

Summary Report

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

December 8, 2025

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee) met on December 8, 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 December 2025 meeting and minutes for the September 2025 meeting.

1. Amendment 60 (Commercial Permits and Trip Efficiency)

Council staff updated the Sub-Committee on progress made since the September meeting and difficulties presented by the federal government shutdown. The Sub-Committee reviewed actions and alternatives as currently drafted and provided the following guidance for further amendment development:

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

- There should be frequent communication with commercial permit holders, informing them of potential upcoming changes to the 2-for-1 policy, beginning in January 2026 and with additional follow-up communications later in the process.
 - **DIRECTION TO STAFF: COORDINATE WITH SERO TO SEND LETTERS IN JANUARY 2026.**
- The Sub-Committee received input from the Permits Office explaining that single permit “transfers” are not recognized in the federal system; the permit remains in the name of the original permit holder until 2 permits are exchanged for a new permit. Both permits must be valid or renewable (within 1 year of expiration) to be exchanged.
- The Sub-Committee discussed that they believe the current number of permits is appropriate. The number of permits that are active at the time of amendment implementation would be the number of permits available moving forward.
- The amendment should include guidance about when it may be appropriate to consider increases or decreases in the number of permits in the future. This guidance could potentially include triggers if the number of permits falls below a certain level due to attrition.

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.

- For several species, when the commercial trip limits were set, much of the discussion centered around the lowest viable trip limit to extend the season. Some of the resulting trip limits are too low for step-downs to be a viable management tool.
- **DIRECTION TO STAFF:** Develop a framework to consider the following factors for each species with a commercial species-specific trip limit (not including the Jacks Complex), using discretion as not all factors would be applicable for all species:

- Change the ‘baseline’ commercial trip limit (this would be the initial trip limit that may be stepped up or down).
- Develop options for threshold annual catch limit (ACL) percentages by associated times of year that would result in a step-up.
 - Develop options for stepped-up trip limits.
- Develop options for threshold annual catch limit (ACL) percentages by associated times of year that would result in a step-down.
 - Develop options for stepped down trip limits.
- Define the procedure for enacting timely increases or decreases of trip limits in step-up or step-down situations.
 - While discretion can be given to the Regional Administrator for greater flexibility in making in-season changes, more discretion means a potential longer implementation process that could require a public comment period.
 - A specifically-defined process with less discretion can implement changes more quickly.

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

- Remove this action from consideration in this amendment.

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

- The Sub-Committee clarified that this revision would apply for bottom longline gear. This is already an authorized gear in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP), although this action will not give any additional access to snapper grouper species using that gear.
- While fishing for species that are not currently allowed to be possessed while having longline gear on board, this action would allow the gear to be on board but stowed according to requirements defined in this action.
 - The Sub-Committee discussed potential requirements that could include hooks not baited and stored below deck, as well as spools stowed below deck.
 - A notification system could aid enforcement, if such a system could be defined and implemented. This could include a call-in system to notify of a multi-gear trip or when switching fishing gears. This could, alternatively, include a vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirement for species to use multiple gears on the same trip.

2. Other Business

The Sub-Committee re-introduced potential revision of applying trip limits to the sale of fish, as well as potential vehicles for addressing this change. This will be discussed further in Snapper Grouper Committee, after the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel’s (AP) comments on this topic are presented.

The Sub-Committee also directed staff to request discussion about SG2 (225-pound) snapper grouper permits from the AP, including their recommendations on whether and how these permits should be used in the future. Staff should present the AP with landings and usage of this permit from the last 5 years ahead of this discussion.