



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Amendment 60

Snapper Grouper Committee

REVISED Decision Document, June 2026

PG: AVH

Background

In March 2024, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) established the Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee) and tasked them with identifying and developing potential management responses to issues in the commercial sector of the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. Through its discussions, the Sub-Committee identified two major objectives to be addressed through an amendment: 1) commercial snapper grouper unlimited (SG 1) permit issues, and 2) increasing commercial trip efficiency.

Scoping was conducted from July 25 through August 8, 2025. Comments received during scoping were summarized in the [September 2025 Discussion Document](#).

Last Meeting (March 2026/April 2026)

The Snapper Grouper Committee last reviewed Sub-Committee recommendations in March 2026. In April 2026 (the April 2026 Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee Report is included in the June 2026 Council Meeting Briefing Book), the Sub-Committee met to make further edits to the Purpose and Need statements, actions, and alternatives. In March and April 2026, the Sub-Committee received several presentations from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) about the commercial SG 1 permit, notification systems that could be used to help law enforcement know if fishermen are switching to or from bottom longline gear, and analyses of trip limit changes that are considered in Amendment 60. Links to these presentations are provided below and are recommended references during discussion of Amendment 60 at the June 2026 Council Meeting.

[March 2026 Presentation on Commercial Permits and Notification Systems](#)

Objectives for this Meeting (June 2026)

- Review feedback on Amendment 60 from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP).
- Review additional analyses and information about considered actions.
- Review revised Purpose and Need statements and revised actions and alternatives.
- Provide direction to staff on edits or additions to actions and alternatives that should be made prior to a draft amendment being published for public hearings in summer of 2026.
- Identify additional information necessary for further discussions.
- Review the amendment timeline and revise as necessary.
- Consider approval of Amendment 60 for public hearings.

Purpose and Need

Purpose: The purpose of this amendment is to increase long-term stability of the commercial fishery by maintaining the current number of permits and to increase flexibility, adaptability, access, and economic profitability in the snapper grouper commercial sector.

Need: The need for this amendment is to provide increased access by modifying limited-access commercial permit requirements, allowing flexibility for changing gears at sea, and modifying trip limits to more consistently achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, commercial closures and other adverse social and economic effects, consistent with Executive Order 14276 – Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.

Committee Action

Review Purpose and Need statements and provide any necessary edits.

Actions and Alternatives

Action 1. Remove the Two-for-One Policy for the Snapper Grouper Commercial Unlimited Permit

Purpose of Action: Facilitate transfer of permits in the snapper grouper commercial sector by removing the two-for-one requirement for obtaining a snapper grouper commercial unlimited (SG 1) permit.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not change the current permit requirements. To acquire a limited access, transferable South Atlantic snapper grouper unlimited permit, an entity must obtain and exchange two such permits for one new permit.

Alternative 2. To acquire a limited access, transferable South Atlantic snapper grouper unlimited permit, an entity must obtain and exchange one such permit for one new permit.

Discussion

- This action maintains the snapper grouper unlimited (SG 1) permit as a limited access permit.
- Currently, after one unlimited (SG 1) permit has been acquired, the new owner has one year after the expiration date of that permit to acquire a second SG 1 permit to exchange the two permits for a new SG 1 permit. Ownership of each permit is not transferred in the federal system until both permits are exchanged.
- The Council has received information on limited access permit pools and has decided not to consider a permit pool at this time.
- A letter was mailed to SG 1 permit holders in January 2026, informing them that the Council is considering a change from the two-for-one policy.
- The Sub-Committee discussed that high amounts of latent effort may be affecting the fishery's ability to harvest some of the ACLs.
 - While the Sub-Committee decided against implementing specific strategies to directly address latent effort (e.g. use or lose provisions), the Sub-Committee recommends monitoring latency in the years following implementation and revisiting the discussion about direct strategies to reduce latency, if necessary.
- SG 2 permits are unaffected by this action. The Sub-Committee has discussed potential changes to SG 2 permits but determined any changes to the SG 2 permit should be considered through a separate amendment.

Preliminary Summary of Effects

- For current SG 2 permit holders that desire a larger role in the snapper grouper commercial fishery, under **Alternative 2**, there could be some decline in SG 2 permits due to these fishermen acquiring and switching to an SG 1 permit (only one snapper grouper permit can be on a vessel).
- **Alternative 2** could have effects on the cost of SG 1 permits, though there would still be easier acquisition of SG 1 permits by only needing to find one permit holder to transfer, rather than two.

- If easier acquisition of SG 1 permits reduces latency under **Alternative 2**, increased effort could make the commercial sector more likely to reach ACLs, increasing revenue, as well as the risk of closures.

