



Gag and Black Grouper
Recreational Vessel
Limits and Black Sea
Bass On-Demand Gear

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36 Public Hearing

July-August 2024

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HOUSEKEEPING

The purpose of this hearing is to gather the public's input on proposed actions for this amendment. Public input will help shape the actions included and the Council's final decisions on the amendment.



FIRST, I will review the amendment in its entirety



NEXT, I will pause to answer any clarifying questions pertaining to this amendment



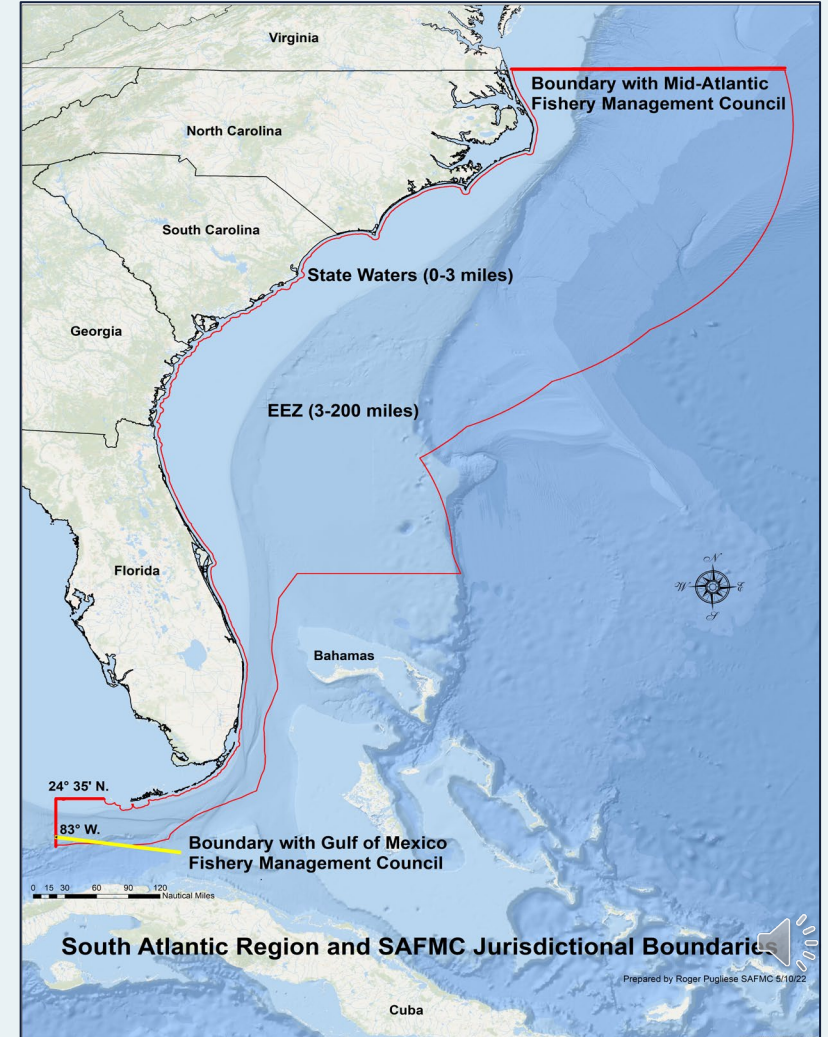
FINALLY, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, A COUNCIL MEMBER will take public comment



ABOUT THE COUNCIL



- 1 of 8 regional fishery management councils
- Jurisdiction:
 - Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) ranges from 3-200 miles
 - South Atlantic Region: NC, SC, GA, East Coast of FL
- Council Makeup:
 - Includes recreational and commercial fishermen, state marine agency reps, and federal partners
 - 17 members, 13 voting, 4 non-voting
 - Representatives from each state in the region
- The Council provides recommendations to NOAA Fisheries



