THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Amendment 44
Reef Fish Amendment 55

Revising stock catch levels and jurisdictional allocation for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper

Decision Document, September 2026

Background

Both mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper are considered single stocks in the South Atlantic and Gulf of America (Gulf) and are managed by the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils under the Snapper Grouper and Reef Fish Fishery Management Plans, respectively. Recently, SEDAR 79 (2024) (terminal year: 2022) and SEDAR 96 (2025) (terminal year: 2023) were completed for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper, respectively. Neither stock was determined to be overfished or experiencing overfishing.

Corresponding SAFE Report Sections (last updated December 2025)

Mutton Snapper (7.1)

Fishery Population Trends: Section 7.1.4
Sector Trends: Section 7.1.5
Economic Trends: Section 7.1.6
Social Trends: Section 7.1.7

Yellowtail Snapper (7.4)

Fishery Population Trends: Section 7.1.4
Sector Trends: Section 7.1.5
Economic Trends: Section 7.1.6

Social Trends: Section 7.1.7

At Your Last Meeting (June 2026)

- During the June 2026 meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee (Committee) reviewed a decision document including catch levels and a preliminary analysis.
- The Council also reviewed the Gulf Council's June 2026 meeting feedback
- The Council:
    - Selected Preferred Alternative 3b for Action 1 (same as Gulf preferred)
    - Selected Preferred Alternative 4b for Action 2 (same as Gulf preferred)
    - Removed the non-viable Alternative 1 for Actions 3 and 4
    - Removed Alternatives 5 and 6 from Actions 3 and 4
    - Selected Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action) for Action 3
    - Selected Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action) for Action 4

Objectives for this Meeting (September 2026)

- Review updated alternatives and preferred alternatives.
- Review Gulf feedback from their August meeting.
- Consider public hearing approval.

Tentative Amendment Timing

✓**February 2025**	Joint SSC to review both assessments
✓**June 2025**	Reinitiated work on the amendment
✓**August 2025**	Gulf Council reviewed action and proposed alternatives
✓**September 2025**	South Atlantic reviewed action and proposed alternatives
✓**November 2025**	Gulf Council reviewed draft document
✓**December 2025**	South Atlantic Councill reviewed draft document
✓**March 2026**	South Atlantic Council received an amendment update including updated catch levels and timeline
✓**June 2026**	South Atlantic and Gulf Councils will review actions and alternatives with catch levels
✓**August 2026**	Gulf Council will review a public hearing draft, select preferred alternatives and approve for public hearings
September 2026	**South Atlantic Council will review a public hearing draft, select preferred alternatives and approve for public hearings**
Fall 2026	Conduct public hearings
October 2026	Gulf Councill will review public hearing comments, consider for final approval
December 2026	South Atlantic Council will review public hearing comments, consider for final approval
Early 2027	Amendment submission

Acceptable Biological Catch

Mutton Snapper

Table 1 shows the stock acceptable biological catch (ABC) and overfishing limit (OFL) recommendations from the joint SSCs for **mutton snapper** for 2024 through 2028 based on SEDAR 79 (2024). The SSCs used the geometric mean of the most recent five years of recruitment (2019-2023) for informing OFL and ABC. The OFL is set at $F_{30\%SPR}$, and the ABC is set at 75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$, for the years 2026 – 2028, as derived from the provided projections for 2024 – 2028. The final report for this meeting can be found **HERE**. Status determination criteria are listed in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Stock OFL and ABC recommendations for **mutton snapper** from the Joint SSCs (February 2025) in response to SEDAR 79 (2024). ABCs are based on projections at F=75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$. Catch levels are in pounds (lbs) whole weight (ww).

Year	OFL ($F_{30\%SPR}$)	ABC (75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$)
2026	3,363,706	2,725,359
2027	3,313,030	2,752,377
2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615

Table 2. Status determination criteria and management benchmarks for southeastern U.S. **mutton snapper**, based on the results of the SEDAR 79 stock assessment.

Southeastern US Mutton Snapper		
Criteria	**Definition**	**Base Model Value**
Fishing mortality (F)$_{30\%}$Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR)	the fishing mortality rate associated with 30% SPR and the proxy used for F_{MSY}	0.149 yr^{-1}
$F_{40\%SPR}$	the fishing mortality rate associated with 40% SPR and the proxy used for F_{OY}	0.11 yr^{-1}
Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold (MFMT)	$F_{30\%SPR}$	0.149 yr^{-1}
F Optimum Yield (OY)	$F_{40\%SPR}$	0.11 yr^{-1}
$F_{current}$	the geometric mean of F on age-3 fish for 2021-2023	0.08 yr^{-1}
Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB)$_{F30\%SPR}$	the estimated spawning stock biomass associated with F at 30% SPR	3,352, metric tons (mt)
Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST)	$0.75*SSB_{F30\%SPR}$	2,514 mt (5,542,421 lbs)
$SSB_{current}$	the geometric mean of SSB for 2021-2023	5,403 mt (11,911,576 lbs)
Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) proxy	Yield at $F_{30\%SPR}$	681.87 mt (1,503,266 lbs)

Yellowtail Snapper

Table 3 shows stock ABC and OFL recommendations for **yellowtail snapper** for 2024 through 2028 based on SEDAR 96 (2025). The SSCs used the arithmetic mean of the most recent five years of recruitment (2019-2023) for informing OFL and ABC projections. The OFL is set at $F_{30\%SPR}$, and the ABC is set at 75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$, for the years 2026-2028, as derived from the provided projections for 2024-2028. The final report for this meeting can be found **HERE**. Status determination criteria are listed in **Table 4**.

Table 3. Stock OFL and ABC recommendations for **yellowtail snapper** from the Joint SSC (February 2025) in response to SEDAR 96 (2025). ABCs are based on projections at F=75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$. Catch levels are in lbs ww.

Year	OFL ($F_{30\%SPR}$)	ABC (75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$)
2026	4,495,187	3,925,031
2027	4,364,600	3,913,426
2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634

Table 4. Status determination criteria and management benchmarks for southeastern U.S. **yellowtail snapper** for the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, based on the results of the SEDAR 96 stock assessment.

Southeastern US Yellowtail Snapper		
Criteria	**Definition**	**Base Model Value**
MSY	The retained yield at F_{MSY} (or proxy, $F_{30\%SPR}$)	1,391.44 mt (3,067,600 lbs)
F_{MSY} or proxy	The fishing mortality rate associated with MSY (or proxy 30% SPR)	0.398 yr^{-1}
MFMT	$F_{MSY \text{ or } 30\%SPR}$	0.398 yr^{-1}
$F_{current}$	the geometric mean of F on age-4 fish for 2021-2023	0.263 yr^{-1}
$SSB_{MSY \text{ or proxy}}$	the estimated spawning stock biomass associated with $F_{MSY \text{ or } F30\%SPR}$	1,816.54 mt (4,004,785 lbs)
MSST	$0.75*SSB_{F30\%SPR}$	1,362.41 mt (3,003,589 lbs)
$SSB_{current}$	the geometric mean of SSB for 2021-2023	2,518.21 mt (5,551,692 lbs)

Recent Landings and Closures

Mutton Snapper

Mutton snapper landings averaged roughly 150,000 lbs annually from 2000-2024 in the Gulf and roughly 1,100,000 lbs annually in the South Atlantic (Figure 1). Neither region has experienced an ACL based closure from 2012-2024.

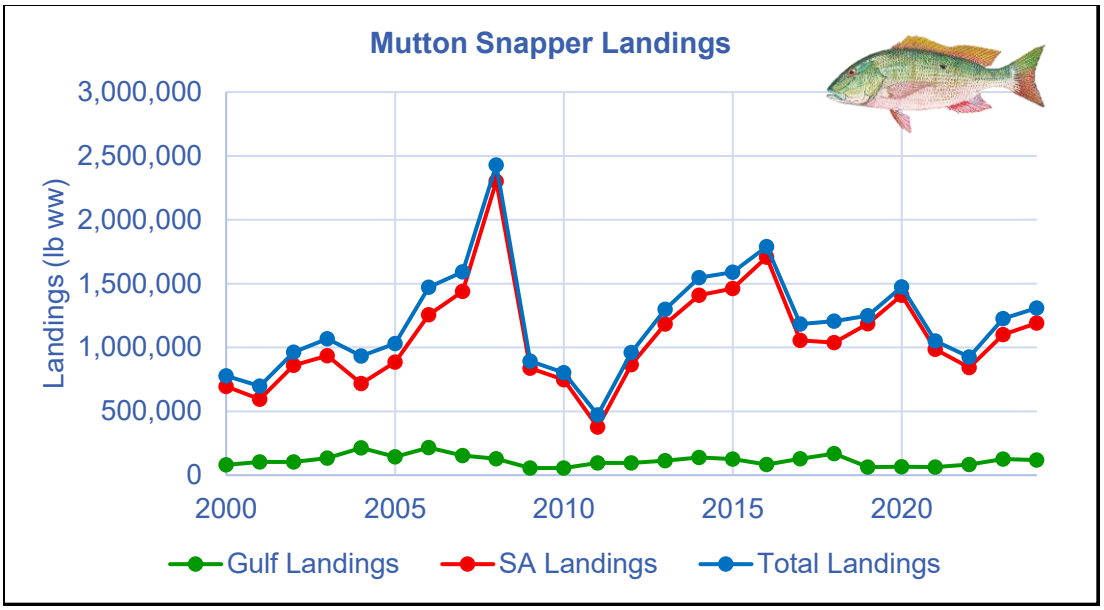

Figure 1. Total (blue), Gulf (green), and South Atlantic (red) landings for mutton snapper from 2000–2024.

Yellowtail Snapper

Yellowtail snapper landings averaged roughly 610,000 lbs annually from 2000-2024 in the Gulf and roughly 3,200,000 lbs annually in the South Atlantic (Figure 2). There has not been an ACL based closure in the Gulf from 2012-2024. There has not been a recreational ACL based closure in the South Atlantic from 2012-2024, however there were commercial ACL-based closures in the following months and years: October 2015, June 2017, June 2018, and June 2019.

