



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Amendment 61

Evaluation of the Fishery Management Unit

September 2025

Background

In December 2024, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) requested information to begin evaluating the need for federal conservation and management of species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU). Since then, the Council has identified 17 species to examine more in-depth to determine whether the species should be removed from the FMU or designated as ecosystem component (EC) species. These species are misty grouper, margate, sailor's choice, tomtate, white grunt, bar jack, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, whitebone porgy, banded rudderfish, blackfin snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, Atlantic spadefish, and sand tilefish.

The FMU composition is relevant to several other ongoing Council considerations, and any changes to the FMU need to be identified to help advance other Council actions. These actions include:

Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement)

Amendment 46 considers which species should require a federal permit for recreational harvest. The Council is also considering whether and how state licenses or endorsements could be deemed equivalent alternatives to a federal permit, and how species designated for the state licenses or endorsements should align with those requiring a federal permit.

For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment

The Council has been developing an amendment to improve reporting for the charter (Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program) and headboat (Southeast Region Headboat Survey) components of the recreational fishery. If the Council considers changes to the Snapper Grouper FMU, this could affect reporting requirements.

Unassessed Species Catch Levels Amendment

Once anticipated revised recreational landings data are available, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will develop new catch level recommendations for the unassessed Snapper Grouper species managed by the Council. All species that the Council has identified for potential removal from the Snapper Grouper FMU or to be designated EC species are unassessed and would be included.

Recreational Aggregate Bag Limits

The Council has expressed an intention to examine aggregate bag limits for the recreational sector that may include a variety of Snapper Grouper species. Decisions made in this amendment could affect the species composition of the potential future aggregate limits.

Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation and Long-Term Management Measures

The Council has been conducting a management strategy evaluation for the Snapper Grouper fishery. One of the potential outcomes of this effort is an amendment that would examine long-term measures for how the fishery is managed. The species composition of the FMU may affect how these measures are considered and analyzed.

Summary of last meeting (June 2025)

In [June 2025](#), the Snapper Grouper Committee (Committee) completed an [online survey](#) that included federal guidelines to facilitate a discussion of whether the 17 selected snapper grouper species are in need of federal conservation and management.

- The Committee concluded that all 17 species should be considered for either designation as EC species or removal from the FMU through an amendment.
- Several Committee members noted that they do not want most of this group of species to be completely unregulated but also recognized that the need for conservation and management of these species may not rise to the same level as other species in the FMU.
- Committee members also noted that some state-level regulations for these species, particularly in North Carolina and South Carolina, are currently dependent on federal regulations.
- The Committee also directed staff to investigate whether a federal permit could be required to commercially harvest EC or unmanaged species from federal waters.
- The Committee requested that state agency Council members compile information about how removal of federal regulations for the 17 species evaluated for EC designation or removal from the FMU would affect the states' ability to manage these species.

The Committee passed the following motion:

INITIATE AN AMENDMENT TO CONSIDER REMOVAL FROM THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT UNIT OR DESIGNATION AS ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT SPECIES/THIRD CATEGORY FOR MISTY GROUPEE, MARGATE, SAILOR'S CHOICE, TOMTATE, WHITE GRUNT, BAR JACK, JOLTHEAD PORGY, KNOBBED PORGY, SAUCEREYE PORGY, SCUP, WHITEBONE PORGY, BANDED RUDDERFISH, BLACKFIN SNAPPER, CUBERA SNAPPER, QUEEN SNAPPER, ATLANTIC SPADEFISH, AND SAND TILEFISH.

Objectives for this meeting (September 2025)

- Review requested information and develop measures that should be further considered in Amendment 61.
- Consider approving the amendment for scoping.

Species being considered

At the June 2025 meeting, the Committee began to develop rationale for maintaining species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) or considering changes to their need for federal conservation and management using [a survey](#) via Google Forms that considers information to address each of the ten criteria listed in Appendix 1. The species requested for further evaluation are listed with their sector annual catch limits (ACL) in Table 1. Species that are part of a complex are listed with their complex sector ACLs as well. Species in each complex that are not being considered for further evaluation are shaded in gray and provided for context. Complexes are managed under a single, collective ACL for all species in the complex. Commercial and recreational ACLs for individual species within complexes are shown in italics to indicate expected distributions of catch within complexes at the time that the ACLs were set. Figure 1 is included to help visualize the proportion of a complex ACL that is accounted for by each species in Table 1.

