

# Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26

## Decision Document

### Background

The Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region would address specific action items in the 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Vision Blueprint). The Vision Blueprint identifies the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that support the vision for the snapper grouper fishery and centers around four goal areas - Science, Management, Communication, and Governance. During 2015, the Council prioritized action items that would be addressed through amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan over the next five years. The Council chose to focus on actions that would address “seasonality” and “retention” in the fishery and began development of two amendments to address the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively. Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 includes recreational management measures.

### Actions in this amendment

*NOTE: Actions reflect Council guidance from June 2017*

- **Action 1:** Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates
- **Action 2:** Modify or establish recreational aggregates and single-species bag limits
- **Action 3:** Specify measures to reduce bycatch mortality of deep-water species
  - **Sub-action 3.1:** Establish a recreational season for deep-water species
  - **Sub-action 3.2:** Remove recreational minimum size limits for deep-water species
  - **Sub-action 3.3:** Specify gear requirements for deep-water species
- **Action 4:** Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers
- **Action 5:** Remove the recreational minimum size limit for certain deep-water species
- **Action 6:** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass
- **Action 7:** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the Exclusive Economic Zone off East Florida

- **Action 8:** Remove the recreational prohibition on the use of powerheads in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina

## Objectives for this meeting

- Consider suggested changes to Purpose and Need and approve
- Consider suggested changes to actions and alternatives and approve or make modifications, as appropriate
- Provide rationale for inclusion or removal of actions/alternatives, as appropriate
- Approve timing of amendment development

## Expected amendment timing

June 2017	Council reviewed actions and alternatives and preliminary analyses and provided guidance to staff. The Council did not approve the amendment for public hearings.
September 2017	Council reviews actions and alternatives and makes final changes. Council reviews, modifies as appropriate, and approves Purpose and Need.
December 2017	Council reviews analyses, selects preferred alternatives as appropriate, and approves for public hearings in January/February 2018
March 2018	Council reviews public comment, modifies the amendment as appropriate, and approves all actions.
June 2018	Council reviews and approves for formal review.

## Purpose and need statement

From June 2017:

### Purpose for Actions

The purpose of this amendment is to modify recreational regulations such as aggregate bag limits, seasonal closures, and minimum size limits for species in the snapper grouper fishery.

### Need for Actions

The need for this amendment is to simplify and promote compatible regulations; improve access to the snapper grouper resource; improve protection for spawning fish; and reduce discards of deep-water snapper grouper species, black sea bass, and gray triggerfish while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects for recreational fishermen in the South Atlantic region.

## **IPT Recommendation:**

### **Purpose for Actions**

Increase recreational access to the snapper grouper fishery through modified aggregates and fishing seasons, minimize discards to allow for increased recreational harvest, and improve regulatory compliance, consistency, and enforcement by simplifying regulations.

### **Need for Actions**

Simplify and promote compatible regulations while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects for recreational fishermen in the South Atlantic region.

## **Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS AND APPROVE
- DO NOT APPROVE THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED
- OTHERS?

## Proposed Actions and Alternatives

### Action 1. Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates

#### Discussion:

- Guidance to staff in June 2017 was to modify action to only address the composition of the recreational aggregates and specify limits in separate action.
- Intent for action is to simplify regulations.
- Need guidance on range of alternatives for which the Council would like to see analyses in December. Consider removing alternatives (by way of motions) that no Council members are likely to support.

#### Action Alternatives:

As discussed in June 2017, Edits were those proposed in June but the Committee did not take action to approve.

### Action 1. Modify the recreational grouper and 10-snapper aggregate bag limits and establish a recreational aggregate bag limit and recreational season for deep-water species

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits and recreational seasons are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Aggregate Snapper Bag Limit: Ten (10) snapper per person per day year-round including for the following species: lane, yellowtail, gray, mutton, queen, blackfin, cubera, and silk. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper. <sup>1</sup> <30 inches; max. 2 per person but no more than 2 per vessel > 30 inches total length (TL) off Florida

Aggregate Grouper Bag Limit: Three (3) groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black<sup>1</sup>, snowy<sup>2</sup>, misty, red, scamp, yellowedge, yellowfin, yellowmouth, blueline tilefish<sup>3</sup>, sand tilefish, golden tilefish<sup>4</sup>, coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind. Shallow-water grouper (gag, black, red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney) harvest only allowed May 1 through December 31.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of 1 one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day with harvest allowed May 1 through December 31.

