this meeting can be found [HERE](#). Status determination criteria are listed in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Stock OFL and ABC recommendations for **mutton snapper** from the Joint SSCs (March 2025) in response to SEDAR 79 (2024). ABCs are based on projections at $F=75\%F_{30\%SPR}$. Catch levels are in pounds (lbs) whole weight (ww).

Year	OFL ($F_{30\%SPR}$)	ABC (75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$)
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377
2028	3,270,355	2,772,615

Table 2. Status determination criteria and management benchmarks for southeastern U.S. **mutton snapper**, based on the results of the SEDAR 79 stock assessment.

Southeastern US Mutton Snapper		
Criteria	Definition	Base Model Value
Fishing mortality (F) _{30%SPR} Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR)	the fishing mortality rate associated with 30% SPR and the proxy used for F _{MSY}	0.149 yr ⁻¹
F_{40%SPR}	the fishing mortality rate associated with 40% SPR and the proxy used for F _{OY}	0.11 yr ⁻¹
Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold (MFMT)	F _{30%SPR}	0.149 yr ⁻¹
F_{Optimum Yield (OY)}	F _{40%SPR}	0.11 yr ⁻¹
F_{current}	the geometric mean of F on age-3 fish for 2021-2023	0.08 yr ⁻¹
Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB)_{F30%SPR}	the estimated spawning stock biomass associated with F at 30% SPR	3,352, metric tons (mt)
Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST)	0.75*SSB _{F30%SPR}	2,514 mt (5,542,421 lbs)
SSB_{current}	the geometric mean of SSB for 2021-2023	5,403 mt (11,911,576 lbs)
Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) proxy	Yield at F _{30%SPR}	681.87 mt (1,503,266 lbs)

Yellowtail Snapper

Table 3 shows stock ABC and OFL recommendations for **yellowtail snapper** for 2024 through 2028 based on SEDAR 96 (2025). The SSCs used the arithmetic mean of the most recent five years of recruitment (2019-2023) for informing OFL and ABC projections. The OFL is set at F_{30%SPR}, and the ABC is set at 75% of F_{30%SPR}, for the years 2026-2028, as derived from the provided projections for 2024-2028. The final report for this meeting can be found [HERE](#). Status determination criteria are listed in **Table 4**.

Table 3. Stock OFL and ABC recommendations for **yellowtail snapper** from the Joint SSC (March 2025) in response to SEDAR 96 (2025). ABCs are based on projections at F=75%F_{30%}. Catch levels are in lbs ww.

Year	OFL (F _{30%SPR})	ABC (75% of F _{30%SPR})
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426
2028	4,307,856	3,918,634

Table 4. Status determination criteria and management benchmarks for southeastern U.S. **yellowtail snapper** for the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, based on the results of the SEDAR 96 stock assessment.

Southeastern US Yellowtail Snapper		
Criteria	Definition	Base Model Value
MSY	The retained yield at F_{MSY} (or proxy, $F_{30\%SPR}$)	1,391.44 mt (3,067,600 lbs)
F_{MSY} or proxy	The fishing mortality rate associated with MSY (or proxy 30% SPR)	0.398 yr ⁻¹
MFMT	F_{MSY} or 30%SPR	0.398 yr ⁻¹
$F_{current}$	the geometric mean of F on age-4 fish for 2021-2023	0.263 yr ⁻¹
SSB_{MSY} or proxy	the estimated spawning stock biomass associated with F_{MSY} or $F_{30\%SPR}$	1,816.54 mt (4,004,785 lbs)
MSST	$0.75 * SSB_{F30\%SPR}$	1,362.41 mt (3,003,589 lbs)
$SSB_{current}$	the geometric mean of SSB for 2021-2023	2,518.21 mt (5,551,692 lbs)

Species Management Review

Before reviewing the proposed actions, the following tables review the current South Atlantic management for both species and recent ACL usage (**Tables 5-6** and **Figures 1-4**). Accountability measures are listed in the appendix of this document.

