

# Amendment 46 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement)

Discussion Document  
Outreach and Communications  
Advisory Panel  
October 2023

**Note:** Words that are [underlined and in blue font](#) provide a link to other documents.

## Background

Amendment 46 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan was previously developed in the first half of 2018 and was approved for scoping at the June 2018 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting. Due to time constraints over the Council's workplan and the need to obtain more information on potential approaches for private recreational data gathering, the amendment was never scoped. From 2018 through 2020 staff focused instead on piloting the MyFishCount mobile app and portal. Other related efforts have also been underway, notably the convening of the Joint Council Workgroup on Section 102 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 (Modern Fish Act), the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup (workgroup), and subsequently the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Advisory Panel (AP). The summary reports and recommendations from these groups can be found on the Council's website under the following links:

- Joint Council Workgroup on Section 102 of the Modern Fish Act (click [HERE](#))
- Private Recreational Reporting Working Group recommendations (click [HERE](#))
- Private Recreational Permitting AP ([Meeting 1](#), [Meeting 2](#), [Meeting 3](#), and [Meeting 4](#))

## **The Council's 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery, previous amendments, and existing requirements**

The 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery (Vision Blueprint) was approved in December 2015 and was intended to inform management of the Snapper Grouper fishery through 2020. The Vision Blueprint was also intended to serve as a “living document” to help guide future management, building on stakeholder input. The Vision Blueprint is organized into four strategic goal areas: (1) Science, (2) Management, (3) Communication, and (4) Governance. Each goal area has a set of objectives, strategies, and actions. The potential actions in Amendment 46 correspond to different objectives and strategies in the Vision Blueprint.

Since the Council began development of the Vision Blueprint, fishermen have expressed concern with the estimates of recreational catch resulting from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Stakeholders have been requesting that the Council explore a recreational stamp or permit for snapper grouper fishing. This recommendation has also been put forth by the Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel numerous times. Permits have been implemented for the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector and the commercial sector for the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic fisheries in part to improve estimates of effort or catch in the South Atlantic region. However, these requirements do not cover the private recreational component.

Currently, a coastal recreational fishing license, issued through the states, is required for private recreational anglers as part of the 2007 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Reauthorization to improve estimates of catch and effort. There have been other federal and state efforts to further refine information gathered on the private recreational component of the recreational sector, such as the [Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Angling Permit](#) and [Large Pelagics Survey](#) that covers highly migratory species in the Atlantic and the [Private Recreational Tilefish Permit](#) in the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions. The state of Florida has also developed the [State Reef Fish Survey](#) where anglers intending to fish for 13 species of snappers, groupers, jacks, triggerfish, or hogfish from a private vessel must obtain an State Reef Fish Angler designation.

### **Recent Council actions in 2022 and 2023**

At their March 2022 meeting, the Council reviewed background information, recommendations from the workgroup, and directed staff to assemble candidates for an ad hoc AP to be selected in June 2022. The Council then reviewed recommendations from the first meeting of the AP at its September 2022 meeting. At the December 2022 meeting, the Council narrowed the scope of the amendment to focus on development of a permit for the private component of the recreational sector and creation of an education component. Additionally, the Council approved the amendment for scoping which was held in January and February 2023. The Council has further refined options within the amendment at their subsequent meetings.

**Private recreational reporting was removed from further consideration in Amendment 46 at the December 2022 meeting.** While reporting may be considered in a different amendment, the Council expressed interest in timely implementation of Amendment 46 as well as the notable

potential benefits of implementing a permit which may include better identifying the universe of private anglers or vessels targeting snapper grouper species and enhancing the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data within existing programs such as the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

## Potential actions in this amendment

- Permit related actions (Actions 1 through 3)
  1. Establish a private recreational permit in the snapper grouper fishery
  2. Specify the species that will be covered
  3. Establish a mechanism for states to opt out of federal permit requirement
- Education component related actions (Actions 4 through 6)
  4. Establish an education component
  5. Specify the timing of implementation
  6. Specify the length of time that an education component will remain valid

## Objectives for this meeting

- Gather feedback on education-related actions and alternatives being considered in the amendment.
- Inventory the applicable education materials or programs that already exist.
- Provide feedback on the types of information and content that should be included in the education materials and program.

