

Summary Report

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

March 3, 2025

In June 2024, the South Atlantic Council (Council) formed the Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee) and tasked it with developing commercial management topics that require further consideration. The Sub-Committee met on March 3, 2025.

The Sub-Committee approved the agenda for the March 2025 meeting and minutes for the November 2024 meeting.

1. Review of Requested Commercial Information

At their previous meeting, the Sub-Committee requested several pieces of information from past reports, as well as more recent data. Council staff presented a summary of these reports and analyses.

2. Discussion of Commercial Issues and Initial Prioritization

The Sub-Committee discussed their previous list of potential commercial management issues to be addressed. The Sub-Committee narrowed this list into two primary objectives: 1) addressing commercial permit issues, and 2) improving trip efficiency. To address these objectives, the Sub-Committee recommended the following:

MOTION 1: RECOMMEND TO THE SNAPPER GROUPE COMMITTEE THAT THEY INITIATE AN AMENDMENT TO CONSIDER ENDING THE 2 FOR 1 POLICY FOR THE SG 1 (UNLIMITED) PERMIT.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

MOTION 2: RECOMMEND TO THE SNAPPER GROUPE COMMITTEE THAT THEY INITIATE AN AMENDMENT THAT WILL ADDRESS COMMERCIAL PERMIT AND TRIP EFFICIENCY ISSUES. THIS MAY INCLUDE CHANGING THE COMMERCIAL 2 FOR 1 SG 1 POLICY AS PREVIOUSLY DIRECTED.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Sub-Committee noted the following:

- Commercial Permit issues
 - Revise 2 for 1 commercial SG 1 permit policy
 - This change was noted by several Sub-Committee members as the highest priority item.
 - The Sub-Committee noted that the commercial fishery has problems related to permit transfers, leasing of permitted vessels, and commercial SG 2 (225 lb) permit policies, but some of these may all be helped by a revision of the 2 for 1 policy.
 - Consider limiting the number of permits that can be owned per entity.
 - Consider establishing income requirements or “use it or lose it” provisions.
- Ways to increase trip efficiency

- Consider viability of aggregate commercial limits, including some form of an evaluation of productivity of all snapper grouper species by area.
- Consider “step-ups”, which would increase trip limits if landings do not exceed a threshold percentage of the commercial ACL by a specified date in the season.
- Consider a non-target or out-of-season allowance for species that are not overfished.
 - A provision like this would need to be low enough to discourage targeting species that are out of season.
 - Could be helpful in reducing regulatory discards.
- Staff will review the objectives listed above and develop draft timelines for amendment development ahead of the Sub-Committee’s next meeting.

3. Discussion of Next Steps and Timeline

The Sub-Committee discussed their next steps and directed staff to schedule their next meeting to occur in-person ahead of the June 2025 Council meeting. The Sub-Committee also noted that future meetings could potentially be scheduled ahead of or following in-person Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meetings.

At the June 2025 meeting, the Sub-Committee will review drafted timelines and methods for addressing the objectives. The Sub-Committee will also review an expansion of the analyses presented at this meeting that will include: 1) more species; 2) the number and length of commercial trips over time; 3) breakdowns of landing and effort information by state; and 4) commercial discard information from observers. Staff will also continue to communicate with the NOAA Fisheries Permit Office on the availability of recent permit information and when this information could be available for Council use.