BACKGROUND – GAG & BLACK GROUPER



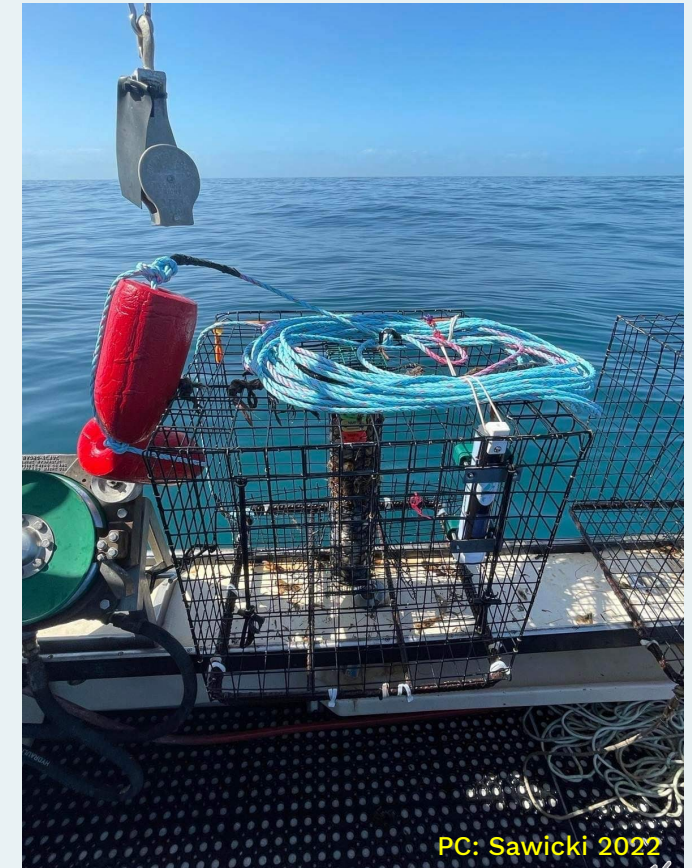
- SG Amendment 53 established recreational vessel limits of 2 gag and 2 black grouper per vessel per day (private) or trip (charter/headboat), implemented in October 2023
- The Council intended these limits to be aggregate limits of 2 fish (gag OR black grouper) per vessel per day/trip
 - Aggregate vessel limits would align with the current aggregate bag limit of 1 fish (gag OR black grouper) per person per day
 - Aggregate vessel limits would also help efforts to rebuild the overfished gag stock



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



- On-demand (a.k.a. ‘ropeless’) pots are black sea bass pots that are fished without a vertical line remaining in the water column
 - On-demand gear was developed to reduce whale entanglements
 - Some versions have a rope & buoy tied down to the pot at depth and released on a timer or using a remote control when ready to be retrieved
 - Other versions have no vertical ropes at all, instead using mechanisms like inflatables to bring the pot to the surface



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



PC: Sawicki 2022

- On-demand pots have been experimentally used in the commercial fishery since 2021 under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), which expires in April 2025
- Workshop held in August 2023 presented results of the EFP study indicating on-demand pots were effective in reducing whale entanglements and catching black sea bass
 - Commercial fishermen that participated in the EFP project supported expanded use of on-demand gear in the S Atlantic



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



- Council reviewed current regulations and found that the use of on-demand gear is not prohibited in times/areas where roped gear is already allowed
 - On-demand pots must meet the same requirements as traditional roped pots, when applicable (e.g. allowable times/areas, marking ropes/buoys when used, identification requirements, etc.)
- Pot endorsement holders informed the Council during scoping that revision of stowage requirements while transiting some closed areas would make transportation with on-demand pots more practical



WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS?



Timing	Council Action
December 2023	Reviewed decision document and approved for scoping
February 2024	Scoping
March 2024	Reviewed scoping comments, draft alternatives, and preliminary analyses
June 2024	Reviewed draft amendment and approved for public hearings; selected preferred alternatives
Summer 2024	Conduct public hearings
September 2024	Review public comment and approve for formal review
Early-Mid 2025	Regulations effective



WHAT INFORMATION DOES THE COUNCIL NEED?



- The Council has determined the actions and alternatives that will be considered in this amendment
- The Council has decided on its preliminary preferred alternatives for each action; preferred alternatives are those that will be recommended to NMFS for implementation
- Which alternative(s) should be selected as preferred under each action? Why should the Council select this or these alternatives rather than another?



ACTION 1 – GAG AND BLACK GROUPER REC VESSEL LIMITS



For all vessel limits in all alternatives: “not to exceed the daily bag limit of 1 gag or black grouper per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.”