## Tentative amendment timing

✓December 2022	Reviewed options paper and approved amendment for scoping.
✓Winter 2023	Conducted scoping.
✓March 2023	Review scoping comments and provide guidance on the amendment.
✓April/May 2023	Gather initial feedback from the Permit and Reporting AP and Snapper Grouper AP.
✓June 2023	Review amendment and AP comments.
✓August 15, 2023	Permit and Reporting AP meeting
✓September 2023	Review amendment and preliminary analyses
<b>October 2023</b>	<b>Advisory Panel review</b>
December 2023	Review modifications to the amendment, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings.
Winter 2023/24	Conduct public hearings. Gather detailed feedback from the APs.
March 2024	Review amendment, public hearing comments, and AP comments.
June 2024	Review final draft of amendment and consider approval for formal review.
2025/2026 (TBD)	Regulation changes effective.

## Purpose and Need

The *purpose* of the amendment is to develop a recreational permitting system that will identify the universe of private anglers or vessels targeting South Atlantic snapper grouper species and will enhance the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data. Also work to promote best recreational fishing practices through education.

The *need* for the amendment is to improve the quality of effort and catch data for the private component of the recreational sector that targets South Atlantic snapper grouper species, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects. Also improve education on best fishing practices.

## Actions in the amendment

### Permit-related actions (Actions 1-3)

#### Action 1. Establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region

**Purpose of the Action:** This action is necessary to establish a private recreational permit requirement in the snapper grouper fishery and determine whether the permit will be issued to an individual angler or a vessel.

Alternative	A federal private recreational permit would be required for:
Alternative 1 (No Action)	A federal permit is not required for a private angler or vessel when fishing for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2	<u>Any vessel</u> participating in the private angler component of the snapper grouper fishery.
Alternative 3	<u>Any angler</u> participating in the private angler component of the snapper grouper fishery.

#### Action 2. Specify the species that would be covered by a private recreational snapper grouper permit

**Purpose of the Action:** This action would specify the species that would be covered by a private recreational permit requirement in the snapper grouper fishery.

Alternative	A federal private recreational permit would be required to fish for, harvest, or possess the following species:
Alternative 1 (No Action)	A federal permit is not required for a private angler or vessel when fishing for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2	<u>Any species</u> in the snapper grouper fishery management unit.

Alternative 3	Any species that is also <b><u>covered by the Florida State Reef Fish Survey.</u></b>
Alternative 4	Any species in the <b><u>deepwater complex.</u></b>

**Discussion:**

- The full list of species within the snapper grouper fishery management unit is provided in **Table 1.**

**Table 1.** Species found within the snapper grouper fishery management unit\*.

Species	FL SRFS	DW Complex	Species	FL SRFS	DW Complex
Black grouper	X		Golden tilefish		
Gag	X		Gray snapper		
Greater amberjack	X		Graysby		
Hogfish	X		Jolthead porgy		
Mutton snapper	X		Knobbed porgy		
Red grouper	X		Lane snapper		
Red snapper	X		Longspine porgy		
Vermilion snapper	X		Margate		
Yellowtail snapper	X		Nassau grouper		
Banded rudderfish	X		Ocean triggerfish		
Lesser amberjack	X		Red hind		
Gray triggerfish	X		Red porgy		
Almaco jack	X		Rock hind		
Yellowedge grouper		X	Rock sea bass		
Silk snapper		X	Sailor's choice		
Misty grouper		X	Saucereye porgy		
Sand tilefish		X	Scamp		
Queen snapper		X	Scup		
Blackfin snapper		X	Snowy grouper		
Atlantic spadefish			Speckled hind		
Bank sea bass			Tomtate		
Bar Jack			Warsaw grouper		
Black sea bass			White grunt		
Blueline tilefish			Whitebone porgy		
Coney			Wreckfish		
Cottonwick			Yellowfin grouper		
Cubera snapper			Yellowmouth grouper		
Goliath grouper					

\*FL SRFS = species is covered by the Florida State Reef Fish Survey.

\*DW Complex = species is part of the deepwater complex.

**Action 3. Establish a mechanism that would allow a state to opt out of a federal private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region**

**Purpose of the Action:** This action would establish a mechanism that would allow a state to opt out of the federal private recreational snapper grouper permit requirement.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>A state could opt out of a federal private recreational snapper grouper permit requirement provided that the state implements equivalent measures that includes:</b>
Alternative 1 (No Action)	A federal permit is not required for a private angler or vessel when fishing for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Sub-alternative 2a	<b><u>The same permit type</u></b> as the federal permit requirement (as <i>selected in Action 1</i> ).
Sub-alternative 2b	<b><u>The same snapper grouper species</u></b> from the federal permit requirement (as <i>selected in Action 2</i> ).
Sub-alternative 2c	<b><u>The same permitting timeframe</u></b> as the federal permit requirement ( <i>annual renewal</i> ).
DRAFT Sub-alternative 2d	<b><u>The same education requirements</u></b> as the federal permit requirement (as selected in Actions 4-6).

