

Overview

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting

November 2010, Charleston

The Snapper Grouper Advisory panel will meet in Charleston, SC, on November 16-18, 2010 to review and provide input to the Council on developing amendments affecting the snapper grouper fishery of the South Atlantic region.

The Attached CD contains the following:

- Attachment 1. SEDAR 24 Final Assessment Report
- Attachment 2. Draft Regulatory Amendment 9
- Attachment 3. Snapper Grouper Amendment 18A Public Hearing Draft
- Attachment 3a. Summary of Amendment 18A
- Attachment 4. Draft Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment
- Attachment 5. Amendment 24 Scoping Document
- Attachment 6. Amendment 22 Options Paper

Draft Regulatory Amendment 10

No draft document for the AP to review is yet available.

Background

At the September Council meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee received a presentation from NOAA Fisheries staff on possible changes to the proposed red snapper management actions as a result of the 2010 stock assessment (**Attachment 1**). The Council decided that a Regulatory Amendment should be developed in order to analyze a change in regulations from those actions proposed in Amendment 17A. In order to conduct the required analyses, however, NOAA Fisheries staff had to make changes to the model that was used to develop alternatives for Amendment 17A. Those changes have not yet been finalized; therefore development of the amendment has not moved forward. (NOTE: The SSC is meeting in Charleston on November 8-10, 2010. The AP will receive an update of SSC discussions on the red snapper assessment and any other pertinent information.)

The Snapper Grouper Committee did provide guidance to staff in terms of the range of alternatives to analyze for Regulatory Amendment 10. The Committee provided the following two alternatives to act as bookends for the analysis:

(1) The combination of the prohibition on red snapper harvest and possession and the smallest possible closed area to snapper grouper fishing.

(2) The combination of the prohibition on red snapper harvest and possession and the closed area proposed in Amendment 17A but possession and retention of snapper grouper species (other than red snapper) would be allowed a portion of the year.

Draft Regulatory Amendment 9 (Attachment 2)

Regulatory Amendment 9 currently contains trip limit actions for black sea bass, vermilion snapper, gag, and greater amberjack. The amendment also addresses other management actions for black sea bass (i.e., split season and spawning season closure).

Background

At the September Council meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee added various trip limit alternatives, including higher trip limits. The Committee also moved the turtle release gear changes to the Comprehensive Ecosystem Based Amendment 2 as NOAA General Counsel advised the Committee that gear restrictions of this type are not covered under the framework. The Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) has been working on analyzing the alternatives in the amendment to present to the Council at their December meeting in New Bern, NC. The intent is for the Council, during their December meeting, to approve this amendment for Public Hearings to be held in Jan/Feb 2011 (please refer to the last page of this Overview for dates and locations).

NEEDED ACTION: The Snapper Grouper AP should review the suite of alternatives for each action and provide their recommendations. The AP should focus on Sections 2 and 4 of the draft amendment document (Attachment 2). Section 2 compares the alternatives and Section 4 presents the detailed analysis of impacts.

Amendment 18A – Public Hearing Draft (Attachment 3)

Amendment 18A currently contains management actions affecting the black sea bass and golden tilefish fisheries. The amendment contains 11 actions:

1. Limit participation in the golden tilefish fishery through an endorsement program
2. Allocate the commercial golden tilefish quota among gear groups
3. Allow for transferability of golden tilefish endorsements
4. Adjust the golden tilefish fishing year
5. Establish golden tilefish commercial trip limit
6. Establish trip limits for commercial fishermen who do not receive an endorsement in the commercial golden tilefish hook-and-line fishery.
7. Limit participation in the black sea bass pot fishery
8. Limit effort in the black sea bass pot fishery

9. Reduce bycatch in the black sea bass fishery
10. Improvements to commercial data reporting
11. Improvements to for-hire data reporting

Background

At the September Council meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee decided to split Amendment 18 into 18B (FMU Extension Action and designation of EFH for Snapper Grouper in Northern Extension Area) and 18A (rest of actions). The Committee also approved a motion to take Amendment 18A to public hearings. Public Hearings were held October 25-27 in New Bern, Charleston and Daytona Beach, respectively. Written comments were due on or before November 12.

The Council will review AP comments and Public Hearing comments in December 2010 and DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) comments in March 2011 and approve for formal review. This meeting is the AP's last opportunity to review Amendment 18A before the Council takes final action.

NEEDED ACTION: The Snapper Grouper AP should review the suite of alternatives for each action and provide their recommendations. The AP should focus on Sections 2 and 4 of the public hearing document (Attachment 3). A Summary of Amendment 18A (Attachment 3a) is also provided.

Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Amendment (Attachment 4)

The Comprehensive ACL Amendment would implement long-term management measures expected to achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

Proposed long-term management measures in the amendment include: (1) changes to the snapper grouper fishery management unit, including the removal of some species and the development of species groups; (2) annual stock mortality limits and targets, (3) percent allocation to all sectors; (4) actions to occur if limits and targets are projected to be exceeded or have been exceeded (otherwise known as accountability measures); and (5) regulations necessary to ensure mortality is at or below the annual limits.

The Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) has been working on analyzing the alternatives in the amendment to present to the Council at their December 2010 meeting in New Bern, NC. The intent is for the Council, at their December meeting, to approve this amendment for Public Hearings to be held in Jan/Feb 2011.

Background

The Council is utilizing several tools to achieve optimum yield (OY) for species addressed in this amendment. These include a determination from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for the overfishing limit (OFL). The SSC also works with the Council to determine acceptable biological catch (ABC) based on an ABC control rule. The OFL is an estimate of the catch level above which overfishing is occurring. This value may stem from the outcome of a stock assessment and is equivalent to the yield at the maximum fishing mortality threshold. The ABC is defined as the level of a stock or stock complex's annual catch that accounts for the scientific uncertainty in the estimate of OFL and any other scientific uncertainty, and should be specified based on the ABC control rule. Using the ABC as a start, the Council is proposing an annual catch limit (ACL) for the stocks in the South Atlantic. The ACL is the annual catch limit expressed in pounds or numbers of fish that serves as the basis for invoking accountability measures (AMs). AMs are designed to provoke an action once the ACL is reached during the course of a fishing season to reduce the risk overfishing will occur. The Council is considering the implementation of AMs in this amendment. While AMs act to *prevent overfishing* in a fishery, *the Council must specify regulations in order to ensure that overfishing does not occur* (through the implementation of management measures).

The Council is scheduled to take final action on this amendment in June 2011 and is considering possibly holding another AP meeting in May 2011.

NEEDED ACTION: The Snapper Grouper AP should review the suite of alternatives for each action and provide their recommendations. The AP should focus on Sections 2 and 4 of the draft document (Attachment 4).

Amendment 24 Scoping Document (Attachment 5)

Amendment 24 would address management of red grouper in the South Atlantic.

Background

The latest assessment indicated that the red grouper stock in the South Atlantic is undergoing overfishing and is overfished. As directed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council and NOAA Fisheries must implement a rebuilding plan which ends overfishing immediately and provides for rebuilding the fishery. NOAA Fisheries notified the Council of the stock status on June 9, 2010; the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies that measures must be *implemented* within two years of notification (June 9, 2012).

The intent of a rebuilding plan is to increase biomass of overfished stocks to a sustainable level within a specified period of time. A plan should achieve conservation goals, while minimizing to the extent practicable adverse socioeconomic impacts. Besides establishing a rebuilding plan,

the Council is proposing establishing: (1) annual catch limits (ACL), (2) accountability measures (AM), (3) allocations, (4) maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and (5) optimum yield (OY).

At the September Council meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee moved the actions pertaining to black grouper to the Comprehensive ACL amendment as that amendment considers species groupings for a shallow water grouper complex. The Committee decided to retain red grouper in this amendment as there is a statutory deadline to implement a rebuilding plan. The Committee chose a preferred rebuilding period of 10 years for red grouper, but recognized that they will review the annual yield and corresponding economic analysis for a shorter rebuilding period in the future. Scoping meetings will be held in January/February 2011 (please refer to the last page of this Overview for dates and locations).

NEEDED ACTION: The Snapper Grouper AP should review the suite of alternatives for each action and provide their recommendations. The AP should focus on Section 2 of the draft scoping document (Attachment 5).

Amendment 22 Options Paper (Attachment 6)

Amendment 22 would include actions to address long-term management of red snapper in the South Atlantic.

Background

As the red snapper stock rebuilds, the Council will need to adjust management. As the stock rebuilds, some level of harvest may eventually be allowed and the closed area may be incrementally reduced in size or eliminated. In order to maintain long-term harvest levels of red snapper at or below the ACL, the Council has requested that an amendment be developed to explore alternative management methods for the species.

At the September Council meeting, staff presented the alternatives in the options paper. The Committee approved the range of alternatives developed by the IPT but added the following:

- (1) red snapper endorsements
- (2) bag limits
- (3) size limits
- (4) actions pertaining to different gear types
- (5) seasonal closures

NEEDED ACTION: The Snapper Grouper AP need to review the Options Paper (Attachment 6) and provide input on the various alternatives.

Scoping/Public Hearing Meetings in 2011

Week of January 24-28 and January 31-February 4, 2011

1. New Bern, NC – January 24, 2011
2. Charleston, SC – January 26, 2011
3. Savannah/Pooler, GA – January 27, 2011
4. Jacksonville, FL – January 31, 2011
5. Cape Canaveral, FL – February 1, 2011
6. Key Largo, FL – February 3, 2011