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of 1 one snowy grouper per vessel per day; recreational harvest allowed only May 1 through August 31 (closed September 1 through April 30)

<sup>3</sup>Blueline tilefish harvest allowed only May 1 through August 31 (closed September 1 through April 30)

<sup>4</sup>Maximum of 1 one golden tilefish per person per day year-round

**Alternative 2.** Modify the current species composition of the 3-fish aggregate grouper bag limit and the 10-snapper aggregate bag limit. Establish a 2-fish per person per day deep-water species aggregate bag limit including species in the Deep-water Complex (yellowedge grouper, silk

snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper), golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and blueline tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Establish a May 1 through August 31 recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Only 1 one fish per person per day within the deep-water species aggregate can be of any one species.

**Alternative 3.** Modify the current species composition of the 3-fish aggregate grouper bag limit and the 10-snapper aggregate bag limit. Establish a 3-fish per person per day deep-water species aggregate bag limit including species in the Deep-water Complex (yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper), golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and blueline tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Establish a May 1 through August 31 recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Only 1 one fish per person per day within the deep-water species aggregate can be of any one species.

**Alternative 4.** Modify the current species composition of the 3-fish aggregate grouper bag limit and the 10-snapper aggregate bag limit. Establish a 4-fish per person per day deep-water species aggregate bag limit including species in the Deep-water Complex (yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper), golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and blueline tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 4a.** Establish a May 1 through August 31 recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Only 1 one fish per person per day within the deep-water species aggregate can be of any one species.

## Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:

*NOTE: Recommendations are for actions as structured prior to the June 2017 meeting.*

*Action 1. Establish a recreational aggregate bag limit and recreational season for deep-water species*

- Concern that alternatives for 1-fish of any one species would significantly increase discards.
- Concern that available recreational data are minimal.
- Season for deepwater species is a good idea.
- Include information on PSEs for deepwater species.
- Concern that ACLs are being exceeded and will continue to be.
- Need for better region-wide survey to get information on deepwater species.
- Recreational effort for deepwater species in south Florida has increased.
- Recommend excluding sand tilefish from deep-water species aggregate.

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A SUB-ALTERNATIVE FROM MAY 1 TO JUNE 30 AS SEASON FOR DEEPWATER SPECIES.  
APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED, 1 ABSTENTION)

*Action 2. Establish a recreational aggregate bag limit for shallow-water grouper species*

- Need information on whether limits are being met, how many fishermen are meeting the aggregate bag limits. Council staff conducted some preliminary analyses indicating very few fishermen were meeting aggregate bag limit.
- In the Florida Keys, fishermen are seeing abundance of black grouper.
- Concern about red grouper becoming a “choke species.”

*Action 3. Modify the 10-snapper and 20-fish recreational aggregate bag limits*

- Concern about making regulations too complicated. Sub-alternatives 2c and 2d (2c: Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 10 fish can be of any one species; 2d: Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 5 fish can be of any one species) may be enough to capture the need to reduce take for some species.
- Five yellowtail within the aggregate may be too low for fishermen in the Keys.
- Consider adding flexibility in aggregate bag limits since fishery is so diverse and certain species are not available in some areas.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 1, NO ACTION, FOR ACTION 3.  
APPROVED BY AP (11 IN FAVOR/6 OPPOSED/ 1 ABSTENTION)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL EXPLORE BAG LIMIT OF PORGIES (3 FISH, 5 FISH) WITHIN THE 20-FISH AGGREGATE  
APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL EXPLORE A 20 FISH AGGREGATE OF SPECIES CURRENTLY IN THE 10-SNAPPER AGGREGATE AND THE 20-FISH AGGREGATE

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED/1 ABSTENTION)

**\*\*INTENT TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT BAG LIMITS WITHIN THE AGGREGATE (I.E., GRAY SNAPPER IS 10)\*\*\***

## **IPT Recommendations:**

*Note: Suggested edits are not noted individually since the action and alternatives were significantly modified from previous version*

## **Action 1. Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregates are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the recreational aggregate groupings that are in place in the South Atlantic Region.

**Alternative 3.** Modify existing aggregates to establish a **deep-water species aggregate** including:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Snappers only: queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Groupers and tilefishes only: snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Snappers, groupers, and tilefishes, combined: queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

**Alternative 4.** Modify existing aggregates to establish a **shallow-water species aggregate** including:

**Sub-alternative 4a.** Snappers only: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, and cubera snapper.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Groupers and tilefish only: gag, black grouper, red grouper, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, scamp, and sand tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 4c.** Snappers, groupers, and tilefish combined: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, gag, black grouper, red grouper, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, scamp, and sand tilefish.

