

# **Review of allocations for species meeting the time-based criteria in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Allocation Review Trigger Policy**

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
September 2024 Meeting**

## **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.

Several of the [allocations for species that the Council manages](#) currently meet the time-based criteria for review. As such, the Council will work to review allocations for these species over several meetings. For this meeting, the Council will review the current sector allocations for Atlantic Spadefish and the three species that make up the Jacks Complex (Almaco Jack, Lesser Amberjack, and Banded Rudderfish). All four of these species are part of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP). In accordance with the guidelines, a summary allocations report will be developed based on the Council's discussion and presented to the Council for approval at the December 2024 meeting.

## **Background**

There is currently no new stock assessment or catch level recommendations for these four fish species. While there will eventually be revised catch levels recommendations through the planned Unassessed Species Amendment, the timing of this amendment has been delayed and is indefinite. Work on the amendment may not begin for several years due to lack of reliable data to set new catch limits and pending SSC discussion on how to update catch level recommendations for these species. Given this uncertainty and that the species meet the time-based criteria, they are being brought to the Council for further discussion.

Based on the Council's guidelines, when an allocation review is triggered for reasons other than a stock assessment or change to catch level recommendations and there is not a planned FMP amendment in the near-term, the Council will be presented with the following information to determine whether a more in-depth allocation analysis is warranted or if the current allocations are sufficient:

- The appropriate FMP Goals and Objectives,
- Current allocations and rationale for setting those allocations,
- Landings and annual catch limit (ACL) usage by sector for the most recent 5-years of available data, and
- The most recent Fishery Performance Report, if available.

The following discussion focuses on the first three bullet points as there is not a fishery performance report available for any of the four fish species that will be examined.

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.

**Snapper Grouper FMP Goals and Objectives**

The Council most recently updated the Goals and Objectives of the Snapper Grouper FMP through [Amendment 49](#), which became effective October 26, 2023. The Goals and Objectives can be found in Table 1 as well as on the [Council’s webpage for the Snapper Grouper FMP](#).

**Table 1.** Goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

<b>Goal 1 (Science):</b> 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.
<b>Goal 2 (Management):</b> 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.
<b>Goal 3 (Communication):</b> 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.
<b>Goal 4 (Governance):</b> 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.



**Atlantic Spadefish**

**Table 2.** Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, regulations, and accountability measures for Atlantic Spadefish in the South Atlantic Region.

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

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

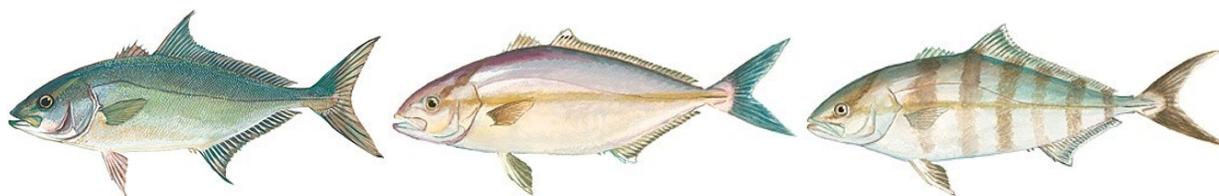
<b>Year</b>	<b>Recreational Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Recreational ACL Landed</b>	<b>Recreational Closure?</b>	<b>Commercial Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Commercial ACL Landed</b>	<b>Commercial Closure?</b>
2019	178,047	26.9%	No	24,410	16.2%	No
2020	143,717	21.7%	No	25,729	17.1%	No
2021	63,248	9.6%	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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Total ACL Landed</b>
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>

*Discussion Questions*

- Does the Council feel that the current sector allocations for Atlantic Spadefish are adequate for the fishery?
  - a. If so, why does the Council feel that these allocations are still appropriate?
  - b. If not, does the Council want to re-examine the sector allocations in an amendment to the Snapper Grouper FMP prior to the planned Unassessed Species Amendment?
  - c. If a decision cannot be made at this time, please elaborate on additional information that is needed.