Committee Action

- Review alternatives and information and provide direction for any necessary edits to language or additional information for future discussions.
- Consider selection of a preferred alternative.

Action 2. Revise bottom longline gear stowage requirements and species that may be harvested while gear is on board and stowed

Purpose of Action: Provide additional flexibility for commercial fishermen that use bottom longline gear to be able to deploy multiple gears within a trip, improving trip efficiency, while maintaining law enforcement's ability to monitor the gear used to catch snapper grouper species.

Alternative 1 (No Action). A vessel that has on board a valid Federal commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper that fishes in the EEZ on a trip with bottom longline gear on board may possess only the following South Atlantic snapper-grouper species: snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish.

Alternative 2. Modify the regulations restricting possession of snapper grouper species to allow possession of any snapper grouper species on commercial trips with bottom longline gear on board. Species other than snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish may only be harvested if bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed. Appropriately stowed means longline hooks are not baited and are not on the deck of the vessel.

Alternative 3. Modify the regulations restricting possession of snapper grouper species to allow possession of any snapper grouper species on commercial trips with bottom longline gear on board. Species other than snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish may only be harvested if bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed. Appropriately stowed means longline hooks are not baited and are not on the deck of the vessel. **Vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear on a single trip must submit an at-sea notification, prior to switching gears.**

Alternative 4. Modify the regulations restricting possession of snapper grouper species to allow possession of any snapper grouper species on commercial trips with bottom longline gear on board. Species other than snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish may only be harvested if bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed. Appropriately stowed means longline hooks are not baited and are not on the deck of the vessel. **Vessel operators who intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear on a single trip are required to carry an active vessel monitoring system on board. [Further details on minimum requirements for VMS systems will be defined later in the amendment development process.]**

Discussion

- Relevant CFR reference: [50 CFR 622.188\(g\)](#)
- The LE AP has commented that there still may be enforcement difficulties due to illegal gear potentially being cut (and needing to be retrieved by law enforcement for prosecution) and identifying fish that were harvested by each gear on multi-gear trips (see [January 2026 LE AP Report](#) for a more complete summary of the discussion).
- The Sub-Committee discussed the prohibition of wreckfish on vessels with bottom longline gear aboard and directed for wreckfish to be incorporated into all alternatives. Under all alternatives, wreckfish may not be harvested using bottom longline gear.

- **Alternative 3** requires an at-sea call-in/notification system that would inform law enforcement that a trip intends to switch to or from bottom longline gear. Only vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip would be required to provide these notifications. For information on this potential system, reference the April 2026 Sub-Committee presentation.
- **Alternative 4** requires an active vessel monitoring system (VMS) that could be used for law enforcement to verify when a trip switches to or from bottom longline gear. Only vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip would be required to have VMS. Additional discussions about VMS minimum requirements will occur at the September Council meeting.
 - The Sub-Committee discussed the potential for fishermen to apply for federal financial assistance in initial acquisition of VMS systems.
- The Sub-Committee also expressed some concern about whether this action would be viewed as ‘regulatory’ or ‘de-regulatory’ and how that would affect the timing of implementation for this and other actions in Amendment 60.

Preliminary Summary of Effects

- Expected effects depend on the number of snapper grouper commercial fishermen that would participate in switching to or from bottom longline gear within a trip.
- **Alternatives 2 through 4** could result in additional fishing mortality for snapper grouper species, but negative effects from this would be mitigated by catch being limited to the ACL.
- **Alternatives 2 through 4** could have economic or social benefits from increased harvests and more efficient commercial trips, potentially lowering overall fuel costs for commercial fishermen.
- Requirements for notification (**Alternatives 3 and 4**) could have mixed effects, with costs of installing and learning any new, required equipment, but benefits of improved communication with law enforcement and access to additional flexibility on the water.

Committee Action

- Review alternatives and information and provide direction for any necessary edits to language or additional information for future discussions.
 - Are the stowage requirements adequate with consideration of different forms of longline gear used in the commercial fishery?
 - Information on requirements for VMS systems can be provided and discussed at the September Council meeting.
- Consider selection of a preferred alternative.

Preliminary Summary of Effects for Actions 3-9

Generally, for Actions 3-9, increasing trip limits is expected to increase commercial landings. Commercial landings are still constrained on an annual scale by the ACLs, which are sustainable levels of harvest, so increasing the commercial trip limits is not expected to result in a significant risk of overfishing. Positive economic and social effects are expected from increasing the trip limits, provided that they do not result in significantly shorter seasons due to the ACLs being met.