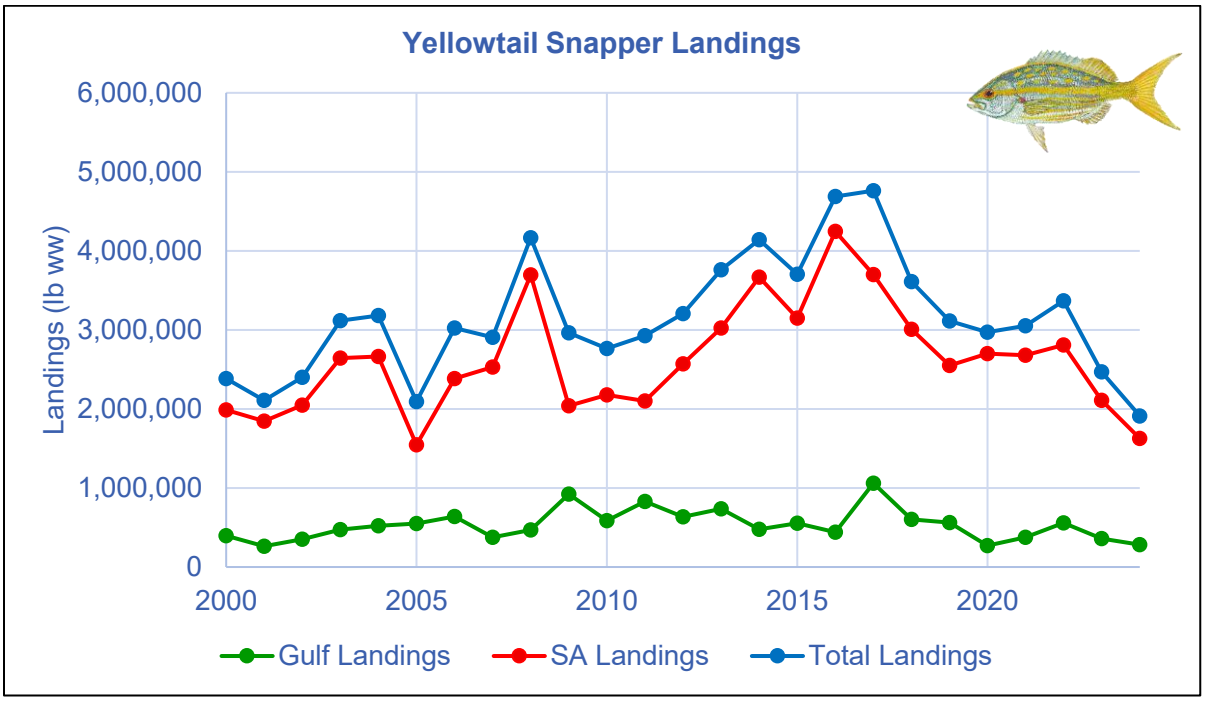

Figure 2. Total (blue), Gulf (green), and South Atlantic (red) landings for yellowtail snapper from 2000–2024.

Purpose and Need Statements

The *purpose* of these fishery management plan amendments is to revise the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper stock overfishing limit, and stock acceptable biological catch, based on the results of the SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96 stock assessments, respectively. The amendments would also revise the jurisdictional apportionment between the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, the regional annual catch limits, and the South Atlantic sector allocations.

The *need* for these fishery management plan amendments is to update existing catch limits, jurisdictional apportionments of the ABCs, and South Atlantic sector allocations for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper to be consistent with the best scientific information available, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL IN DECEMBER 2025

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Action 1. Modification of Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Jurisdictional Apportionment and Regional Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)

Purpose of Action: *This action will update the **stock OFL**, **stock ABC**, **jurisdictional apportionment**, and **regional ACLs** for southeastern U.S. **mutton snapper**, based on the results of the SSC's review of the 2024 SEDAR 79 (2024). The stock ABC and each region's respective ABC will include Florida's SRFS and MRIP FES recreational landings estimates.*

Alternative 1: No Action. Maintain the current OFL, ABC, jurisdictional apportionment of the ABC, and regional ACLs for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper. The jurisdictional apportionment of the mutton snapper stock ABC by region is based on the formula established in the Generic ACL/Accountability Measures (AM) Amendment and Comprehensive ACL Amendment (weighting 50% to the average catch history from 1990-2008 + 50% to the average catch history from 2006-2008), whereby 82% of the stock ABC is apportioned to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council), and 18% is apportioned to the Gulf Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). The apportionment for mutton snapper was derived, in part, using data generated from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). Each region's stock ACL equals its apportionment of the stock ABC. Catch limits are shown below in pounds (lb) whole weight (ww).

Alternative 2: Modify the OFL and ABC and retain the current jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and establish regional ACLs based on the recommendations of the Councils' Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) for 2027 – 2028 and subsequent years. Each region's ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. For mutton snapper, 82% of the stock ABC is apportioned to the South Atlantic Council, and 18% is apportioned to the Gulf Council. Catch limits shown below are in pounds (lb) whole weight (ww) and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

Preferred Alternative 3: Modify the OFL and ABC and the jurisdictional apportionment of the mutton snapper ABC and the regional ACLs using the average of historic and recent landings, and the following reference period, based on the recommendations of the Councils' SSCs for 2027 – 2028 and subsequent years. Each region's ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. Monitoring of landings for mutton snapper will be inclusive of SRFS for recreational private vessel landings, MRIP for federal for-hire and recreational shore landings, and SRHS for headboat landings. Catch limits shown below are in lb ww and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

> **Option 3a:** Use 50% of the average landings from 2004 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 16% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 84% to the South Atlantic Council.

Preferred Option 3b: Use 50% of the average landings from 2014 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 15% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 85% to the South Atlantic Council.

Alternative	Gulf Percentage	SA Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Alternative 1 (No Action)	18%	82%	**True No Action** - retain the percentages and ABCs based on CHTS units for both species
Alternative 2	18%	82%	Apply the current percentages onto the updated ABC based on SEDAR 79. SA and Gulf ACLs=Regional ABC
Preferred Alternative 3: Modify the jurisdictional apportionment based off the previously used formula (bowtie) with the following updated date ranges:			
Alternative 3a	16%	84%	Update based on 50% average landings from **2004-2023** and 50% average landings from **2021-2023** (most recent 19 yrs) SA and Gulf ACLs=Regional ABC
Preferred Alternative 3b	**15%**	**85%**	Update based on 50% average landings from **2014-2023** and 50% of the average landings from **2021-2023** (most recent 9 yrs) SA and Gulf ACLs=Regional ABC

Table 5. The stock and regional catch levels for Action 1 for mutton snapper.

Alternative	Year	Stock OFL (lbs ww)	Stock ABC (lbs ww)	Gulf ABC/ACL (lbs ww)	South Atlantic ABC/ACL (lbs ww)
Alternative 1 (No Action)	2025+	912,500	797,874	143,617	654,257
Alternative 2	2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	490,565	2,234,794
	2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	495,428	2,256,949
	2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	499,071	2,273,544
Alternative 3a	2026	3,363,706	2,725,359	436,057	2,289,302
	2027	3,313,030	2,752,377	440,380	2,311,997
	2028+	3,270,355	2,772,615	443,618	2,328,997
Preferred Alternative 3b	**2026**	**3,363,706**	**2,725,359**	**408,804**	**2,316,555**
	2027	**3,313,030**	**2,752,377**	**412,857**	**2,339,520**
	2028+	**3,270,355**	**2,772,615**	**415,892**	**2,356,723**

Discussion

- **Alternative 2** would apply the current jurisdictional allocation to the updated catch levels.
- **Alternatives 3a** and **3b** would update the current allocation formula using more recent date ranges and apply revised jurisdictional allocation to the updated catch levels.

Effects Summary

Effects on the Physical Environment

- Although some proposed alternatives could substantially increase potential mutton snapper harvest, current landings are well below those potential allocations in both the Gulf and South Atlantic.
- Both recreational and commercial sectors are currently open to year-round harvest, and this is not expected to change under the proposed alternatives.
- The proposed changes are expected to have **minor effects** on the physical environment and vulnerable marine/coastal ecosystems because they would not change how the reef fish or snapper-grouper fisheries are conducted.

Biological Effects

- The proposed alternatives are expected to have **minimal or no additional negative effects** on the biological environment, bycatch, biodiversity, or protected species because the fishery is expected to operate much as they do currently.

Economic Effects

- Overall, **recreational** economic effects are expected to be minimal or negligible.
- No direct economic effects to the **commercial** sector are expected from the proposed alternatives.
- The increases in ABC for either region are unlikely to translate into comparable increases in actual harvest, because the fishery has not been reaching the existing ACLs.
- Consequently, **little to no measurable economic effect** is expected for either the recreational or commercial sectors.

Social Effects

- The viable alternatives are expected to have **generally positive social effects** because they increase the amount of mutton snapper available for harvest.
- Higher catch limits should provide greater fishing opportunities and reduce the risk of restrictive in-season closures.
- The alternatives are not expected to require major changes in fishing behavior.
- Overall, the viable alternatives are expected to provide **broadly positive benefits to fishery participants and communities**.

Administrative Effects

- None of the proposed alternatives are expected to result in **significant administrative effects**.

Committee Action

- REVIEW THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Action 2. Modification of Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Jurisdictional Apportionment and Regional Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)

Purpose of Action: *This action will update the **stock OFL**, **stock ABC**, **jurisdictional apportionment**, and **regional ACLs** for southeastern U.S. **yellowtail snapper**, based on the results of the SSC's review of the 2024 SEDAR 79 (2024). The stock ABC and each region's respective ABC will include Florida's SRFS and MRIP FES recreational landings estimates.*

Alternative 1: No Action. Maintain the current OFL, ABC, jurisdictional apportionment of the ABC, and regional ACLs for southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. The jurisdictional apportionment of the yellowtail snapper stock ABC by region is based on the formula established in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment and Comprehensive ACL Amendment (weighting 50% to the average catch history from 1993-2008 + 50% to the average catch history from 2006-2008), whereby 75% of the stock ABC is apportioned to the South Atlantic Council, and 25% is apportioned to the Gulf Council. The apportionment for yellowtail snapper was inclusive of MRFSS. The South Atlantic Council's regional ACL equals its apportionment of the stock ABC. The Gulf Council's regional ACL is reduced by 11% from its jurisdictional apportionment of the ABC using the Gulf Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule. Catch limits are shown below in lb ww.

Alternative 2: Modify the OFL and ABC and retain the current jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC for southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper and establish regional ACLs based on the recommendations of the Councils' SSCs for 2026 – 2028 and subsequent years. The South Atlantic Council's regional ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. For yellowtail snapper, 75% of the stock ABC is apportioned to the South Atlantic Council, and 25% is apportioned to the Gulf Council. Catch limits shown below are in lb ww and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

> **Option 2a:** The Gulf regional ACL will be reduced 11% from the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC, consistent with the buffer established in the Gulf Generic ACL/Accountability Measures Amendment in 2012.
>
> **Option 2b:** The Gulf regional ACL will be set equal to the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC.

Alternative 3: Modify the OFL and ABC and the jurisdictional apportionment of the yellowtail snapper ABC and the regional ACLs using the average of historic and recent landings, based on the recommendations of the Councils' SSCs for 2026 – 2028 and subsequent years. Use 50% of the average landings from 2004 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 17% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 83% to the South Atlantic Council. The South Atlantic Council's regional ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. Catch limits shown below are in lb ww and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

Option 3a: The Gulf regional ACL will be reduced 11% from the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC, consistent with the buffer established in the Gulf Generic ACL/Accountability Measures Amendment in 2012.

