

Amendment 48

to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region



Modernization of the Wreckfish ITQ Program
and Modification of the Snapper Grouper FMP
Goals and Objectives

Options Paper

December 2020



A publication of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award Number FNA10NMF4410012

Background

The Council is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) to review the Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program every five to seven years. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) initially reviewed the program in 2009. The review completed in 2019 was the first subsequent review. That review examined how the Wreckfish ITQ program changed between the baseline time period (2009/2010 – 2011/2012 fishing years) and the review time period (2012/2013 – 2016/2017 fishing years) with respect to various social, economic, biological, and administrative factors, and offered conclusions and recommended changes to the program based on the findings. In general, the program has been relatively successful in achieving its stated objectives, although there is still room for further improvement, particularly with respect to confidentiality issues and related constraints; moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and economic data collection. Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 will consider actions and alternatives necessary to improve and modernize the Council's Wreckfish ITQ program.

In addition, the Magnuson-Stevens Act national standard guidelines require fishery management councils to establish objectives in each FMP and propose management measures that will achieve the objectives. Amendment 17A to the Snapper Grouper FMP was the last amendment to list and modify the objectives in the Snapper Grouper FMP. In December 2012, the Council began a three-year long stakeholder-driven visioning process to identify long-term goals, objectives, and strategies for managing the snapper grouper fishery. This process involved evaluating the objectives in the Snapper Grouper FMP and revising them based on the current needs of the fishery. Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 will consider the revised goals and objectives for inclusion in the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Objectives for this meeting

- Review Wreckfish Shareholder and Wholesale Dealer Comments
- Consider approval of Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 for scoping during the March 2021 Council meeting.

Expected Timing for Snapper Grouper Amendment 48

	Process Step	Date
✓	Council reviews options paper and directs staff to hold a meeting of the wreckfish shareholders and wholesale dealers.	September 2020
✓	Meeting of the wreckfish shareholders and wholesale dealers.	October 2020
	Council reviews shareholder input and approves amendment for scoping.	December 2020
	Scoping Hearing	March 2021
	Council reviews public input and approves actions/alternatives.	March 2021
	Council reviews draft amendment, selects preferred alternative, and approves for public hearings.	June 2021
	Public Hearings	Summer 2021

Council reviews the draft amendment, modifies the document as necessary, and approves for formal review.	September 2021
--	----------------

Modifications recommended by the 2019 Wreckfish ITQ Program Review:

Wreckfish ITQ Goals and Objectives

The review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program (2019) evaluated the program based on whether it met the original goals and objectives. Since the beginning of the program in 1991 (SAFMC 1990), the fishery has changed significantly through regulation and participation. It is reasonable for the Council to review the program’s goals and objectives to determine whether they are sufficient for a modernized and updated Wreckfish ITQ Program. Snapper Grouper Amendment 5 (SAFMC 1991) listed the following goals and objectives for the Wreckfish ITQ program as justification for limiting participation in the fishery through an ITQ program:

1. “Develop a mechanism to vest fishermen in the wreckfish fishery and create incentives for conservation and regulatory compliance whereby fishermen can realize potential long-run benefit ...”
2. “Provide a management regime which promotes stability and facilitates long-range planning and investment by harvesters and fish dealers while avoiding, where possible, the necessity for more stringent management measures and increasing management costs over time.”
3. “Develop a mechanism that allows the marketplace to drive harvest strategies...”
4. “Promote management regimes that minimize gear and area conflicts...”
5. “Minimize the tendency for over-capitalization in the harvesting and processing/distribution sectors.”
6. “Provide a reasonable opportunity for fishermen to make adequate returns from commercial fishing by controlling entry so that returns are not regularly dissipated by open access, while also providing avenues for fishermen not initially included in the limited entry program to enter the program.”

