



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

AGENDA

Law Enforcement Advisory Panel

Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston

2934 West Montague

North Charleston, SC 29418

January 20-21, 2026

Public comment will be solicited at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will recognize individuals to provide comment in-person or on the webinar.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

- Welcome and Introductions
- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of February 2025 AP minutes
- Public Comment
- SAFMC Law Enforcement Committee Chair Remarks – Carolyn Belcher

1:15 pm – 3:00 pm

1. Updates
 - a. Recent Council actions and developing amendments (*Attachment 1a*)
 - b. Exempted Fishing Permits for state management of the recreational red snapper fishery (*Attachments 1b-1e*)

--- Break ---

3:15 pm – 5:00 pm

2. Commercial Snapper Grouper Management
 - a. Permits and Trip Efficiency (Amendment 60) (*Attachment 2*) – Mike Schmidtke
 - b. Commercial trip limit sale discussion – Mike Schmidtke & Myra Brouwer

Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

9:00 am – 10:00 am

3. Revision of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (*Attachments 3a and 3b*) – John Hadley

--- Break ---

10:15 am – 12:00 noon

4. Spawning Special Management Zones: evaluation tool, enforcement and compliance (*Attachment 4*) – Chip Collier
5. Vessel Limits for Headboats (*Attachment 5*) – Myra Brouwer

--- Lunch ---

1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

6. Updates
 - a. Biological Opinion for the Shrimp Fishery (*Attachment 6a*) – Allie Iberle
 - b. Citizen Science (*Attachment 6b*) – Julia Byrd
 - c. Lines of Communication (*Attachment 6c*) – Christina Curtis

--- Break ---

3:15 pm – 4:00 pm

7. Joint Enforcement Agreements: updates from state representatives on activities and upcoming priorities
8. Update on descending device compliance
9. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
10. Other Business

Attachments:

Attachment 1a: Recent Council actions and developing amendments

Attachment 1b: FL FWC Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application

Attachment 1c: GA EFP application

Attachment 1d: SC EFP application

Attachment 1e: NC EFP application

Attachment 2: Snapper Grouper Amendment 60 Discussion Document

Attachment 3a: Snapper Grouper Amendment 61 Discussion Document

Attachment 3b: Snapper Grouper Amendment 61 Summary Presentation

Attachment 4: [SMZs enforcement and compliance](#)

Attachment 5: Vessel Limits for Headboats

Attachment 6a: Update on Biological Opinion for the Shrimp Fishery

Attachment 6b: Citizen Science Program Update

Attachment 6c: Lines of Communication Update

OVERVIEW

Law Enforcement Advisory Panel

The AP will approve minutes from the February 2025 meeting and the agenda for January 2026 meeting.

1. Updates (*Attachments 1a-1e*)

Council staff will update the AP on recent Council actions and developing amendments (*Attachment 1a*).

At the December 2025 meeting, representatives from each of the South Atlantic states briefed the Snapper Grouper Committee on the EFP applications (*Attachments 1b-1e*) that were submitted on November 10, 2025, to explore state management of the recreational red snapper fishery. NOAA Fisheries will solicit public comment on the EFPs in early 2026. The Council intends to submit a comment letter to NOAA Fisheries when the public comment period opens. Council staff will provide a brief overview of the proposals and request feedback from the LEAP.

2. Commercial Snapper Grouper Management

a. Commercial Permits and Trip Efficiency (Amendment 60) (*Attachment 2*)

In June 2024, Council established the Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee to focus on revising policies to improve the commercial snapper grouper fishery. Following the Sub-Committee's recommendations, the Council initiated Amendment 60 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan with two main objectives: 1) address issues related to the Commercial Snapper Grouper Unlimited (SG 1) Permit, and 2) increase commercial trip efficiency. The Council more recently directed actions to include consideration of removing the 2-for-1 policy for SG 1 permits, revising commercial trip limits to potentially be more dynamic through step-ups or step-downs, and revising species allowed to be retained with bottom longline gear on board and appropriately stowed. The Council requests that the AP discuss these actions, particularly the actions addressing trip limits and regulations surrounding bottom longline gear, with recommendations on how to best accomplish the amendment's objectives while maintaining practical and effective enforcement.