**Alternative 5.** Modify existing aggregates to establish an aggregate **(other shallow-water species aggregate??)** including:

**Sub-alternative 5a.** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, Atlantic spadefish, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, and cubera snapper.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

- Alternative 2 is recommended for analysis as it is within reasonable range and meets the intent of simplifying regulations. If this alternative were chosen, individual bag limits would be retained for species that have them under Action 2.
- Guidance on naming of Other Species Aggregate (Alternative 5)

**Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- PROVIDE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AS REQUESTED BY THE IPT
- OTHERS?



## **Action 2. Modify or establish recreational aggregates and single-species bag limits**

### **Discussion:**

- Guidance to staff in June 2017 was to modify action to only address the composition of the recreational aggregates and specify limits in separate action.
- Intent for action is to simplify regulations.
- Need guidance on range of alternatives for which the Council would like to see analyses in December. Consider removing alternatives (by way of motions) that no Council members are likely to support.
- Alternative 2 addresses Committee guidance from June 2017 for an additional alternative that would specify a 20-fish maximum daily limit of snapper grouper species while retaining existing restrictions on individual species. This alternative would require the Council selecting Alternative 2 (remove all aggregates) under Action 1.
- Alternatives 3-5 correspond to Alternatives 3-5 under Action 1.
- Below is specific guidance from June 2017 on former Actions 1-3:
  - Separate Action 1 into three actions that would address: (1) species composition, (2) bag limits, and (3) season
  - Add sub-alternative(s) for single-hook requirement for deep-water species
  - Remove “only one fish can be from any one species” from deep-water species aggregate alternatives due to possible increase in discards
  - Add alternative that considers a 20 fish maximum daily limit for all snapper grouper species (excluding tomtate) and retain existing bag limits within the aggregate
  - Add accountability measure that would change (reduce) bag limits for species that continue to exceed their recreational ACLs
  - Consider consistency in seasons (i.e., actions in Amendment 43). Also analyze different options for seasons, i.e., September-December (since May-Aug overlaps with spawning season for some species)
  - Do not consider restriction for “maximum of any one species” for shallow-water species aggregate alternatives due to concern over discards
  - Add sub-alternative to establish a shallow-water grouper aggregate bag limit including species in the Shallow-Water Grouper complex and retain the existing harvest restrictions but modify the aggregate
  - Add alternative for a 20-fish aggregate where only ten fish could be species in the current ten-snapper aggregate and ten fish could be species in the current 20-fish aggregate
  - Limit on mutton snapper would remain at 5 fish (as currently proposed in Amendment 41)
  - Remove Sub-alternative 2d (within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than five fish can be of any one species)

## Action Alternatives:

As discussed in June 2017. Edits were those proposed in June but the Committee did not take action to approve.

### Action 2. ~~Establish a~~ Modify the recreational grouper aggregate bag limit and establish a recreational aggregate bag limit for shallow-water grouper species

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limit is in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Aggregate Grouper Bag Limit: Three (3) groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black<sup>1</sup>, snowy<sup>2</sup>, misty, red, scamp, yellowedge, yellowfin, yellowmouth, blueline tilefish<sup>3</sup>, sand tilefish, golden tilefish<sup>4</sup>, coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind. Shallow-water grouper (gag, black, red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney) harvest only allowed May 1 through December 31.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of 1 one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person/day with harvest allowed May 1 through December 31.

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of 1 one snowy grouper per vessel per day; recreational harvest allowed only May 1 through August 31 (closed September 1 through April 30)

<sup>3</sup>Blueline tilefish harvest allowed only May 1 through August 31 (closed September 1 through April 30)

<sup>4</sup>Maximum of 1 one golden tilefish per person per day year-round

**Alternative 2.** Modify the current species composition of the 3-fish aggregate grouper bag limit. Establish a shallow-water grouper aggregate bag limit including species in the Shallow-Water Grouper complex (red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper), scamp, gag, black grouper, and red grouper.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** 1 one fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 2 two fish per person per day with no more than 1 fish of any one species.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 3 three fish per person per day with no more than 1 fish of any one species.

## Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:

Refer to recommendations under Action 1 above.