Shareholder Recommendations

- Shareholders believed the current program allows fishermen to be vested in the fishery (goals one and six) but expressed concern about giving fishermen an unrealistic expectation of permanent ownership in the fishery as unused shares have been reallocated in the past.
- Additionally, the current program is successfully meeting goals two through five.
- However, regarding goal six, shareholders were hesitant to make any program modifications what would encourage new entrants outside of a leasing program. Wreckfish is a small fishery is already at maximum capacity with the current effort.

Allocation Issues

Recreational landings of wreckfish are rarely reported through the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), or its predecessor, the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics

Survey (MRFSS). In fact, as of 2019, there were no records of recreational wreckfish landings by MRIP/MRFSS with the exception of one intercept in 2012. However, 5% of the wreckfish ACL is set aside for the recreational sector. The Council may want to revisit sector allocations for wreckfish in this amendment. Several suggestions have been made for how the Council might consider allocations for wreckfish in the future, including getting rid of sector allocations altogether or continued monitoring of future MRIP landings to see if wreckfish start to become prevalent thus requiring additional sector allocation consideration.

Shareholder Recommendations

- Stakeholders discussed two options for sector allocations: considering the recreational sector to be *de minimis* as long as catch remains low, resulting in 100% of the available catch being allocated to the commercial sector or allocating 1% of the available catch to the recreational sector and closing their season if their catch limit is reached.
 - Concern that the *de minimis* status may encourage the development of a recreational fishery and the potential dangers outweigh any potential benefit to the commercial sector.
- Generally, shareholders preferred the 1% allocation to the recreational sector and felt it would be sufficient cover all recreational landings without resulting in a closure.
 - While current management measures for the recreational sector keep landings low, management measures can change over time and recreational fishermen should have accountability measures in place that would close the fishery should they exceed the catch limit.
 - The recreational season is July/August with a bag limit of 1-fish per vessel per trip.
 - A shareholder reported that most recreational landings occur off southern Florida or in Bahamian waters. Farther north, recreational fishermen do not have the capability to go far enough out to catch wreckfish. They are not targeted for that reason; rather they are occasionally caught when targeting other species.

Migration to an Electronic System

Data management and user experience could be greatly enhanced by moving from a paper system to an electronic system. The migration to an electronic system would:

- Increase timeliness of reported data

The current system utilizes paper resources for share certificates, allocation coupons, vessel logbooks, and dealer logbooks. Data regarding the program is transcribed to various electronic systems and must be merged to form a complete dataset. As the ITQ review demonstrated, there have been some concerns with the ability to fully merge the files, as information may not be similarly reported by both vessel and dealer logbooks. Additionally, the current system is managed jointly but separately between the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) and SEFSC, with SERO issuing wreckfish permits, share certificates, and coupons, and SEFSC managing the vessel and dealer logbook programs. While SERO processes requests to transfer shares, SEFSC monitors coupon transfers. This dual data management structure creates an unnecessary administrative burden for NMFS and inefficiency in the use of annual allocation for

shareholders. Finally, the current use of coupons for allocation comes with limitations, as the coupons must be printed and mailed, and are only created in two denominations (100 lbs and 500 lbs). Very rarely are landings from a trip in these increments. In general, the use of an electronic online catch share system could enhance the management of the program as all functions relating to the program would be accessed through a web-interface and stored in one electronic database system.

The Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs were successfully modified to account for the needs of the Highly Migratory Species' Bluefin Tuna Individual Bycatch program and a pilot study for the Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative program. Each of these programs had different requirements from the base model, but modifications were made to suit the needs of each program. Likewise, the base catch share program structure could be used as the starting point for an electronic Wreckfish ITQ program. One of the key aspects of the base catch share electronic system method is a direct connection to the permits managed by SERO. The ability to link with the permits database could be used to create a more efficient method to track participation in the program, link participant attributes with transactions (e.g., community to coupon price), and link shareholders directly to landings and the vessels used to land wreckfish.