Option 3b: The Gulf regional ACL will be set equal to the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC.

Preferred Alternative 4: Modify the OFL and ABC and the jurisdictional apportionment of the yellowtail snapper ABC and the regional ACLs using the average of historic and recent landings, based on the recommendations of the Councils' SSCs for 2026 – 2028 and subsequent years. Use 50% of the average landings from 2014 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 17% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 83% to the South Atlantic Council. The South Atlantic Council's regional ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. Catch limits shown below are in lb ww and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

Option 4a: The Gulf regional ACL will be reduced 11% from the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC, consistent with the buffer established in the Gulf Generic ACL/Accountability Measures Amendment in 2012.

Preferred Option 4b: The Gulf regional ACL will be set equal to the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC.

Alternative	Gulf Percentage	SA Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Alternative 1 (No Action)	25%	75%	**True No Action** - retain the percentages and ABCs based on MRFSS units for both species
Alternative 2	25%	75%	Apply the current percentages onto the updated ABC based on SEDAR 79. SA ACL=SA ABC
	Alternative 2a	Gulf will retain the 11% buffer between the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL.	
	Alternative 2b	Gulf ACL = Gulf ABC	
Alternative 3	17%	83%	Update based on 50% average landings from **2004-2023** and 50% average landings from **2021-2023** (most recent 19 yrs) SA ACL=SA ABC
	Alternative 3a	Gulf will retain the 11% buffer between the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL.	
	Alternative 3b	Gulf ACL = Gulf ABC	
Preferred Alternative 4	**17%**	**83%**	Update based on 50% average landings from **2014-2023** and 50% of the average landings from **2021-2023** (most recent 9 yrs) SA ACL=SA ABC
	Alternative 4a	Gulf will retain the 11% buffer between the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL.	
	Preferred Alternative 4b	**Gulf ACL = Gulf ABC**	

Table 6. The stock and regional catch levels for Action 2 for yellowtail snapper. The South Atlantic specific ACLs are highlighted in green.

Alternative	Year	OFL (lbs ww)	Stock ABC (lbs ww)	South Atlantic ABC/ACL (lbs ww)	Gulf ACL (lbs ww)
Alternative 1 (No Action)	2025+	4,510,000	4,050,000	3,037,500	1,012,500
Alternative 2 (25% G/75% SA)	2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	2,943,773	See Alts 2a and 2b
	2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	2,935,070	
	2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	2,938,976	
GULF ACL ONLY Alt 2a (Gulf ACL=11% of Gulf ABC)	2026	values the same			873,320
	2027				870,738
	2028+				871,897
GULF ACL ONLY Alt 2b (Gulf ACL=Gulf ABC)	2026	values the same			981,258
	2027				978,357
	2028+				979,659
Alternative 3 (17% G/83% SA)	2026	4,495,187	3,925,031	3,257,776	See Alts 3a and 3b
	2027	4,364,600	3,913,426	3,248,144	
	2028+	4,307,856	3,918,634	3,252,466	
GULF ACL ONLY Alt 3a (Gulf ACL=11% of Gulf ABC)	2026	values the same			593,857
	2027				592,101
	2028+				592,889
GULF ACL ONLY Alt 3b (Gulf ACL=Gulf ABC)	2026	values the same			667,255
	2027				665,282
	2028+				666,168
Preferred Alternative 4 (17% G/83% SA)	**2026**	**4,495,187**	**3,925,031**	**3,257,776**	**See Alts 4a and 4b**
	2027	**4,364,600**	**3,913,426**	**3,248,144**	
	2028+	**4,307,856**	**3,918,634**	**3,252,466**	
GULF ACL ONLY Alt 4a (Gulf ACL=11% of Gulf ABC)	2026	values the same			593,857
	2027				592,101
	2028+				592,889
GULF ACL ONLY Preferred Alt 4b (Gulf ACL=Gulf ABC)	**2026**	**values the same**			**667,255**
	2027				**665,282**
	2028+				**666,168**

Discussion

- **Alternatives 2a-b**, **3a-b,** and **4a-b** are Gulf specific. Currently the Gulf has an 11% buffer between the Gulf ABC and ACL. The current preferred alternative would remove this buffer.
- The South Atlantic does not currently have a buffer between the ABC and ACL and therefore sub-alternatives are not needed if the Council does not feel a management

buffer is necessary. During discussions at the December 2025 meeting, the Council indicated that they did not feel that either stock would benefit from a buffer between the South Atlantic ABC and ACL.

Effects Summary

Effects on the Physical Environment

- Fishing practices in both the Gulf and South Atlantic are expected to remain unchanged, including gear types, fishing methods, and overall effort.
- The proposed alternatives would increase the potential amount of yellowtail snapper that could be harvested, but neither the commercial nor recreational sectors are currently harvesting their full potential allocations.
- Because fishing activity is expected not expected to change, the proposed alternatives are **not expected to produce measurable differences in physical environmental impacts**.
- Overall, effects on the physical environment are **expected to be minor**, because changing catch limits and jurisdictional allocations would not change fishing methods or substantially alter how the Gulf or South Atlantic fisheries operate.

Biological Effects

- The proposed alternatives are **not expected to have negative biological effects** on southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper.
- Alternatives retaining the Gulf's 11% buffer could provide **somewhat greater biological benefits**, but the difference is largely theoretical because current harvest is well below the proposed catch limits.
- Overall, the yellowtail snapper stock, bycatch, and protected species are **not expected to experience significant additional biological impacts** from the proposed alternatives.

Economic Effects

- Overall **recreational** economic effects are expected to be **minimal**.
- No direct economic effects on the **commercial** sector are expected.
- The proposed alternatives would provide more potential yellowtail snapper harvest than recent landings however, actual harvest is expected to remain well below the proposed ACLs.
- Because neither recreational nor commercial fishermen are currently reaching their catch limits, the increased ACLs are **unlikely to substantially change fishing activity or economic outcomes**.
- Overall, the proposed catch-limit increases are expected to have **little to no measurable economic effect** on either the recreational or commercial sectors, despite providing greater potential fishing opportunities.

Social Effects

- Overall social effects are expected to be **minimal.**

- The preferred option generally **shifts opportunity toward the South Atlantic while maintaining a Gulf ACL that is unlikely to constrain fishermen under recent fishing patterns**.

Administrative Effects

- The proposed action is **not expected to result in significant administrative effects** and may reduce the administrative burden associated with converting recreational catch data from MRIP-FES to MRFSS.

Committee Action

- REVIEW THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Action 3: Modification of Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic

Purpose of Action: *This action will update the South Atlantic allocations and sector ACLs for mutton snapper.*

Preferred Alternative 1: No Action. Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 17.02% and 82.98%, respectively, of the current South Atlantic total annual catch limit for mutton snapper.

Alternative 2. Allocate 12.71% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the commercial sector and 87.29% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the recreational sector.

Alternative 3. Allocate 11.45% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the commercial sector and 88.55% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the recreational sector.

Alternative	Commercial Percentage	Recreational Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action)	**17.02%**	**82.98%**	The current allocation percentages would be applied to the **UPDATED** South Atlantic ACL. **This is a viable alternative**
Alternative 3	12.71%	87.29%	Update the current allocation formula: (0.5 x average landings from **2004-2023**) + (0.5 x average landings from **2021-2023**)
Alternative 4	11.45%	88.55%	Update the current allocation formula: (0.5 x average landings from **2014-2023**) + (0.5 x average landings from **2021-2023**)

Table 7. The sector ACL values for each sector allocation alternative (Action 3), based on the preferred ABC under Action 1 Alternative 3b for mutton snapper.

Year	Action 1 Alternative Jurisdictional ABC/ACL	South Atlantic Apportionment and ABC/ACL	South Atlantic Commercial ACL	South Atlantic Recreational ACL Numbers of Fish
Action 3, Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action)				
2026	**Preferred Alternative 3b (15% Gulf/85% SA)**	**2,316,555**	**394,278**	**371,021**
2027		**2,339,520**	**398,186**	**364,028**
2028+		**2,356,723**	**401,114**	**359,617**
Action 3, Alternative 3				
2026	Preferred Alternative 3b (15% Gulf/85% SA)	2,316,555	294,434	382,781
2027		2,339,520	297,353	375,904
2028+		2,356,723	299,539	371,581
Action 3, Alternative 4				
2026	Preferred Alternative 3b (15% Gulf/85% SA)	2,316,555	265,246	386,219
2027		2,339,520	267,875	379,376
2028+		2,356,723	269,845	375,079

Discussion

- The commercial ACL is expressed in lbs ww whereas the recreational ACL is expressed in numbers of fish. A full explanation of the methods used to convert the recreational ACL to numbers of fish can be found in SG Amendment 41, Appendix J. In summary, the following methods and weight conversion were used:
    1. Calculate the total ACL in lbs ww?
    2. Apply the allocation percentages to the total ACL to get sector ACLs in lbs ww
    3. Convert the **commercial ACL** into numbers of fish using the average weight of a commercially caught mutton snapper: **7.68 lbs ww**.
    4. Calculate the **recreational ACL** in numbers of fish by subtracting the commercial allocation in numbers from the total ACL in numbers.
- **Appendix II** analyzed ways to update the weight conversion. Recreational ACL values in numbers of fish are reflective of the recommended commercial weight conversion (**8.49 lbs ww**). The average weight of fish increased after the size limit increased in 2018.
- **Alternatives 3** and **4** follow the methods developed for gag grouper in SG Amendment 53, referred to as the Split Reduction Method. Since the catch levels for mutton snapper would be increasing (Table 1), the method would distribute the *increase* in year 1 proportionally to each sector's landings in the set year range and then split the poundage *increase* each year thereafter.
- The **SAFE REPORT** details sector trends for mutton snapper in section 7.1.5.

Effects Summary

Effects on the Physical Environment

- Direct and indirect effects on the physical environment of South Atlantic sector allocations of mutton snapper are not expected to differ from those described in Action 1.

Biological Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action):**
  - Maintains the current commercial/recreational allocation percentages.
  - Revised sector ACLs would still be higher than recent landings.
  - No sector closures are expected.
  - Therefore, **no direct or indirect biological or ecological effects are expected**.
- Because neither sector is expected to reach its allocation, **no significant biological or ecological effects are expected from the allocation changes**.

Economic Effects

- Even though no direct economic effects are expected, the size of the gap between typical landings and the ACL provides potential future economic benefits.
- A larger sector ACL may equal greater potential economic opportunity, particularly in years when mutton snapper abundance or availability is unusually high.
- Thus, **Alternative 3** provides the **greatest potential future benefit** for the **recreational sector**, while the **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action)** provides **the greatest potential future benefit** for the **commercial sector**.
- These are **potential benefits rather than expected realized economic gains**, because current harvest levels are not expected to reach the sector ACLs.

Social Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action**) is likely to have **few social effects** because both sectors would have catch limits higher than recent landings.

