

Public Reporting

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Public Comment Form



Meeting

June 2024 Council Meeting

Written public comment for the June 2024 Council Meeting will be accepted from 5/24/2024 - 6/14/2024. More information about the meeting can be found here: <https://safmc.net/events/june-2024-council-meeting/>

Submit Date	Submitted By	Location	Affiliation	Comment
5/29/2024	First Name: Ana Last Name: Walter Email: awalter@keysao.org	City: State: Florida	Other	The impact of decisions made at this meeting may significantly affect local fishermen in Monroe County. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council should seek better participation from this community. To date, no public comments show on the "READ PUBLIC COMMENTS" link. Lack of participation evidences lack of notice to the fishermen who will be affected by the regulations. Please seek our local fishermen's opinions - these are the most important stake holders as their businesses support families and our local economy.
6/2/2024	First Name: Allan Last Name: Guarino Email: g0tagrip33@gmail.com	City: Indialantic State: Florida	Private Recreational	Your data on the red snapper fish population is so far from reality that it is a joke to those of us that want to fish for red snapper. There are so many red snapper that it is nearly impossible to catch anything else when bottom fishing. When you allow us to have a season, we typically get our limit in less than an hour, and they are big fish. If they were scarce, and they are NOT, we would not be able to catch them so readily. I'd be happy to take you out on my boat and show you the real population that is out there on our reefs.
6/2/2024	First Name: Eric Last Name: Finn Email: Finnaticfishco@gmail.com	City: Boca Raton State: Florida	Commercial	<p>Although public comments seem to fall on deaf ears and are just for "show", as seen with the complete and utter mismanagement of the red snapper, shark and jewfish fisheries in the south Atlantic, I'll leave my 2 cents, again.</p> <p>I have been fishing my entire life, and have been a full time fisherman for 14 years supporting my family 100% through commercial fishing.</p> <p>I was taught at a young age, to solve a problem you must search and find the root of the issue. All "research" and "science" aside, and trust me I use those terms very loosely, the time has more than come for the council and other fishery managing bodies to listen to fisherman who are actually out in the field. You ask and we comment, but nothing ever happens. If you want to know why the Gag grouper and black sea bass stocks are experiencing overfishing, give you 3 real world(not backed by science or surveys) causes.</p> <p>#1 Sharks. Yes despite what shark week tells us on animal planet tv, there is a very severe depredation issue going on in the south Atlantic. In my opinion this is due to unregulated shark feeding tours off of palm beach county, and the strict regulations imposed on the commercial fleet for the sale of shark fins. We can talk all we want, but until we allow the commercial shark fisherman to work, the problem will continue to get worse.</p> <p>#2 Red Snapper. Commercial, recreational, and charter fisherman can't scream this loud enough(we've tried for the last 8+ years). Red snapper have colonized every wreck, ledge and or hard bottom virtually everywhere north of Martin county in the south Atlantic fishery. So much so, that other species such as gag grouper and black sea bass that would once be found in these areas have been run out by the thousands of red snapper that take over these areas, eating everything in their path. As we know, loss of habitat for a species will translate to smaller a stock. And yes as a diver myself, the word thousands is not an embellishment. Many, many areas I have seen underwater fit this description.</p> <p>#3 Jewfish. This is a completely unregulated species who not only colonize like their red snapper friends, but they aggressively eat everything and are more than just a nuisance. I strongly believe they need to be regulated with some sort of open season. A type of season not catering to the flats fisherman in the Florida keys who catch fish less than 36" in Florida bay, but a real life season allowing some of the bigger fish to be taken off the reefs.</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. As someone heavily invested in the south Atlantic fishery, I only want the best for the health of the fishery. If more resources and time were put into regulating the 3 reasons I listed above, I can assure you the overall health of the region would be much better off.</p>
6/3/2024	First Name: Chris Last Name: McCaffity Email: freefish7@hotmail.com	City: Morehead City State: North Carolina	Commercial	For well over a decade, I have submitted public comments pleading with this council to manage quotas with appropriate possession limits that would avoid extended closures and excessive discards. The council seemed to be moving in that direction for a while with wonderful results that greatly reduced regulatory discards. Now the council seems to be reversing that trend while offering grants to figure out how to reduce discards. Recreational fishing licenses with tags and reporting requirements would greatly reduce recreational discards while collecting real data so the council doesn't only rely on assumptions about assumptions. Managing low commercial quotas with By-catch Allowances to keep most seafood legal at the same time would greatly reduce regulatory discards while following Congressional Mandates to limit waste, make efficient use of public resources, and promote fishermen's safety at sea. Reducing the trip limit from 75 pounds to 50 for Red Snapper would be a great start. That would be low enough that people wouldn't just go target them. There could be a weekly limit of two trip limits to make it more fair for boats that stay multiple days. The unjust Gag Grouper quota this year should have had a much lower trip limit to extend the season. I would be happy to explain species by species how to manage each quota to comply with all Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates if the council is interested in managing our public resources responsibly.
6/8/2024	First Name: scoyy Last Name: redmond Email: ssjr103@live.com	City: paisley State: Florida	Private Recreational	I enjoy fishing on the headboats, I support the headboat fleet and support the vessel limits in proportion to # of anglers for headboats. i also feel that your agenda is not in the best interest of sustainable fisheries. you people are so out of touch with reality its actually scary. please stop doing things that destroy recreational fishing. theres a better population of red snapper on the atlantic side than the gulf side this would be a good place to start fixing things. your efforts on the gulf side have been proven to be wrong please dont repeat those mistakes on the atlantic side. thank you
6/8/2024	First Name: Casey Last Name: Maday Email: casey.maday@gmail.com	City: Jacksonville State: Florida	Private Recreational	I am a regular Headboat fisherman, and it is pretty frustrating that vessel limits are the same on a vessel with 6 anglers as a vessel with 42. In particular the 2 Cobia and 2 African Pompano per vessel. Please take into consideration the number of people on. Headboat.

6/9/2024	First Name: Jeremy Last Name: Scott Email: Rebelfish90@gmail.com	City: Port Orange State: Florida	Private Recreational, Commercial, For- Hire	Currently I am the first mate on the last remaining headboat in Ponce Inlet. I was also the final first mate of the Super Critter, the last remaining vessel of a 50 year multi-boat headboat business that was directly put out of business because of overregulation over the last 20 years, and unfair bag limits not proportionate to its high passenger count (80). I can attest to the need for a more reasonable bag limit on higher occupancy vessels, and absolutely agree with the sentiment that it is almost discriminatory to lump a 50+ passenger vessel in with 6 packs. Headboat life is a lifestyle, and a dying one at that, after being killed off over the last 40 years. Once upon a time our waters were primarily filled with headboats, a distant memory that has slowly been beaten down by the belief that they should be treated like the rest. I'm sure that the problem is the same all over the South Atlantic region, with fewer and fewer vessels on the water that operate under mandatory reporting requirements, with actual Coast Guard COI's- this seems counterproductive to fishery management in general. With more proportionate bag limits I'm sure the headboat industry will be revived, allowed to thrive, and create a more reliable way to gain real data with trained professionals who are held to the highest standards. Thank you for taking the time out to read my comments.
6/9/2024	First Name: Haley Last Name: Starbeck Email: Poncefishnetwork@gmail.com	City: Port Orange State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	<p>Hello my name is Haley, I am the owner of a digital magazine & social media movement known as Ponce Fish Network, which is a news source and live feed into the Ponce Inlet areas charter fishing industry. I currently have over 20 charters on my roster, of which several have been in business for over 25 years. I am also a writer at Southern States Fishn' & Huntn' Magazine, a publication that's has kept detailed records over the last 60 years of the charter fishing industry here in Ponce. Today I will be commenting on several agenda items.</p> <p>Headboat History & Bag Limits:</p> <p>Part of my work with Southern States includes taking the old pictures of catches, separating them by vessel, and digitalizing them for current archive records. The stark difference between the number of headboats in the 50s, 60s, and 70s to current day is jaw dropping. It seems that back then most boats were high occupancy, regulations came in that hindered their ability to catch what was needed to keep the businesses going, and eventually Captains opted to go the 6 pack route due to less expenses, oversight, etc. Part of the reason why I started Ponce Fish Network was watching the Critter Fleet/F.V. Super Critter close its doors during the pandemic. The mismanagement of our local red snapper fishery, coupled with the inadequate bag limits compared to angler counts, and the unnecessary closure of the business during the Covid shutdown created a fate that can not be fixed by changing a rule now. With my work, I know very well that this is a sentiment that has likely be felt more often than not over the last few of decades, and that over regulation and unfair bag limits have slowly killed off an entire industry. I heard a statement from a previous meeting, in which a commenter called this a 'head boat rescue', and while I want to agree with that. I feel a more adequate statement would be that this is a 'head boat bailout', which is directly needed because of the prison you have created around the industry that started it all. I fully support higher and more balanced bag limits on headboats based on occupancy, after all they are the only vessels available to you that can help you acquire the data needed to make wiser decisions in fishery management in the recreational sector, and they have never wavered in their obligations to report to you even though you have historically failed them.</p> <p>Limited Access:</p> <p>Part of the vetting system that I created with my Captains in Ponce Fish Network is a mandatory showing of any and all credentials needed to operate a fishing charter in order to join. While my Captains and I would have to agree that the industry has exploded in recent years, with high numbers of new charter companies, as well as high numbers of pop up illegal charters- I can assure you that the limited access program is the wrong direction to go in, and would only punish the hard working fisherman that have struggled as you have mismanaged their fisheries and almost put them out of business in doing so. In a perfect world this program would probably work, however given the recent tides of fishery management and it's past failures, coupled with the already struggling industry desperately trying to keep its head above water, this program would certainly be fatal. You have already created an environment that no longer has positive hopes for the future, allowing this program to start would not only add insult to injury, but it would have devastating consequences to the businesses and fishermen who have patiently waited for the past 20 years to have a chance to thrive. Much like the 'head start' and 'no child left behind' debacle, much of the problems that exist today begin and end at the same place, and that is on your desk, not in our waters.</p> <p>Red Snapper Mismanagement:</p> <p>One of the charter companies in my network is an offshoot of an older company that stood at Capitol Hill fighting the red snapper closure in 2011. Despite his concise arguments and evidence, nothing was done. It's now 12 years later, the population of red snapper has further exploded to the point of no return, and yet we have to hold our breath yearly in the hopes that this council will finally see the light of day, and climb out from the rock they've been living under. Gone are the days of catching a Black Sea bass, but yet not a single regulation in sight to protect a species that truly needs it. The strain that you place on our inlets, boat ramps, police, FWC & Coast Guard during these mini seasons is an absolute horror show for the hardworking fishermen who spend every day on the water, and a supreme waste of resources and taxpayer dollars. It creates such havoc and chaos, with hundreds of vessels piling onto each rock, it's a wonder that there hasn't been any extreme problems/losses because of it. Last year I watched as not one but two vessels had to come back in at day break because they were taking on water, one being assisted by the Coast Guard. By limiting anglers to 2 days you literally create a panic run, causing so many people who should not be on the water to stampede it in the hopes of managing our local fishery better than you have. Make no mistake, more than half of my Captains sit red snapper season out, while the other half go out in obligation to clear the red plague that has destroyed our fishery in the last 10 years. I'm told that we have to wait til 2026 to see change, and that makes me so worried for our future. By 2026 there will be nothing left, and you will probably close more complexes as you have grouper, all because of bad data and an inability to admit when you are out of your element. Despite all the funding and research, it's clear to the world you can not honestly count all the fish in the sea.</p> <p>Shark/Goliath Grouper Depredation:</p> <p>When the red snapper isn't ruining the day, it's the protected pet sharks and Goliath grouper. Both continue to eat everything off of every rock and hook they see, while you cater to the 3.5 million divers in Florida yearly, and ignore the screams of the 6 million anglers, Captains and commercial fishermen who are begging for change. The removal of commercial finning has killed an entire industry that has historically helped keep the shark population at reasonable levels, just another causality of an in-house war that doesn't seem know what sides it's on.</p> <p>In closing, when I came into this industry 5 years ago, I fell in love with it and was idealistic in my opinions of its state and future. Nowadays I realize that despite being in the land of the free, we are simply at your disposal. I am not alone when I say that you have forgotten the people, while you try to play god with the fish.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>

6/10/2024	First Name: Marshall Last Name: LaCombe Email: marshlacombe@gmail.com	City: Fort Pierce State: Florida	Private Recreational	<p>I think much like everyone else that I'm going to sound like a broken record with this comment, but I've always been taught the squeaky wheel gets the grease. So here I am with several others squeaking as loud as we possibly can hoping this council will apply some much-needed grease.</p> <p>The red snapper fishery here in the Atlantic has to be the biggest scam since Bernie Madoff. Much like everyone has stated, if you fish these waters and know where to target red snapper there is an overabundance. As many have stated you can't drop a bait down without getting it past a red snapper most times. To be sitting here on June 10th at 12:30 pm and still have no indication as to whether there will be a season is a tragedy. Thankfully I am a recreational fisherman so my livelihood is not dependent on this, but I have several friends and colleagues that do rely on this to feed their families. To get a never-promised two days out 365 to fish for a species of snapper that is thriving is absurd. I think any common or reasonable person would see this to be true. There has to be a better system or way to go about announcing the season whether there is going to be one or not. To have us waiting around like a puppy for its owner to come home is pretty sad. The council has to and must do better by us the people that ultimately fund and make this whole system work.</p> <p>The second issue which again seems to be pretty popular is the lack of the ability to keep sharks or goliath grouper. Sharks are so overpopulated now it's going to cause more harm than good. Same thing with the Goliath grouper. This has been a species protected ever since I was a child and I'm about to be 31 this year. To not be able to keep something for 30-plus years is just not healthy. These grouper grow to be upwards of 600 pounds and can swallow a person whole. They have overpopulated the wrecks and reefs and caused more harm than they do good. I know there is a tag system in place, but how about you give us two days a year to harvest these fish and more days for red snapper. Same with the shark population. I can't even get into the water and enjoy the ocean when I am fishing because I know what's lurking beneath. There was once a time when these fish could be kept and sold commercially and that practice needs to continue or we need more dedicated days to harvest sharks legally as recreational fishermen.</p> <p>This Council needs to please listen to the people that consistently fish these waters daily, and yearly. The ones that make a living doing this and whose families have fished these waters for hundreds of years. We understand science and politics have their place and that of course we aren't always correct as the public. However, when there are so many voices shouting the same message time and time again it would behoove you to open your ears and listen to that message. We aren't trying to radically change the ecosystem of the ocean. We just simply want to fish the at least given two-day season, and by the grace of the council maybe a little bit more.</p>
6/11/2024	First Name: Dan Last Name: Plant Email: dplant@ufl.edu	City: Melrose State: Florida	Private Recreational	<p>Deep-sea fishing is often a child's first adventure on the ocean. For most who cannot afford the expense of a boat, chartering is the only way. Six-pack charters can cost thousands of dollars for a single trip while the Coast Guard approved Passenger Vessel can typically host 50 or more fishermen allowing a family to experience the ocean for hundreds instead of thousands of dollars. When I started fishing in Wrightsville Beach, NC in 1966, you carried your ice chest and filled it up. Very little regulation and as a result, about 20 years ago, many fish stocks were down due to over-fishing. In my mind, the recreational fishermen did not do as much damage to the fishery as a few commercial fisherman who will "burn the rock" to maximize their profit without much concern for conservation. We were having trouble catching grouper around 2000 but would hear about commercial divers powerheading 250 gags off one rock. Those fish would have fed a hundred families if the recreational fisherman had a chance to participate in the take. Red snapper and red porgy are good examples. Once plentiful until under-management allowed the commercials to deplete the resource.</p> <p>Many fishermen feel that the Atlantic Council is composed of commercial fishermen who want recreational fishing to go away and animal rights activists who want all fishing to go away. The outcry from watermen over the abundance of red snapper, sharks and goliaths seems to fall on deaf ears.</p> <p>In 2005 or so, the 2-fish, 20 inch rules had allowed the red snapper population to spring back where you could catch a few keepers although thousands of fish were killed from infection due to improper venting. State studies also showed that the ones that did make it back down past the sharks and barracudas had brain damage from the embolisms. A flawed practice that has improved a bit by education about venting but clueless Florida Wildlife Commission researchers routinely tag fish on headboats only to have everyone watch their dinner float away.</p> <p>So how does that affect the Head boat industry, which serves thousands of citizens who cannot afford a boat. When you spend \$400 dollars to take your family on a deep-sea adventure, how many times can you come home empty handed before you decide that you can't afford to go.</p> <p>Yes, it's fun and yes the chance to see blue planet nature can be worth the price of admission. Jumping manta rays, right whales breaching at the inlet, sea turtles, big hammerhead sharks, flying fish, moray eels and fish large enough to feed the whole family. Along with that 10-20 lb red snapper you just caught though, you also get an explanation of why Council has decreed that that fish is endangered and has to be thrown back for the sharks to eat.</p> <p>Head boats serve a very valuable service and the people who dedicate their lives and their families lives to its success are not being treated fairly. You can see this from the decimation of the fleet just in Northeast Florida. Mayport had 2 headboats, now only one. St. Augustine had 3 headboats now only 2. Ponce Inlet had 5 and now only one and it's on it's third owner in 20 years. If our Atlantic fishery had not been overregulated, these boats would still be here carrying families to the sea to enjoy the bounty of nature.</p> <p>The Sea Spirit did a trip last weekend for a group that encourages kids to fish. One little girl told the event coordinator that "this was the best day ever". I felt the same way.</p> <p>If you lump the head boats regulations in with the six-packs, you will drive the few remaining head boats out of business and the Council will be responsible for denying thousands of people the experience of enjoying the beauty of the ocean and appreciation of it's inhabitants.</p> <p>Learning to fish, like learning to garden or hunt not only represents the ability to produce your own food, it also increases your appreciation of the ecosystem which leads to individual stewardship of the resource.</p>
6/11/2024	First Name: Marie Last Name: Kelley Email: rerunsmom2@gmail.com	City: Osteen State: Florida	For-Hire	I enjoy fishing on the head boats, I support the vessel limits in proportion to the # of anglers for headboats.
6/11/2024	First Name: Rick Last Name: Gonzalez Email: rickgonzalez52065@yahoo.com	City: Daytona Beach State: Florida	Private Recreational	I support headboat and or partyboat they create a great experience for many of us that don't have funds to buy a boat and catch pelagic fish.

6/11/2024	First Name: Travis Last Name: Ajay Email:	City: State: Florida	Wholesale/Dealer /Retail, Other	I am huge advocate of headboat fishing for many reasons personally and for my community. My 13 yr old son and I have frequented the local headboat for going on 8 years now. Not only do we enjoy the possibility of catching and eating various species from our waters but also some of the amazing friends we've made from all over the country on our trips. As a manager of a local surf shop I also meet many customers who use fishing on the headboats as a focal point of their vacations and look forward to those same experiences year in and year out. I hope headboats are still operating for years to come so my son can one day take his children and share the same type of experiences we did.
6/11/2024	First Name: Joe Last Name: Williams Email: fishslayer004@yahoo.com	City: Winter Haven State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	I have been fishing party boats on Floridas East Coast for the past 35yrs and I must say it's very sad to see the great decline in the business do to rules and laws that have been put in place to govern the business , it almost seems like the agenda is to put them all out of business. When I first started fishing party boats more than 35yrs ago their were 6 head boats operating out of Sebastian, today there are none there was also 6 operating out of Cape Canarvel today there are 2 there was 6operating out of Ponce today there is 1. It's a shame to let what has long been away of life for so many in Florida for so long just fall by the way side as if it doesn't matter. Fishing is a way of life for millions of Floridans and a valuable asset to the economy and head boat fishing gives the average Floridians as well as millions of tourists the opportunity to experience one of the best things this state has to offer. I don't know who will read this but if it's anyone with authority please help save what's left of our party boats for our future generations... Thank You..
6/11/2024	First Name: Daniel Last Name: Corcoran Email: dandtc@att.net	City: New Smyrna Beach State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	Please consider opening up a longer season on red snapper. They're are caught anytime we drop a bait so there is obviously no shortage. It's blatantly apparent that the existing limits and season are dictated by money and not actual conditions or science. Thank you for your consideration.
6/11/2024	First Name: Rober Last Name: Dean Email: jaxsrfer26@gmail.com	City: Jacksonville State: Florida	For-Hire	I have been a mate on a headboat for a total of 9 years now.I have seen many changes in our fishery with the restrictions to ARS. Alone with this closure alone we are seeing the at an alarming rate to the fluctuation of customer decline to the headboat industry. Not only to that the fishery itself is struggling to maintain balance when there is such an over abundance of the population of the ARS striving on other reef fish. For example since the closure we are seeing less and less grouper. This is not a cause of over fishing grouper but the cause is from the ARS eating much of the juvenile grouper. So for the new amendment that is in interest of this meeting shouldn't be more closures. The shark closure isn't helping these matters in hand either. This new amendment that is at hand will not only to continue to disrupt the balance of our fishery it will also be the demise of the headboat community through the South East region. Not only the increasing cost for the owners to operate due to the another issue of inflation. But if this amendment is passed and headboats are included in the same category as a recreational vessel. We will lose more of our customer bases due to the even lower fish counts that are in place as a recreational vessel or even a for-hire 6 pack vessel. The headboat industry should have its own set of regulations for the multi customer vessel. Makes it extremely difficult to explain why we are releasing numerous amount of big ARS. Or to explain that we have to release grouper, cobia & African Pompano after we have already secured our 2 fish limit on these species. So as a mate on a headboat vessel please consider that with the rate of these closures it is placing my job and so many others jobs at stake. Thank you for your time and let's do the right thing
6/11/2024	First Name: Mark Last Name: Leppla Email: Mleppla@aol.com	City: Winter springs State: Florida	For-Hire, Other	My name is Captain Mark Leppla I have been a headboard captain for 25 years working out of Ponce Inlet Fl. I ran the MAll, SeaLove, SeaLove II, and a six pack boat Island Spirit. When I started we had 7 headboard in Ponce inlet. Over the years fishing regulations have changed more toward the favor of 6 pack vessels due to the fact that 6 customers compared to 50-80 passengers of the headboats. Headboats are more affordable then 6 pack boats the regulation should not be the same as 6pack. Two fish per boat? When u have 50 customers and only two fish per boat is not a regulation that works for the head boat community. The number of head boats has decreased to the point where we now have one head boat in ponce inlet that hold up to 60 people , the same is going on up and down the east coast. Please change regulations that would support the head boat customer base to equal that of recreational boats and 6 pack for charter boats. The head boat send in more data on what was caught compared to other boats in the fishing industry
6/11/2024	First Name: dan Last Name: zimbelman Email: zimbel@aol.com	City: palm coast State: Florida	Private Recreational	The policy regarding American Red Snapper is totally failing. From near shore out to 120' plus, 95% of our catch is American Red Snapper. A huge percentage are taken by sharks whether during the catch or during Desending Device releases. ARD have displaced virtually all of the other native species in reefs out to 100'. The gulf policy is much more reasonable giving a 100 day season and limit of 2 per day. It is becoming more difficult to retain interest in reef fishing here due to the flawed policy. Please use common sense and logic is changing the policy.
45454	First Name: Richard Last Name: McCormick Email: rpmccormick@gecfla.com	City: Orlando State: Florida	Private Recreational	Hi All, It is June 11th and you haven't indicated if we get the recreational Atlantic ARS season on July 12 and 13. That's just rude. We wait all year for 2 days to keep a couple of these overabundant bait eaters. And 2 days isn't gonna hurt the population. 20 days won't hurt the population. I'm a small boat guy and can't go running 40 miles off on the gulf side to enjoy the ARS season over there. Instead, fish the Atlantic reefs and rockpiles within sight of shore. ARS after ARS after ARS and I'm not fishing for them or in the preferred depth zone. We even catch them trolling diving lures for king mackerel. Saw some other comments about 6-packs and head boats getting the same fish limits? That's absurd. Head boats are a wonderful opportunity for folks to go out, talk with folks and just enjoy the day. I usually go out a time or two each year and have a good time. Please don't kill the head boat industry with some 1-size fits all rule that won't amount to much. Most head boat trips do not produce the kind or numbers of fish that the 6-pack trips do. 6 packs catch more "quality" fish and preferred species on a much more frequent basis. This is not apples to apples. Sharks need a commercial season - we were AJ fishing this spring on a charter and at one point had 12 sharks from 6 to 10 feet long following a fish in. Was unreal. Didn't stay there any longer. Enjoy your Council Meeting. You're in Daytona, if you want to see the ARS problem, let me know and I'll take you out and let you catch a few.
45454	First Name: Carter Last Name: Shivers Email: jay.shivers@yahoo.com	City: Palm coast State: Florida	Private Recreational	The red snapper are over populated within 35 miles of St Augustine inlet. Last year we caught our limit of big red snapper under a hour. Then we ran out about 35 miles out and all we caught was more red snapper trying for other species of fish. They are so plentiful they are the dominant fish on every wreck or reef within 35 miles of the coast. I also catch red snapper at the ledge when trying for triggerfish.
45454	First Name: Lenny Last Name: Manginelli Email: Hellonreelsfishing@gmail.com	City: Deltona State: Florida	Private Recreational, For-Hire	How are you going to limit the Atlantic to 1 day for snapper when you cannot go offshore without catching 10 ars when trying to fish for other species. This is absolutely ridiculous seeing gulf gets 100+ days

45454	First Name: Ryann Last Name: Olson Email: Manny1117@gmail.com	City: Port Orange State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	This is ridiculous!!!! I think we all can pull up on some ledges we have in our GPS and spend 5 minutes there and pull up some big, small and medium size RED Snappers... thats all we catch any more.. what happen to the sea bass thats right all the big reds had lunch.. noaa and all the fisheries are like weather man have to be correct maybe 50% of the time!!! they have no idea what they are talking about.. continue to but the working man our of business.
45454	First Name: Laura Last Name: White Email: Lauramicaell@hotmail.com	City: Atlantic beach State: North Carolina	Private Recreational, Commercial, For-Hire	I support head boat fishing, have been working for a business that's been doing it for 65 years!
45454	First Name: Loretta Last Name: Davis Email: Info@captstacy.com	City: 28512 State: North Carolina	Private Recreational, Commercial, For-Hire	I support Headboat fishing, regulations should be different for those type boats.
45454	First Name: Tanya Last Name: Ebersole Email: Tanya.ebersole@gmail.com	City: Deland State: Florida	Private Recreational	Fishermen aren't wrong and we aren't lying. Your data regarding ARS and Sharks is so wrong it makes your whole organization look foolish, the rules and limits laughable, and the true goal of conservation suspect. The only shortages of fish now are created by the over abundance of ARS and Sharks eating all the other species.
45454	First Name: david Last Name: hurley Email: davidhurley001@aol.com	City: Jacksonville State: Florida	For-Hire	I would love to see the biologists that are attempting to set the regulations spend sometime a for hire party boat, specifically for red snapper. A few years ago there were two weekends in November and than I believe it was October the following year where a person could keep red snapper, the seasons have consistently gotten shorter and shorter since than. But in reality on a party boat hundreds of red snapper are caught and released everyday. Numerous red snapper over 20 pounds are caught and released on a day basis. I myself catch numerous red snapper between 15 pounds almost every time I go out on the Mayport Majesty. Red snapper is one of the more prevalent game fish we catch. By placing a limit on for hire boats you are hurting tourists as well as Florida residents that look forward catching and keeping red snapper every year. You are hurting the tourist industry as well as the fishing industry. You are also limiting the income of those that choose to make fishing as their career.
45455	First Name: Ryan Last Name: Olson Email: Manny1117@gmail.com	City: Port Orange State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	These continuous regulation changes is creating people and businesses to lose there entire lively hood.. I fish regularly, and respect our catch size and limits but your data is very much skewed.. not only do you effect the local commercial, charter and recreational fishing, it will soon effect the local tackle shops, boat sales and repairs will be effected as well. The market soon will be flooded boats that people can not use any more because your regulations will soon destroy are fisheries and our favorite past times.
45455	First Name: Anthony Last Name: Restall Email: Anthony.l.restall@gmail.com	City: New smyrna beach State: Florida	Private Recreational	Not letting us keep red snapper is completely ridiculous. I am outraged. I try to go fishing once a month to get fresh fish for my family. All I catch are red snappers in the Atlantic near Central FL. They don't let any other fish get a chance to get caught and red snapper is all you get its very frustrating. This needs to change asap and just a weekend or two is not going to cut it.
45455	First Name: Aric Last Name: Greene Email: Agree2071@gmail.com	City: Hobe Sound State: Florida	Private Recreational, Commercial	Good afternoon do too family emergency I will not be able to attend the meeting but I want to make it very clear. You guys are going way to far with your regulations and your data is not correct. I am a advid recreational Diver and fisherman. I Dive atleast 3 times a week. I Dive from Ft peirce to Key West. I Dive as deep as 220ft so I feel I have a pretty good understanding of fish populations in my regions. # 1 your regulations are way to restrictive on gag grouper on the east coast. I have seen more gag groupers in my 15 years of diving then ever before you can hit a rock pile in Stuart that had 30 gags in a 100ftby 100ft area as of 2024. Your 2 vessel limit is uncalled for and is forcing captains to play referies with clients on charters. If your going to regulate gag grouper properly and fairly. Continue with 1 black or gag per person and shorten the season do not strip us of our God given right for 1 fish. Start out with shorter seasons and promise the people every year it will increase. But keep 1 per person. ANOTHER MAJOR THING. Visibility in Ft peirce /STUART was the worst it's ever been for the past 3 years meaning that harvesting fish in those areas has been minimal to none. Ask the commercial lobster guys if you dont believe me. All in all I think your data is flawed and made up in order to fit some other agenda. This all goes the same for red snapper 1 DAY are you kidding me! For 1 fish. Where does it end ! Yall need to gather your fish data correctly and properly Maybe even consider you allowing divers to submit video evidence of fish populations and requiring fish submissions on harvest online. It's time for yall to either gather correct data and apply fair regulations or get out because we the people will not stand for this much longer.
45455	First Name: Jeff Last Name: Emery Email: Jse360@aol.Com	City: Daytona beach State: Florida	Commercial	I have been commercial spearfishing/diving since 1990 offshore of Ponce Inlet from Cape Canaveral to Saint Augustine. We have three major problems to address, the incredible over abundance of red snapper, sharks, and goliath grouper. The population of these three species is literally destroying the ocean in the southeast. There are far less other reef fish, such as triggerfish and Seabass, because they don't have anywhere to live because the red snapper are, literally everywhere on every reef in high numbers! The Goliath population is also out of control. The lobster and I believe other reefish are far less abundant now because in almost every cave where the lobster live there's a 500 pound Goliath living now. I have seen a goliath grouper eat a lobster recently. You can only imagine the appetite of 500 pound fish has and the ability to consume mass quantities! The shark population is also ridiculously out of control and they're eating many of the endangered red snapper, gag grouper, Amberjacks, etc. I won't dwell too much on the red snapper issue because I'm sure everybody else will, but please open up for harvest, goliath grouper, and coordinate with HMS to do the same with sharks. Thank you, Jeff Emery

45455	<p>First Name: Sandra Last Name: Brooke Email: sbrooke@fsu.edu</p>	<p>City: St Teresa State: Florida</p>	<p>Other</p>	<p>Coral Amendment 10 proposes to establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern boundary of the Northern Extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC). The purpose of the proposed action is to help achieve optimum yield in the rock shrimp fishery within the SAFMC region by allowing permit holders within the industry access to currently protected areas of the OHAPC.</p> <p>Rock shrimp are harvested using bottom trawls, which comprise heavy doors and chains that drag across the seafloor. Industrial bottom trawling is arguably the single greatest cause of physical damage to deep coral and sponge communities globally, reducing large tracts of complex reef habitat to rubble. Deep coral reefs develop slowly and are thousands of years old, so recovery from physical impact will take many years, if it happens at all. Rock shrimp trawling has caused extensive and well-documented damage to the Oculina Banks (Koenig 2001, Reed 2002, Koenig et al 2005, Reed et al. 2007), and despite restoration efforts, the reefs have not recovered (Brooke et al 2006, Harter et al 2019).</p> <p>In addition to the direct physical impact, the doors and chains of bottom trawl gear dragging along the seafloor cause sediment resuspension. The amount and type of sediment, it's persistence in the water column and its dispersal distance are dependent on a number of factors (e.g. grain size, current speed) that are specific to each location. Palanques et al. (2001) documented a 3-fold increase in the amount of suspended sediment that lasted for up to 5 days after trawling on a soft-sediment continental shelf in the Mediterranean. The OHAPC sediment is dominated by coral rubble and sand near the reefs but has a higher percentage of silt and clay further from the coral areas (Scanlon et al 1999). The smaller (silt and clay) particles remain in suspension longer than the heavier elements and therefore can be carried further from the source of disturbance (e.g. bottom tending fishing gear). The Gulf Stream drives the hydrodynamic regime in the OHAPC, creating strong currents that can potentially transport sediments significant distances. The prevailing current in the OHAPC is northerly, but current reversals are possible at depth (pers. obs.), and periodic gyres and upwelling events create significant cross-shelf flow (Smith 1983). These complex interactions create an unpredictable current regime within the OHAPC.</p> <p>Corals and other suspension or filter feeders have delicate feeding mechanisms that can become clogged by sediment, or in severe cases, sediments can bury deep reef communities and cause stress or mortality (Brooke et al 2009). Corals shed sediment by producing mucus which is energetically costly. In an area of repeated disturbance (such as a commercial trawling area), the chronic cost of removing sediment could impact community health and resilience. The early life history stages of many benthic invertebrates are planktonic and use fine cilia and appendages for feeding and swimming. If sediment load is high during spawning periods, larval cohorts may be compromised, which has a long-term effect on community resilience (Jones et al 2015).</p> <p>The proposed alternatives 2 and 3 would open historical rock shrimp fishing areas, which represent a very small percentage (1.8%) of past fishing activity (SAFMC Coral Amendment 10 Environmental Assessment report) and remove most of the slim buffer that currently exists between the high relief coral mounds and the OHAPC eastern boundary. Surface currents are frequently as fast as 2 meters/second (120 m/min) over the OHAPC. Cross-shelf bottom currents are weaker, but even at half this speed (1 m/s), and with the current boundaries in place, sediment from trawling could be transported to the mounds within minutes. Removing the boundaries exposes the corals to almost immediate sediment load from bottom trawling prosecuted along the edge of the proposed fishing access area. The high relief mounds do not simply stop at the base; they often have areas of low relief coral communities that gradually taper off into soft sediment. Detailed maps of this area would provide more information on low relief structures, but in their absence, these habitat boundaries are unknown. The existing OHAPC boundaries provide some measure of protection against physical impact and sedimentation. Given the strong unpredictable currents in the region, it is possible (or likely) that fishing gear will sometimes be carried off the planned trawling lines. If the buffer area is removed by the proposed amendment, trawl gear could impact the periphery of the coral mounds and damage low relief habitat. Since the VMS systems track the vessel, the fishing gear could intrude into the protected area boundary without alerting law enforcement. In summary, proposed Alternatives 2 and 3 both substantially increase the risk of direct and indirect damage to ecologically important habitat.</p> <p>One of the basic tenets of the Magnusen-Stevens Act is the precautionary principle, which seeks to prevent degradation of resources and facilitate their restoration. A review of best practices for managing fishery impacts to deep coral ecosystems highlighted protection of vulnerable habitat to bottom tending gear (Hourigan 2009). The OHAPC boundaries were expanded by the SAFMC in 2001, in consultation with stakeholder groups, to protect existing areas of Oculina habitat, which had been decimated elsewhere. Moving the fishing access areas to effectively abut the coral habitat violates the precautionary approach, and reverses existing protections, without significantly increasing economic benefit to the Rock Shrimp fishers.</p> <p>I ask that the Council consider accepting Alternative 1 (no action) of Coral Amendment 10, leaving the OHAPC protected area intact.</p> <p>References Brooke S, CC Koenig, AN Shepard (2006) Oculina Banks restoration project: description and preliminary assessment. Proc 57th Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute 607-620</p> <p>Brooke S, M Holmes, CM Young (2009) Effects of sediment on two morphotypes of <i>Lophelia pertusa</i> from the Gulf of Mexico. Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser. 390:137–14</p> <p>Harter, S, J Reed, S Farrington, F Drummond, A David (2019) South Atlantic MPAs and Oculina HAPC: Characterization of benthic habitat and biota. NOAA Ship Pisces Cruise 18-02. 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45455	<p>First Name: Joshua Last Name: Coffman Email: joshcoffman@comcast.net</p>	<p>City: Orlando State: Florida</p>	<p>Private Recreational</p>	<p>Dear SAFMC, Where to begin.... Your mismanagement of Red Snapper is starting to border on a level of criminality. Every single person who has spent more than 11 minutes on the water knows that every single piece of relief from 60-300ft in the Port Canaveral area are inundated with Red Snapper to the point it's almost impossible to catch any other species. The council's arrogance in this matter in regard to trusting only your "science", while at the same time ignoring the concerns and observations of 1000's of anglers and commercial fisherman is appalling, especially after it was proven after the GRSC that your "science" was "off".</p> <p>I'm struggling to see what the actual end goal of the council is at this point. Catching Red snapper surf fishing? At Jetty Park? These impossible to reach RS numbers will inevitably come at the expense of even more moratoriums that you with have to place on all the other reef species, since they will inevitably be consumed by the "overfished" RS Biomass. I guess it's good "job" security to ensure your people will have plenty of "overfished" or should I say over consumed stock to rebuild.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the SRSRP count in 2025 I sincerely hope that the council will make a public apology for how poorly this was managed and how far your "Science" was proven to be off (see GRSC). In the interim, I will continue to make sure everyone I come in contact with is aware of which council members are still active in the commercial/restaurant sector, who they are affiliated with, and which entities to boycott.</p> <p>Thanks for the 24 hours.... Joshua Coffman</p>
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