Committee Action for Actions 3-9:

- Review trip limit alternatives and provide edits, if necessary.
- Consider selection of preferred alternatives.

Action 3. Revise commercial trip limit for greater amberjack

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for greater amberjack to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limits for greater amberjack. The current trip limit for greater amberjack during Season 1 (March 1 through August 31) and Season 2 (September through February) is 1,200 lbs ww or gw.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack during Season 1 to:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 1,500 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 2b. 1,750 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 2c. 2,000 lbs gw.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack during Season 2 to:

Sub-Alternative 3a. 1,500 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 3b. 1,750 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 3c. 2,000 lbs gw.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Recommend 2,000 lbs gw as the preferred alternatives (both seasons).

Discussion

- Reg Amendment 27 specified trip limits in pounds whole weight OR pounds gutted weight, noting the small conversion factor between these units.
- April 2026 discussions among the Commercial Sub-Committee recommended that the trip limits be set in pounds gutted weight to reduce confusion and because that is the unit in which commercial harvest is tracked against the ACL during the season.

Table 1. Commercial regulations for greater amberjack in the most recent fishing year (2025-2026).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (total length)	Seasonal Closure
March-August	544,990 lbs gw	1,200 lbs ww or gw	34 inches	No harvest in April
September-February	363,327 lbs gw*	1,200 lbs ww or gw	34 inches	None

*If the March-August ACL is not met, unused ACL from this season is added to the September-February ACL. Unused ACL from September-February is not added to a future season.

Table 2. Greater amberjack commercial trip limit and recent (2021/2022-2023/2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL). September-February percentages are relative to the ACL for that season, not including any rollover from the March-August season.

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2023/2024 (Preliminary)	2022/2023	2021/2022
Greater Amberjack	1,200 lbs ww or gw	Mar 2023-Aug 2023: 45.4% Sept 2023-Feb 2024: 33.1%	Mar 2022-Aug 2022: 66.5% Sept 2022-Feb 2023: 59.0%*	Mar 2021-Aug 2021: 69.0% Sept 2021-Feb 2022: 61.9%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

*Management change became effective during this year/season

Action 4. Revise commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for vermilion snapper to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper. The current trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 1 (January through June) and Season 2 (July through December) is 1,000 lbs gw.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 1 to:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 1,500 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 2b. 1,750 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 2c. 2,000 lbs gw.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 2 to:

Sub-Alternative 3a. 1,250 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 3b. 1,500 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 3c. 1,750 lbs gw.

Sub-Alternative 3d. 2,000 lbs gw.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Recommend 1,500 lbs gw as the preferred alternatives (both seasons).

Discussion

Table 3. Commercial regulations for vermilion snapper in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (total length)	Seasonal Closure
January-June	454,240 lbs ww	1,000 lbs gw	12 inches	None
July-December	454,240 lbs ww*	1,000 lbs gw	12 inches	None

*If the January-June ACL is not met, unused ACL from this season is added to the July-December ACL. Unused ACL from July-December is not added to a future season.

Table 4. Vermilion snapper commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL). July-December percentages are relative to the ACL for that season, not including any rollover from the January-June season.

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Vermilion Snapper	1,000 lbs gw	Jan-Jun: 65.3% Jul-Dec: 56.4%	Jan-Jun: 61.9% Jul-Dec: 92.6%	Jan-Jun: 61.7% Jul-Dec: 88.2%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

Action 5. Revise commercial trip limit for red porgy

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for red porgy to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for red porgy. The current trip limit for red porgy during Season 1 (January through April) and Season 2 (May through December) is 15 fish.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for red porgy during Season 1 to:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 30 fish.

Sub-Alternative 2b. 45 fish.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for red porgy during Season 2 to:

Sub-Alternative 3a. 30 fish.

Sub-Alternative 3b. 45 fish.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Recommend 45 fish as the preferred alternatives (both seasons).

Discussion

Table 5. Commercial regulations for red porgy in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (total length)	Seasonal Closure
January-April	13,500 lbs gw	15 fish	14 inches	None
May-December	31,501 lbs gw*	15 fish	14 inches	None

*If the January-April ACL is not met, unused ACL from this season is added to the May-December ACL. Unused ACL from May-December is not added to a future season.

Table 6. Red porgy commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL). May-December percentages are relative to the ACL for that season, not including any rollover from the January-April season.

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Red Porgy	15 fish	Jan-Apr: 47.3% May-Dec: 44.8%	Jan-Apr: 54.1%* May-Dec: 57.0%	Jan-Apr: 35.2% May-Dec: 38.8%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

*Management change became effective during this year/season

Action 6. Revise commercial trip limit for hogfish (Georgia-North Carolina)

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for hogfish (Georgia-North Carolina) to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for hogfish from Georgia-North Carolina. The current trip limit for hogfish from Georgia-North Carolina is 500 lbs ww.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for hogfish from Georgia-North Carolina to 750 lbs ww.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for hogfish from Georgia-North Carolina to 1,000 lbs ww.

Discussion

Table 7. Commercial regulations for hogfish (Georgia-North Carolina) in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (fork length)	Seasonal Closure
January-December	23,456 lbs ww	500 lbs ww	17 inches	None

Table 8. Hogfish (Georgia-North Carolina) commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL).

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Hogfish (GA-NC)	500 lbs ww	72.6%	74.1%	74.7%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

Action 7. Revise commercial trip limit for red grouper

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for red grouper to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for red grouper. The current trip limit for red grouper is 200 lbs gw; 236 lbs ww.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for red grouper to 300 lbs gw; 354 lbs ww.

Subcommittee Recommendation: Recommend 300 lbs gw as the preferred alternative.

Discussion

Table 9. Commercial regulations for red grouper in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (total length)	Seasonal Closure
January-December	71,280 lbs ww	200 lbs gw	20 inches	No harvest January-May off NC and SC; No harvest January-April off GA and FL

Table 10. Red grouper commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL).

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Red Grouper	200 lbs gw	52.6%	27.1%	25.4%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

Action 8. Revise commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for gray triggerfish to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish. The current trip limit for gray triggerfish is 1,000 lbs ww.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish to 1,200 lbs ww.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish to 1,400 lbs ww.

Discussion

Table 11. Commercial regulations for gray triggerfish in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit (total length)	Seasonal Closure
January-June	156,162 lbs ww	1,000 lbs ww	12 inches	None
July-December	156,162 lbs ww*	1,000 lbs ww	12 inches	None

*If the January-June ACL is not met, unused ACL from this season is added to the July-December ACL. Unused ACL from July-December is not added to a future season.

Table 12. Gray triggerfish commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL). July-December percentages are relative to the ACL for that season, not including any rollover from the January-June season.

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Gray Triggerfish	1,000 lbs ww	Jan-Jun: 34.2%	Jan-Jun: 54.1%	Jan-Jun: 58.9%
		Jul-Dec: 47.7%	Jul-Dec: 73.1%	Jul-Dec: 92.2%

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

Action 9. Revise commercial trip limit for golden tilefish (hook and line only)

Purpose of Action: Revise commercial trip limits for golden tilefish (hook and line component) to better enable commercial fishermen to harvest the ACL.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for the golden tilefish hook and line component. The current trip limit for the golden tilefish (hook and line) is 500 lbs gw; 560 lbs ww.

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for golden tilefish (hook and line) to 600 lbs gw; 672 lbs ww.

Alternative 3. Increase the commercial trip limit for golden tilefish (hook and line) to 750 lbs gw; 840 lbs ww.

Discussion

Table 13. Commercial regulations for golden tilefish (hook and line) in the most recent fishing year (2025).

Season	Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	Trip Limit	Minimum Size Limit	Seasonal Closure
January-December	110,722 lbs gw	500 lbs gw	None	None

Table 14. Golden tilefish (hook and line) commercial trip limit and recent (2022-2024) commercial landings relative to the commercial annual catch limit (ACL).

Species	Trip Limit	Commercial ACL % (In-Season Closure Date, if applicable)		
		2024 (Preliminary)	2023	2022
Golden Tilefish (H&L)	500 lbs gw	94.2%	84.5%* (10/31/2023; Re-opened 12/7/2023)	107.7% (7/6/2022)

Source: [NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Annual Catch Limit \(ACL\) Monitoring Website](#)

*Management change became effective during this year/season

Potential Amendment Timeline

Beginning with the June 2026 Council meeting, further development of Amendment 60 will be done by the full Snapper Grouper Committee, rather than the Commercial Sub-Committee, until completion of the amendment.

March 2025	Amendment 60 initiated
June 2025	Review initial actions and consider approval for scoping
July 5-August 8, 2025	Scoping
September 2025	Review scoping comments; provide direction for actions and alternatives
December 2025	Review available analyses and draft action and alternative language
March 2026	Review available analyses and draft action and alternative language. Approve suite of actions and range of alternatives for analysis.
April 2026	Review additional analyses and further develop actions and alternatives
June 2026	Consider approval for public hearings
Summer 2026	Public hearings
September 2026	Review public comment and approve all actions
December 2026	Final Council approval

Sub-Committee Action

Review the amendment timeline and edit as necessary.

Consider approval for public hearings. Provide staff with any necessary guidance on the timing and format for public hearings.