Administrative Effects

- **No significant administrative effects** are expected from any Action 3 alternative.
- **Sector ACLs already exist** in the regulations, so no new administrative framework is needed.

Preliminary Analysis

Commercial

- South Atlantic mutton snapper commercial landings (Figure 4) are compared against the commercial ACLs being considered for the South Atlantic region.
  - This analysis tiers off Action 1 and bases the sector ACLs on the South Atlantic total ACL from the preferred alternative from Action 1.

- The recent annual South Atlantic mutton snapper commercial landings are below the South Atlantic commercial ACLs being considered. Therefore, it's likely that future South Atlantic mutton snapper commercial landings will not exceed the commercial ACLs being considered.

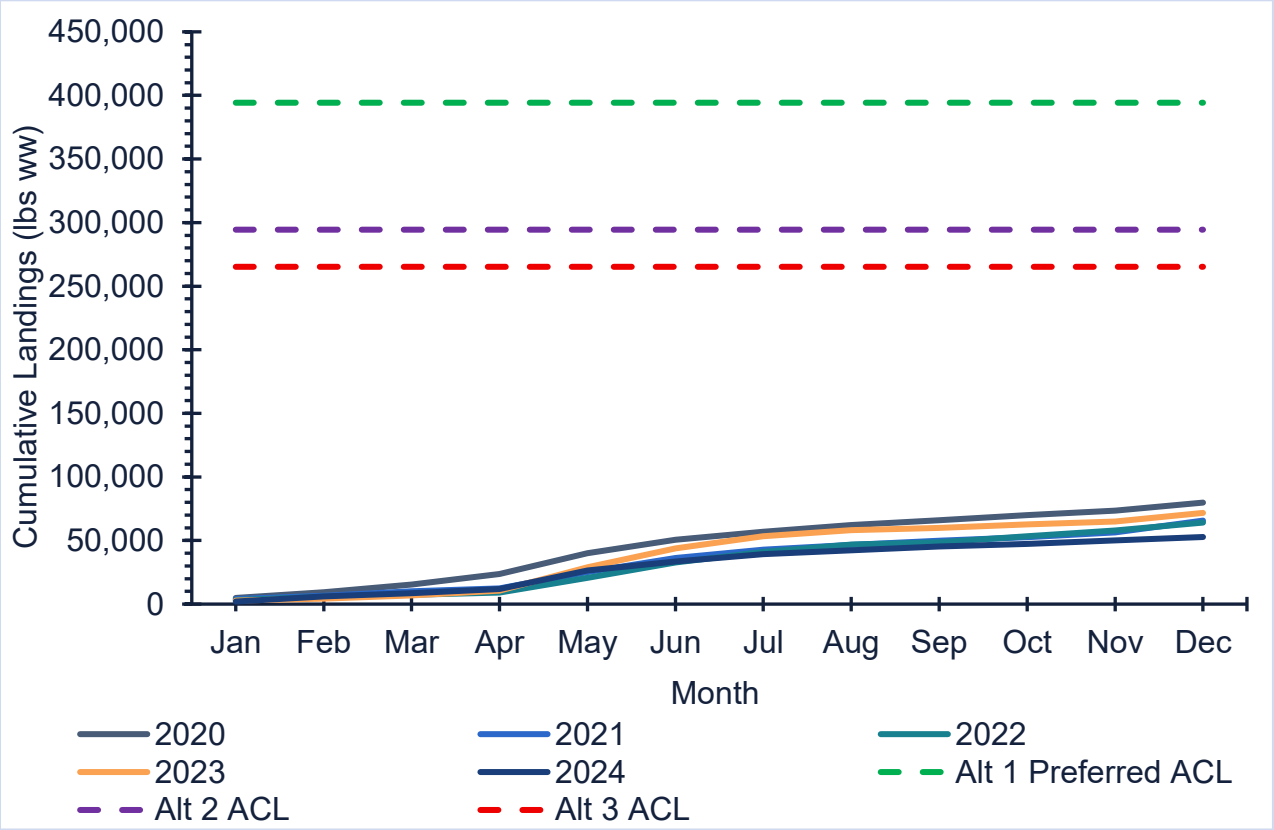

Figure 4. South Atlantic mutton snapper cumulative commercial landings by month from 2020 through 2024. The dashed lines are the Action 3 South Atlantic commercial ACLs being considered. All ACL alternatives for this action are based on the preferred South Atlantic total ACL from Action 1 (Preferred Alternative 3b).

Recreational

- South Atlantic mutton snapper recreational landings (Figure 5) are compared against the recreational ACLs being considered for the South Atlantic region.
    - This analysis tiers off Action 1 and bases the sector ACLs on the South Atlantic total ACL from the preferred alternative from Action 1.
- The recent annual South Atlantic mutton snapper landings are below the South Atlantic recreational ACLs being considered except under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**. However, the recreational ACL in **Alternative 1 (No Action)** is based on the legacy Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey recreational estimates, which are no longer considered consistent with the best scientific information available for mutton snapper. Therefore, it's likely that future South Atlantic mutton snapper recreational landings will not exceed the recreational ACLs being considered.

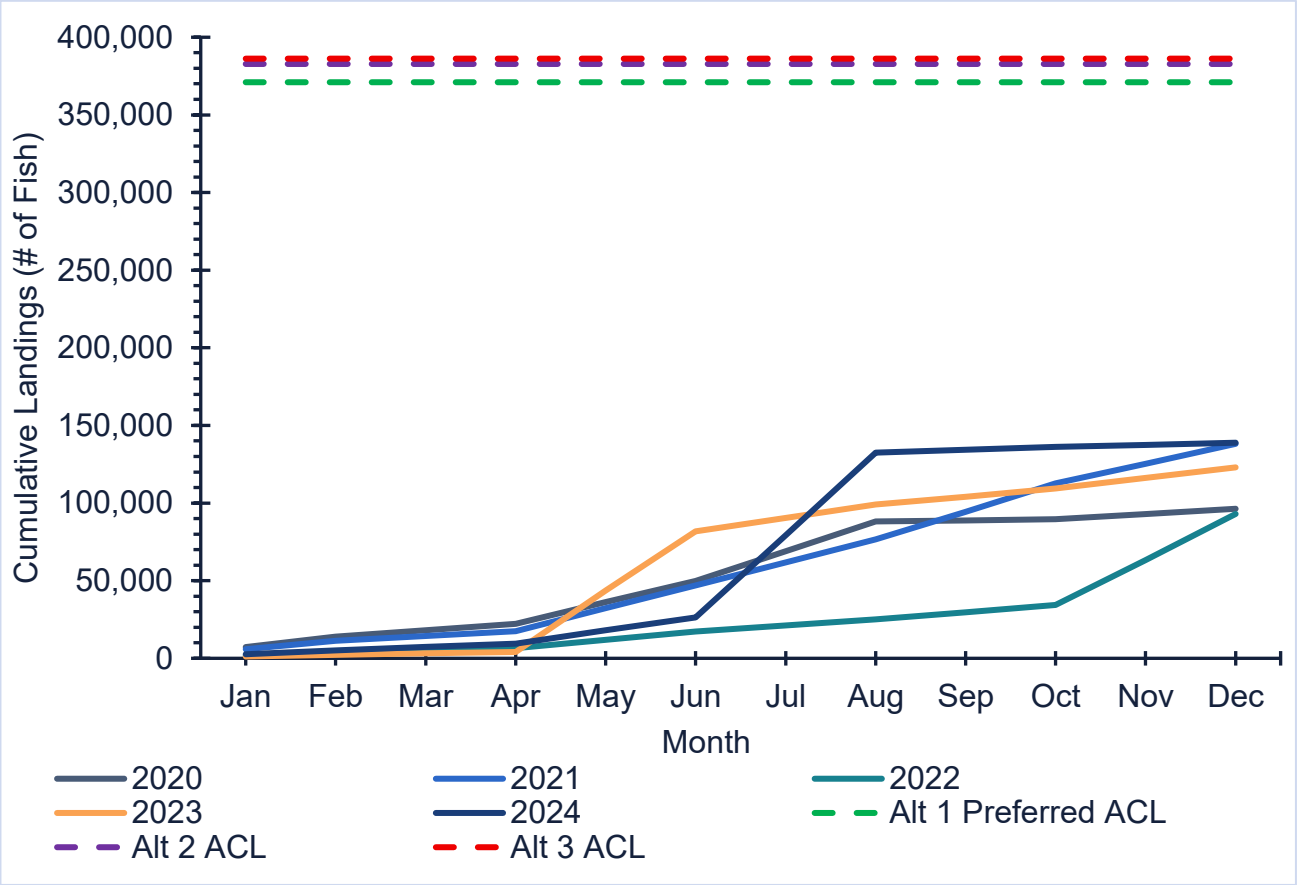

Figure 5. South Atlantic mutton snapper cumulative recreational landings by month from 2020 through 2024. The landings are in number of fish. The dashed lines are the Action 3 South Atlantic recreational ACLs being considered. All alternatives for this action are based on the preferred South Atlantic total ACL from Action 1 (Preferred Alternative 3b).

Committee Action

- REVIEW THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES.

Action 4: Modification of Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic

Purpose of Action: *This action will update the South Atlantic allocations and sector ACLs for yellowtail snapper.*

Preferred Alternative 1: No Action. Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 52.56% and 47.44%, respectively, of the current South Atlantic total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper.

Alternative 2. Allocate 55.46% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the commercial sector and 44.54% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the recreational sector.

Alternative 3. Allocate 56.52% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the commercial sector and 43.48% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the recreational sector.

Alternative	Commercial Percentage	Recreational Percentage	Formula/Explanation
Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action)	**52.56%**	**47.44%**	The current allocation percentages would be applied to the **UPDATED** South Atlantic ACL. **This is a viable alternative.**
Alternative 3	55.46%	44.54%	Update the current allocation formula: (0.5 x average landings from **2004-2023**) + (0.5 x average landings from **2021-2023**)
Alternative 4	56.52%	43.48%	Update the current allocation formula: (0.5 x average landings from **2014-2023**) + (0.5 x average landings from **2021-2023**)

Table 8. The sector ACL values for each sector allocation alternative (Action 3), based on the preferred ABC under Action 2 Alternative 4b for yellowtail snapper.