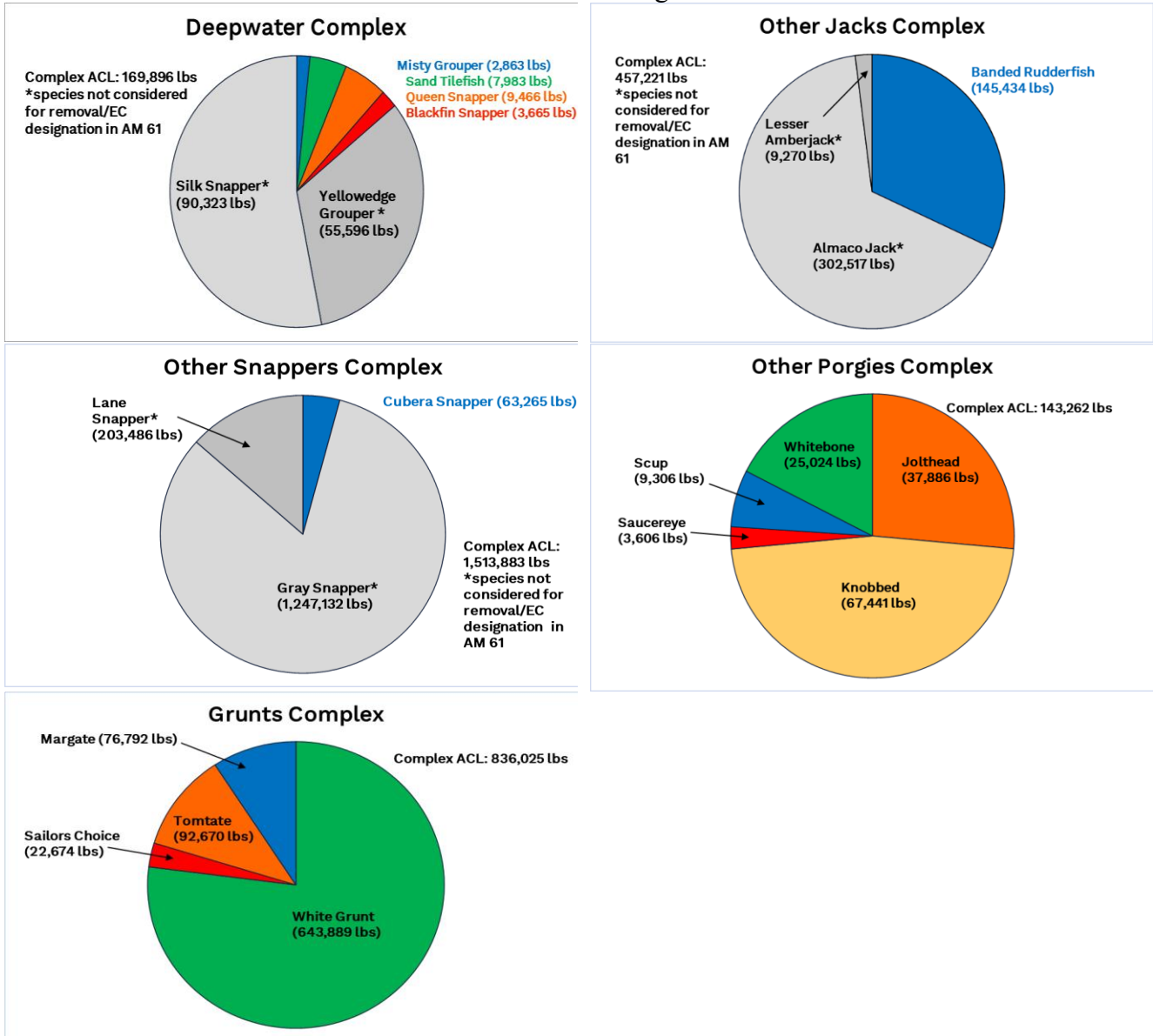
Table 1. Sector and total ACLs for Snapper Grouper species requested by the Council for further evaluation of the need for conservation and management*.

