



Status of Council Activities and Accomplishments During 2014

The Council has had a very active and productive year in 2014. It has been rewarding because we continued to accomplish many of our ending overfishing and rebuilding goals. We have also continued to give more fish back to our fishermen that have sacrificed so much over the past several years. It has required a tremendous amount of work by our Council members and staff, our SSC and AP members, as well as the NMFS folks at the SERO and the SEFSC.

The Council has worked on 32 major actions this year. Eight amendments were completed and implemented by the Secretary of Commerce, seven other amendments were completed by the Council and are undergoing Secretarial review and seventeen other actions are currently under development. It has been one the most active years in the history of the South Atlantic Council, surpassing last year when the Council worked on 21 majors actions.

Council members and staff also spent a significant amount of time and effort on the visioning process related to the future of the snapper grouper fishery.

The SEDAR component of the staff was also very active throughout the southeast region, including the South Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean Council's jurisdictions organizing and conducting nine SEDAR workshops.

Actions Approved by the Secretary and Implemented in 2014

Snapper Grouper Amendment 27 (Nassau grouper, blue runner, framework)

This amendment designated the management of Nassau grouper in the Gulf of Mexico to the South Atlantic Council; modified the crew size restriction for dual-permitted vessels (those with a Snapper Grouper Unlimited or 225-Pound Permit and a Charter/Headboat Permit for Snapper Grouper); modified the bag limit retention restriction for captain and crew of for-hire vessels; changed the existing snapper grouper framework procedure to allow for more timely adjustments to ACLs; and removed blue runner from the Snapper Grouper FMP. The regulations became effective January 27, 2014.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 14 (multiple snapper grouper species)

Regulatory Amendment 14 included the following actions: (1) modify the commercial and recreational fishing years for greater amberjack, (2) modify the recreational fishing year for black sea bass; (3) modify the recreational accountability measure for black sea bass; (4) modify the commercial fishing year for black sea bass; (5) change the commercial fishing seasons for vermilion snapper; (6) modify the trip limit for gag; and (7) modify the recreational accountability measure for vermilion snapper. The Council selected No Action for changing the commercial fishing seasons for vermilion snapper.

Although the Council approved the amendment during its September 2013 meeting, staff continued working with NOAA GC to finalize the document for transmission to the Secretary of Commerce. The

proposed rule for the amendment was published on April 25, 2014. Regulatory Amendment 14 was approved by the Secretary of Commerce and regulations become effective on December 8, 2014.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 21 (MSST definition for species with low M)

The SSC recommended that for blueline tilefish, and other species with low natural mortalities, the MSST be set at $75\%SSB_{MSY}$ to avoid a stock's status shifting between "overfished" and "not overfished" simply because of natural annual variation in recruitment, etc.

At the December 2013 meeting, the Council requested that Regulatory Amendment 21 be developed to consider changing the MSST definition to $75\%SSB_{MSY}$ for snapper grouper species with low natural mortalities. The Council reviewed the amendment at the March 2014 meeting and approved it for transmittal to the Secretary of Commerce. A public hearing was held during the March 2014 Council meeting. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS for formal review on April 1, 2014. The amendment was approved by the Secretary of Commerce and regulations became effective on November 6, 2014.

Coral Amendment 8 (modifications to coral HAPCs)

Approved actions include expansion of the northern and western boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC); expansion of the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs; and establishment of a transit provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC for vessels with rock shrimp onboard. Within the expanded HAPCs, the use of bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap is prohibited, and if aboard a fishing vessel, anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited. Mid-water trawl is also prohibited in the Coral HAPCs, including Stetson-Miami Terrace and the Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs. The notice of availability for Coral Amendment 8 published in the Federal Register on May 20, 2014 (79 FR 28880), and the comment period ended on July 21, 2014. The proposed rule for Coral Amendment 8 published on June 3, 2014. The amendment has been approved by the Secretary and a Final Rule implementing the management measures is expected to be published in the Federal Register before the end of the year.

Joint Mackerel (CMP) Amendment 20A (sales and permits)

This joint amendment with the Gulf Council prohibits sale of recreationally caught king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, with an exception for sale of fish caught on for-hire trips on dually permitted vessels in the Gulf region, and an exception for sale of fish caught in state-permitted tournaments in both regions. The final regulations became effective July 16, 2014.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 5 (ABCs/ACLs/ACTs/AMs, trip limits)

This amendment revised the ACLs for dolphin and wahoo based on updated information; changed AMs to determine when ACL overages need to be paid back; updated the framework procedure; and established a commercial trip limit for dolphin north and south of 31° N. Latitude. The final regulations became effective July 9, 2014.