Table 5. Current catch levels for mutton and yellowtail snapper.

*In 2017 the way the **mutton snapper** recreational landings were tracked changed from lbs ww to numbers of fish. The average weight conversion used was **7.98 lbs** (SG Amendment 41).

Species	MSY	Jurisdictional Allocation (SA/Gulf)	Stock OFL lbs ww/Amendment Last modified	Stock ABC lbs ww/Amendment Last modified	SA ABC lbs ww	Total SA ACL lbs ww	Sector Allocations (C/R)	Commercial ACL lbs ww	Recreational ACL
Mutton Snapper	F _{30%} SPR	82%/18%	850,077/Am 41	798,300/Am 41	654,257	654,257	17.02%/82.98%	111,354	127,115 fish*
Yellowtail Snapper	F _{30%} SPR	75%/25%	4,510,000/Reg Am 15	4,050,000/Reg Am 15	3,037,500	3,037,500	52.56%/47.44%	1,596,510	1,440,990 lbs ww

Table 6. Current management measures for mutton and yellowtail snapper.

Species	Fishing Year	Bag Limit	Trip Limit	Min Size Limit
Mutton Snapper	Jan 1 - Dec 31	5 per person per day within the 10-snapper aggregate	Jan 1 - Mar 30: 500 lbs ww Apr 1 - Jun 30: 5 per person per day Jul 1 - Dec 31: 500 lbs ww	18" TL both sectors
Yellowtail Snapper	Aug 1 - Jul 31	10 fish per person per day within the 10-snapper aggregate	none	12" TL both sectors