Complex/Species	Com ACL (lbs ww)	Rec ACL (CHTS lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Percent of Total Complex ACL
Atlantic Spadefish	150,552	661,926	812,478	-
Bar Jack	13,228	49,021	62,249	-
Deepwater Complex	131,268	38,628	169,896	-
Misty Grouper	<i>2,388</i>	<i>475</i>	<i>2,863</i>	<i>1.7%</i>
Sand Tilefish	<i>1,770</i>	<i>6,213</i>	<i>7,983</i>	<i>4.7%</i>
Queen Snapper	<i>8,756</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>9,466</i>	<i>5.6%</i>
Blackfin Snapper	<i>1,096</i>	<i>2,569</i>	<i>3,665</i>	<i>2.2%</i>
Yellowedge Grouper	<i>50,464</i>	<i>5,132</i>	<i>55,596</i>	<i>32.7%</i>
Silk Snapper	<i>66,794</i>	<i>23,529</i>	<i>90,323</i>	<i>53.2%</i>
Other Jacks Complex	189,422	267,799	457,221	-
Banded Rudderfish	<i>37,829</i>	<i>107,605</i>	<i>145,434</i>	<i>31.8%</i>
Almaco Jack	<i>147,322</i>	<i>155,195</i>	<i>302,517</i>	<i>66.2%</i>
Lesser Amberjack	<i>4,270</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>9,270</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
Other Snappers Complex	344,575	1,169,308	1,513,883	-
Cubera Snapper	<i>12,381</i>	<i>50,884</i>	<i>63,265</i>	<i>4.2%</i>
Gray Snapper	<i>302,180</i>	<i>944,852</i>	<i>1,247,132</i>	<i>82.4%</i>
Lane Snapper	<i>30,014</i>	<i>173,472</i>	<i>203,486</i>	<i>13.4%</i>
Other Porgies Complex	36,348	106,914	143,262	-
Jolthead Porgy	<i>1,571</i>	<i>36,315</i>	<i>37,886</i>	<i>26.4%</i>
Knobbed Porgy	<i>34,515</i>	<i>32,926</i>	<i>67,441</i>	<i>47.1%</i>
Saucereye Porgy	<i>0</i>	<i>3,606</i>	<i>3,606</i>	<i>2.5%</i>
Scup	<i>0</i>	<i>9,306</i>	<i>9,306</i>	<i>6.5%</i>
Whitebone Porgy	<i>262</i>	<i>24,762</i>	<i>25,024</i>	<i>17.5%</i>

Grunts Complex	217,903	618,122	836,025	-
White Grunt	203,405	440,484	643,889	77.0%
Sailor's Choice	0	22,674	22,674	2.7%
Tomtate	0	92,670	92,670	11.1%
Margate	14,498	62,294	76,792	9.2%

* Species in each complex that are not being considered for further evaluation are shaded in gray and provided for context.

Figure 1. Complex ACLs for snapper grouper species requested by the Council for further evaluation of the need for federal conservation and management.



Previous Council Actions

The Council has altered the composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU several times by removing species from the FMP or designating species as ECs through [Amendment 25 \(Comprehensive ACL Amendment\)](#), [Amendment 27](#), and [Amendment 35](#) to the Snapper Grouper FMP (note: click on amendment title for a link to the amendment document). The following summarizes these Council actions:

Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment (Amendment 25)

- Removed 13 species from the FMP (French grunt, bluestriped grunt, spanish grunt, sheepshead, yellow jack, crevalle jack, grass pogy, black margate, porkfish, puddingwife, queen triggerfish, tiger grouper, and smallmouth grouper).
 - Selected criteria included species with 95% or greater landings from state waters,
 - Species covered under the Florida Marine Life Species Rule, and
 - Species with no landings.
- Designated six species as ecosystem components (bank sea bass, cottonwick, longspine pogy, ocean triggerfish, rock sea bass, and schoolmaster).
 - The Council had considered removing these species from the FMP but changed course after receiving comments from the public in support of designating some species as ECs instead of removing them.
 - When considering which species would qualify as EC species, the Council considered various landings categories (less than or equal to 1,000, 2,500, 5,000, or 10,000 lbs) and species that met three of the four National Standard (NS) 1 criteria for EC species at the time.
 - Ended up selecting species that met three of the four NS 1 criteria for EC species.