Generic Seafood Dealer Amendment

The amendment modified the current permitting and reporting requirements for seafood dealers who first receive federally managed species. Prior to implementation, there were five federal dealer permits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions, and the permits and reporting requirements were different depending on the species purchased. Federally permitted Gulf of Mexico reef fish and South Atlantic snapper grouper (excluding wreckfish) dealers were required to submit dealer purchase forms once every two weeks via fax or online. South Atlantic golden crab, rock shrimp, and Atlantic dolphin wahoo dealers were required to submit purchase forms once a month via fax or online. The approved

action requires one federal dealer permit in order to first receive the following additional species: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic resources and spiny lobster and Gulf of Mexico red drum. Dealers must report weekly and are not authorized to purchase product if they are not current in their reporting. The final regulations became effective August 7, 2014.

Joint South Atlantic/Gulf of Mexico Generic Headboat Reporting Amendment

An action to address charter/headboat reporting was originally included in CE-BA 3. At the December 2012 meeting, the Council voted to develop that action in a separate generic amendment jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Council and so amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels. The Joint Headboat Reporting Amendment requires headboats to submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director (SRD) weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified. Weekly is defined as 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). Headboats are not authorized to fish if they are not current in their reporting. The final regulations became effective January 27, 2014.

Actions Approved by Council and Under Secretarial Review

Snapper Grouper Amendment 29 (ORCS and ABC Control Rule)

At the June 2013 Council meeting, the SSC presented to the Council their recommended changes to the ABC Control Rule. In addition, the SSC provided ABC recommendations for “Only Reliable Catch Stocks”. To implement these recommendations, the Council requested development of Amendment 29. A Decision Document/Options Paper was presented to the Council at their September 2013 meeting. At that time, the Council also added actions to implement management measures for gray triggerfish.

Public hearings on this amendment were held in January 2014 and the Council reviewed comments at their March 2014 meeting. The Council revised the Purpose and Need, the range of alternatives for each action, and selected preferred alternatives. The Council reviewed the amendment at their June 2014 meeting and requested some changes to the alternatives to address concerns over scamp grouper. The Council took public comment on the amendment at their September 2014 meeting and approved the amendment for Secretarial review. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS for formal Secretarial review in October 2014.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 20 (snowy grouper)

Regulatory Amendment 20 proposes to adjust the rebuilding strategy, Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), annual catch limit (ACL), maximum sustainable yield (MSY), minimum stock size threshold (MSST), and optimum yield (OY), and revise management measures for snowy grouper.

At the March 2014 meeting, the Council approved the Purpose and Need, reviewed options, and selected a range of alternatives for each action. The Council opted to use the normal framework procedure to develop this amendment. Public hearings were held in August and the Council approved the amendment for formal review at their September 2014 meeting. Regulatory Amendment 20 will be sent to NMFS for formal Secretarial review in December 2014.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 32 (blueline tilefish)

The SSC reviewed the stock assessment for blueline tilefish (SEDAR 32) in October 2013 and found it to be suitable for management. The assessment indicated the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. However, the SSC recommended an alternate definition of MSST (adopted thorough Regulatory Amendment 21) that indicates the stock is in fact not overfished and a rebuilding plan is not necessary. A scoping document was developed and a scoping webinar was held on November 7, 2013.

The Council is required to take action to end overfishing and/or establish a rebuilding plan within two years of being notified that a stock is undergoing overfishing and/or is overfished. The Council received the notification on the status of the blueline tilefish stock on December 6, 2013.

At the December 2013 meeting the Council requested that NMFS take emergency action to set the blueline tilefish ACL at 224,100 pounds whole weight, the yield at 75% F_{MSY} . The emergency rule became effective in April 2014. At their June 2014 meeting, the Council reviewed the actions and alternatives in the amendment and approved it for public hearings in August 2014. At the September 2014 meeting, the Council requested and extension of the emergency rule to allow completion of Amendment 32 and approved the amendment for formal review. Amendment 32 was sent to NMFS for formal Secretarial review in November 2014.

