

Summary Report

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

September 15, 2025

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee) met on September 15, 2025 to further develop Amendment 60 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP).

The Sub-Committee approved the agenda for the September 2025 meeting and minutes for the June 2025 meeting.

1. Updated Commercial Snapper Grouper Landings Analyses

In March and June 2025, Council staff presented a report that analyzed landings for snapper grouper species across several factors, including catch rankings, numbers of trips, and breakdowns of landing effort information by state. At the request of the Sub-Committee, Council staff has updated the report and presented analyses with additional information about percentages of trips landing trip limits by species and trip limit impacts. The Sub-Committee asked staff to further examine this information at a more regional level (state by state) for any unique trends.

2. Amendment 60 (Commercial Permits and Trip Efficiency)

The Sub-Committee reviewed scoping comments and developed guidance for staff on actions and ranges of alternatives to include in initial amendment development. The Sub-Committee directed staff to develop the following actions:

Action 1. Revise the 2-for-1 snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy

- Range of alternatives: either keep or remove the 2-for-1 policy
- Include discussion of the future goals for the commercial sector of the snapper grouper fishery.
- Examine permit data (corporate vs. individual) by location.

Action 2. Establish dynamic (step-down) trip limits that vary throughout the season, based on the tracked catch and the time remaining in the season, for snapper grouper species with species-specific trip limits.

- Species with species-specific commercial trip limits (13): black sea bass, blueline tilefish, gag, golden tilefish, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, hogfish (both stocks), mutton snapper, red grouper, red porgy, red snapper, snowy grouper, vermilion snapper
 - Should scamp/yellowmouth grouper (pending trip limit from Amendment 55) be included?
- Specify ACL percentage/time remaining in the fishing year thresholds for step-downs.
 - Step-downs are more likely to consistently achieve the ACL.
- Include flexibility in the language for the regional administrator to change the trip limit, if necessary.
- Where applicable, consider how split seasons affect use of dynamic trip limits.

- Explore applicability of carry-over (this may require a separate, additional action) for the species being considered.
 - For carry-over to apply, the Council would need to specify that through an amendment, connected to the ABC and ACL.
 - Species that do not have an overfishing limit (OFL) would not be eligible for carry-over.
 - Species without an OFL: blueline tilefish (based on SEDAR 92), gray triggerfish, hogfish (GA-NC)
 - Species that do not have post-season accountability measures (i.e. payback) would not be eligible for carry-over.
 - Species with payback: black sea bass
 - Species without payback: red snapper, vermilion snapper
 - Species with payback only if overfished: blueline tilefish, gag, golden tilefish, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, hogfish (both stocks), mutton snapper, red grouper, red porgy, snowy grouper

Remove the action considering multi-day trip limits.

Action 3. Establish an incidental or out-of-season allowance for harvest of deep water species.

- To discourage targeting, include an alternative that requires landing of in-season (deepwater?) species to retain the out-of-season allowance.
- Define “deepwater species”, considering those with high discard mortality rates.

Action 4. Revise existing stowage requirements for gear on board.

- Consider changing the longline species limitation.
- **Question for Committee: Establish possession allowances for specific gear type(s) or more general allowance/regulation?**
 - Current possession allowances: sink nets (NC), bait nets, cast nets
- Check with other FMPs (e.g. HMS) to ensure gear restrictions/allowances are complementary across FMPs.
- Include consideration of a notification requirement, informing law enforcement if a fisherman is switching gears.
 - Work with NMFS to identify potential system/mechanism.

Staff will develop actions and alternatives for initial review in December 2025. A draft amendment will be developed for review at the March 2026 Council meeting for the Council to consider approval for public hearings..

The Sub-Committee directed staff to wait to bring this amendment for discussion at the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) until it is more fully developed, at the AP’s April 2026 meeting. Staff will update the Snapper Grouper AP on the actions and alternatives that are currently included in the amendment at their next meeting, in October 2025. The Sub-Committee also directed staff to present the amendment to the Law Enforcement AP at their next meeting, in January/February 2026.

3. Other Business

The Sub-Committee was notified of difficulties experienced by fishermen attempting to sell fish on days when fish houses are closed. **The Sub-Committee recommends that the Snapper Grouper Committee consider revision of applying trip limits to the sale of fish, as well as potential vehicles for addressing this change.**

The Sub-Committee was also notified of requests from commercial fishermen for Starlink to be added to the Coast Guard's list of approved telecommunication devices. Sub-Committee members noted that this process would require an application to the Federal Communications Commission from Starlink and could include changes to Coast Guard regulations that would accommodate Starlink communications. **The Sub-Committee recommends sending a letter to the Coast Guard, of similar form to a letter sent by the Gulf Council, requesting approval of Starlink as an approved telecommunication device.**