**The Jacks Complex (Almaco Jack, Lesser Amberjack, and Banded Rudderfish)**

**Table 5.** Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, regulations, and accountability measures for the Jacks Complex in the South Atlantic Region.

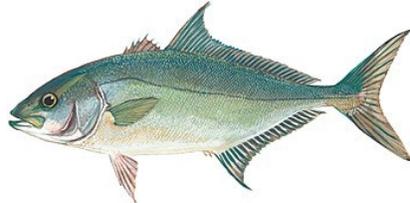
<b>Total ACL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 457,221 lbs ww. Current ACLs in place via SG Regulatory Amendment 13 (effective July 17, 2013).</li> <li>• The ACL and landings are tracked as a complex and not by single species.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	58.57% of the Total ACL (267,799 lbs ww)
<b>Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	41.43% of the Total ACL (189,422 lbs ww)
<b>Rationale for Allocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defacto allocation based on the resulting summed sector ACLs for the three jack species. The Comprehensive ACL Amendment equation was applied to all 3 jack species.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 fish per person bag limit.</li> <li>• Part of the 20 fish per person aggregate bag limit.</li> <li>• No size limit or season.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 lbs gw aggregate Jacks Complex trip limit.</li> <li>• 20 inch FL minimum size limit for Almaco Jack.</li> <li>• No size limit for Lesser Amberjack or Banded Rudderfish.</li> <li>• No season.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-season closure for both sectors once the sector ACL is met.</li> <li>• Payback provision for an overage only if the total ACL is exceeded.</li> </ul>

**Table 6.** Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for the Jacks Complex 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	403,222	150.6%	Yes 9/25/2019	186,940	98.7%	Yes 7/16/2019
2020	192,919	72.0%	No	146,022	77.1%	No
2021	297,986	111.3%	No	135,114	71.3%	No
2022	185,707	69.3%	No	145,050	76.6%	No
2023	200,268	74.8%	No	155,025	81.8%	No
<i>Average</i>	<i>256,021</i>	<i>95.6%</i>	-	<i>153,630</i>	<i>81.1%</i>	-

**Table 7.** Total landings and ACL utilization for the Jacks Complex in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Total ACL Landed</b>
2019	590,162	129.1%
2020	338,941	74.1%
2021	433,100	94.7%
2022	330,757	72.3%
2023	355,293	77.7%
<i>Average</i>	<i>409,651</i>	<i>89.6%</i>



**Almaco Jack**

**Table 8.** Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, regulations, and accountability measures for the Almaco Jack in the South Atlantic Region.

<b>Total ACL</b>	302,517 lbs ww. Current ACLs in place via SG Regulatory Amendment 13 (effective July 17, 2013).
<b>Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	51.30% of the Total ACL (155,195 lbs ww)
<b>Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	48.70% of the Total ACL (147,322 lbs ww)
<b>Rationale for Allocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used the Comprehensive ACL Amendment equation of 50% weighting towards the sector-based breakdown of landings from 1986-2008 and 50% from 2006-2008.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 fish per person bag limit.</li> <li>Part of the 20 fish per person aggregate bag limit.</li> <li>No size limit or season.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of the 500 lbs gw aggregate Jacks Complex trip limit.</li> <li>20 inch FL minimum size limit.</li> <li>No season.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-season closure for both sectors once the Jacks Complex sector ACL is met.</li> <li>Payback provision for an overage only if the total Jacks Complex ACL is exceeded.</li> </ul>

**Table 9.** Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for Almaco Jack in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023<sup>1</sup>.