## **IPT Recommendations:**

*Note: Suggested edits are not noted individually since alternatives were significantly modified from previous version*

### **Action 2. Modify or establish recreational aggregates and single-species bag limits**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day including: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per vessel per day

<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: 20 fish per person per day including: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

Individual species' bag limits are as follows:

Back sea bass – seven per person per day

Vermilion snapper – five per person per day

Greater amberjack – one per person per day

Red porgy – three per person per day or three per trip, whichever is more restrictive

Hogfish – *pending*: one per person per day off East Florida, two per person per day off GA, SC and NC

Wreckfish – one per vessel per day

Mutton snapper – *pending*: five per person per day

**Alternative 2.** Establish a 20-fish per person maximum recreational daily bag limit including all snapper grouper species (**species will be listed**) (excluding tomtate). Existing bag limits would continue to apply (**species and limits listed in a table in discussion**).

**Alternative 3.** Specify bag limits for proposed **deep-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Two per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Two per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Three per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3d.** Three per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Sub-alternative 3e.** Four per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3f.** Four per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Alternative 4.** Specify bag limits for proposed **shallow-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 4a.** Two per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Two per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 4c.** Three per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4d.** Three per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 4e.** Four per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4f.** Four per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Alternative 5.** Specify bag limits for the proposed **other shallow-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 5a.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where ten fish can be snappers and ten fish can be other species within the aggregate, with existing restrictions on mutton snapper.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be gray triggerfish.

**Sub-alternative 5c.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be Atlantic spadefish.

**Sub-alternative 5d.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be of any one species.

- Does the Council want to consider further restriction for red grouper under Alternative 4?
- IPT members' comments on request for an alternative that would specify an accountability measure to reduce bag limit(s) for species that continue to exceed their ACL:
  - ACLs are not tracked based on aggregates but either individual species or species complexes that *do not* match the aggregates.
  - Consider high level of uncertainty of recreational estimates. When is an overage really an overage and not caused by spikes in MRIP data that may produce inflated estimates?
  - Recreational data are not final for many months so there is a delay in determining ACL overages.
  - Consider that AMs can be implemented through expedited framework as needed or written into revisions to ABC control rule.
  - Would need to include as additional action with appropriate range.
  - Recommendation to exclude from this amendment. *Perhaps address in ABC Control Rule amendment?*

### Committee Action:

- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURE ACTION/ALTERNATIVE
- OTHERS?

### Action 3. Specify measures to reduce bycatch mortality of deep-water species

#### Discussion:

- Guidance to staff in June 2017 was to modify action to only address the composition of the recreational aggregates and specify limits in separate action.
- Intent for action is to simplify regulations.
- Need guidance on range of alternatives for which the Council would like to see analyses in December. Consider removing alternatives (by way of motions) that no Council members are likely to support.
- See specific guidance from June 2017 under Action 2 above.

#### Action Alternatives:

**As discussed in June 2017.** Edits were those proposed in June but the Committee did not take action to approve. *Note that alternative 2 and its sub-alternatives are now addressed under Action 2, Alternative 5.*

### Action 3. Modify the 10-snapper and 20-fish recreational aggregate bag limits

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Aggregate Snapper Bag Limit: Ten (10) snapper per person **per** day year-round including the following species: lane, yellowtail, gray, mutton, queen, blackfin, cubera<sup>1</sup>, and silk. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

<sup>1</sup> Less than 30 inches; maximum two fish per person but no more than two fish per vessel less than 30 inches total length off Florida

Aggregate for Species Without Bag Limit: Twenty (20) fish per person/day year-round including: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and **Atlantic** spadefish.

**Alternative 2.** **Modify the current species composition of the 10-snapper aggregate grouper bag limit and the 20-fish aggregate bag limit.** Establish a 20-fish aggregate limit including species in the current 20-fish aggregate in addition to those in the current 10-snapper aggregate: whitebone

porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, **Atlantic** spadefish, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper (daily limit is 5 per person)\*, and cubera snapper (<30 inches; max. 2 per person but no more than 2 per vessel > 30 inches TL off Florida). *\*Pending approval of Amendment 41*

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 10 fish can be gray triggerfish.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 10 fish can be Atlantic spadefish.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 10 fish can be of any one species.

**Sub-alternative 2d.** Within the 20-fish aggregate, no more than 5 fish can be of any one species.

## **Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:**

Refer to recommendations under Action 1 above.

