Amendment 49

Catch Level Adjustments and Allocations for Greater Amberjack and Snapper Grouper Recreational Annual Catch Targets

Decision Document (Revised)

September 2022

****Revised from original posting for the September 2022 Council Meeting Briefing Book.*

Background

The most recent assessment of South Atlantic greater amberjack indicated that the stock is not overfished nor undergoing overfishing. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed SEDAR 59 (2020) during their April 2020 meeting and found that the assessment represented the best scientific information available. The Council received the results of the assessment and the SSC's recommendations for the Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) at their June 2020 meeting and directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment to adjust catch level adjustments based on SSC recommendations and Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) 59 (2020), and address sector allocations. The Council later added actions addressing management measures to increase equitability and efficiency in the fishery.

An application providing an overview of the fishery, including management history, landings, and assessment information, has been developed and can be found here: https://data.safmc.net/SA_FisheryDataGreaterAmberjack/.

In 2012, the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit (ACL) Amendment established ACLs for many species managed through the Council's fishery management plans (FMP). This

amendment also established recreational Annual Catch Targets (ACT), values lower than the ACL that establish a precautionary buffer accounting for uncertainty in the recreational catch estimates. While ACTs were developed and established as part of the management process (thus, they must be changed through plan amendments as the ACL changes), these values were not used in developing regulations and were not included in codified regulatory text. Given their lack of regulatory use, in March 2021, the Council's Snapper Grouper Committee directed staff to include an action in Amendment 49 that would consider removal of recreational ACTs throughout the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Actions in this amendment

Action 1. Revise the greater amberjack overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield
Action 2. Revise the greater amberjack sector allocations and sector annual catch limits
Action *3*. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack
Action *4*. Increase the seasonal commercial trip limits for greater amberjack
Action *5*. Revise the April spawning closure for greater amberjack
Action *6*. Remove recreational annual catch targets from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan
NOTE: This amendment also includes adoption of revised Goals and Objectives for the Snapper Grouper FMP, included HERE and in Appendix I of Draft Amendment 49.

Amendment timing

December 2020	Review options paper and provide guidance to staff
March 2021	Review draft actions and alternatives and approve for scoping
Apr 14 & 15, 2021	Conduct scoping hearings
September 2021	Review scoping comments, review preliminary analyses, and provide guidance to staff
December 2021	Review modifications to the amendment, select preferred alternatives, and provide additional guidance
March 2022	Review modifications to the amendment, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings
June 2022	Approve all actions, select preferred alternatives, and conduct public hearing
September 2022	**Review final draft amendment and consider approval for formal review**
Early-Mid 2023	Regulations effective

Objectives for this meeting

- Review and approve modifications to language of *Purpose and Need, as well as* alternatives in Action 1 and Action 3
- Review the draft Council Conclusions for all actions and modify as needed
- Consider approval for formal review

Purpose and Need

Purpose: The *purpose* of this amendment is to revise the overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch and catch limits for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic based on the results of the latest stock assessment; revise sector allocations, the commercial minimum size limits, ~~the~~ commercial trip limits, and the April spawning closure for greater amberjack; and remove recreational annual catch targets for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Need: The *need* for this amendment is to ensure catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to ensure overfishing does not occur for the South Atlantic greater amberjack stock, while increasing social and economic benefits through sustainable and profitable harvest of South Atlantic greater amberjack, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and its National Standards. This amendment is also needed to make administrative efforts more efficient by removing recreational annual catch targets, which are not actively used in management, from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Committee Action:

REVIEW AND APPROVE EDITS TO PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS.

Proposed Actions

Action 1. Revise the greater amberjack *overfishing limit*, acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield

Purpose of Action: The latest stock assessment (SEDAR 59 2020) indicated the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Action is needed because the SSC recommended a new ABC based on results of SEDAR 59, and the ABC, total ACL, and annual OY must be adjusted accordingly. The Council cannot set the total ACL above the SSC's recommended ABC.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The current overfishing limit for greater amberjack is 2,005,000 pounds whole weight. The total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for greater amberjack are equal to the **current** acceptable biological catch (1,968,001 pounds whole weight). The current acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey.