Amendment 27

- Removed blue runner from the Snapper Grouper FMP. The Council noted that the majority of landings of blue runner (99%) were in waters off of Florida and adequate management was already in place in Florida state waters.
- The Council considered alternatives that would:
 - Keep blue runner in the FMP,
 - Remove blue runner from the FMP (Council Preferred),
 - Retain blue runner in the Snapper Grouper FMP but allow commercial harvest and sale of blue runner for vessels associated with a commercial Spanish Mackerel or commercial Snapper Grouper permit, and
 - Retain blue runner in the Snapper Grouper FMP but exempt it from the Snapper Grouper permit requirement for purchase, harvest, and sale.

Amendment 35

- Removed black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster (an EC species) from the FMP.
- Harvest of the four species was very low from federal waters and in state waters other than Florida.
- Also noted that species could be or already were adequately managed by the state of Florida.

- The stated objective of this action was to create a consistent regulatory environment for the subject species and ensure that only species requiring federal management are included in the Snapper Grouper FMP.

State regulations and the ability of states to manage species that are removed from federal management

Regulations applicable in state waters for the 17 species being considered in Amendment 61 are included in Appendix 2. Some regulations mirror those that are in place for federal waters, while others differ. This varies by the species and state (Table A2-1).

Under section 306(a)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), states may regulate a fishing vessel in federal waters under specific circumstances, including when there is no fishery management plan or other applicable federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating (Appendix 3). Should species be removed from the Snapper Grouper FMP, there is the potential for states to manage these species and extend regulations into federal waters, should the states choose to do so. States in the South Atlantic exhibit varying regulation development processes and existing authority to manage species once they are removed from federal management. The following summarizes relevant information for each state:

North Carolina

Existing state authority to manage a species if removed from federal management:

- The North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) Director would lose the proclamation authority provided by NC Marine Fisheries Commission (NCMFC) [rule 15A NCAC 03M .0512](#) which allows for compliance with management of federal and interjurisdictional species.
- If continued management of the species were desired, the Commission and Division would then need to begin the rulemaking process to implement state management of those species completely removed from federal management.
 - The rulemaking process takes approximately two years for a rule to become effective, which may be further extended if legislative review is required.

Existing state authority to implement regulations if species are designated as EC species in a federal FMP:

- Uncertain whether the Director would have proclamation authority to implement additional regulations beyond what is federally required if a species remains in a federal FMP as an EC species.
- One way for the NCMFC to bolster this authority would be to amend the N.C. FMP for Interjurisdictional Fisheries (IJ FMP) to include the additional management measures and articulate the scope of the Director's proclamation authority.
 - The NCMFC has authority over this process, but it would still take a year or more to complete.
 - Alternatively, the NCMFC could pursue a rule change to 15A NCAC 03M .0512.

- In addition to the timeline and requirements outlined, General Statute 150B-19.3 limits the NCMFC from adopting a rule that imposes a more restrictive standard, limitation, or requirement than those imposed by federal law or rule if a federal law or rule pertaining to the same subject matter has been adopted.

South Carolina

Existing state authority to manage a species if removed from federal management:

- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) does not have pre-existing authority to manage species completely removed from federal management.
- If state management is desired for species removed from federal management, SCDNR would need to coordinate efforts with members of the state’s legislature to introduce a bill.
 - The bill would include draft language to create fishing regulations. After any bill is introduced, it will proceed through committee reviews and discussions in both the House of Representatives and Senate, and if it favorably passes in both chambers, it would be sent to the Governor for approval and signed into law.

Existing state authority to implement regulations if species are designated as EC species in a federal FMP:

- SCDNR does have the ability to implement regulations for a species designated as an EC species.
- The rule making process previously outlined involving the state’s legislature would apply to this scenario.

Georgia

Existing state authority to manage a species if removed from federal management:

- Removal from a federal FMP would not affect Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ (GADNR) ability to manage those species.
- None of the 17 proposed species are currently regulated in state waters.
- Georgia does not adopt federal measures by proxy so there could be regulations that are more or less stringent than federal regulations.

Existing state authority to implement regulations if species are designated as EC species in a federal FMP:

- Georgia could implement regulations if there was a desire to do so. See information above for additional details.

Florida

Existing state authority to manage a species if removed from federal management:

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has the authority to set regulations for species in adjacent federal waters off Florida in the absence of a federal management plan as outlined in the MSA.
 - FWC has set recreational regulations for a number of species including blackfin tuna, stone crab, permit, African pompano, tripletail, and many other marine life species.