MOTION: RECOMMEND REMOVAL OF MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR DEEP-WATER SPECIES  
APPROVED BY AP (UNANIMOUSLY)

## **IPT Recommendations:**

*Note: Suggested edits are not noted individually since the action and alternatives were significantly modified from previous version*

## **Action 3. Specify measures to reduce bycatch mortality of deep-water species**

### **Sub-action 3.1. Establish a recreational season for deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational season for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish is May 1 to August 31. Recreational harvest of golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper is allowed year-round.

**Alternative 2.** Specify a recreational season for deep-water species:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** May 1 to August 31 (would apply to golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** May 1 to June 30

**Sub-alternative 2c.** September 1 to December 31

**Sub-action 3.2. Remove recreational minimum size limits for deep-water species**

*(Note that this sub-action addresses Action 5. If sub-action is approved, Action 5 would need to be removed)*

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone is 12 inches total length.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Sub-action 3.3. Specify gear requirements for deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There are no gear requirements to target deep-water species (golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper).

**Alternative 2.** Require single-hook rigs when targeting deep-water species (golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper)

- Does the Council wish to consider revising the existing recreational season for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish in light of snowy peak spawning months being May through August?

**Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?

## **Action 4. Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers**

### **Discussion:**

The Council provided the following guidance in June 2017:

- Move Alternative 2 and its sub-alternatives to Appendix A (Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species seasonally by area)
- Retain Alternative 4 (prohibit recreational harvest of black grouper) but specify area south of 28 degrees

### **Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in June 2017. Edits were those proposed in June but the Committee did not take action to approve.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) is prohibited annually in the South Atlantic EEZ from January 1 through April 30.

**Alternative 2.** Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) ~~annually~~ seasonally by area:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** In federal waters off East Florida from the Georgia/Florida state boundary south to the end of the **SAFMC's South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's** jurisdiction, the closure applies (month) to (month).

**Sub-alternative 2b.** In federal waters off Georgia and the Carolinas from the Georgia/South Carolina border north to the North Carolina/Virginia border, the closure applies (month) to (month)

**Alternative 3.** Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (gag, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) (excluding black grouper) south of 28° North latitude (approximately off Palm Bay, Florida):

**Sub-alternative 3a.** January – March (**three** months)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** February – March (**two** months)

**Sub-alternative 3c.** February – April (**three** months)

**Sub-alternative 3d.** February – May (**four** months)

**Alternative 4.** Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of black grouper in federal waters off (specify area based on Alternative 2a above)

**Sub-alternative 4a.** January – March (**three** months)

**Sub-alternative 4b.** January

**Sub-alternative 4c.** February

**Sub-alternative 4d.** March



**Alternative 5.** Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in federal waters off (specify area based on Alternative 2b above)

**Sub-alternative 5a.** January – May (five months)

**Sub-alternative 5b.** February – May (four months)

**Sub-alternative 5c.** March – June (four months)

### **Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:**

- Concern about not having results of stock assessment on red grouper. May be premature until it is known whether a reduction in harvest, and if so how much, is needed.
- Concern that after closure having been in place for many years there is no apparent increase in population.
- Existing closure already covers the bulk of spawn for these species.

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS NO ACTION ON MODIFYING THE SHALLOW-WATER GROUPER CLOSURE  
APPROVED BY AP (UNANIMOUSLY)

### **IPT Recommendations:**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) is prohibited annually in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone from January 1 through April 30.

**Alternative 2.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (gag, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) (excluding black grouper) south of 28° North latitude (approximately off Palm Bay, Florida):

**Sub-alternative 2a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** February – March (two months)

**Sub-alternative 2c.** February – April (three months)

**Sub-alternative 2d.** February – May (four months)

**Alternative 3.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of black grouper in the federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone south of 28 degrees north latitude

**Sub-alternative 3a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** January

**Sub-alternative 3c.** February

**Sub-alternative 3d.** March

**Alternative 4.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 in the Exclusive Economic Zone off Georgia and east

Florida. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in ~~federal waters~~ the Exclusive Economic Zone off North Carolina and South Carolina

**Sub-alternative 4a.** January – May (five months)

**Sub-alternative 4b.** February – May (four months)

**Sub-alternative 4c.** March – June (four months)

- Provide rationale for significance of 28 degrees North latitude (existing regulatory boundary for circle hook requirement?).

### **Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?

## **Action 5. Remove the recreational minimum size limit for certain deep-water snapper species**

### **Discussion:**

The Committee made no changes to this action at the June 2017 meeting.

### **Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in June 2017:

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in South Atlantic federal waters is 12 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch TL recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in South Atlantic federal waters.