- Reduce cost and time for management

Another benefit of an electronic system would be the ability to increase the efficiency and timeliness of program resource distributions and transactions. For example, annual distribution of coupons and transfer of shares and coupons among participants could occur electronically. By using an electronic system to transfer shares, the participants would no longer need to obtain ink signatures and mail the certificates to SERO. This would allow for share transfers to be completed in a timelier manner and would provide for an improved tracking system for share ownership. The online system could be built to contain algorithms that would determine if an entity would exceed a share cap, rather than manually calculating ownership levels for each entity. An electronic system could also potentially reduce the amount needed to be collected in a Cost Recovery Program.

Annual distribution of allocation would also occur electronically. This would reduce the administrative and financial burden on NOAA Fisheries, as coupons would no longer need to be printed and mailed to recipients. Instead, the system could distribute the allocation to all participants electronically at the start of the season. The ability to transfer the allocation (coupons) to other participants would also be greatly enhanced. Transfers could be completed more readily through an electronic process that tracks and records the date, quantity, and value of the transferred allocation.

- Provide additional flexibility to fishermen

An electronic system could also add increased flexibility for the fishermen. An electronic system, the system would be capable of tracking allocation to a single pound. This would allow for a 1 to 1 ratio between landings and allocation, unlike the current system. Additionally, the online system may be able to streamline the ability of fishermen to monitor their activities. The current system in the Gulf of Mexico has been modified numerous times to collect and produce

information that may help the fishermen such as the creation of ledgers that detail an individual's landings, share transfers, and allocation transfers. Fishermen have then used these ledgers to aid in documenting their business. There is also the possibility of using the electronic catch share system to replace the wreckfish logbook and wreckfish dealer reports.

- Improve data quality

An online system could be used to enhance data collection through the mandatory reporting of certain information when completing transfers (shares and allocation) or landings. Specific fields could be required to be completed (e.g., share value, ex-vessel price) or the values entered could be constrained. The system could also automatically fill in information regarding the initiator of any transaction (e.g., transfer or landing), as well as the recipient for transfers or dealer for landings, decreasing the reporting burden for fishermen.

Coupon transfer prices are reported on the vessel logbooks, and thus are mandatory. Should the Council migrate to an electronic reporting system, reporting coupon transfer prices would not necessarily have to be mandatory. However, a shift from mandatory to voluntary reporting of coupon/allocation prices would potentially lead to a significant decline in important data. The value of transferred shares is manually entered by shareholders on the back of share certificates when shares are transferred, but the reporting of the transferred value is not mandatory. Relatively few share transactions occur each year and even over an extended period. Thus, generating statistically accurate estimates of share prices requires that a census of such data be collected to the extent possible. Only slightly more than half of the share transfers between fiscal year (FY) 2009 and FY 2016 reported a value for the transferred shares, and the percentage of share transfers where a value was recorded has noticeably declined in recent years, causing estimates of share prices over that time to be suspect. Shifting to an electronic system where reporting of the transferred share value is required before a share transfer is processed would help ensure accurate estimates of share prices can be provided. Share prices are an important indicator of how well the program is expected to perform economically in the future, and thus provide useful information to analysts and managers.

Finally, the collection of economic data and analysis would be eased if it were integrated into an online electronic system. Fixed- and trip-level costs have only been collected twice in the history of the Wreckfish ITQ program, but this information is necessary to assess whether the program is meeting the goal of reducing inefficiencies in harvest. Requiring shareholders to fill out an online fishing cost survey during the period in between wreckfish fishing seasons would provide the necessary data to assess the program's performance against economic metrics on an ongoing basis. This would in turn provide the Council with more information to weigh proposed management changes.

- Improve program enforcement and monitoring

Enforcement of the program could also be improved using an electronic online system. Other catch share programs in the Southeast region use the electronic nature of the program to send notifications to enforcement about landings. The system could be modified to aid in

alerting enforcement of offloading times, which may provide a mechanism to investigate the potential modifications to the current offload time restrictions.