Alternative 1 (No Action). Current recreational vessel limits:

- Private: 2 gag/vessel/day and 2 black grouper/vessel/day
- For-Hire (Charter and Headboat): 2 gag/vessel/trip and 2 black grouper/vessel/trip

Preferred Alternative 2. For the private recreational component:

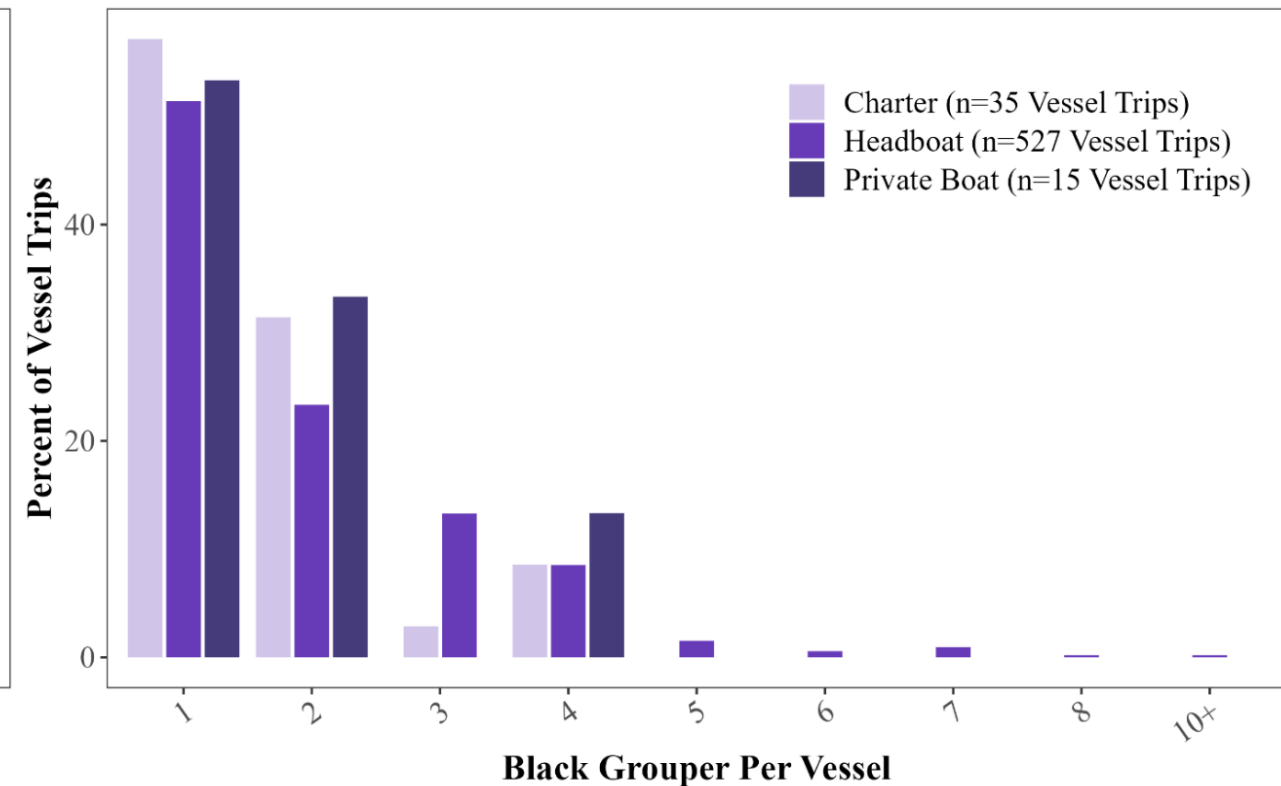
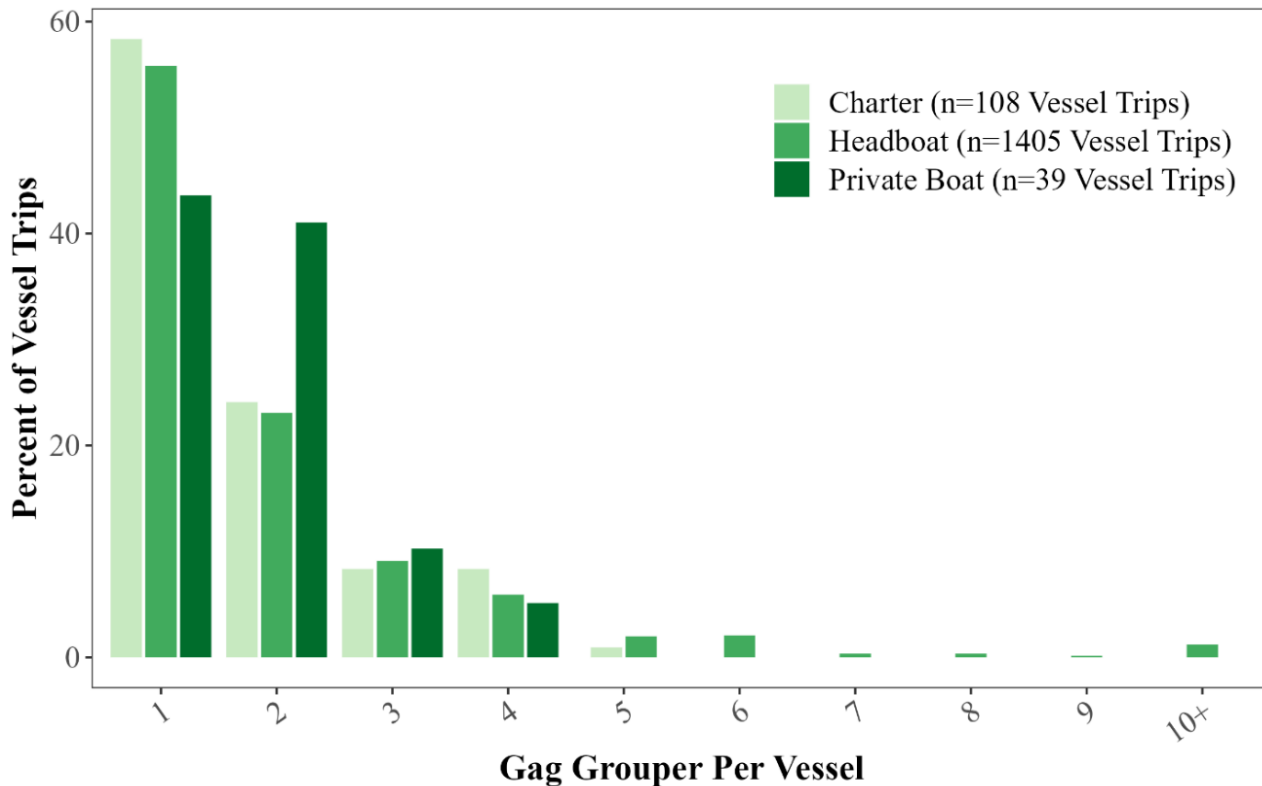
- Aggregate limit of 2 gag or black grouper/vessel/day