Preferred Alternative 2. Revise the overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch and set them equal to the most recent recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for greater amberjack and set them equal to the **recommended** acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey. The 2026/2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Fishing Year	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)	Annual OY (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)
2022/2023	4,615,000	4,380,000	4,380,000	4,380,000
2023/2024	3,283,000	3,233,000	3,233,000	3,233,000
2024/2025	2,839,000	2,818,000	2,818,000	2,818,000
2025/2026	2,719,000	2,699,000	2,699,000	2,699,000
2026/2027+	2,691,000	2,669,000	2,669,000	2,669,000

Alternative 3. Revise the overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch and set them equal to the most recent recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for greater amberjack and set them equal to 90% of the **recommended** acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey. The 2026/2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Fishing Year	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)	Annual OY (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)
2022/2023	4,615,000	4,380,000	3,942,000	3,942,000
2023/2024	3,283,000	3,233,000	2,909,700	2,909,700
2024/2025	2,839,000	2,818,000	2,536,200	2,536,200
2025/2026	2,719,000	2,699,000	2,429,100	2,429,100
2026/2027+	2,691,000	2,669,000	2,402,100	2,402,100

Alternative 4. Revise the overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch and set them equal to the most recent recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for greater amberjack and set them equal to 80% of the **recommended** acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey. The 2026/2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Fishing Year	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)	Annual OY (lbs ww)	Total ACL (lbs ww)
2022/2023	4,615,000	4,380,000	3,504,000	3,504,000
2023/2024	3,283,000	3,233,000	2,586,400	2,586,400
2024/2025	2,839,000	2,818,000	2,254,400	2,254,400
2025/2026	2,719,000	2,699,000	2,159,200	2,159,200
2026/2027+	2,691,000	2,669,000	2,135,200	2,135,200

Summary of Effects

Biological

- **Alternative 1 (No Action)** is not a viable alternative because it would retain the current total ACL for greater amberjack (equal to the current ABC), which is no longer based on the best scientific information available (BSIA).
- When totaling the annual ACL from 2022/2023 through 2026/2027, **Alternative 4** has the lowest cumulative ACL which is expected to have the greatest biological benefits to the stock, followed by **Alternative 3** and **Preferred Alternative 2**.
- South Atlantic greater amberjack have a low release mortality rate of 20% (sensitivity range: 10-30%) (SEDAR 15 2008 and SEDAR 59 2020).

Economic

- Total ACLs that allow for more fish to be landed can result in increased positive economic effects if harvest increases without notable long-term effects on the health of a stock.

- From a short-term economic perspective under initial implementation, **Preferred Alternative 2** would have the highest potential net economic benefits, followed by **Alternative 3** and **Alternative 4**.

Social

- In general, a higher ACL would lower the chance of triggering a recreational AM and result in the lowest level of negative effects on the recreational and commercial sectors.
- **Preferred Alternative 2** would be the most beneficial for fishermen, followed by **Alternative 3** and **Alternative 4**.

Snapper Grouper AP Recommendation

- **(April 2022) The AP recommended the Total ACL equal the 2026/2027+ ABC (2,669,000 lbs ww).**
    - Recommendation developed through compromise and working together between sectors and regions for most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. General consensus that the Snapper Grouper AP does not feel the stock is as healthy as suggested by the assessment.
- In general, there were concerns over the health of the greater amberjack stock. It was noted that:
    - Greater amberjack may be in similar situation to gag or snowy in that they appear to be declining; may be better to be more conservative now (North Carolina).
    - Not seeing as many greater amberjack in recent years (North Carolina; Cape Canaveral and Stuart, Florida).
    - The fishery has not been catching ACL as it currently stands.
- Rather than the Preferred Alternative that results in a large, short-term increase to the ACL, the AP recommended a more conservative approach that benefits both sectors and consideration of a consistent ACL. The AP also recommended the Council consider the potential economic implications of large, sudden changes in the ACL.

Summary of Public Comments

- Most comments supported **Preferred Alternative 2**.
    - Including one letter from an organization.
- One comment supported maintaining status quo.

Draft Conclusion

The current greater amberjack total ACL is set equal to the ABC. The OFL and ABC recommended by the SSC in this amendment would update that value to be based on the best scientific information available. Therefore, setting the ABC, total ACL, and annual OY at the recommended ABC levels is expected to prevent overfishing. The SSC's recommended ABC also accounts for the change in recreational catch estimation from the Marine Recreational Fishing Statistical Survey (MRFSS) methodology to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES). Setting the total ACL and annual OY equal to the recommended ABCs decreases the likelihood of accountability measures (AM) being triggered, thus reducing negative impacts to fishing communities. Additionally, with the SEDAR 59

(2020) stock assessment indicating the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, there is no indication that a buffer between ABC and total ACL is needed to maintain the health of the stock at this time.

