



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

July 2, 2026

John Carmichael
Executive Director
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
john.carmichael@safmc.net

Dear Mr. Carmichael:

Thank you for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) work regarding Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, including your detailed action plan outlining priorities, and your extensive stakeholder engagement. I deeply appreciate the Council's partnership and the thorough analysis provided by the Council members, your expert staff and industry advisors. The volume of input from fishery participants and coastal communities received in public comments highlights the urgency of our shared mission. In particular, I want to acknowledge and commend the Council for already integrating several of these priority actions directly into your current action plans. To fulfill the EO's mandate to reduce burdens on domestic fishing, increase production, stabilize markets, improve access, and enhance economic profitability, I request the Council maintain momentum on these key issues and focus on the following priorities during upcoming prioritization and action planning processes:

- **Revise Snapper Grouper (SG1) Permit Policies (Amendment 60):** Inefficient trip limits and potentially outdated 2-for-1 permit policies may be restricting commercial productivity and preventing new entrants from accessing the fishery. I understand the Council is actively moving forward with Amendment 60. I request the Council continue to prioritize the advancement of Amendment 60, including considering establishing dynamic trip limits and removing the 2-for-1 permit requirement, to improve the overall flexibility and effectiveness of the commercial harvest.
- **Support State-Agency Led Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) for Red Snapper:** I acknowledge the ongoing frustration surrounding federal dead discard estimates and their impact on recreational seasons. While the recent federal court injunction temporarily pauses the South Atlantic state-led EFPs, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) remains firmly supportive of the Council's vision for innovative, localized data collection. Rather than abandoning these pilot concepts, please continue to actively work alongside state agencies to refine these proposals and address the court's scientific and structural concerns to establish legally resilient, state-led management tools that restore angler confidence and stabilize fishing opportunities.
- **Address Shark and Dolphin Depredation:** Some predators are negatively impacting gear and catch, increasing discarding and rendering some commercial reef fishing economically unviable. I recognize this remains an active area of concern and collaborative study for the Council, and I understand the Council does not have independent authority to change shark quotas or Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) regulations to solve depredation issues. However, I urge the Council to continue to prioritize this important work and advance policies, including the deployment of non-lethal acoustic and visual deterrents. Mitigating these interactions is critical to landing target catches and restoring fleet profitability.

Strategic EO 14276 Mandates for Council Consideration:

To further optimize regional management, I urge the Council to systematically assess current Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and consider removing species that no longer require conservation and

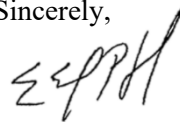


management. Where species are not in need of conservation and management, but including them in the FMP would help achieve ecosystem management objectives, I encourage the Council to consider redesignating them as Ecosystem Component (EC) species. Specifically, I commend the Council's effort to advance Amendment 61, which may serve as an example of how to move unassessed species into EC species designations. Finally, as stated in the Seafood EO, I strongly encourage the Council to collaborate with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the expanded and continued use of Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) as agile management tools to test gear innovations, enhance value-added quality, explore additional fishing opportunities, and safely increase domestic production.

In some instances, the priorities identified above may implicate other statutory requirements. Where that applies, NMFS will work with the Council to determine how best to advance an action. Complementing your efforts, NMFS is concurrently evaluating internal actions to support these initiatives. These include continuing to support the South Atlantic red snapper stock assessment as it moves through the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review process, evaluating the economic impacts of the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act to inform future communications on the impacts of depredation, considering commercial discard logbook requirements, and working with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to explore insurance options for our commercial operators.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the South Atlantic's fishing communities. I look forward to advancing these vital reforms together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Piñero Soler', written in a cursive style.

Eugenio Piñero Soler
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries