

Snapper Grouper Catch Share Request

Matt Ruby and Phil Conklin

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Introduction

- **Matt Ruby** – Little River Fish House (packs out 12 SG vessels)
- **Phil Conklin** – Owner of Seven Seas Seafood (packs out 9 SG vessels)
- **Others that can't be here today** - Many fishermen out fishing in expectation of closures but have shown support through letter or survey

Our future under the current and expected regulations

- **Status quo:**
 - Gag and shallow water species closure Jan-May
 - Vermillion closure Sept-Dec
 - Possible black sea bass closure Nov/Dec-May 31
 - Red snapper closed areas
 - Golden tilefish 300 lb. trip limit as of April with closure in July
- **What else would people fish for (info from survey)?**
 - Jacks/Trigger/Grunts/Yellowtail/Mutton/Gray/Mangrove Snapper/Porgies
 - Bonita/Barracuda
 - Mackerel/Cobia
 - Wahoo/Dolphin
 - Blue Fin
 - Lobster
 - Blueline (grey) tilefish



Our future under the current and expected regulations

- Back to back trips are occurring and will continue
- Huge loss of revenue for fish houses (80%), may close doors, trying to hang on to employees
- Twin engine boats going out with one engine (lack of money and time)
- Fishermen trying to figure out what they will do and fish for with closures



Do other fishermen want this explored?

- **Sign on Letter** (distributed via phone calls, email, fax – word of mouth – not sent to all permit holders)
 - Requests the Council consider catch shares for the SG fishery, all species analyzed
 - Belief that catch shares work elsewhere
 - Why? Improve economics, ease other restrictions to the extent possible (season and large area closures), healthy commercial fishery

Do other fishermen want this explored?

- **Sign on Letter** (name, role, city and state, phone number) – 78 signers
 - 22 permit holders (holding 29 permits) signed including NC (2), SC (18), FL (2)
 - 56 others (mostly SG captains/SG crew. Also represented: SG fish house owners, SG charters, marina operator, restaurant owner, family of SG fishermen)
 - At least 76% of permits holders are SG highliners
 - Almost 100% of permit holders are full-time SG fishermen



Do other fishermen want this explored?

- **Why do a survey when we have a sign on letter?**
 - Get a broader range of fishermen feedback
- **Survey distribution – 630 surveys**
 - Sent to all permit holders not contacted regarding sign on letter or who have already made their position known in favor or against
 - Sent to all 130 limited permit holders (current NFMS permit list)
 - Sent to all but ~50 (signed on or not interested in signing letter) unlimited permit holders (~500 accounting for duplicates)
 - Sent via mail



Do other fishermen want this explored?

- **Survey**

- Survey sent to unlimited permit holders went out 3 weeks ago
 - 7.6% or 38 surveys returned thus far
 - Typical return rate is 15% entire time period with follow-up
 - Still getting calls, people just opening survey, we expect more returned surveys in the future
- Survey sent to limited permit holders went out 1 week ago
 - No responses yet

Do other fishermen want this explored?

- **Survey Results**

- 39 surveys returned
- 24 (61.5%) in favor of (NC – Morehead City, Holly Springs, Jacksonville, Carolina Beach, Sneads Ferry, Southport, Supply, Wilmington, Sanford, Manteo; FL – Lake Worth, Islamorada, Ponce Inlet, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Key West, Tavernier, West Palm Beach; NY; VA:
 - The Council reconsidering a catch share (Question #11)
 - Supporting a catch share if early season closures occur (Question #12)
 - Supporting a catch share with a decrease in regulations (Question #13)

Do other fishermen want this explored?

- 5 (12.8%) in favor if:
 - Either current regulations resulted in early closures (Question #12) and/or
 - If a catch share meant fewer area closures, shorter spawning season closures, and no trip limits (Question #13)
- 10 (25.6%) opposed to catch shares (FL - Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Miami; NC - Beaufort and Bald Head Island, TN, NJ)

Do other fishermen want this explored?

- Other letters of support:
 - Runners Seafood (Kathy Mathis)
 - Gulf Fishermen's Association



Other Survey Results

Of those who responded:

- 66% would put VMS on their boat if the unit was paid for (Question #5)
- 55% said they could avoid red snapper (Question #2)
- 68.4% answered “no” to the question, “would you still be in business after a 6-8 month gag and other shallow water grouper species closure (Question #6)



Other Survey Results

Of those who responded:

- 50% answered “no” to the question, “would you still be in business with a 2-4 month vermillion snapper closure.” (Question #8)
- 57% answered “no” to the question, “Do you think the dealer you sell to would still be in business with these [vermillion/gag] closures? (Question #9)



Summary

- 101 people in favor (letter or survey) from all areas of the coast. 5 supportive under certain conditions.
- High response rate (60.5% want the Council to consider a catch share outright, 13.2% under early season closures, or easing of other restrictions)
- High enough to justify an amendment
 - SG LAP Workgroup had 55% in favor
 - 0% have supported red snapper closures and Amendment 16, yet the Council has moved ahead with no fishermen consensus

What We Want

- Snapper Grouper Catch Shares Amendment analyzed immediately
- Commercial ACTs and commercial AMs for all SG species
- VMS and other monitoring to ensure compliance and accurate reporting