



Potential Short-Term Changes to Management in Response to the Pandemic

Prepared for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to inform discussion of potential emergency action request

June 2020

Summary of Stakeholder Input

In May 2020 the Council request input (via online form), on possible short- and long-term changes to management to help offset impacts from pandemic.

Participants included commercial and recreational fisheries, seafood dealers and wholesalers, other persons involved in fishing-related activities and/or businesses.

Input from May 15 – June 1; 15 participants



Input from Commercial Sector



- 3 commercial industry participants recommended maintaining current regulations
- One participant noted an increase in demand for 1-2 lb Vermilion Snapper



Input from Recreational Sector: For-Hire

- Suspend annual closure for shallow-water grouper and allow fishing in the Warsaw Hole SSMZ (Florida Keys)
- Consider delaying implementation of for-hire electronic reporting program
- Lengthen the red snapper season
- Allow bag limit sales of dolphin by dual-permitted vessels
- Separate for-hire sector from recreational sector and allow for-hire sector to sell their catch



Input from Recreational Sector: Private



Open red grouper harvest in
the Carolinas in May 2021

Allow fishing in closed areas

No changes

Extend recreational seasons



Guidelines for emergency action

Criteria: Results from recent unforeseen events

Presents serious conservation or management problems in the fishery

Can be addressed through emergency regulations for which immediate benefits outweigh the value of advance notice and public comment



Guidelines for emergency action

Justification: Ecological: prevent overfishing or other serious damage to fishery or habitat

Economic: prevent significant direct economic loss or preserve significant opportunity

Social: prevent significant community impacts or user group conflict

Public health: prevent significant adverse effects to health of fishery participants or seafood consumers



Commercial Sector



Landings

The average percent of the commercial ACL that was landed from 2016 through 2018 was used to classify species into different groups for determining candidate species for potential changes:

1. Less than 50% of the ACL landed, on average (**Table 2-1 in Appendix 2**)
2. 50% to 94% of the ACL landed, on average (**Table 1**)
3. Over 94% of the ACL landed, on average (**Table 2**)



Group 1: Less than 50% of ACL landed

May need substantial changes in management to address long-term under harvest. Not discussed further but info in **Table 2-1 in Appendix 2.**



Group 2: 50% to 94% of ACL landed

- Minor management adjustments could lead to more ACL being harvested
- Some species are removed from consideration due to stock status or other factors
- Suggested stocks for further consideration:
 - Mutton Snapper
 - Wahoo



Mutton Snapper

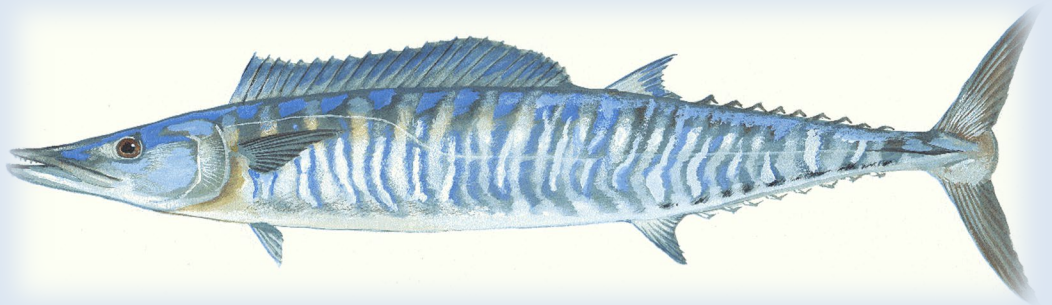


- Landings by May 2020 are similar to landings as of May 2019
- Only 68% of ACL was met in 2019 and almost 80% of ACL still available for the remainder of 2020
- Increase in mutton snapper trip limit?



Wahoo

- Landings in May 2020 are about 50% less than landings in May 2019
- Changes in management could help increase harvest in second part of the year.
- Temporary increase in trip limit?



Group 3: Over 94% of ACL landed

- Would be expected to reach their ACL in 2020 under normal circumstances
- Some can be removed from consideration due to stock status or other factors
- Suggested stocks for further consideration:
 - Vermilion Snapper
 - Yellowtail Snapper
 - Spanish Mackerel?





Vermilion Snapper

- Landings in May 2020 were about 200K lbs less than landings by May 2019
- Only 51% of the season 1 ACL has been landed so far in 2020. It is unlikely that the full ACL will be met this year under current regulations
- ACL was increased in 2019 and trip-limit step down removed in 2020





Trip Limit Increase Scenarios

1. Trip limit of 2,000 lbs results in increase in harvest of 100K pounds (based on data from 2017-2019)
1. Landings per week would need to increase by about 3,100 lbs to catch the second season ACL (plus carry-over). Trip limit could increase by 100 to 250 lbs.





Yellowtail Snapper

- Fishing year was modified in 2016 to begin August 1
- Most harvest occurs from April-July (Reg 25)
- It is expected that approximately 300K lbs would be harvested in June and July in 2020 if the fishery were to remain open
- Temporary suspension of in-season closure?



Types of actions to consider (commercial)

Temporary trip limit increase for certain species
(mutton snapper, vermilion snapper?)

Temporary suspension of in-season accountability
measures for certain species (yellowtail snapper?)

Temporary opening of annual closed seasons for
species not undergoing overfishing or overfished?

Allow carry-over of unused 2020 ACL into 2021?



Recreational Sector



Landings

- Landings estimates only available for Wave 1 (Jan-Feb)
- Given disruption of sampling, it is unclear how estimates for Waves 2 and 3 will be derived for 2020
- Since the pandemic's impacts on landings cannot be estimated, species to consider for temporary changes in management may be based on species' importance or desirability.



King Mackerel

- Landings have been less than 40% of the ACL since 2011 and stock is neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing
- Currently: 2 fish per person in FL and 3 fish per person in GA, SC, and NC
- Mackerel Cobia AP recommended increasing FL bag limit to 3 fish to match the rest of the SA states



Increase bag limit for King Mackerel?

Increase bag limit in FL:

- 1 fish: 3.2% average increase in landings
- 2 fish: 7.1% average increase in landings
- 5 fish: 14.2% average increase in landings

Predicted increases in landings from raising the bag limit are not expected to exceed the King Mackerel ACL



Yellowtail Snapper



- Rec sector has landed 41% of its ACL, on average, from 2016 through 2018
- Bag limit is 10 fish within the 10-snapper aggregate
- Remove 10 fish limit for yellowtail snapper from the aggregate
 - Would not impact other species
 - Add 10 fish overall retention limit providing incentive
 - May provide data on how fishing effort responds to loosening restrictions and inform future catch level changes for this species



Other possible actions for recreational sector

- Suspend in-season closures for species that are predicted to reach their recreational ACL in 2020?
- Could consider limiting to stocks for which ACLs are not based on stock assessments



Summary

Commercial

- Temporary trip limit increase for certain species (Mutton, Vermilion?)
- Temporary suspension of in-season accountability measures for certain species (Yellowtail?)
- Temporary opening of annual closed seasons for species not undergoing overfishing or overfished?
- Allow carry-over of unused 2020 ACL into 2021?

Recreational

- Increase bag limit for King Mackerel?
- Remove Yellowtail from Snappers aggregate?
- Suspend in-season closures for species that are predicted to reach their recreational ACL in 2020?



Questions?