Year	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Landed	Recreational Closure?	Commercial Landings (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Landed	Commercial Closure?
2019	318,622	205.3%	Yes 9/25/2019	151,921	103.1%	Yes 7/16/2019
2020	166,249	107.1%	No	124,667	84.6%	No
2021	271,955	175.2%	No	119,958	81.4%	No
2022	157,365	101.4%	No	124,140	84.3%	No
2023	167,132	107.7%	No	138,690	94.1%	No
<i>Average</i>	<i>216,265</i>	<i>139.4%</i>	-	<i>131,875</i>	<i>89.5%</i>	-

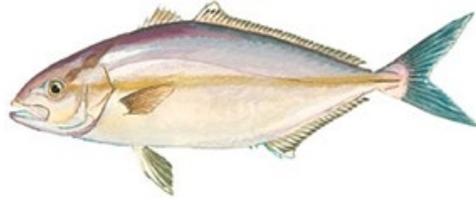
<sup>1</sup> Landings and the ACL are tracked cumulatively for the Jacks complex and not by single species. The triggering of accountability measures is also based on complex rather than single species landings. Species-specific recreational landings of Almaco Jack are available from MRIP and commercial landings of Almaco Jack are based upon landings reported by seafood dealers.

**Table 10.** Total landings and ACL utilization for Almaco Jack in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Total ACL Landed</b>
2019	470,543	155.5%
2020	290,916	96.2%
2021	391,913	129.6%
2022	281,505	93.1%
2023	305,822	101.1%
<i>Average</i>	<i>348,140</i>	<i>115.1%</i>

*Discussion Questions*

- Does the Council feel that the current sector allocations for Almaco Jack are adequate for the fishery?
  - a. If so, why does the Council feel that these allocations are still appropriate?
  - b. If not, does the Council want to re-examine the sector allocations in an amendment to the Snapper Grouper FMP prior to the planned Unassessed Species Amendment?
  - c. If a decision cannot be made at this time, please elaborate on additional information that is needed.



**Lesser Amberjack**

**Table 11.** Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, and accountability measures for the Lesser Amberjack in the South Atlantic Region.

<b>Total ACL</b>	9,270 lbs ww. Current ACLs in place via SG Regulatory Amendment 13 (effective July 17, 2013).
<b>Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	53.93% of the Total ACL (5,000 lbs ww)
<b>Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	46.07% of the Total ACL (4,270 lbs ww)
<b>Rationale for Allocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used the Comprehensive ACL Amendment equation of 50% weighting towards the sector-based breakdown of landings from 1986-2008 and 50% from 2006-2008.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 fish per person bag limit.</li> <li>Part of the 20 fish per person aggregate bag limit.</li> <li>No size limit or season.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 lbs gw aggregate Jacks Complex trip limit.</li> <li>No size limit or season.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-season closure for both sectors once the Jacks Complex sector ACL is met.</li> <li>Payback provision for an overage only if the total Jacks Complex ACL is exceeded.</li> </ul>

**Table 12.** Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for the Lesser Amberjack in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023<sup>2</sup>.

Year	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Landed	Recreational Closure?	Commercial Landings (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Landed	Commercial Closure?
2019	1,404	28.1%	Yes 9/25/2019	2,741	64.2%	Yes 9/25/2019
2020	651	13.0%	No	4,790	112.2%	No
2021	1,021	20.4%	No	10,842	253.9%	No
2022	370	7.4%	No	12,222	286.2%	No
2023	5,006	100.1%	No	8,734	204.5%	No
<i>Average</i>	<i>1,690</i>	<i>33.8%</i>	-	<i>7,866</i>	<i>184.2%</i>	-

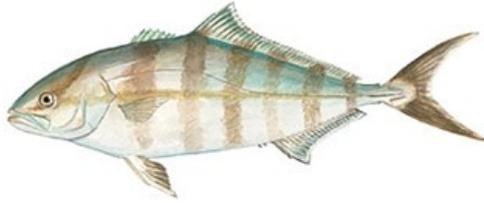
<sup>2</sup> Landings and the ACL are tracked cumulatively for the Jacks complex and not by single species. The triggering of accountability measures is also based on complex rather than single species landings. Species-specific recreational landings of Lesser Amberjack are available from MRIP and commercial landings of Lesser Amberjack are based upon landings reported by seafood dealers.