Existing state authority to implement regulations if species are designated as EC species in a federal FMP:

- If allowed under MSA, the FWC has the ability to set more stringent regulations in adjacent federal waters off Florida in the absence of other applicable federal fishing regulations.

Regulatory parameters for designating EC species

Per the National Standard Guidelines ([50 C.F.R §600 Subpart-D](#)), Councils have the option to establish EC species within a federal FMP if they determine that the species do not require conservation and management, but should be listed in a federal FMP in order to achieve ecosystem management objectives. In such a case, the NS Guidelines provide some guidance on factors that a Council should consider when determining whether species need federal conservation and management as well as whether species can be considered as ECs. The following descriptions provide information on the definition of EC species and how EC species may be considered for addition to a federal FMP.

What are ecosystem component species?

EC species are defined as “*stocks that a Council or the Secretary has determined do not require conservation and management, but desire to list in an FMP in order to achieve ecosystem management objectives*” ([50 C.F.R §600.305\(d\)\(13\)](#)).

How can a Council designate species as ecosystem components?

Under National Standards General guidelines, “*Councils may choose to identify stocks within their FMPs as ecosystem component (EC) species...if a Council determines that the stocks do not require conservation and management based on the considerations and factors in paragraph (c)(1) of this section (see Appendix 1). EC species may be identified at the species or stock level, and may be grouped into complexes. Consistent with National Standard 9¹, MSA section 303(b)(12)², and other applicable MSA sections, management measures can be adopted in order to, for example, collect data on the EC species, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality of EC species, protect the associated role of EC species in the ecosystem, and/or to address other ecosystem issues*” (50 C.F.R §600.305(c)(5)).

Examples of EC species and associated measures

Several councils, including the South Atlantic, have taken action to include EC species in their FMPs. Many councils have often considered EC species designations in the context of protecting forage species, but as previously noted species may also be considered ECs for other reasons. The following examples outline some general measures that have been taken for EC species:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

In 2017, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council implemented an [Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment](#) that designated 16 species or species groups as EC species. The

¹ National Standard 9 covers bycatch.

² From MSA 303(b)(12) when discussing discretionary provisions of an FMP: “include management measures in the plan to conserve target and non-target species and habitats, considering the variety of ecological factors affecting fishery populations.”

amendment established a possession limit for all EC species combined, along with permit, transit, and reporting provisions. The following specific measures were implemented³:

- Aggregate possession limit: A 1,700-pound possession limit for all EC species combined.
- Permit: Requirement that all commercial vessels and operators that catch and/or possess EC species be issued a commercial vessel and operator permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).
- Transit provisions: Allows commercial vessels to transit the Mid-Atlantic Forage Species Management Unit with an amount of EC species onboard that exceeds the possession limit and to land in a port outside of the management unit provided that the fish were harvested outside of the management unit and that all gear is stowed and not available for immediate use while transiting.
- Record keeping and reporting: Requires vessel operators and seafood dealers to report the catch and sale of EC species on existing vessel trip reports and dealer reports.

Pacific Fishery Management Council

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) developed a [Comprehensive Ecosystem-Base Amendment 1 \(CEBA 1\)](#), effective May 2016, that “*prohibits the development of new directed fisheries on forage species that are not currently managed by the Council (PFMC), or the States, until the Council (PFMC) has had an adequate opportunity to assess the science relating to any proposed fishery and any potential impacts to our existing fisheries and communities*”. General measures included:

- Retention limit: A prohibition on landing EC species without any other species onboard.
- Trip limit: A vessel trip limit of 10 metric tons combined weight of all EC species onboard.
- Annual limit: An annual vessel limit of 30 metric tons combined weight of all EC species in a calendar year.
- Processing limitation: A prohibition, with limited exceptions, of at-sea processing of EC species.

Trawl gear-specific measures:

- Trip limit: A vessel trip limit of 1 metric ton combined weight of all EC species onboard, with the exception of EC squid species.
- Annual limit: An annual vessel limit of 40 metric tons combined weight of any EC squid species in a calendar year.