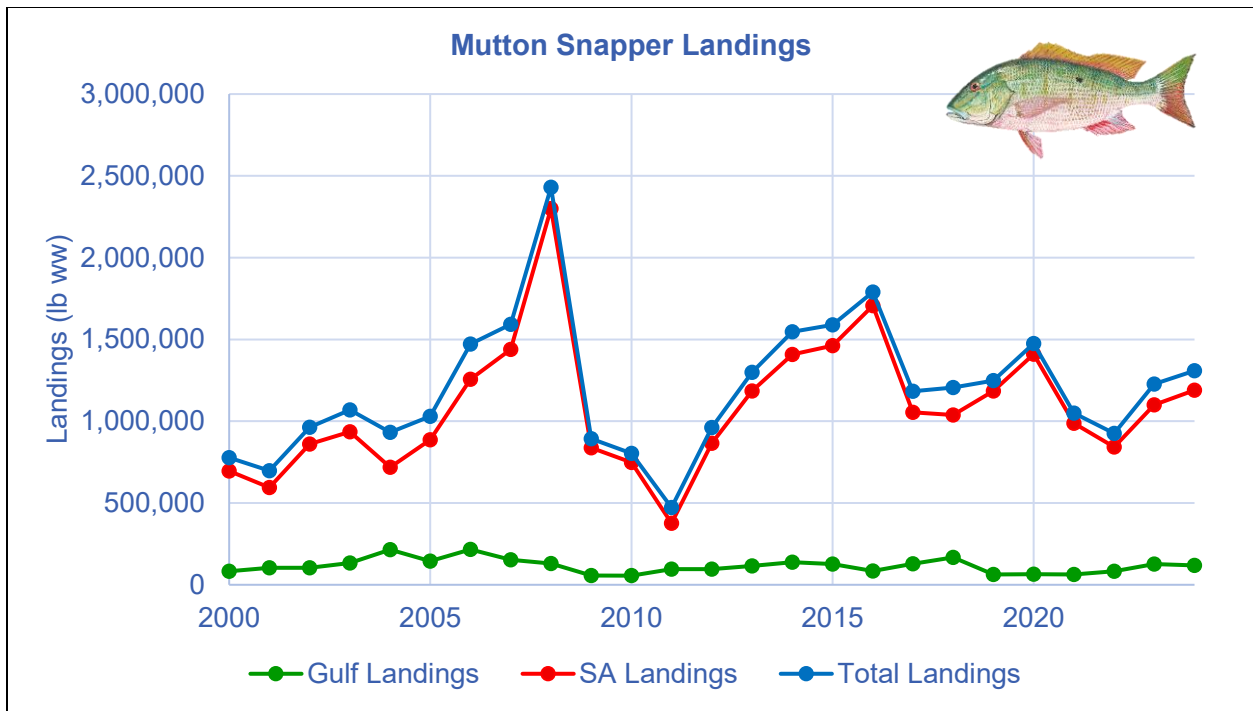


Figure 1. Total, Gulf, and South Atlantic landings for mutton snapper from 2000–2024.

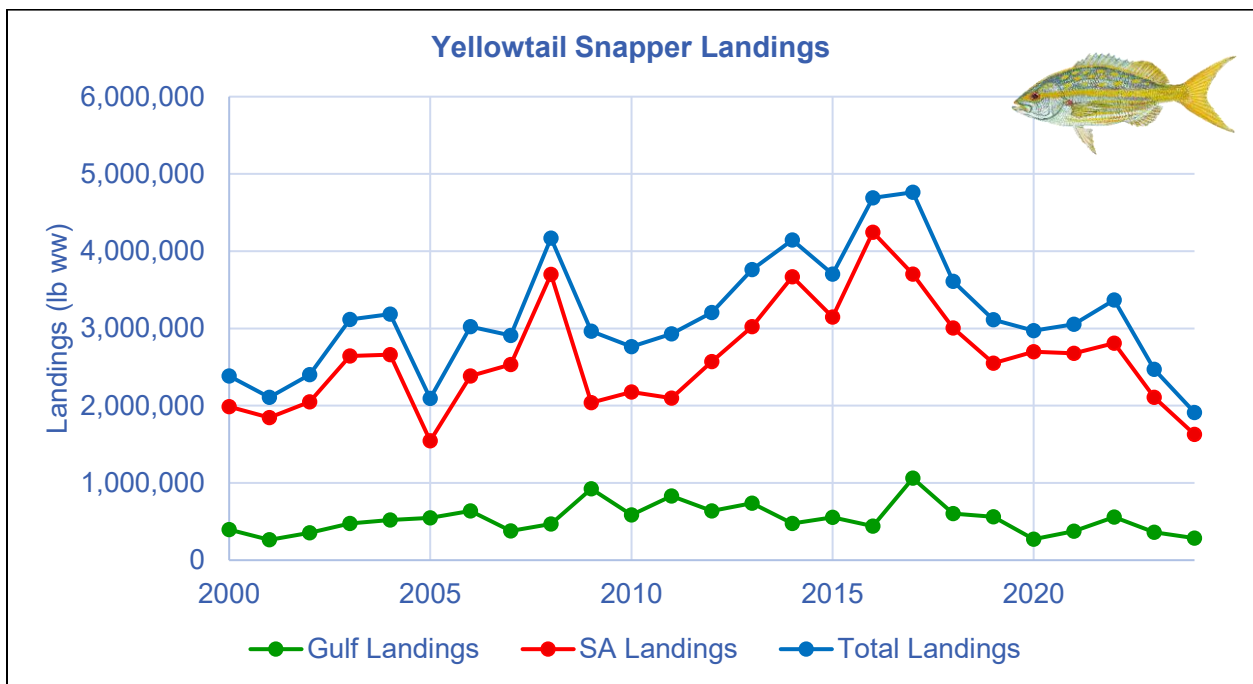


Figure 2 Total, Gulf, and South Atlantic landings for yellowtail snapper from 2000–2024.

Table 7. South Atlantic closure history for both species and their respective sectors from 2012-present. There have not been any closures in the **Gulf** from 2012-present for sector for both stocks.