*Education requirement-related actions (Actions 4-6)*

**Action 4. Establish a required education component in the private recreational portion of the snapper grouper fishery.**

**Purpose of the Action:** This action is necessary to establish a required education component for private recreational permit holders fishing for or targeting snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Education component</b>
Alternative 1 (No Action)	There is not a required education component to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2	<b><u>Establish a required education component</u></b> for private recreational permit holders who fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.

**Action 5. Specify the timing of implementation for a required education component in the private recreational portion of the snapper grouper fishery**

**Purpose of the Action:** This action would specify the timing of when a required education component would become effective for private recreational permit holders fishing for or targeting snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.

Alternative	Education component
Alternative 1 (No Action)	There is not a required education component to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2	Implemented <b>at the same time</b> that a private recreational snapper grouper permit is established.
Alternative 3	Implementation is <b>delayed until a later date</b> after a private recreational snapper grouper permit is established. ( <i>Note: Council would need to specify length of the delay</i> ).

**Action 6. Specify the effective term of a required education component for the private recreational portion of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region**

**Purpose of the Action:** This action is necessary to establish how often an education component would need to be completed.

Alternative	A required education component would need to be completed:
Alternative 1 (No Action)	There is not a required education component to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2	<b>Upon each issuance</b> of a private recreational snapper grouper permit.
Alternative 3	<b>Every other year upon issuance</b> of a private recreational snapper grouper permit.
Alternative 4	<b>One time</b> upon initial issuance of a private recreational snapper grouper permit.
Alternative 5	<b>Upon initial issuance</b> of a private recreational snapper grouper permit <b>and each time that the education component materials are updated.</b>

**Other AP Comments and Recommendations:**

The following feedback and recommendations have been provided by the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical AP at their November 2022 meeting:

- **Recommendation:** An education requirement or certification may not be necessary or required on an annual basis, thus such a requirement would not be an adequate substitute for a permit.

- There would still need some readily available way to identify anglers in the field that took the education training. For both compliance and validation as well as sampling purposes.
- **Recommendation:** An education requirement would pair well with a permit, potentially in the initial issuance or renewal process.
  - Such a requirement would provide an opportunity to educate anglers on best fishing practices, what species are within SG complex, species ID, descending devices, etc.
  - Education could include information on why the permit exists and importance of data collection.
  - An education requirement could help deter oversubscription.
  - If a permit is vessel based, the details need to be specified regarding who must obtain the education certificate.
    - Vessel owner? Vessel operator? At least one person onboard a permitted vessel?

The following feedback and recommendations were provided by the Snapper Grouper AP at their April 2023 meeting:

- **Recommendation:** There is strong support for developing an education component as soon as possible.
  - The education requirement could be modeled along the lines of what HMS requires for sharks.
  - In the education materials, include links to encourage anglers to use existing reporting and regulation apps.
  - Potentially consider implementing an education requirement that is valid for as long as a permit is maintained and up to date. If a permit lapses or a new permit is issued, the permit holder would need to go through the education requirement again.
- **Recommendation:** Consider implementing an education requirement that is valid for as long as a permit is maintained and up to date. If a permit lapses or a new permit is issued, the permit holder would need to go through the education requirement again.

### **Outreach and Communications AP Discussion:**

- 1) Does the AP have recommendations on the content and structure of the education materials or program that would be required?
  - What type of content and information should be included? (Best fishing practices? Basic regulations? Other?)
  - What should be the format of the materials? (Online? Video? Should a test be involved?)
  - Approximately how long should the education module take to complete?
- 2) Rather than develop a new education module, the Council is interested in potentially partnering with other organizations to utilize existing education materials or programs.
  - Does the AP know of existing education programs or modules on best fishing practices applicable to the snapper grouper fishery that could potentially be used to satisfy the education requirement that the Council is considering?



- 3) If the Council does elect to develop a new education module, does the AP have a recommendation for who or what group(s) should lead that effort? (Council staff? NMFS? A contractor? Other group, person, or organization?)
- 4) The Council is considering a permit that could be issued for a vessel. If the permit is vessel-based, does the AP have recommendations for who would need to satisfy the education requirement? (Vessel owner? Vessel operator? Someone on the vessel? Other?)
- 5) Does the AP have recommendations on preferred alternatives for the Council to consider in Actions 4-6?
- 6) In Action 5, the Council is considering delaying the implementation of an education requirement until sometime after a permit has been established.
  - What are the AP's thoughts on delayed implementation of an education requirement?
  - If the Council does delay implementation of an education requirement, does the AP have recommendations for how long of a delay should be considered?