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) classified squids as EC species through amendments to their Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMPs. The NPFMC noted that “*squid are important prey species for marine mammals, fish, and other squid*” and “*although squid do not require conservation and management, it is still appropriate to take measures to minimize squid bycatch to the extent practicable.*”

In addition to classifying squids as EC species, the two amendments prohibited directed fishing for squids in the BSAI or GOA groundfish fisheries, maintained record keeping and reporting

³ As outlined on the MAFMC’s website at: <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/unmanaged-forage>

requirements to record and report catches of squids, and specified retention limits for squids. Specific measures were as follows⁴:

- **Record keeping and reporting:** catch, discard, and production of squid must be recorded in logbooks or on catch or production reports.
- **Retention limit:** the maximum retainable amount of squid is not to exceed 20 percent of the total landings retained.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

As previously mentioned, the Council has established several EC species in the Snapper Grouper FMP, including longspine porgy, cottonwick, ocean triggerfish, bank sea bass, and rock seabass. There are no regulations associated with the EC species listing, but the listing has prioritized the species for continued data collection and may help with future ecosystem modeling or ecosystem-based fishery management efforts.

Permit requirement

At the June 2025 meeting, the Committee indicated an interest in determining whether a federal permit could be required to commercially harvest EC or unmanaged species from federal waters. To address the latter scenario, a species likely must be included in a federal FMP for a federal permit requirement to be considered, thus a federal permit cannot be required for a species that is federally unmanaged and is not included in a federal FMP.

A federal permit can be required for a species that is removed from “conservation and management” but is designated as an EC species within a federal FMP. The Council would need to develop rationale for such a permit requirement, but as previously mentioned, the NS Guidelines mention that councils can adopt measures aimed at data collection. Efforts to effectively gather data and monitor landings, which may help gauge whether future conservation and management becomes necessary, would be enhanced by a permit and the associated reporting requirements. As such, it appears that a permit requirement may be an appropriate measure to consider for EC species.

An important caveat is that a permit to harvest EC species would likely need to be open access or include an open access option, and the existing Snapper Grouper commercial permits (Unlimited and 250-pound trip-limited) are limited entry. For species that are not in need of “conservation and management” (i.e., EC species), requiring a limited entry permit would subject fishery participants to a stringent management measure. Thus, requiring a commercial Snapper Grouper permit to harvest EC species may not be appropriate due to the limited entry nature, and a more general “commercial permit” requirement may need to be considered for the species included in Amendment 61 if they are designated as EC species within the Snapper Grouper FMP.

⁴ As outlined in Federal Register implementing BSAI Groundfish Amendment 117 and GOA Groundfish Amendment 106: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/07/06/2018-14457/fisheries-of-the-exclusive-economic-zone-off-alaska-reclassifying-squid-species-in-the-bsai-and-go>

Committee Action

A summary of potential measures that could be considered in Amendment 61 based on measures that the Council has expressed interest in and actions from other councils is provided in Table 2. The ability of the Council to implement some measures will require proper rationale and further input from the IPT for this amendment. Based on the Council’s previous discussions, a combined possession limit, permit requirement, and reporting requirement may be of particular interest.

Table 2. Potential measures that could be taken for removing species from the Snapper Grouper FMU or listing as EC species in the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Potential Measures	Description	Comments
1) No Action	Leave species in the FMU and within existing complexes where appropriate.	Species will continue to need ACLs, monitoring of ACLs, and other measures where appropriate. Complex ACLs would not need to be recalculated.
2) Remove species from the Snapper Grouper FMU	Selected species would be removed from federal measures and management altogether.	States may be able to implement measures that extend into federal waters if there is interest. The ability and the mechanism to do so varies by state. The Deepwater, Jacks, and Other Snappers Complex ACLs would be recalculated. In some circumstances, removing some species within a complex may have unintended consequences. E.g., the almaco jack and lesser amberjack ACLs have been fully harvested or exceeded in recent years, while the banded rudderfish ACL has been underharvested. This has allowed the Jacks Complex to remain open (See Allocation Review Report for the Jacks Complex).
3) Designate species as ecosystem component species	Designate as EC species within the Snapper Grouper FMU. This may elevate the importance of the species for data collection as well as research and monitoring purposes.	Same comment as above regarding Complex ACLs (recalculation and potential unintended consequences). Ability of states to manage the species would vary since federal management would still be in place.
3a) Do not implement possession limits or other measures		The Council has 5 EC species in the Snapper Grouper FMP with no associated regulations or possession limits.