Joint CMP Amendment 20B (zones and quotas)

This joint amendment with the Gulf Council would change the hook and line trip limits and fishing year for some of the Gulf group king mackerel zones/subzones, and establish a provision to allow transit through closed king mackerel areas. The amendment also includes an action to establish regional allocations of the Atlantic group king mackerel commercial ACL and the Atlantic group Spanish commercial ACL to a Northern Zone and Southern Zone (boundary at the NC/SC line). The amendment will also update language in the framework procedure. The last action will update the cobia ACLs based on the 2012 stock assessment, and will allocate part of the Gulf group cobia ACL to the Florida East Coast because of the designation of the biological boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic stocks at the GA/FL line. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS on May 22, 2014. The proposed rule published on October 31, 2014, and the comment period closes on December 16, 2014.

South Atlantic CMP Framework Action 2013 (transfer at sea provision and king mackerel trip limits)

This amendment establishes provisions to allow transfer at sea of Spanish mackerel caught in gillnet when one set exceeds the trip limit. The amendment also includes an action to modify the trip limit for the Florida East Coast subzone by moving the potential step-up to 75 fish/day in the last month of the season and if less than 70% of the subzone's ACL has been met. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS for Secretarial review on December 18, 2013. The proposed rule was published March 19, 2014, and the public comment period closed on April 18, 2014. The final rule will be effective December 19, 2014.

CMP Framework Amendment 1 (Spanish mackerel ACLs)

This amendment will update the ACLs for Atlantic group and Gulf group Spanish mackerel based on the recent stock assessment (SEDAR 28). Previously this amendment was called the South Atlantic and Gulf Joint Framework Actions 2014. The South Atlantic Council took final action in March 2014, and the Gulf Council took final action in April 2014. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS for Secretarial review on May 28, 2014. The Proposed Rule published on July 31, 2014, and the comment period closed on September 2, 2014. The final rule will be effective on December 22, 2014.

CMP Framework Amendment 2 (Atlantic Spanish mackerel trip limits for Southern Zone)

This amendment will revise the quota and trip limit system for commercial harvest of Atlantic Spanish mackerel in the Southern Zone (which is proposed in Amendment 20B, and includes SC, GA and Florida East Coast. Public hearings were held in August 2014. The South Atlantic Council took final

action in September 2014, and the Gulf Council will review and approve in October 2014. The amendment was transmitted to NMFS for Secretarial review on November 5, 2014.

Actions Under Council Development

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16

The amendment includes one action to address the prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots that was implemented through Regulatory Amendment 19 and became effective on October 23, 2013. Scoping meetings were held in January 2014 and the Council reviewed alternatives at the March 2014 meeting and provided guidance on changes and additional alternatives to include. The action includes alternatives to remove the closure, shorten the timeframe, confine the closure spatially to apply only within designated critical right whale habitat, and confine it spatially based on depth contour. The Council will review the analyses for this amendment at their December 2014 meeting. Public hearings will be held in January 2015, and the amendment may be approved for transmission to NMFS for formal Secretarial review at the Council's June 2015 meeting.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 17 (MPAs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper)

This amendment was initiated to consider alternatives for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that would help diminish bycatch of speckled hind and warsaw grouper. The Council initially convened a group of experts and held an MPA Expert Workgroup meeting in Pooler, GA in May 2012. The Workgroup comprised scientists with expertise in deepwater groupers and/or MPAs and commercial and recreational fishermen with extensive experience in the South Atlantic. The Workgroup produced a report that was presented to the Council in June 2012 and contained recommendations for both re-orientation of existing deepwater MPAs as well as options for new MPAs. The Council stated their intent to initially only consider re-orientation of some of the existing deepwater MPAs, however, they approved a motion at the December 2012 meeting to consider other areas. The MPA Expert Workgroup was convened again in February 4-6, 2013 in Charleston to provide further advice to the Council.

At their June 2014 meeting, the Council decided to stop development of Regulatory Amendment 17 and focus instead of development of Amendment 36 (see below) based on recommendations from the Snapper Grouper AP and public input received through the Visioning Project.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 (Spawning Special Management Zones)

The Council is considering the following actions in Amendment 36:

- Specify a *process* for identifying spawning sites/aggregations for snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, based on the characteristics of sites important for spawning (bottom topography, current systems, etc.) Note: Currently any proposed Spawning SMZs would only consider prohibiting fishing for and/or possession of snapper grouper species (species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit); fishing for all other species would be allowed.
- Specify proposed Spawning SMZ sites. During scoping and public hearings, the public will be encouraged to suggest sites that could be considered. The scoping document did not include any proposed sites. It is anticipated that the public hearing draft would include preliminary sites (based on public input from scoping, as well as additional information) and the final amendment would specify proposed Spawning SMZ sites.
- Explore placement of artificial reefs on appropriate bottom type within existing MPAs to target warsaw grouper, speckled hind, and other snapper grouper species.