Year	Action 2 Alternative Jurisdictional ABC/ACL	South Atlantic Apportionment and ABC/ACL	South Atlantic Commercial ACL	South Atlantic Recreational ACL
Action 4, Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action)				
2026	**Preferred Alternative 4b (17% Gulf/83% SA)**	**3,257,776**	**1,712,287**	**1,545,489**
2027		**3,248,144**	**1,707,224**	**1,540,919**
2028+		**3,252,466**	**1,709,496**	**1,542,970**
Action 4, Alternative 3				
2026	Preferred Alternative 4b (17% Gulf/83% SA)	3,257,776	1,806,762	1,451,013
2027		3,248,144	1,801,420	1,446,723
2028+		3,252,466	1,803,818	1,448,648
Action 4, Alternative 4				
2026	Preferred Alternative 4b (17% Gulf/83% SA)	3,257,776	1,841,295	1,416,481
2027		3,248,144	1,835,851	1,412,293
2028+		3,252,466	1,838,294	1,414,172

Discussion

- **Alternatives 3** and **4** follow the methods developed for gag grouper in SG Amendment 53, referred to as the Split Reduction Method. Since the catch levels for yellowtail snapper would both increase and decrease throughout the time period (Table 3); hence, the *increase* in year 1 would be proportional to each sector's landings in the set year range and the poundage would *change* each year thereafter.
- The **SAFE REPORT** details sector trends for mutton snapper in section 7.4.5.

Effects Summary

Effects on the Physical Environment

- Direct and indirect effects of South Atlantic sector allocations of yellowtail snapper are not expected to differ from those described in Action 2.

Biological Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action):**
  - Maintains the current commercial and recreational allocation percentages.
  - **No direct or indirect biological effects are expected**.
  - Revised sector ACLs would remain above recent landings, so sector closures are not expected.

Economic Effects

- Although **no direct economic effects are expected**, alternatives can be ranked based on the potential economic benefit created by the amount of unused ACL available:
    - Recreational sector ranking (highest to lowest economic benefit): **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action), Alternative 2, Alternative 3.**
    - Commercial sector ranking: (highest to lowest economic benefit): **Alternative 3, Alternative 2, Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action).**
- The alternatives are **not expected to produce immediate economic changes** because neither sector is currently constrained by its ACL, but the allocation changes affect the potential future economic opportunity for each sector.

Social Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action**) is likely to have **few social effects** because both sectors would have catch limits higher than recent landings.

Administrative Effects

- **No significant administrative effects** are expected from any Action 4 alternative.
- **Sector ACLs already exist** in the regulations, so no new administrative framework is needed.

Preliminary Analysis

Commercial

- The fishing season for the commercial sector is from August 1 through July 31.
- A summary of the cumulative landings of the four most recent fishing years of complete commercial landings from 2020/2021 through 2023/2024 is shown in Figure 6.
    - This analysis tiers off Action 2 and bases the sector ACLs on the South Atlantic total ACL from the preferred alternative from Action 2.
- All the recent fishing year commercial landings are below the South Atlantic ACLs being considered. Therefore, it is likely that future South Atlantic yellowtail snapper commercial landings will be below the ACLs being considered.

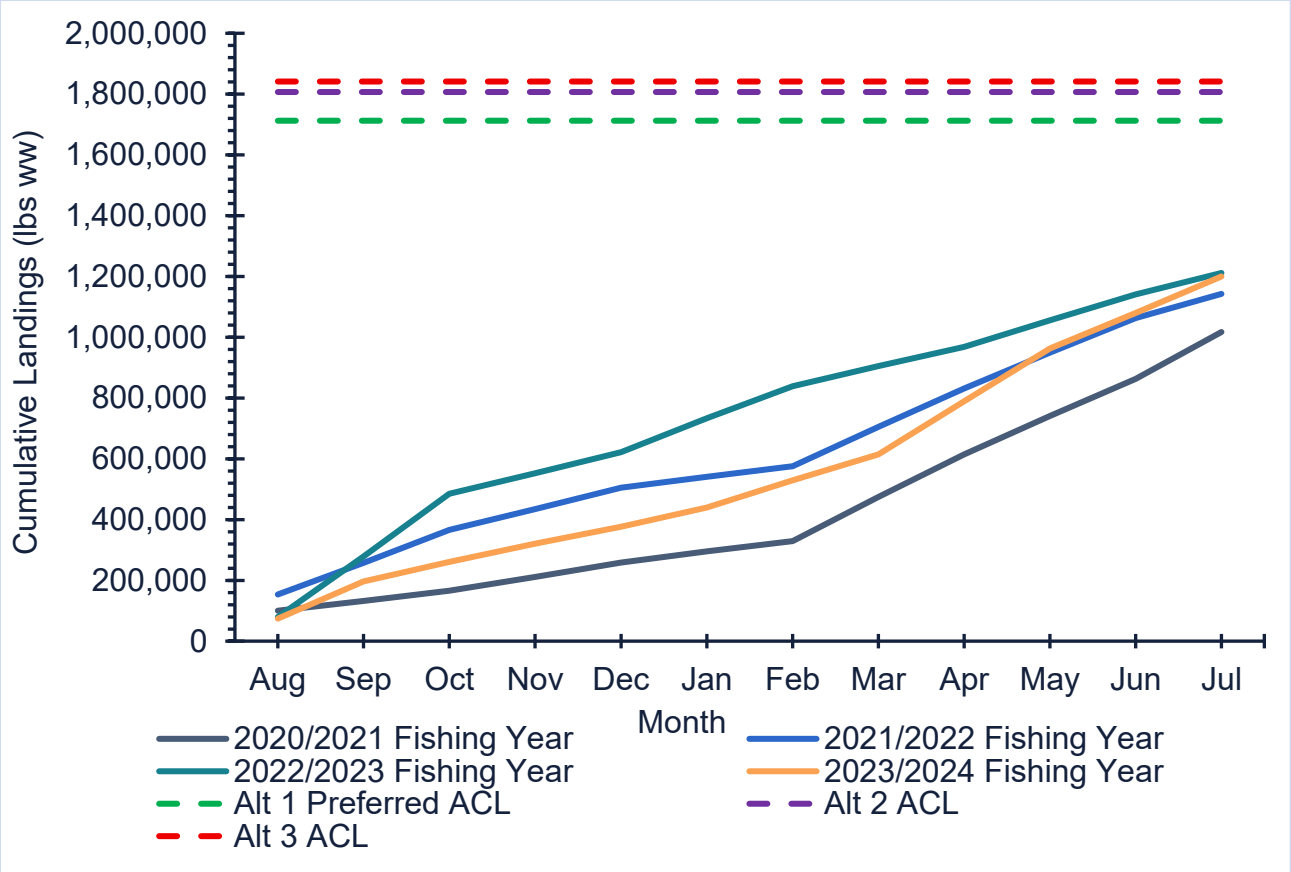

Figure 6. South Atlantic yellowtail snapper commercial cumulative landings by month from 2020/2021 through 2023/2024. The dashed lines are the South Atlantic ACLs being considered in Action 4 which is based on the preferred South Atlantic total ABC/ACL from Action 2 (Preferred Alternative 4b).

Recreational

- The fishing season for the recreational sector is from August 1 through July 31.
- A summary of the cumulative landings of the four most recent fishing years of complete landings from 2020/2021 through 2023/2024 is shown in Figure 7.
    - This analysis tiers off Action 2 and bases the sector ACLs on the South Atlantic total ACL from the preferred alternative from Action 2.
- All of the recent fishing year recreational landings are below the South Atlantic ACLs being considered. Therefore, it is likely that future South Atlantic yellowtail snapper recreational landings will be below the ACLs being considered.

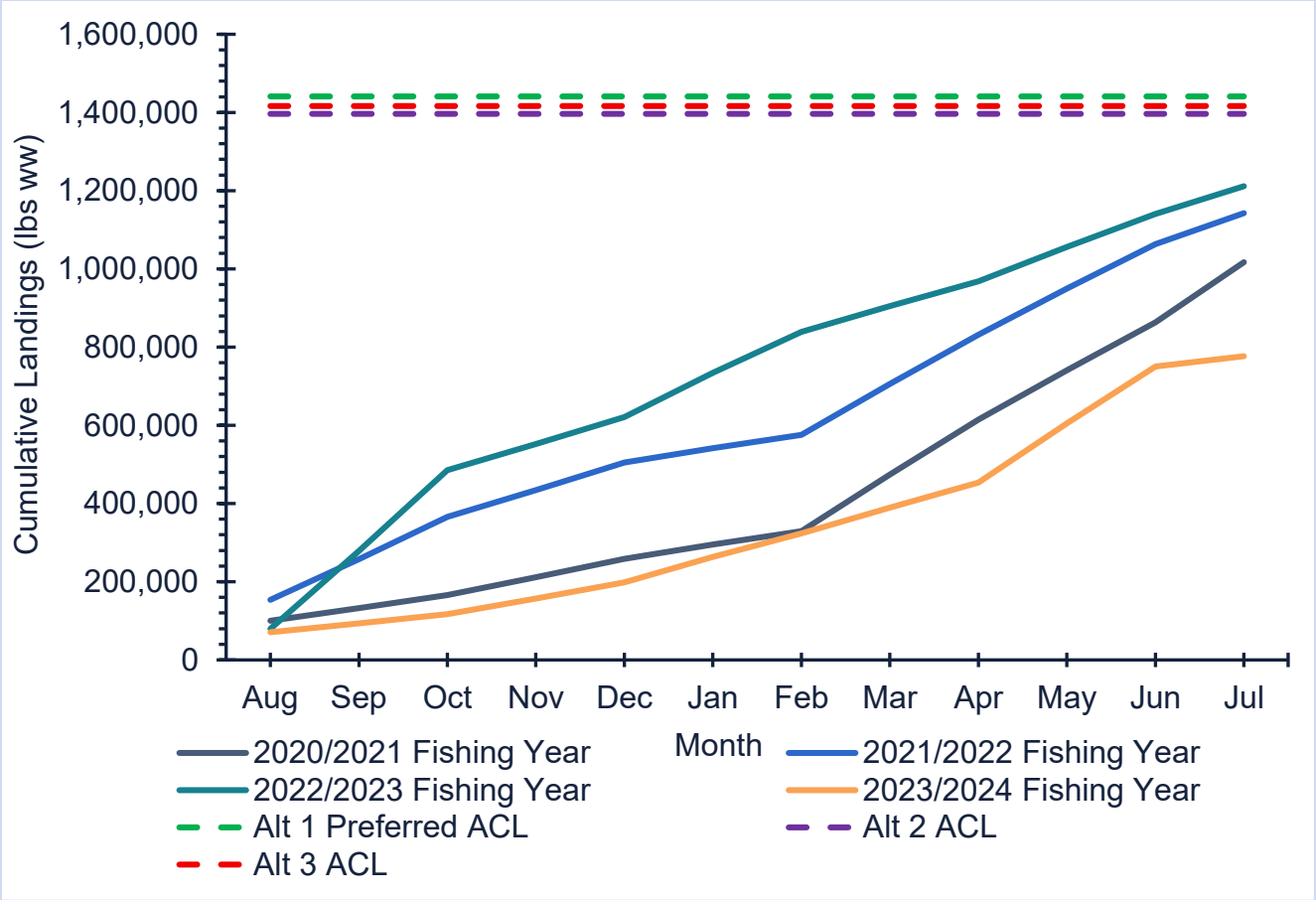

Figure 7. South Atlantic yellowtail snapper recreational cumulative landings by month from 2020/2021 through 2023/2024. The dashed lines are the South Atlantic ACLs being considered in Action 4 which is based on the preferred South Atlantic total ACL from Action 2 (Preferred Alternative 4b).