Potential Measures	Description	Comments
3b) Implement an aggregate trip limit	Establish an aggregate trip limit which could be based on a total amount or a percent of total trip landings.	Would need to specify possession limits by sector. Limits would likely need to be very high and unrestrictive since the species are no longer in need of conservation and management.
3c) Implement a reporting requirement	Establish or focus reporting requirements towards EC species on logbooks or dealer reports.	Necessity of this measure would depend on the intended outcome from the Council and whether a permit requirement is implemented. Both the commercial discard and for-hire logbook total compliance has been notably low in recent years. There is not a logbook for the private recreational sector.
3d) Implement a permit requirement	Establish permit requirements for landing EC species.	Would likely need to have an option for a permit that is not limited entry, which may be problematic if only allowing the commercial Snapper Grouper permits to qualify. There is also not a federal permit requirement for private vessels.
4) Other EC options???	Under NS General guidelines <i>“management measures can be adopted in order to...address other ecosystem issues.”</i> Are there “other ecosystem issues” that could be addressed in the Snapper Grouper FMP through designating EC species and what measures could be created to address them?	

To move the amendment forward, the Committee could consider the measures specified in Table 2 or other measures and provide a bulleted list of potential actions that should be approved for scoping.

List of measures to include for scoping:

- *(Committee builds list here based on items in the table or other ideas)*

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 61 FOR SCOPING.

Appendix 1. Evaluation criteria

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) section 302(h)(1) requires that a council prepare a fishery management plan (FMP) for each fishery under its authority that requires conservation and management. Not every fishery requires federal management. Any stocks that are predominately caught in federal waters and are overfished or subject to overfishing, or likely to become overfished or subject to overfishing, are considered to require conservation and management (50 CFR § 600.305(c)(1)). Beyond such stocks, councils may determine that additional stocks require “conservation and management.” (see Magnuson-Stevens Act definition at 16 U.S.C. 1802(5)). Based on this definition, and other relevant provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, a council should consider the following non-exhaustive list of factors when deciding whether additional stocks require conservation and management:

- i. The stock is an important component of the marine environment.
- ii. The stock is caught by the fishery.
- iii. Whether an FMP can improve or maintain the condition of the stock.
- iv. The stock is a target of a fishery.
- v. The stock is important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users.
- vi. The fishery is important to the Nation or to the regional economy.
- vii. The need to resolve competing interests and conflicts among user groups and whether an FMP can further that resolution.
- viii. The economic condition of a fishery and whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization.
- ix. The needs of a developing fishery, and whether an FMP can foster orderly growth.
- x. The extent to which the fishery is already adequately managed by states, by state/federal programs, or by federal regulations pursuant to other FMPs or international commissions, or by industry self-regulation, consistent with the requirements of the MSA and other applicable law.

[50 CFR § 600.305\(c\)\(4\)](#): When considering removing a stock from, or continuing to include a stock in, an FMP, Councils should prepare a thorough analysis of factors in [paragraphs \(c\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) through [\(x\)](#) of this section, and any additional considerations that may be relevant to the particular stock. As mentioned in [paragraph \(c\)\(3\)](#) of this section, if the amount and/or type of catch that occurs in Federal waters is a significant contributing factor to the stock's status, such information would weigh heavily in favor of continuing to include a stock in an FMP. Councils should consider weighting the factors as follows. Factors in [paragraphs \(c\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) through [\(iii\)](#) of this section should be considered first, as they address maintaining a fishery resource and the marine environment. *See* [16 U.S.C. 1802\(5\)\(A\)](#). These factors weigh in favor of continuing to include a stock in an FMP. Councils should next consider factors in [paragraphs \(c\)\(1\)\(iv\)](#) through [\(ix\)](#) of this section, which set forth key economic, social, and other reasons contained within the MSA for an FMP action. *See* [16 U.S.C. 1802\(5\)\(B\)](#). Finally, a Council should consider the factor in [paragraph \(c\)\(1\)\(x\)](#) of this section before deciding to remove a stock from, or continue to include a stock in, an FMP. In many circumstances, adequate management of a fishery by states, state/Federal programs, or another Federal FMP would weigh in favor of removing a stock from an FMP. *See e.g.*, [16 U.S.C. 1851\(a\)\(7\)](#) and [1856\(a\)\(3\)](#).

Ecosystem Component Species

Ecosystem Component Species (see §§ 600.305(c)(5) and 600.310(d)(1)) are stocks that a Council or the Secretary has determined do not require conservation and management, but desire to list in an FMP in order to achieve ecosystem management objectives.