In conclusion, moving towards an online electronic system would enhance the program in many ways as well as align with NMFS's desire to improve data collection through the modernization of data collection platforms and the use of innovative technologies. While the initial creation of such a system may create a short-term administrative burden on NMFS, the benefits of such a system would be realized immediately and provide a long-term benefit to the program.

Shareholder Recommendations

- The individual fishing quota (IFQ) electronic monitoring system used in the Gulf red snapper fishery could function well as a replacement for the current wreckfish paper coupon system.
 - Much of this program mirrors how the wreckfish fishery currently operates.
- Electronic reporting would be more efficient than paper coupons. However, the actual difference in cost between the two programs is unknown until incremental differences in cost are identified and calculated.
- Using an electronic system, fishermen would need to have an allocation in their account prior to catching wreckfish (technically prior to landing at the dock – but takes time to do the paperwork).
- Even with an electronic reporting system, fishermen would still need to report a duplicate entry with their state. However, SERO is aware of the issue and is actively working on reducing duplicative reporting
- When asked if they would be supportive of a vessel monitoring system requirement (VMS) in the wreckfish fishery, stakeholders indicated that they were not a fan of VMS but thought it might be useful in preventing quota fraud.
 - Related, a shareholder also expressed hesitancy to remove the requirement of needing to own shares to transfer coupons because, in the absence of the requirement or a law enforcement presence, a vessel that has transferred coupons may choose to sell their fish without reporting landings so that they don't have to access more coupons to support their fishing. A VMS requirement to participate in the fishery may help with this potential problem.

Revise approved offloading sites and times

The allowable offloading time requirement affects the efficiency of fishing operations. If fishermen arrive at the dock too late to offload, the fish must remain aboard overnight. Unloading the next day impedes the fleet from going back out on another trip by several hours, thereby reducing the number of daylight hours they can fish. Additionally, shareholders reported that they rarely, if ever, encounter law enforcement officials at the dock when they do offload.

These requirements are holdovers from when the program was initially begun with 49 participants, many more than are currently in the fishery. Since fishermen report that they rarely encounter law enforcement when offloading, the intended outcome of approved offloading sites

and times as a deterrent for landing unreported fish has not been realized. And because there are few participants in the fishery, there are few locations where the fish are offloaded.

Shareholder Recommendations

- Shareholders felt the time requirement should be removed, especially if VMS was required.
 - If time requirements were not removed, they should become more flexible. Fishermen are often unable to predict exactly how a day of fishing will go and time requirements for offloading can result in missed orders.
 - Changes to fishing infrastructure availability can make it challenging for fishermen to make it to the dock at a specific time due to tide restrictions.
- Some shareholders felt the fishery was small enough to do away with approved offloading sites, while others felt that approved sites help hold fishermen accountable.
- The issue of offloading sites and times for wreckfish should be discussed with the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel at their Spring 2021 meeting.

Eliminate the Wreckfish Permit Requirement

An entity must possess wreckfish coupons, a commercial snapper grouper vessel permit, and a commercial wreckfish vessel permit to possess, land, and sell wreckfish harvested from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Further, an entity must possess ITQ shares to receive coupons either prior to the start of the fishing year or through transfer. Given that ITQ shares are considered a “permit” for the purposes of sections 307, 308, and 309 in the Magnuson-Stevens Act (see section 303A(b)(1)), the requirements to possess two permits in addition to owning ITQ shares appears to be duplicative and therefore may be unnecessarily burdensome for program participants and data managers. These requirements may also unnecessarily complicate the use of data by program analysts.

Currently, all entities in the ITQ program also harvest other snapper grouper species, and thus would need a commercial snapper grouper permit to harvest those species regardless of whether they participated in the Wreckfish ITQ program. The cost to apply for a commercial snapper grouper permit is \$25 and the applicant must complete a “Federal Permit Application for Vessels Fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone.” However, the cost to apply for a commercial wreckfish vessel permit is higher at \$50 and requires the submission of a separate but practically identical application form specifically for wreckfish permits. The additional requirement to possess a commercial wreckfish permit does not appear to enhance NMFS’ ability to track and monitor the harvesting activities of vessels in the program, nor does it appear to provide additional information to analysts and program managers beyond the information already provided as a result of the commercial snapper grouper permit requirement.