Committee Action

- REVIEW THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES.

Appendix

Appendix I. Current Accountability Measures

Mutton Snapper

Commercial (50 CFR 622.193(o)(1))

(i). If commercial landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the applicable commercial ACL specified in paragraph (o)(1)(iii) of this section, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of mutton snapper is prohibited and harvest or possession of mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.,* in state or Federal waters.

(ii) If commercial landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the applicable commercial ACL specified in paragraph (o)(1)(iii) of this section, and the applicable combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in paragraph (o)(3) of this section is exceeded during the same fishing year, and the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Recreational (50 CFR 622.193(o)(2))

(i). If recreational landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the applicable recreational ACL specified in paragraph (o)(2)(iii) of this section, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

(ii) If recreational landings for mutton snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the applicable recreational ACL specified in paragraph (o)(2)(iii) of this section, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if

the applicable combined commercial and recreational ACL specified in paragraph (o)(3) of this section is exceeded during the same fishing year. NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Yellowtail Snapper

Commercial (50 CFR 622.193(n)(1))

(i). If commercial landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL of 1,596,510 lb (724,165 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of yellowtail snapper is prohibited and harvest or possession of yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.,* in state or Federal waters.

(ii) If commercial landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the commercial ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 3,037,500 lb (1,377,787 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year, and yellowtail snapper are overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL for that following fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Recreational (50 CFR 622.193(n)(2))

(i). If recreational landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 1,440,990 lb (653,622 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

(ii) If recreational landings for yellowtail snapper, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational

fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if the species is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 3,037,500 lb (1,377,787 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year. The AA will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for yellowtail snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Appendix II. Converting Recreational Sector Allocation to Annual Catch Limit in Numbers of Fish: Mutton Snapper

Developed by Council Staff
May 4, 2026

Background

Recreational and commercial fishery datasets were analyzed to identify the most appropriate basis for converting the recreational sector's allocation from pounds to numbers of fish. Tracking the recreational sector in numbers of fish is warranted because recreational catch monitoring is conducted at the individual fish level, with lengths and weights recorded for a fraction fish landed. While this individual-based data collection supports direct enumeration, it also introduces additional measurement and estimation error relative to weight-based reporting.

The commercial sector, by contrast, reports landings in pounds for a trip, providing a weight-based record that is generally more consistent and stable across years. Sampling occurs dockside on some trips with a random sample of lengths taken to describe the catch composition. Because the two sectors use fundamentally different reporting units, converting between them requires a mean weight conversion factor, which carries inherent uncertainty.

To minimize the risk of exceeding the total Annual Catch Limit (ACL) through conversion error, it is recommended that the ACL for one sector be calculated directly in its native reporting unit, and the remaining sector's ACL be derived by subtracting that sector's contribution from the total ACL. This approach confines conversion uncertainty to a single sector and provides an approach that prevents exceeding the combined ACL.

Recommendation

Use the commercial average weight from 2020 to 2024 as the basis to develop the recreational ACL in numbers of fish because:

- There are more length samples taken from commercial catches (**Figure A-5**);
- Commercial mean weight varied by 0.22 lbs over the time period [(recreational fishery varied by 1.98 lbs), **Figure A-5**)];
- The uncertainty associated with the commercial average weight is smaller (**Figure A-5**); and
- The commercial data has smaller annual distribution shifts in weights observed compared to the recreational data [(KS-D values), **Table A-1**].

The average weight of Mutton Snapper in the commercial fishery was **8.49 lbs whole weight (95% CI – 8.34-8.63 lbs).**

Data and Methods

Data Sources and Preparation

Recreational catch data were obtained from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and commercial landings data were obtained from SEFSC Trip Interview Program (TIP). Both datasets were analyzed to evaluate the stability of annual fish weight distributions and to identify the most appropriate basis for converting the recreational sector's allocation from pounds to numbers of fish.

All lengths were converted to maximum total length using species-specific conversion equations from SEDAR 79 (Table 2.13.1). Maximum total length was subsequently converted to weight (kilograms) using the length-weight relationship specified in the final equation of that table. All distributional comparisons and mean weight estimates were conducted on the derived weight values rather than on lengths directly. This approach was adopted to avoid the bias introduced by applying the nonlinear length-weight relationship after averaging, as converting a mean length to weight does not yield the same result as computing the mean of individually converted weights, which is the quantity of direct relevance for translating a weight-based allocation to numbers of fish.

Recreational Fishery Data

MRIP catch records were expanded using the domain-level sample weights for lengths (wp_size), which account for the survey design and provide estimates representative of the total recreational catch. Proportional length frequency distributions and weighted mean weights were computed annually using these expansion weights.

Imputed length and weight records were retained in the analysis. In some years, imputed records comprised up to approximately 40% of available length samples. Although the distributions of imputed and observed lengths were nearly identical, imputed records carried substantially higher expansion weights (wp_size) than observed records. Excluding imputed records would therefore have disproportionately reduced the contribution of highly expanded observations, introducing systematic bias into the weighted mean weight estimate. To minimize this potential bias, all imputed records were included.

Commercial Fishery Data

Commercial length records were filtered to retain only random samples, as identified by the sample design designation in the dataset. Commercial samples were treated as a simple random sample; no expansion weights were applied. Individual fish lengths were converted to maximum total length and subsequently to weight using the same SEDAR 79 equations applied to the recreational data (SEDAR 2024).

Stability Analysis

Annual weight distributions for both fleets were compared across all pairwise year combinations using the two-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test. The KS test was applied to the derived individual fish lengths and weights. Lengths are provided as a first test. KS test on weights is consistent with the objective of characterizing weight-based variability for quota conversion purposes and avoiding artifacts of the nonlinear length-weight transformation. Mean KS D-statistics were computed across all year pairs for each fleet as an index of inter-annual distributional stability, with lower values indicating greater consistency across years. The KS D-statistic measures the maximum vertical difference between two distributions. A lower KS D-statistic means that there is greater consistency between the estimates indicating improved prediction for future estimates based on past observed values.

Mean Weight Estimation

A pooled grand mean weight was calculated for the commercial fleet across all years (2020–2024) using the unweighted arithmetic mean of all individual fish weight observations, with a 95% confidence interval derived from the standard error ($SE = s/\sqrt{n}$). This pooled estimate

serves as the recommended conversion factor for translating commercial pounds to numbers of fish. Annual mean weights were also calculated separately for each year to characterize inter-annual variability and support assessment of the stability of the conversion factor over time. For the recreational fleet, annual mean weights were computed as expansion-weighted means using wp_size, with standard errors adjusted for the effective sample size ($n_{eff} = (\sum w_i)^2 / \sum w_i^2$) to account for heterogeneity in expansion weights.

Results/Discussion

Recreational Results

Mutton Snapper harvested in the recreational fishery ranged from 8 to 34 inches in maximum total length. The most commonly caught fish measured between 15 and 20 inches, though the size of fish landed varied noticeably from year to year (Figure A-1). Many of the smallest fish are coming from the shore mode.

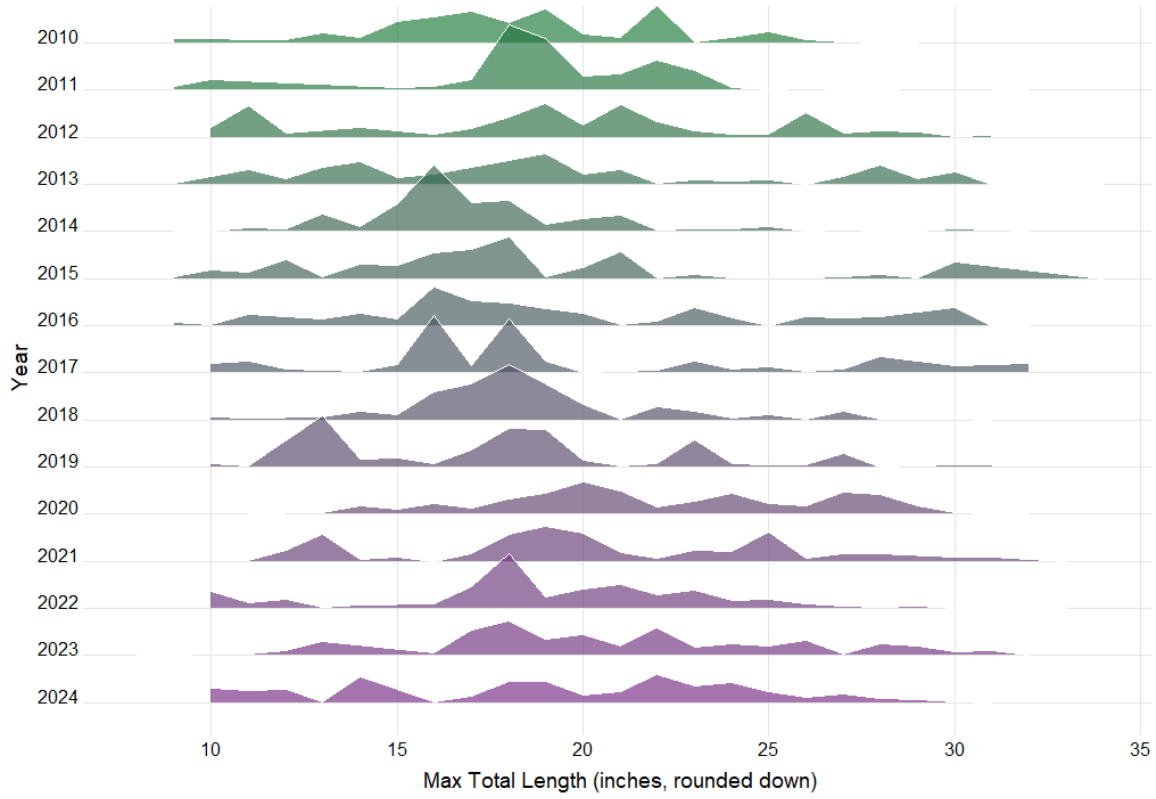

Figure A-1. Expanded maximum total length distribution of recreationally landed Mutton Snapper in the South Atlantic region estimated through Marine Recreational Interview Program, 2010 to 2024.

Following the 2018 increase in the minimum size limit to 18 inches total length, the average size of recreationally harvested Mutton Snapper increased, which is consistent with the intent of that management action. From 2020 to 2024, the annual average length of recreationally caught fish ranged from approximately 18.2 to 22 inches (**Figure A-2**).