Stocks that are identified in an FMP but not in need of conservation and management (*i.e.*, EC species or stocks that the fishery interacts with but are managed primarily under another FMP, see § 600.305(c)(5) through (6)) do not require ACLs, other reference points, or accountability measures.

Appendix 2. State Regulations

Table A2-1. State waters regulations currently in place for the species that are being considered in Amendment 61 as of September 2025.

	North Carolina	South Carolina	Georgia	Florida
Atlantic Spadefish	no more than 10 within the 20 fish/person aggregate bag limit Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	14-inch TL 30 fish/vessel/day Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	No size limit Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Bar Jack	no more than 10 within the 20 fish/person aggregate bag limit Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	No size limit Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Sand Tilefish	3 fish/person/day within the 3-grouper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	3 fish/person/day within the 3-grouper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	No size limit Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Misty Grouper	3 fish/person/day within the 3-grouper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	3 fish/person/day within the 3-grouper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	3 fish/person/day within the 3-grouper aggregate Descending device or venting tool (rigged and ready) required on board a vessel when harvesting or attempting to harvest reef fish
Blackfin Snapper	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Up to 10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Descending device or venting tool (rigged and ready) required on board a vessel when harvesting or attempting to harvest reef fish
Queen Snapper	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Up to 10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate Descending device or venting tool (rigged and ready) required on board a vessel when harvesting or attempting to harvest reef fish

	North Carolina	South Carolina	Georgia	Florida
Cubera Snapper	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate 12-inch TL Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate 12-inch TL Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	10 fish/person/day within the 10-snapper aggregate 12-inch TL No more than 2 over 30"/person or vessel/day 30" or larger fish are not included in the 10/person snapper aggregate bag limit Descending device or venting tool (rigged and ready) required on board a vessel when harvesting or attempting to harvest reef fish
Banded Rudderfish	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	5 fish/person/day within the 5-fish aggregate 14-inch min size, 22-inch max size Descending device or venting tool (rigged and ready) required on board a vessel when harvesting or attempting to harvest reef fish
Jolthead Porgy	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Knobbed Porgy	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Saucereye Porgy	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more

	North Carolina	South Carolina	Georgia	Florida
Scup	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate south of Cape Hatteras Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Whitebone Porgy	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
White Grunt	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Sailor's Choice	10 fish/person/day within the 20-fish aggregate Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	20 fish/person/day aggregate (All Other Snapper-Grouper Species) with no more than 10 of any single species Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more
Tomtate	No bag or size limit Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No bag or size limit Gear and descending device requirements consistent with federal regulations	No State Management	Default recreational bag limit of 100lbs or 2 fish per day, whichever is more

Appendix 3. Section 306(a)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

(3) A State may regulate a fishing vessel outside the boundaries of the State in the following circumstances:

(A) The fishing vessel is registered under the law of that State, and (i) there is no fishery management plan or other applicable Federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating; or (ii) the State's laws and regulations are consistent with the fishery management plan and applicable Federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating.

(B) The fishery management plan for the fishery in which the fishing vessel is operating delegates management of the fishery to a State and the State's laws and regulations are consistent with such fishery management plan. If at any time the Secretary determines that a State law or regulation applicable to a fishing vessel under this circumstance is not consistent with the fishery management plan, the Secretary shall promptly notify the State and the appropriate Council of such determination and provide an opportunity for the State to correct any inconsistencies identified in the notification. If, after notice and opportunity for corrective action, the State does not correct the inconsistencies identified by the Secretary, the authority granted to the State under this subparagraph shall not apply until the Secretary and the appropriate Council find that the State has corrected the inconsistencies. For a fishery for which there was a fishery management plan in place on August 1, 1996 that did not delegate management of the fishery to a State as of that date, the authority provided by this subparagraph applies only if the Council approves the delegation of management of the fishery to the State by a three-quarters majority vote of the voting members of the Council.

(C) The fishing vessel is not registered under the law of the State of Alaska and is operating in a fishery in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska for which there was no fishery management plan in place on August 1, 1996, and the Secretary and the North Pacific Council find that there is a legitimate interest of the State of Alaska in the conservation and management of such fishery. The authority provided under this subparagraph shall terminate when a fishery management plan under this Act is approved and implemented for such fishery.