**Table 13.** Total landings and ACL utilization for the Lesser Amberjack in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Total ACL Landed</b>
2019	4,145	44.7%
2020	5,441	58.7%
2021	11,863	128.0%
2022	12,592	135.8%
2023	13,740	148.2%
<i>Average</i>	<i>9,556</i>	<i>103.1%</i>

*Discussion Questions*

- Does the Council feel that the current sector allocations for Lesser Amberjack are adequate for the fishery?
  - a. If so, why does the Council feel that these allocations are still appropriate?
  - b. If not, does the Council want to re-examine the sector allocations in an amendment to the Snapper Grouper FMP prior to the planned Unassessed Species Amendment?
  - c. If a decision cannot be made at this time, please elaborate on additional information that is needed.



**Banded Rudderfish**

**Table 14.** Current ACLs, sector allocations, rationale for allocations, and accountability measures for the Banded Rudderfish in the South Atlantic Region.

<b>Total ACL</b>	145.434 lbs ww. Current ACLs in place via SG Regulatory Amendment 13 (effective July 17, 2013).
<b>Recreational Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	73.99% of the Total ACL (107,605 lbs ww)
<b>Commercial Sector Allocation and ACL</b>	26.01% of the Total ACL (37,829 lbs ww)
<b>Rationale for Allocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used the Comprehensive ACL Amendment equation of 50% weighting towards the sector-based breakdown of landings from 1986-2008 and 50% from 2006-2008.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreational Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 fish per person bag limit.</li> <li>Part of the 20 fish per person aggregate bag limit.</li> <li>No size limit or season.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Retention Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 lbs gw aggregate Jacks Complex trip limit.</li> <li>No size limit or season</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-season closure for both sectors once the Jacks Complex sector ACL is met.</li> <li>Payback provision for an overage only if the total Jacks Complex ACL is exceeded.</li> </ul>

**Table 15.** Sector specific landings and ACL utilization for the Banded Rudderfish in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023<sup>3</sup>.

Year	Recreational Landings (lbs ww)	% of Recreational ACL Landed	Recreational Closure?	Commercial Landings (lbs ww)	% of Commercial ACL Landed	Commercial Closure?
2019	83,196	77.3%	Yes 9/25/2019	32,278	85.3%	Yes 7/16/2019
2020	26,019	24.2%	No	16,565	43.8%	No
2021	25,011	23.2%	No	4,314	11.4%	No
2022	27,972	26.0%	No	8,688	23.0%	No
2023	28,130	26.1%	No	7,601	20.1%	No
<i>Average</i>	<i>38,066</i>	<i>35.4%</i>	-	<i>13,889</i>	<i>36.7%</i>	-

<sup>3</sup>Landings and the ACL are tracked cumulatively for the Jacks complex and not by single species. The triggering of accountability measures is also based on complex rather than single species landings. Species-specific recreational landings of Banded Rudderfish are available from MRIP and commercial landings of Banded Rudderfish are based upon landings reported by seafood dealers.

**Table 16.** Total landings and ACL utilization for the Banded Rudderfish in the South Atlantic Region, 2019-2023.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Landings (lbs ww)</b>	<b>% of Total ACL Landed</b>
2019	115,474	79.4%
2020	42,584	29.3%
2021	29,325	20.2%
2022	36,660	25.2%
2023	35,731	24.6%
<i>Average</i>	51,955	35.7%

*Discussion Questions*

- Does the Council feel that the current sector allocations for Banded Rudderfish are adequate for the fishery?
  - a. If so, why does the Council feel that these allocations are still appropriate?
  - b. If not, does the Council want to re-examine the sector allocations in an amendment to the Snapper Grouper FMP prior to the planned Unassessed Species Amendment?
  - c. If a decision cannot be made at this time, please elaborate on additional information that is needed.