South Atlantic Closure History	
Mutton Snapper	
Commercial	No closures from 2012-present
Recreational	No closures from 2012-present
Yellowtail Snapper	
Commercial	Oct. 31st 2015
	Jun 3rd 2017
	Jun 5th 2018
	Jun 7th 2019
Recreational	No closures from 2012-present

Purpose and Need Statements

Purpose: The *purpose* of this fishery management plan amendment is to revise the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, and the **regional annual catch limits** based on the jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of America Fishery Management Councils, using the results of the SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96 stock assessments, respectively.

Need: The *need* for this fishery management plan amendment is to update existing catch limits and jurisdictional allocations for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper to be consistent with the best scientific information available, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

Committee Action

- REVIEW AND SUGGEST ANY EDITS

Proposed Action and Alternatives

1. Modify the stock overfishing limit, stock acceptable biological catch, and jurisdictional allocation of the stock acceptable biological catch between the South Atlantic and Gulf of America Fishery Management Councils' for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper

Purpose of Action: This action will update the stock OFL, stock ABC, and jurisdictional allocation for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper, based on the results of the SSC's review of the 2024 SEDAR 79 (2024) and SEDAR 96 (2025) respectfully. The stock ABC and each region's respective ABC will also be updated to include Florida's SRFS and MRIP FES recreational landings estimates.

Alternative	Gulf Percentage	SA Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Alternative 1 (No Action)	18% mutton/25% yellowtail	82% mutton/75% yellowtail	True No Action - retain the percentages and ABCs based on MRFSS units for both species



Mutton Snapper Alternatives

Alternative	Gulf Percentage	SA Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Alternative 2a	18%	82%	retain the apportionment percentages but apply them to the updated ABC
Alternative 3a	9%	91%	50% average landings from 2004-2023 and 50% of average landings from 2021-2023
Alternative 3b	8%	92%	50% average landings from 2014-2023 and 50% of average landings from 2021-2023
Alternative 4a	9%	91%	Average recent landings from 2004-2023
Alternative 4b	8%	92%	Average recent landings from 2014-2023
Alternative 4c	7%	93%	Average recent landings from 2019-2023



Yellowtail Snapper Alternatives

Alternative	Gulf Percentage	SA Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Alternative 2b	25%	75%	retain the apportionment percentages but apply them to the updated ABC
Alternative 3c	16%	84%	50% average landings from 2004-2023 and 50% of average landings from 2021-2023
Alternative 3d	15%	85%	50% average landings from 2014-2023 and 50% of average landings from 2021-2023
Alternative 4d	17%	83%	Average recent landings from 2004-2023
Alternative 4e	15%	95%	Average recent landings from 2014-2023
Alternative 4f	14%	86%	Average recent landings from 2019-2023

Discussion

- Each alternative is a separate formula/basis for allocating and setting the regional ABCs and includes sub-alternatives for different date ranges for each species.
 - When selecting a preferred alternative, the Councils will select an alternative or alternatives that include their preferred basis for allocation as well as multiple sub-alternatives, one for each species.
 - Example: Alternative 4 is selected as the preferred and then Alternative 4a and 4f are selected as preferred sub-alternatives for each species (4a for mutton and 4f for yellowtail).
- **Alternative 1 (No Action)** is non-viable and would retain both the current percentage and ABC values, whereas **Alternative 2 (a and b)** would retain the same allocation percentage but divvy the updated ABC values up according to these percentages.
- Both species are showing a northward expansion into the Gulf.

Gulf Discussion (August 2025)

- To review Gulf meeting materials, click [HERE](#).
- Gulf GC recommended separating the single action into 2 actions, one for each species for the NEPA analysis, Council members agreed.
- One Council member recommended retaining the bowtie method formula.
 - It was also suggested that the current percentages be retained and applied to the updated ABC values (**Alternatives 2a and 2b**).

GULF MOTION: IN ACTION 1, TO MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED.

(this would remove Alternatives 4a-f, any alternative that does not consider the bow-tie method)

Table 8. The stock OFL, ABC, and each region’s ABC for each sub-alternative that pertains to mutton snapper.