b. Commercial trip limit sale discussion

During scoping for Amendment 60, fishermen expressed concern over not being able to sell their commercial trip limits on days that the local fish house was not open, due to the daily requirement. This led to further Council discussions on the intent and enforcement of trip limits and potential changes to consider. In September 2025, the Council passed a motion to initiate action to revise the current regulations. Depending on what regulatory language may change in a potential regulation, the corresponding prohibition language in the CFR may have to be adjusted. The Council requests that the AP discuss the issue and suggest acceptable forms of evidence to denote that an attempt to sell occurred and where there could be potential gaps in the system.

3. Revision of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (*Attachments 3a and 3b*)

The Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) currently consists of 55 species, many of which are unassessed or have low landings. The Council is considering changes to the species composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU through Amendment 61 to streamline ongoing

management of the fishery. In doing so, the Council is evaluating 17 species to determine whether they continue to need federal conservation and management, thereby potentially removing species from the FMU all together or designating appropriate species as ecosystem component (EC) species where full federal management measures are not necessary. The Council requests the LEAP's feedback on potential enforcement concerns or benefits from removing the selected 17 species from federal conservation and management.

4. Spawning Special Management Zones: evaluation tool, enforcement and compliance (Attachment 4)

Regulations for three of the five Spawning Special Management Zones are scheduled to expire in July 2027. Prior to that deadline, the Council will need to develop an amendment to either extend the existing regulations or modify them if they intend to keep them.

To support a comprehensive review of the Spawning Special Management Zones, the Council established a System Management Plan (SMP) Workgroup composed of scientists, communication and outreach specialists, fishermen, non-governmental organizations, and law enforcement representatives. The SMP Workgroup is currently evaluating the effectiveness and implementation of these zones.

Members of the LEAP are asked to complete [this survey](#) in advance of the meeting. Survey results will be used to facilitate discussion during the meeting and will be provided to the SMP Workgroup. Law enforcement input will be incorporated into the Workgroup's report and used to inform recommendations to the Council.

5. Vessel Limits for Headboats (Attachment 5)

In 2024, the Council began discussing potential management changes that better reflect the needs of the headboat fishery. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center developed a detailed report, which the Council received in June 2025, and Council staff compiled additional information. The Snapper Grouper Advisory panel provided recommendations for how the regulations could be changed so as to not have a disproportionate negative effect on headboat businesses. The Council requests the LEAP's feedback on enforceability of the potential changes and any other enforcement issues that could arise. The Council intends to pick up this topic again in March 2026 and determine whether to initiate an amendment to modify the regulations.

6. Updates

a. Biological Opinion for the Shrimp Fishery (Attachment 6a)

In September 2025 the Council received an update on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 biological opinion for giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish. The Council was presented with the most recent bycatch estimates for both species as well as the results of the population viability analysis (PVA) for smalltooth sawfish. In response, the Council passed a motion to develop a workgroup, consisting of shrimp fishery stakeholders, scientists, and managers, to develop workable solutions to reduce interactions between giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish in the South Atlantic shrimp fishery. The first meeting is anticipated to take place in early 2026.

b. Citizen Science (Attachment 6b)

Council staff will update the LE AP on the Citizen Science Program and ongoing projects.

c. Lines of Communication (Attachment 6c)

Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council, or simply “Lines,” is a new Council initiative aimed toward building relationships with fisheries stakeholders and providing an opportunity for mutual sharing of information. Unlike other outreach efforts and public comment opportunities, Lines allows attendees to actively discuss their perspectives with local Council members, Council staff, and other fishery participants. Lines meetings will be held in-person throughout the South Atlantic, meeting fishermen in their communities. Staff will update the AP on recent meetings and discuss how law enforcement representatives can participate and assist staff during the meetings.

7. Joint Enforcement Agreements

LEAP representatives will provide updates on JEA activities and upcoming priorities

8. Descending Device Compliance

LEAP representatives will provide updates on compliance with the requirement to have a descending device onboard and ready to use when fishing for snapper grouper species.

9. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

10. Other Business