Preferred Alternative 3. For the for-hire (charter and headboat) recreational component:

- Aggregate limit of 2 gag or black grouper/vessel/trip



ACTION 1 – GAG AND BLACK GROUPER REC VESSEL LIMITS



Developed from S Atlantic dockside intercept and headboat logbook data, 2018-2022



ACTION 2 – BSB ON-DEMAND POT TRANSIT



Under all alternatives: BSB pots must be appropriately stowed while transiting a marine protected area (MPA), special management zone (SMZ), or spawning SMZ

- Transit: direct, non-stop progression through the area

Alternative 1 (No Action). 'Appropriately stowed' (all pot types) means:

- sea bass pots are not baited
- all buoys must be disconnected from the gear
- buoys may remain on deck.

Preferred Alternative 2. 'Appropriately stowed' for pots equipped with on-demand gear means:

- pots are not baited
- buoys may remain connected to the gear

Alternative 3. 'Appropriately stowed' for pots equipped with on-demand gear means:

- pots are not baited
- all buoys must be disconnected from the gear or stowed within the sea bass pots





WAYS TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

Public Hearing Webinars: July 31st and August 1st at 6:00 pm

Written comments: Use the online form available from the [Regulatory Amendment 36](#) page on the Council's website (www.safmc.net). Submit by 5:00 PM on August 2, 2024

Comments by mail: Send comments to John Carmichael, Executive Director, SAFMC, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405

Comments by fax: 843-769-4520

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