Note: The Spawning SMZ approach would not make any changes to the existing MPAs. The Council is developing a System Management Plan to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects (with cost estimates) necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the existing MPAs.

Scoping for this amendment took place in August 2014. At the September 2014 meeting the Council reviewed the amendment and provided guidance to staff to continue development. The Council will review the amendment and provide guidance at the December 2014 meeting. The amendment is scheduled to be approved for public hearings at the March 2015 Council meeting with public hearings in April/May 2015. Consideration for final approval is scheduled for the Council's June or September 2015 meeting.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 22 (recreational tag program)

Amendment 22 is being developed to closely control annual harvest levels of snapper grouper species with exceptionally low recreational annual catch limits (ACLs). In order to accomplish this, the Council requested that an amendment be developed to create a recreational tag program for these species. Recreational fishery participants would be issued tags through a pre-determined process. Tags issued to individuals or entities would allow the tag holder to harvest a set number of fish from federal waters in the South Atlantic Region.

The Council reviewed a revised Options Paper at their December 2013 meeting but suspended further development of the amendment pending NOAA General Counsel input on several issues, including whether a recreational harvest tag program would be considered a Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) and thus be subject to specific requirements. NOAA General Counsel provided further guidance to the Council at the September 2014 meeting. However, the Council decided to postpone further development of the amendment and instead requested a presentation from the NC Division of Marine Fisheries on the state's Catch Card Program for highly migratory species. The presentation will be given at the December 2014 Council meeting.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 33 (transport of snapper grouper fillets from the Bahamas)

This amendment modifies requirements for recreational fishermen to bring snapper grouper species fillets from The Bahamas into the US EEZ. The Council directed this amendment be developed at the September 2013 meeting. Current measures would allow leaving skin on the fillets, require onboard documentation requirements, as well as determine how many Bahamian fillets may be aboard the vessel in the U.S. EEZ.

At the March 2014 Council meeting, the Council received input on the proposed actions and alternatives from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and the Law Enforcement Committee. The Council made revisions to the Purpose and Need and revised actions and alternatives. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings held in August 2014. The Council is scheduled to take final action in December 2014.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 34 (accountability measures for snapper grouper species)

The Generic Accountability Measures and Dolphin Allocation Amendment considers changes in accountability measures for snapper grouper species to determine when ACL overages need to be paid back and to bring consistency to accountability measures. A scoping webinar was held in February 2014 and the Council reviewed the amendment at their March 2014 meeting. The Council approved the Purpose and Need and revised the range of alternatives. The Council also clarified that payback of an ACL overage would apply only to the amount above the total ACL, not the sector ACL. In June 2014,

the Council approved the amendment for public hearings held in August 2014. The Council is scheduled to take final action in December 2014.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 35 (removal of species from the FMU)

This amendment would remove 4 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU: black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster. Representatives from the State of Florida requested the South Atlantic Council remove the above 4 species from the Snapper Grouper FMU as well as Nassau grouper. At their June 2014 meeting, however, the Council opted to retain Nassau grouper in the FMU given its ESA status. Florida regulations would be extended into federal waters off Florida to manage the remaining 4 species.

Scoping for Amendment 35 took place in August 2014. At their September meeting, the Council reviewed the scoping comments and provided guidance to continue development of the amendment. Additionally, the Council added an action to the amendment to address issues with golden tilefish longline endorsements. The Council will review the amendment at their December 2014 meeting and approve it for public hearings in January 2015.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 22 (Gag and Wreckfish)

This amendment would revise the annual catch limits and optimum yield for gag and wreckfish, and modify the gag recreational bag limit based on new stock assessments. The Council provided guidance at the June and September 2014 meetings and a webinar public hearing was held on November 6, 2014. The Council will review public comments at their December 2014 meeting and approve for formal review.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 7 (bringing dolphin and wahoo fillets from the Bahamas into the US EEZ)

This amendment was developed in conjunction with Snapper Grouper Amendment 33 (see above). It addresses allowing recreational fishermen to bring dolphin and wahoo fillets from The Bahamas into the US EEZ as is currently allowed with snapper grouper species. The Council directed this amendment be developed at the September 2013 meeting.