Further, the regulations in 50 C.F.R. § 622.170(a)(2) regarding the wreckfish permit requirement complicate management of the program. Specifically, although the wreckfish permit applicant must be a wreckfish shareholder, the shareholder must be the vessel owner, or the vessel owner or operator must be an employee, contractor, or agent of the shareholder. No other permit requirement in fisheries managed by the Council requires NMFS to determine

whether an entity is an employee, contractor, or agent of the vessel owner. Such determinations are difficult to make without requesting more information than is typically requested of permit applicants in fisheries managed by the Council, which creates additional administrative burden for applicants and NMFS. In addition, the fact that so many individuals could claim “rights” with respect to the confidentiality of the vessels’ landings data made it much more difficult to get consensus from all the affected parties with respect to waiving confidentiality.

Shareholder Recommendations

- Shareholders requested that the Council consider whether the agent requirement would serve any purpose in an electronic reporting system. Additionally, the Council should consider the potential implications of decoupling the wreckfish permit and the snapper grouper permits and/or removing the requirement for a wreckfish permit.
 - It would be problematic to have wreckfish shares tied to snapper grouper permits, especially if/when those snapper grouper permits were sold.
 - The current cost of snapper grouper permits, the two-for-one requirement, and the cost of shares makes it difficult for interested fishermen to get into the wreckfish fishery. Removing wreckfish from the snapper grouper permit requirement may encourage new entrants.
- It was noted that the electronic reporting system could be developed in a way that would limit participation based on specific eligibility requirements.
- A SERO representative noted that assigning shares to a permit, which comes with consequences (different permits have different value, and if the wreckfish permit is still an open access permit it would need to be made into a limited access permit in this scenario) would require the wreckfish permit to remain because it would not be ideal to tie wreckfish shares to snapper grouper permits.

Mandatory economic data collection

Economic data collection for the wreckfish program has been limited to two surveys, one following the first year of the program (Richardson 1994) and another two decades later (Yandle and Crosson 2015). In comparison, the logbooks for other fisheries managed under the Snapper Grouper FMP are surveyed continuously, with 20% of vessels required to track per-trip and annual cost estimates in any particular year (Overstreet et al. 2018). This allows for continuous monitoring of the economic profitability and efficiency of the snapper grouper fleet, which in turn aids management of the fishery.

Because of the small size of the fleet, data collection needs to be a complete census, as individual boats vary greatly in their percentage of the catch. Increasing the rate of collection to an annual basis would require an increase in FTE staff time that may be infeasible unless it is integrated into an electronic data system at SERO as mentioned above.

Shareholder Recommendations

- Shareholders are comfortable providing the economic information needed by managers, however they would like to avoid reporting duplicative information. They would like to report either trip level information (which can be burdensome) or annual information, but not both.

Cost Recovery

Cost recovery, the collection of a fee to recover the actual cost directly related to the management, data collection, and enforcement of any limited access privilege program (LAPP), is mandated under section 304(d)(2)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Magnuson-Stevens Act states that the fee shall not exceed 3% of the ex-vessel value of fish harvested under such a program. Additionally, when establishing a cost recovery fee, there should be a defined methodology and means to identify and assess the actual cost directly associated with the program. The Wreckfish ITQ program does not currently contain a cost recovery fee.

As the Council proceeds with establishing a cost recovery fee, a methodology must be established to recover the costs directly related to the program. These are considered incremental costs, which are costs that would not have been incurred if the program had not been established. Typical categories tracked for cost recovery may include, but not be limited to:

- Personnel – includes both full time employees and contract employees.
- Information Technology (IT) - cost related to stakeholder data collection, public access to non-confidential data, software necessary to maintain access for stakeholders and NMFS staff; computers needed to manage the program; servers needed to maintain an online system.
- Travel – full or partial costs of travel for the purpose of program management, program outreach, program presentations/reports, and direct assistance to stakeholders.
- Supplies - full or partial costs of materials that promote the program or reduce the burden of reporting. This may include printing charges or equipment needed to create outreach materials (e.g., laminators, scanners, printers).
- Training – full or partial costs of training directly associated with the support of the program.

Some anticipated recovered costs include the costs of issuing wreckfish share certificates and coupons, processing share transfers, recording coupon transfers, permit issues and renewals, and management and analyses of the data. These costs may differ for the current system versus moving towards an online electronic system. In fact, many of these costs could be greatly reduced, if not eliminated under an online electronic system for both program participants and NMFS. Opportunity cost savings in the form of time saved resulting from the elimination of paper forms are expected to be significant.

When and from whom the fees would be collected are important issues to explore as the Council considers implementing a cost recovery fee in the Wreckfish ITQ program. The Magnuson-Stevens Act states that fees must be collected at the time of landing, filing of a landing report or sale of fish, or in the last quarter of the calendar year. There are multiple approaches used in current catch shares systems across the nation. In the Gulf of Mexico, the cost recovery fee is collected by the dealers and submitted to NMFS at the end of each quarter. When a dealer does not comply with the submission of the cost recovery time, their account is suspended until payment is received. In other programs, the fees are calculated based on a standard price for each species determined by the value and volume in the previous year. The standard price is typically published near the start of the fishing year. Likewise, in other programs the person responsible for payment of the cost recovery fees could be the allocation

holder who made the landings or the shareholder owning the long-term privilege. Methods of payment for cost recovery can vary as well, with some programs issuing paper bills and others utilizing the Department of Treasury's pay.gov online billing system. The Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs use the pay.gov system and has a direct link for each shareholder in their online account.

Shareholder Recommendations

- Law enforcement officers are rarely present when wreckfish are offloaded at the dock or on the water and shareholders were concerned about cost recovery funds going towards efforts not directly aimed at wreckfish.
- SERO noted that in order for law enforcement (and other eligible entities) to receive cost recovery funds from the wreckfish ITQ program, they would have to submit a memo justifying their need for reimbursement. This can change from year to year based on program developments.
- Shareholders were uncomfortable with the dealers paying cost recovery because they are not benefitting from the fishing privilege. Rather, the allocation holder or the shareholder should be responsible for paying the cost recovery fee.
- Shareholders had different options on the timing of cost recovery payments, with some preferring to pay quarterly and others preferring to pay at the last quarter of the fishing year.
 - It was noted that pay.gov limits the amount that can be charged to a credit card with larger payments requiring checking account information.
- SERO noted that fishermen are not allowed to deduct the cost of ice, bait, or other products from the dealer they may have purchased before leaving the dock. The percentage is applied to the total monetary sale amount a fisherman receives (ex-vessel value).

Additional Topic: Modifying Commercial Fishing Year

The current electronic system has a built-in shutdown from December 31st-January 1st. Modifying the fishing year may help with end of year accounting.

Shareholder Recommendations

- The current closure was implemented to protect spawning fish. Shareholders expressed concern regarding how adjusting the dates would affect the benefits of the closure to the wreckfish stock.
 - NMFS staff indicated that scientific literature suggests that peak spawning is January through March.
 - Changes in Gulf Stream and water temperatures due to climate change may impact optimum spawning dates.
- Shareholders would like to look at possible changes but are cautious about moving forward with any changes.
 - Some shareholders participate in the golden tilefish fishery early in January, so they rarely fish for wreckfish prior to January 14th.

Additional Topic: Wreckfish Stock Assessment

- In the past, some of the wreckfish fishery participants hired stock assessment scientists to conduct a wreckfish stock assessment, which was then peer-reviewed by the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee and then used by the Council. Ideally, a new stock assessment would be conducted and would get away from using historic landings to set an acceptable biological catch/annual catch limit for the fishery.
 - SERO is currently exploring the possibility of using cost recovery funds to help provide an external wreckfish stock assessment.

Snapper Grouper FMP Objectives

The Magnuson-Stevens Act national standard guidelines require fishery management councils to establish objectives in each FMP and propose management measures that will achieve the objectives. In establishing the objectives, the councils should balance the biological needs of the fish stock(s) with human need, reconcile both present and future costs and benefits, integrate both private and public interests, and provide for a comprehensive approach to addressing problems within the fishery. Also, as the needs of a fishery change over time, fishery management councils are encouraged to regularly reassess the FMP objectives (50 C.F.R. § 600.305(b)).

Amendment 17A to the Snapper Grouper FMP was the last amendment to list and modify the objectives in the Snapper Grouper FMP. In December 2012, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) began a three-year long stakeholder-driven visioning process to identify long-term strategies for managing the snapper grouper fishery. This process involved evaluating the objectives in the Snapper Grouper FMP and revising them based on the current needs of the fishery. The 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery (Vision Blueprint) was approved by the Council at their December 2015 meeting and is intended to inform the management of the snapper grouper fishery through 2020. The Vision Blueprint serves as a “living document” to help guide future management, build on stakeholder input, and illustrate actions that could be developed through the amendment process to address the goals identified during the visioning process. Specifically, the Vision Blueprint is organized into four goal areas: (1) Science, (2) Management, (3) Communication, and (4) Governance. Each goal area has a set of objectives intended to drive management of the snapper grouper fishery (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Management objectives for the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Goal 1 (Science): Management decisions for the snapper grouper fishery are based upon robust, defensible science that considers qualitative and quantitative data analyzed in a timely, clear, and transparent manner that builds stakeholder confidence.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Promote collection of quality data to support management plans and programs considered by the Council.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Encourage development of mechanisms to effectively engage and collaborate with stakeholders on cooperative research, data collection and analysis.

<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve knowledge about the social and economic elements of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Support improved and expanded monitoring and reporting programs for the snapper grouper fishery.
<i>Objective 5</i>	Promote data collection and analysis to support ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.
Goal 2 (Management): Adopt management strategies for the snapper grouper fishery that rebuild and maintain fishery resources, adapt to regional differences in the fishery, and consider the social and economic needs of fishing communities.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Develop management measures that consider sub-regional differences and issues within the fishery.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Develop innovative management measures that allow consistent access to the fishery for all sectors.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Ensure that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Develop management measures that reduce and mitigate discards.
<i>Objective 5</i>	Support management measures that incorporate ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.
<i>Objective 6</i>	Develop management measures that support optimal sector allocations for the snapper grouper fishery.
Goal 3 (Communication): Employ interactive outreach strategies that encourage continuous participation and support two-way engagement between managers and snapper grouper fishery stakeholders while building a greater understanding of science and management.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Develop communication approaches that provide streamlined and timely information to increase awareness and engage stakeholders.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Ensure that Council communication encourages and supports engagement with a diverse audience of stakeholders.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of fishery science and research and how these inform management.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of how social and economic issues are linked to fisheries management measures.
Goal 4 (Governance): Commit to a transparent, balanced, and timely decision-making process that allows flexible yet well-defined protocols and strategies for managing the snapper grouper fishery.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Create an accountable and flexible decision-making process for development and evaluation of management measures.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Build capacity to streamline management efforts and better coordinate with management partners.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve communication with stakeholders to ensure the needs of the fishery are understood and considered throughout the Council process.

Committee Action:

DISCUSS RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ITQ REVIEW
 APPROVE AMENDMENT FOR SCOPING
 OTHERS?

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 48 FOR SCOPING
 DURING THE MARCH 2021 COUNCIL MEETING.