To assess whether the annual catch compositions were consistent enough to support a reliable weight-based conversion factor, the length distributions were compared across years using a standard statistical test. Results indicated that the 2019 catch composition differed substantially from all subsequent years, which is consistent with the fishery adjusting to the new size limit during that transition period. Because 2019 represented an atypical year compared to 2020 to 2024, it was excluded from the conversion factor analysis. The years 2020 through 2024 showed more consistent catch compositions but each year there were significant differences in the year to year comparisons in the length distribution (**Table A-1**).

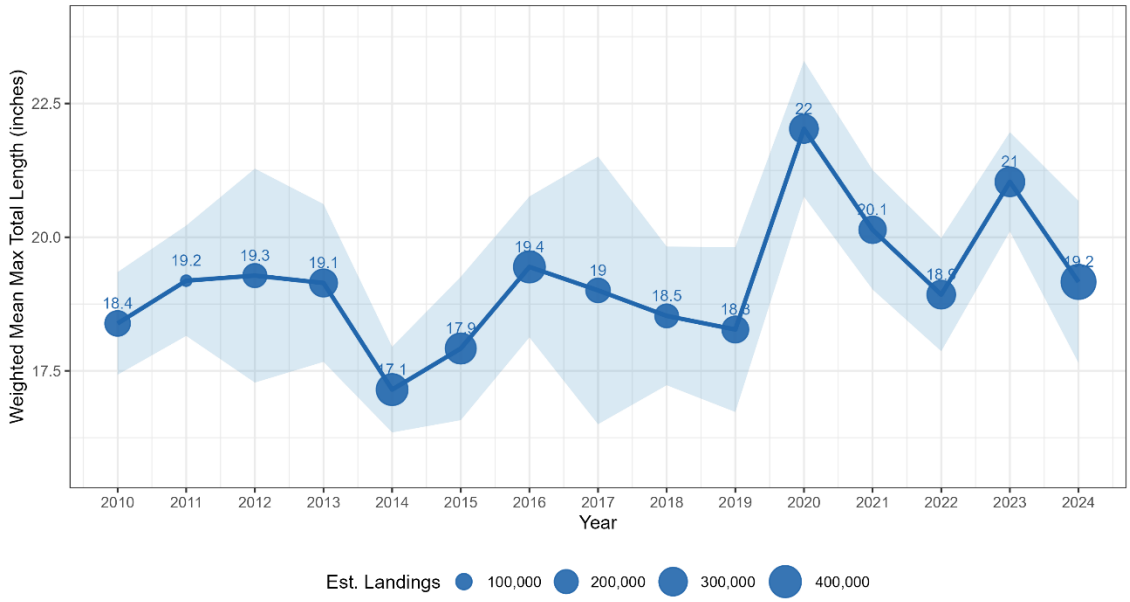

Figure A-2. Weighted mean maximum total length of recreationally landed Mutton Snapper in the South Atlantic region, 2010 to 2024. Data were collected through the Marine Recreational Information Program. The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval for the mean and size of points are scaled to the estimated landings. Values above the points are the weighted means.

Table A-1. Kolmogorov-Smironov (KS) D statistic tests of length and weight of landed Mutton Snapper for recreational (MRIP) and commercial (TIP) commercial data from 2020 to 2024.

		Length		Weight	
Dataset	YearPair	KS D	KS p value	KS D	KS p value
MRIP	2020 vs 2021	0.204	<.0001	0.224	<.0001
MRIP	2020 vs 2022	0.302	<.0001	0.315	<.0001
MRIP	2020 vs 2023	0.155	<.0001	0.183	<.0001
MRIP	2020 vs 2024	0.248	<.0001	0.248	<.0001
MRIP	2021 vs 2022	0.166	<.0001	0.190	0.000
MRIP	2021 vs 2023	0.105	<.0001	0.126	0.032
MRIP	2021 vs 2024	0.126	<.0001	0.174	<.0001
MRIP	2022 vs 2023	0.186	<.0001	0.188	<.0001
MRIP	2022 vs 2024	0.161	<.0001	0.168	<.0001
MRIP	2023 vs 2024	0.199	<.0001	0.201	<.0001
TIP	2020 vs 2021	0.115	0.002	0.095	0.025
TIP	2020 vs 2022	0.073	0.074	0.081	0.050
TIP	2020 vs 2023	0.148	<.0001	0.120	0.001
TIP	2020 vs 2024	0.116	0.001	0.120	0.002
TIP	2021 vs 2022	0.075	0.111	0.063	0.281
TIP	2021 vs 2023	0.105	0.007	0.109	0.006
TIP	2021 vs 2024	0.058	0.452	0.084	0.097
TIP	2022 vs 2023	0.097	0.006	0.072	0.105
TIP	2022 vs 2024	0.050	0.504	0.052	0.541
TIP	2023 vs 2024	0.047	0.059	0.056	0.433

Commercial Results

Mutton Snapper harvested in the commercial fishery ranged from 11 to 37 inches in maximum total length. The most commonly caught fish measured between 18 and 27 inches. In the most recent years (2020 to 2024), the range of sizes landed narrowed and the annual catch compositions became more consistent with one another, suggesting the fishery stabilized following the 2018 regulatory change (**Figure A-3**).

Comparing the commercial and recreational mean length trends reveals two noteworthy differences. First, the average length of commercially caught Mutton Snapper was more consistent from year to year over the 2020 to 2024 period. Second, the uncertainty around those annual averages was smaller for the commercial fleet than for the recreational fleet. Together, these differences indicate that the commercial data provide a more stable and precise characterization of the typical size of fish being harvested, which has direct implications for the reliability of any weight-to-number conversion factor derived from those data.

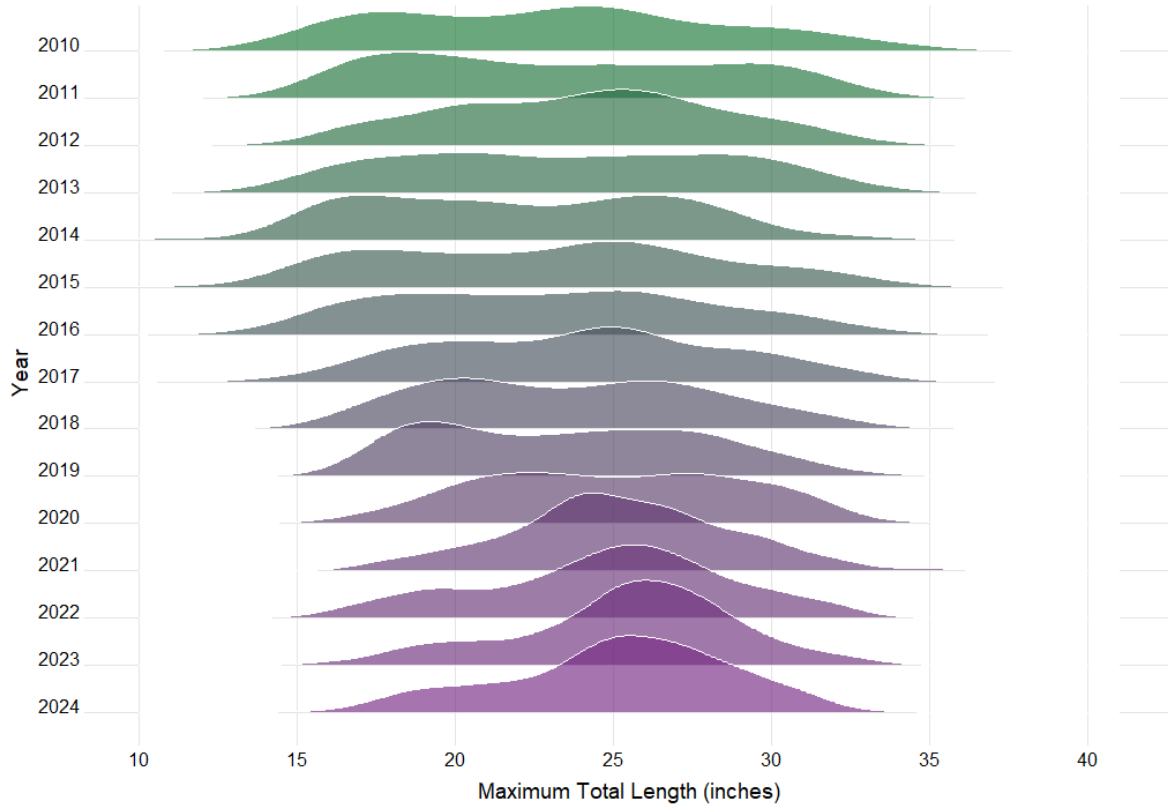

Figure A-3. Observed maximum total length distribution of commercially landed Mutton Snapper in the South Atlantic region collected through the Trip Interview Program, 2010 to 2024.

Following the 2018 increase in the minimum size limit to 18 inches total length, the average size of commercially harvested Mutton Snapper increased from 24 inches to 25 inches. From 2020 to 2024, the annual average length of commercially caught fish ranged from approximately 24.8 to 25.4 inches (**Figure A-4**).

To further evaluate the consistency of the commercial catch composition over time, annual length distributions were compared across years using the same statistical approach applied to the recreational data. As observed in the recreational fleet, the 2019 catch composition differed substantially from those of subsequent years, consistent with the fishery still adjusting to the new size limit during that transition period. From 2020 to 2024, the annual catch compositions were more similar to one another, though approximately half of the year-to-year comparisons still showed detectable statistical differences (**Table A-1**). Despite this, the degree of variation observed was notably smaller than that found in the recreational fishery, further supporting the use of the commercial fleet as the more reliable basis for developing a weight-to-number conversion factor.

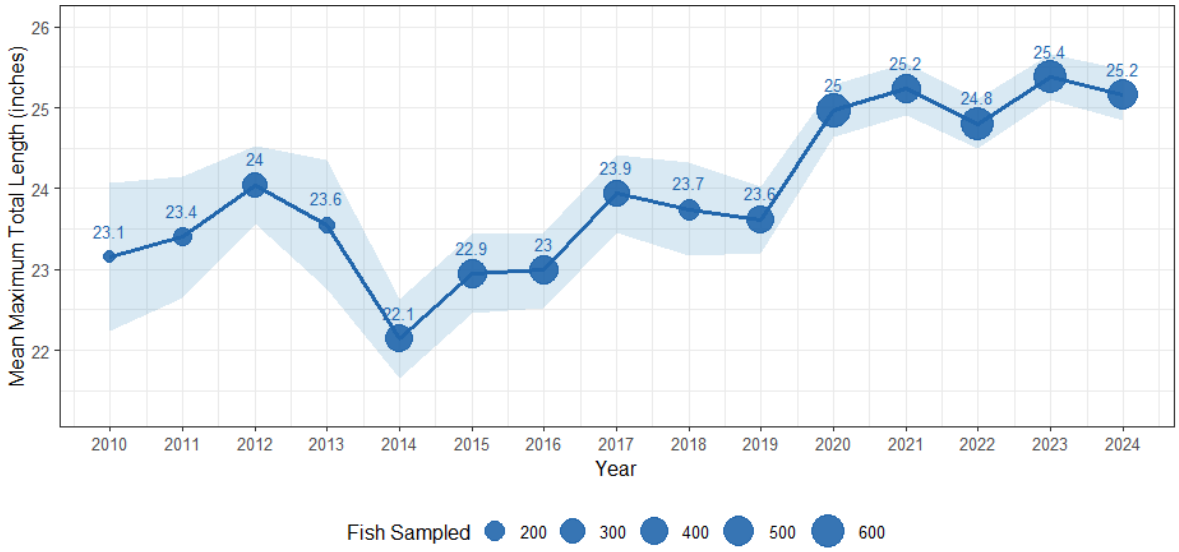

Figure A-4. Mean maximum total length of commercially landed Mutton Snapper in the South Atlantic region, 2010 to 2024. Data were collected through the Trip Interview Program. The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval for the mean and size of points are scaled to the estimated landings. Values above the points are the means.