At the March 2014 Council meeting, the Council received input on the proposed actions and alternatives from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and the Law Enforcement Committee. The Council made revisions to the Purpose and Need and revised actions and alternatives. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings held in August 2014. The amendment is scheduled for final approval at the December 2014 meeting.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 8 (sector allocations for dolphin)

The Generic Accountability Measure and Dolphin Allocation Amendment (includes Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 8) consider changes in how dolphin is allocated between commercial and recreational sectors. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings held in August 2014. The Council is scheduled to take final action in December 2014.

Golden Crab Amendment 9 (ABCs/ACLs/ACTs/AMs, trip limits)

The Generic Accountability Measures and Dolphin Allocation Amendment (includes Golden Drab Amendment 9) considers changes in accountability measures for golden crab to determine when ACL overages need to be paid back and to bring consistency to accountability measures. In June 2014, the Council approved the amendment for public hearings held in August 2014. The Council is scheduled to take final action in December 2014.

Joint CMP Amendment 24 (sector allocations)

This amendment originally considered changes in the recreational/commercial allocations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Gulf king mackerel. South Atlantic scoping meetings were held in January 2014. The Gulf Council reviewed the scoping comments and options in February 2014 and decided to postpone further work on the amendment until after SEDAR 38 is finalized. In June 2014, staff presented an options paper on permanent re-allocation, an in-season “ACL shift,” and pre-season ACL shift for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. The South Atlantic Council will revisit a more detailed options paper in December 2014.

Joint CMP Amendment 26 (king mackerel ACLs, re-designation of KM boundaries and mixing zone, and other king mackerel actions)

The stock assessment for Atlantic and Gulf king mackerel (SEDAR 38) was completed in September 2014. The amendment proposes re-designating the king mackerel stock boundaries and mixing zone, and will review the approach used in SEDAR 38 to designate the Gulf and Atlantic stocks, and the mixing zone.

The South Atlantic SSC reviewed the results of the assessment at their October 2014 meeting, and provided recommendations to revise the Atlantic king mackerel ABC based on the assessment and stock boundaries. The South Atlantic Council will review the SSC recommendations in December 2014 and provide direction to staff on alternatives and actions for Amendment 26.

The Gulf Council will review the stock assessment results and recommendations from the Gulf SSC in January 2015. Additional actions for Gulf king mackerel may include: revised recreational/commercial allocations; revised quotas for Gulf commercial zones and subzone quotas; modified trip limits; changes to Gulf accountability measures.

Joint CMP Amendment 28 (modification of king mackerel and Spanish mackerel commercial permits)

This amendment considers ways to separate the commercial permits for king and Spanish mackerel into designated permits for each region. Currently there is one commercial king mackerel permit and one Spanish mackerel that allows harvest in the Gulf and South Atlantic regions. South Atlantic scoping was held in January 2014. The Gulf Council decided to postpone further development until after the results of SEDAR 38 are final. The South Atlantic Council directed staff presented a white paper at the September 2014 meetings on methods to separate permits for the regions.

Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment

During the December 2012 meeting, the South Atlantic Council approved a motion moving the commercial logbook reporting action out of CE-BA 3 and indicated their wish to work with the Gulf Council on a joint amendment to address commercial logbook issues in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

The amendment includes an action to consider modifying the timing of reporting requirements for commercial logbooks in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic resources, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries, and providing an option for logbooks to be submitted electronically. Currently, logbook reports from commercial fishermen targeting snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. The amendment also considers requiring that the components of the commercial logbooks (landings, economic, and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip. This would increase the timeline for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and

dolphin/wahoo fishermen to complete logbooks, and decrease the timeline for golden crab fishermen. Commercial electronic logbooks, as proposed in this amendment, would not be used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they could serve as a means to verify dealer reports and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program standards that require two sources for verification of quota-monitored species. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the commercial logbook landings, with the new timing and compliance requirements specified in this amendment, to compare with commercial trip ticket landings to help ensure the commercial ACLs are not exceeded.

At their June 2013 meeting, the Council approved scheduling a NMFS SEFSC presentation on the details of the commercial electronic logbook pilot study at the September 2013 meeting. South Atlantic Council staff will work with Gulf staff and NMFS staff to plan for completion of the amendment incorporating results from year 1 of the pilot study and target regulations being effective on January 1, 2016.