### **Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:**

MOTION: RECOMMEND REMOVAL OF MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR DEEP-WATER SPECIES

APPROVED (UNANIMOUSLY)

### **IPT Recommendations:**

## **Action 5. Remove the recreational minimum size limit for certain deep-water snapper species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone is 12 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch TL total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone.

### **Committee Action:**

- *IF COMMITTEE APPROVED STRUCTURE OF ACTION 3, THEN THIS ACTION SHOULD BE REMOVED. OTHERWISE:*
- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?

## **Action 6. Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass**

### **Discussion:**

From June 2017 Decision Document:

The new bag/size limit analysis developed by Council staff and being considered by the Scientific and Statistical Committee relies on information from the most recent stock assessment. In particular, it requires estimates of abundance at age, size at age, and selectivity at age in order to estimate the proportion of discarded fish in the catch that are above or below a given size limit. For black sea bass, the most recent assessment is the SEDAR 25 Update (2013), which has a terminal year of 2012. We are currently five years past that terminal year and the estimates of abundance at age are no longer valid. It may be possible to obtain projected abundance at age from the projections, but there are several issues with doing that. First, projections were only run through 2015. Second, and more importantly, using projected information assumes the population is actually following the trend assumed in the projections. Recent chevron trap data have shown that black sea bass may not be following the trajectory assumed in the projections despite landings remaining below the ACL. Therefore, analyzing the size limit alternatives for black sea bass is not possible at this time given the available data.

### **Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in June 2017:

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in South Atlantic federal waters is 13 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in South Atlantic federal waters to 12 inches TL.

**Alternative 3.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in South Atlantic federal waters to 11 inches TL.

### **Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:**

- Concern about how change in size limit would affect bag limit and length of season

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS REDUCING RECREATIONAL MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT FOR BLACK SEA BASS TO 12 INCHES (ALTERNATIVE 2)  
APPROVED BY AP (6 OPPOSED)

### **IPT Recommendations:**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone is 13 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone to 12 inches TL total length.

**Alternative 3.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic federal waters Exclusive Economic Zone to 11 inches TL total length.

- Council staff indicated that analyses for this action cannot be completed until SEDAR 56 is finalized (see discussion above). The IPT recommends removing the action from this amendment and addressing when catch levels and other management measures for black sea bass are considered after the results of the assessment.

**Committee Action:**

- CONSIDER IPT'S RECOMMENDATION AND MOVE ACTION TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX
- RETAIN ACTION AND ACCEPT IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- RETAIN ACTION BUT DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?

**Action 7.—Decrease—Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters the Exclusive Economic Zone off the east coast of Florida**

**Discussion:**

The Council provided the following guidance in June 2017:

- Select Alternative 2 as Preferred (reduce the recreational minimum size limit of gray triggerfish in federal waters off east Florida to 12 inches Fork length)

**Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in June 2017:

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in South Atlantic federal waters off the east coast of Florida is 14 inches fork length (FL). The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina is 12 inches FL.

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off the east coast of Florida to 12 inches FL.

**Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations:**

MOTION: AP RECOMMENDS ALTERNATIVE 2, REDUCING THE MSL FOR GRAY TRIGGERFISH OFF EAST FLORIDA TO 12 INCHES  
APPROVED BY AP (1 ABSTENTION)

**IPT Recommendations:**

**Action 7.—Decrease—Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters the Exclusive Economic Zone off the east coast of Florida**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in South Atlantic federal waters off the east coast of Florida is 14 inches fork length. The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters the Exclusive Economic Zone off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina is 12 inches FL fork length.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters the Exclusive Economic Zone off the east coast of Florida to 12 inches FL fork length.

**Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?

## **Action 8. Remove the recreational prohibition on the use of powerheads in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina**

### **Discussion:**

This action was added based on guidance at June 2017 Council meeting. Rationale is that powerhead use is not restricted elsewhere besides off South Carolina (and in SMZs).

### **Action Alternatives:**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** A powerhead may not be used to harvest South Atlantic snapper grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina.

**Alternative 2.** Allow the use of powerheads for recreational harvest of South Atlantic snapper grouper species in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina.

### **IPT Recommendations:**

- It is not clear how this action addresses Visioning priorities related to seasonality and retention. However, it would address the Council's intent to simplify regulations. Committee should provide rationale for inclusion in this amendment.

### **Committee Action:**

- MAKE MODIFICATION TO ACTION/ALTERNATIVES
- DO NOT MAKE MODIFICATIONS TO ACTION/ALTERNATIVES
- OTHERS?