

DRAFT Allocation Review Report for Atlantic Spadefish



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council December 2024

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 Atlantic Spadefish met the Council's time-based trigger policy and were discussed at the September 2024 meeting. These allocations were last reviewed by the Council through Snapper Grouper Amendment 29, which became effective July 1, 2015. 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, and the landings and annual catch limit (ACL) usage by sector for the most recent 5-years of available data. There is no Fishery Performance Report available for the species but additional information on the total ACL, retention regulations, accountability measures, and recent harvest closures for Atlantic Spadefish were also provided as background information for the Council. The information provided to the Council is included for reference in the appendix.

Council's comments and decision on current sector allocations for Atlantic Spadefish

Generally, the Council noted that the existing sector allocations for Atlantic Spadefish are sufficient in relation to 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. Thus, Goal 2 (Management) of the Snapper Grouper FMP is adequately addressed under the existing allocations.

The Council did note that sector allocations should be re-examined when annual catch limits are revised and catch estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey are integrated into the catch level recommendations. The Council also expressed that accountability measures should be examined at this time as well.

Appendix. Information provided to the Council for reviewing sector allocations of Atlantic Spadefish

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 Atlantic Spadefish in the South Atlantic Region.

Total ACL	812,478 pounds whole weight (lbs ww). Current ACL in place via Snapper Grouper (SG) Amendment 29 (effective July 1, 2015).
Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL	81.47% of the Total ACL (661,926 lbs ww)
Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL	18.53% of the Total ACL (150,552 lbs ww)
Rationale for Allocation	Used the Comprehensive ACL Amendment equation of 50% weighting towards the sector-based breakdown of landings from 1986-2008 and 50% from 2006-2008.
Recreational Retention Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 fish per person bag limit. • Part of the 20 fish per person aggregate bag limit. • No size limit or season.
Commercial Retention Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No trip limit, size limit, or season.
Accountability Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-season closure once the sector ACL is met (applicable to both sectors). • Payback provision for an overage only if the total ACL is exceeded.

Table 3. Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for Atlantic Spadefish in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.*

Year	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Landed	Recreational Closure?	Commercial Landings (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Landed	Commercial Closure?
2019	178,047	26.9%	No	24,410	16.2%	No
2020	143,717	21.7%	No	25,729	17.1%	No
2021	63,248	9.6%	No	32,859	21.8%	No
2022	215,645	32.6%	No	25,810	17.1%	No
2023	42,378	6.4%	No	32,030	21.3%	No
<i>Average</i>	<i>128,607</i>	<i>19.4%</i>	-	<i>28,168</i>	<i>18.7%</i>	-

Table 4. Total landings and ACL utilization for Atlantic Spadefish in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.*

Year	Total Landings (lbs ww)	% of Total ACL Landed
2019	202,457	24.9%
2020	169,446	20.9%
2021	96,108	11.8%
2022	241,455	29.7%
2023	74,408	9.2%
<i>Average</i>	<i>156,775</i>	<i>19.3%</i>

*Recreational landings estimates for each species are based on the Marine Recreational Information Program’s (MRIP) Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) methodology rather than the more recent Fishing Effort Survey (FES). Reallocation based on landings that include CHTS estimates may prove difficult since it is no longer considered best scientific information available, but potential solutions can be provided should the Council deem reallocation is warranted at this time. The recreational landings presented are sourced from an ACL monitoring dataset provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office. The presented commercial landings are from the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program [public data warehouse](#), which is used to avoid showing confidential landings.