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (bycatch)

The action in CE-BA 3 considers improvements in bycatch/discard data collection methods to better quantify all sources of fishing mortality in South Atlantic fisheries. Alternatives consider expanding aspects of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's Release, Discard and Protected Species Module to coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only) and dolphin and wahoo fisheries; and also implementing a commercial observer program at 2-5% coverage levels for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only), dolphin and wahoo, and golden crab vessels.

At their March 2013 meeting, the Council delayed action on CE-BA 3 until a presentation by NOAA General Counsel staff was provided that assesses how the Council is meeting bycatch requirements under the Magnuson Act for SA fisheries. During the September 2014 meeting, NOAA GC reported that the SEFSC and SERO would begin work on a comprehensive bycatch reporting methodology for the southeast; status reports will be provided to the Council at each meeting. Once the methodology is developed, the Council will develop a Joint Amendment with the Gulf Council to address bycatch reporting in 2015.

Joint Generic Amendment (South Florida Management Issues)

This amendment considers ways to implement compatible regulations for species management by the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils and the State of Florida. Joint Committee meetings have been held and the goal is to approve for public hearings at the June 2015 Council meetings and complete by the end of 2015.

Habitat/Ecosystem Management

The Council and staff continued to work on issues related to habitat including policy statements and commenting on projects that may impact EFH and EFH/HAPCs. Council staff continued to coordinate with partners to move closer to development of an ecosystem model and ecosystem management for the Council's area of management.

SAFMC Visioning Project

Since December 2012, the Council has been working on a Visioning Project to develop a long-term plan for the snapper grouper fishery. Below is list of some of the Council's accomplishments during 2014.

- Organized and facilitated 26 'port' meetings throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida between February and April 2014 to collect direct feedback from fishery stakeholders. These informal meetings allowed fishermen to voice their ideas about current and new management strategies and solutions for the fishery, with over 370 fishermen participating. Results from the port

meetings were summarized for each individual meeting and for each state. All port meeting participants received copies of the summaries and the summaries are available on the Council's website: (<http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/2014-port-meetings>).

- Developed promotional flyers for the port meetings that were distributed electronically to over 1,500 fishery stakeholders and by mail to over 1,900 federal commercial snapper grouper permit holders (225-lb limited and unlimited), for-hire snapper grouper permit holders, and federal snapper grouper dealers. See: <http://safmc.net/sites/default/files/Resource%20Library/pdf/Visioning%20&%20Port%20Meetings/port-meeting-flyer-draft-011714.pdf>
- Developed a Web page on the Council's website about the Visioning Project and port meeting information and schedule. (See: <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/2014-port-meetings>; <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/council-visioning-project>)
- Developed a web-based port meeting discussion comment form and posted it on the Council's website to collect additional comments and ideas from fishery stakeholders. The web comment form lists the same discussion items that were discussed at the in-person port meetings and asked for additional ideas. See: <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/port-meeting-discussion>.
- In October 2014, Council staff organized and facilitated a 2.5-day Council Visioning Workshop for Council members. The goal of the workshop was to begin development of a draft Vision Blueprint for the snapper grouper fishery based on port meeting input and Council deliberation. The draft Vision Blueprint is organized into four strategic goals – Management, Science, Communication, and Governance – and will specifically outline management strategies and action required for the fishery. The workshop used breakout group sessions to discuss and brainstorm management strategies addressing seven key topics: Sub-regional Management, Data Collection, Bycatch, Access to the Fishery, Stakeholder Engagement, Habitat/Ecosystems, and Allocation.
- At the December 2014 meeting, the Council will have another visioning workshop during the Council meeting and will begin review of the strategic goals for Management and Communication.

The proposed timeline for moving forward with the draft Vision Blueprint is as follows:

- **March 2015 Council meeting:** Review of draft strategic goals (Science & Governance) for Vision Blueprint; further revise Management & Communication strategic goals; plan public comment activities.
- **March – June 2015:** Receive public input on the draft Vision Blueprint document.
- **June 2015 Council meeting:** Review public comments and further refine.
- **July 2015:** Council Visioning Workshop to prioritize short-term and long-term items and further refine for development of SG Amendment 37.
- **September 2015 Council meeting:** Review and approve prioritize items to be scoped under SG Amendment 37.