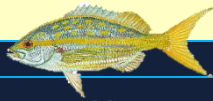
 MUTTON SNAPPER				
Alternative 1 (No Action)				
Year	Stock OFL (lbs ww)	Stock ABC (lbs ww)	Gulf Stock ABC (lbs ww)	SA ABC (lbs ww)
2025-2028+	850,077	798,300	143,617	654,257
Alternative 2a				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	479,218	2,183,102
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	490,565	2,234,794
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	495,428	2,256,949
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	499,071	2,273,544
Alternative 3a				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	239,609	2,422,711
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	245,282	2,480,077
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	247,714	2,504,663
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	249,535	2,523,080
Alternative 3b				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	212,986	2,449,334
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	218,029	2,507,330
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	220,190	2,532,187
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	221,809	2,550,806
Alternative 4a				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	239,609	2,422,711
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	245,282	2,480,077
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	247,714	2,504,663
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	249,535	2,523,080
Alternative 4b				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	212,986	2,449,334
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	218,029	2,507,330
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	220,190	2,532,187
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	221,809	2,550,806
Alternative 4c				
2025	3,384,760	2,662,320	186,362	2,475,958
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	190,775	2,534,584
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	192,666	2,559,711
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	194,083	2,578,532

Table 9. The stock OFL, ABC, and each region’s ABC for each sub-alternative that pertains to yellowtail snapper.

 YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER				
Alternative 1 (No Action)				
Year	Stock OFL (lbs ww)	Stock ABC (lbs ww)	Gulf Stock ABC (lbs ww)	SA ABC (lbs ww)
2025-2028+	4,510,000	4,050,000	1,012,500	3,037,500
Alternative 2b				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	993,272	2,979,816
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	981,258	2,943,773
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	978,357	2,935,070
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	979,659	2,938,976
Alternative 3c				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	635,694	3,337,394
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	628,005	3,297,026
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	626,148	3,287,278
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	626,981	3,291,653
Alternative 3d				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	595,963	3,377,125
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	588,755	3,336,276
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	587,014	3,326,412
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	587,795	3,330,839
Alternative 4d				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	675,425	3,297,663
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	667,255	3,257,776
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	665,282	3,248,144
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	666,168	3,252,466
Alternative 4e				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	595,963	3,377,125
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	588,755	3,336,276
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	587,014	3,326,412
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	587,795	3,330,839
Alternative 4f				
2025	4,767,230	3,973,088	556,232	3,416,856
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	549,504	3,375,527
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	547,880	3,365,546
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	548,609	3,370,025

Committee Action

- REVIEW AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK FOR AMENDMENT DEVELOPMENT

What's Next

- The IPT will analyze alternatives and develop season projections.
- The Gulf Council will review the draft document at their November meeting

Appendix

Appendix I. Current Accountability Measures

Mutton Snapper

Commercial (50 CFR 622.193(o)(1))

(i). If commercial landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the applicable commercial ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(1\)\(iii\)](#) of this section, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of mutton snapper is prohibited and harvest or possession of mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

(ii) If commercial landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the applicable commercial ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(1\)\(iii\)](#) of this section, and the applicable combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(3\)](#) of this section is exceeded during the same fishing year, and the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Recreational (50 CFR 622.193(o)(2))

(i). If recreational landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the applicable recreational ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(2\)\(iii\)](#) of this section, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

(ii) If recreational landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the applicable recreational ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(2\)\(iii\)](#) of this section, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if

the applicable combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in [paragraph \(o\)\(3\)](#) of this section is exceeded during the same fishing year. NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Yellowtail Snapper

Commercial (50 CFR 622.193(n)(1))

(i). If commercial landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL of 1,596,510 lb (724,165 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of yellowtail snapper is prohibited and harvest or possession of yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

(ii) If commercial landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the commercial ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 3,037,500 lb (1,377,787 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year, and yellowtail snapper are overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL for that following fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Recreational (50 CFR 622.193(n)(2))

(i). If recreational landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 1,440,990 lb (653,622 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

(ii) If recreational landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational

fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 3,037,500 lb (1,377,787 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year. The AA will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.