

Update on Recent Regulations Changes and Status of Amendments

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 (Revising Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures)

Summary Description: As of the September 2020 Council meeting, Amendment 10 would accommodate updated recreational data from the Marine Recreational Information Program by revising the annual catch limits and sector allocations for dolphin and wahoo. The amendment also contains actions that implement various other management changes in the fishery including revising recreational accountability measures, accommodating possession of dolphin and wahoo on vessels with certain unauthorized gears onboard, removing the operator card requirement, reducing the recreational vessel limit for dolphin, and allowing filleting of dolphin at sea onboard for-hire vessels north of the Virginia/North Carolina border.

Expected Timing: The Council is expected to vote to send the amendment out to public hearings at the December 2020 meeting and vote on approval of the amendment for Secretarial review at the June 2021 meeting. The associated regulation changes would likely go into effect sometime in 2022.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 12 (Bullet Mackerel and Frigate Mackerel as Ecosystem Component Species)

Summary Description: This amendment includes a single action that would add bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan as Ecosystem Component (EC) species. The Council reviewed Amendment 12 at their June 2020 meeting and approved it for public hearings which were held at their September 2020 meeting.

Expected Timing: At the September 2020 meeting the Council approved the amendment for Secretarial review. The amendment is currently undergoing final internal review and will be submitted to NFMS in late October or early November 2020. The EC species designation for bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel will likely go into effect in early to mid 2021.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 13 (Pelagic Longlines in the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery)

Summary Description: At the September 2020 meeting, the Council moved actions that would modify gear, bait, and training requirements in the commercial longline fishery for dolphin and wahoo to align with HMS requirements to a new amendment. The Council also approved a motion to add a new alternative that would prohibit the use of pelagic longline gear in the dolphin wahoo fishery unless a vessel has the limited entry HMS permits that allow the use of this gear.

Expected Timing: The Council has not specified timing for development of this amendment.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices and Powerhead Regulations)

Summary Description: This amendment:

- Requires a descending device be on board vessels fishing for or possessing snapper grouper species,
- Requires the use of non-offset, non-stainless-steel circle hooks to fish for species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit with hook-and-line gear and natural baits north of 28 degrees north latitude (approximately 25 miles south of Cape Canaveral, Florida),
- Requires the use of non-stainless-steel hooks to fish for snapper grouper species with hook-and line gear and natural baits in the South Atlantic, and
- Allows the use of powerheads to harvest snapper grouper species in federal waters off South Carolina. This is consistent with the use of powerheads in federal waters off other states in the South Atlantic region.

Timing: The Council approved this amendment for formal review at the September 2019 meeting. The amendment was submitted to NMFS on January 13, 2020. The final rule published on June 15, 2020 and regulations became effective on July 15, 2020.

South Atlantic For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment

Summary Description: This amendment:

- Requires weekly electronic reporting for charter vessel operators with a federal for-hire permits in the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, or coastal migratory pelagic fisheries,
- Reduces the time allowed for headboat operators to complete their electronic reports, and
- Requires location reporting by charter vessels with the same detail now required for headboat vessels.

Timing: The amendment was submitted to NMFS on January 13, 2020. The proposed rule published on April 4, 2018, with a comment period through May 4, 2018. The NMFS notified the Council on June 12, 2018, that the amendment was approved. The expected effective date of the final rule for the South Atlantic will be January 4, 2021.