Weight Distribution from 2020 to 2024

Since individual weight is the desired estimate, pairwise Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) comparisons of estimated fish weight distributions across all year combinations from 2020 to 2024 and found that the commercial fishery exhibited substantially greater year-to-year stability than the recreational fishery both in shifts the mean total weight of individual fish (**Figure A-5**) and weight distributions (**Table A-1**). The mean weight of commercially landed Mutton Snapper ranged from 3.79 to 3.89 kilograms (8.36 to 8.57 lbs) and the mean weight of recreationally landed Mutton Snapper ranged from 1.73 to 2.63 kilograms (3.81 to 5.80 lbs). For 2020–2024, weight distribution data from the commercial fleet had a mean KS D-statistic of 0.085 (max =

0.120) compared to 0.202 (max = 0.315) for the weight distribution from the recreational fleet, representing a greater than 2-fold difference in average distributional shift. These results support the use of commercial mean weight as the more stable anchor for annual quota conversion from pounds to numbers of fish.

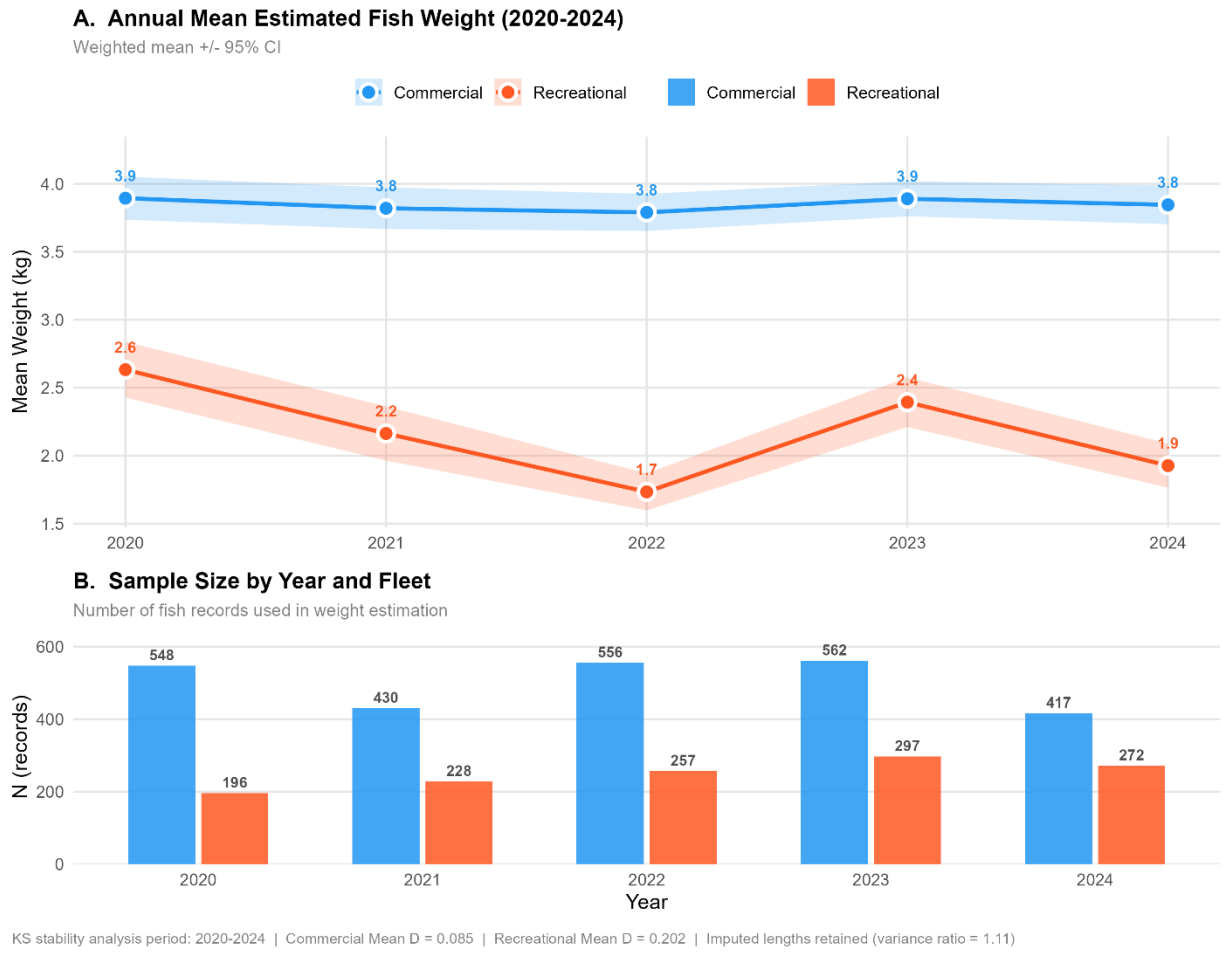

Figure A-5. A. Annual mean weight of commercially (blue) and recreationally landed Mutton Snapper from 2020 to 2024 based on Trip Interview Program Sampling and Marine Recreational Information Program sampling. B. Yearly sample sizes are provided for each program. The recreational samples include imputed values.

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Appendix III. Monroe County Data Attributions

Why was this discussed?

- Each assessment (for both species) now includes Florida State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) landings. MRIP and SRFS differ in how landings in southwest Florida (i.e., Area D in the Western Keys [Figure 3]) are attributed.

Currently:

- Under MRIP, this area is combined with Area E (Figure 3) and these landings have historically been attributed to the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.
- Under the SRFS program, Areas D and E are split to provide additional geographic resolution and the landings in Area D are attributed to the Gulf Council's jurisdiction.
- SRHS Headboat landings in Area D have historically been attributed to the Gulf Council's jurisdiction.
- Charter for-hire landings in Area D are typically combined with Area E and attributed to the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

Attribution Method (as of March 2026):

- **Headboat**: Split landings in Area D between the regions using the SRHS.
- **Shore Landings:** Use the MRIP FES and attribute all landings to the South Atlantic.
- **Private Recreational:** Split landings in Area D based on a ratio of catch between areas D and E using FL SRFS.
- **Charter:** Split landings in Area D based on a ratio of catch between areas D and E using FL SRFS.
    - SRFS Ratios:
        - Mutton snapper – 83.269% South Atlantic
        - Yellowtail snapper – 93.607% South Atlantic

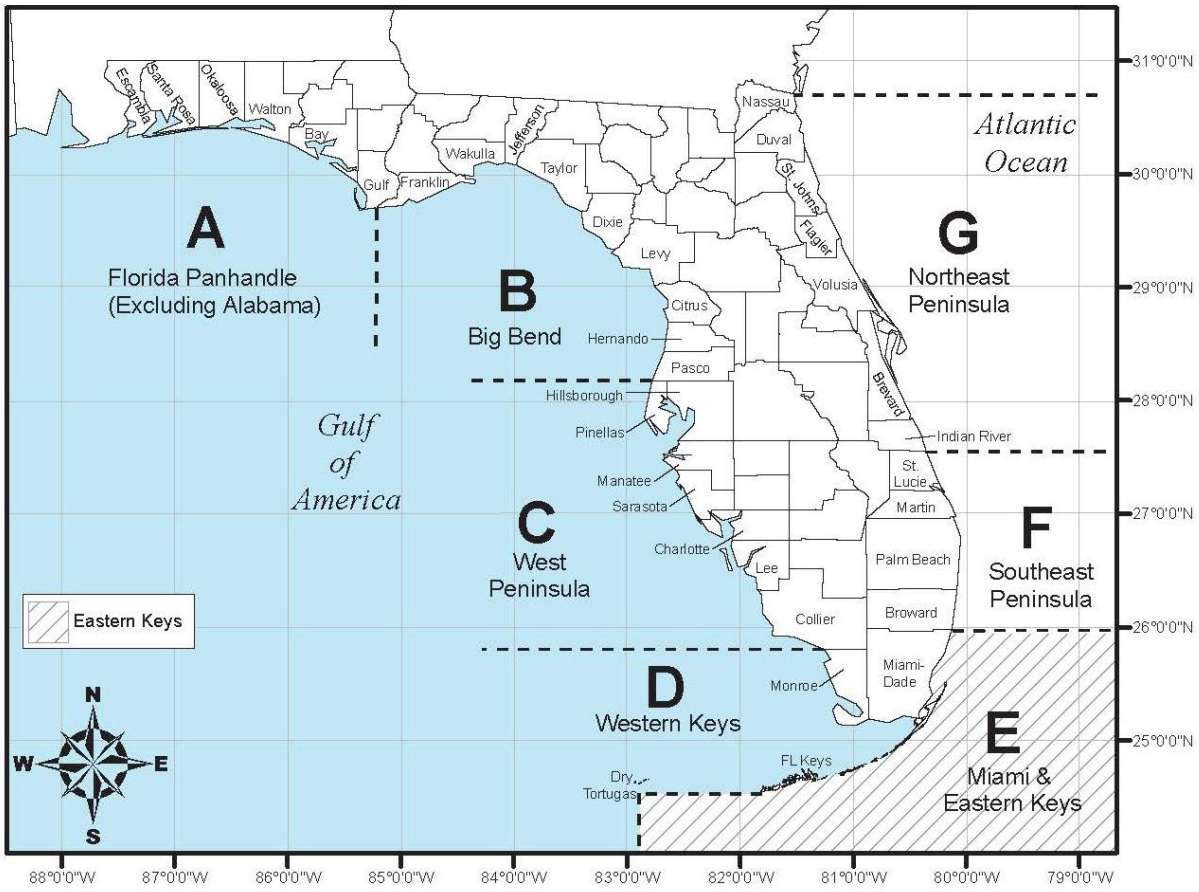

Figure 3. Map of survey areas used by Florida's SRFS program used to survey the offshore private recreational component of mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper catch and effort.