The Council chose to maintain the relationship of total ACL and annual OY equaling ABC and update ABC to the values most recently recommended by the SSC by selecting **Preferred Alternative 2**. The Council determined that **Preferred Alternative 2** would best meet the purpose of adjusting catch levels to prevent overfishing of the greater amberjack stock using the best scientific information available while also maximizing social and economic benefits from increased harvest opportunities while the stock's biomass is above B_{MSY}. **Preferred Alternative 2** best meets the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, as amended, while complying with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and other applicable law.

Committee Action:

- REVIEW AND APPROVE MODIFIED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES LANGUAGE.
- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

Action 2. Revise the greater amberjack sector allocations and sector annual catch limits

Purpose of Action: The Council's Allocations Trigger Policy states the Council will review sector allocations upon completion of a stock assessment. In addition, recreational landings estimates have been revised to adopt the new MRIP FES methodology. This action allows the Council to consider how to allocate the total ACL between the commercial and recreational sectors from the 2022-2023 fishing year onwards under the revised catch levels.

Note: The revised sector annual catch limits shown in Table 1 reflect the revised total annual catch limit in Preferred Alternative 2 of Action 1.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain the current recreational sector and commercial sector allocations as 59.34% and 40.66%, respectively, of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack.

Alternative 2. Allocate 70.16% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the recreational sector and 29.84% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the commercial sector.

Preferred Alternative 3. Allocate 65.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the recreational sector and 35.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the commercial sector.

Alternative 4. Allocate 55.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the recreational sector and 45.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the commercial sector.

Alternative 5. Allocate 50.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the recreational sector and 50.00% of the revised total annual catch limit for greater amberjack to the commercial sector.

Discussion

Future recreational catches under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, as well as the rest of the Action 2 alternatives, would be monitored via the MRIP FES. Table 1 summarizes the rationale for the allocation alternatives considered. Table 2 summarizes the resulting ACLs for **Preferred Alternative 3**.

Table 1. Current and proposed South Atlantic greater amberjack allocations and rationale for **Alternatives 1 (No Action)-5**.

Action 2 (Allocations)	Commercial Allocation	Recreational Allocation	Rationale for Development
Alternative 1 (No Action)	40.66%	59.34%	Current allocation; based on applying the formula of sector annual catch limit = ((mean landings 2006-2008)*0.5)) + ((mean landings 1986-2008)*0.5) using recreational catch estimates calibrated to MRFSS (which is no longer the current survey method)
Alternative 2*	29.84%	70.16%	This allocation is based on applying the formula of sector annual catch limit = ((mean landings 2006-2008)*0.5)) + ((mean landings 1986-2008)*0.5) to a revised dataset that is inclusive of MRIP FES (the current survey method)
Preferred Alternative 3	**35.00%**	**65.00%**	**This allocation is based on these percentages being approximate midpoints between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. These percentages are also approximate (rounded to the nearest whole percentage) averages of annual percentages of total landings for each sector from 2010-2019.**
Alternative 4	45.00%	55.00%	Additional option considering increase to commercial allocation given growing commercial importance of greater amberjack and ACL reductions to other commercially important snapper grouper species.
Alternative 5	50.00%	50.00%	Additional option considering increase to commercial allocation given growing commercial importance of greater amberjack and ACL reductions to other commercially important snapper grouper species.

Table 2. Sector annual catch limits (ACL) for greater amberjack based on the revised total ACL from **Preferred Alternative 2** in Action 1 and allocation percentages from **Preferred Alternative 3** in Action 2 (65.00% recreational and 35.00% commercial). The commercial ACL is allocated 60% to Season 1 (March-August) and 40% to Season 2 (September-February).

Year	Recreational ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL* (lbs gw)	Commercial Season 1 Quota (lbs gw)	Commercial Season 2 Quota** (lbs gw)
2022/2023	2,847,000	1,474,038	884,423	589,615
2023/2024	2,101,450	1,088,029	652,817	435,212
2024/2025	1,831,700	948,365	569,019	379,346
2025/2026	1,754,350	908,317	544,990	363,327
2026/2027+	1,734,850	898,221	538,933	359,288

*The total annual catch limit (ACL) is allocated in pounds whole weight (lbs ww) to the commercial and recreational sectors. The commercial allocation is then converted to pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) for regulatory use in the commercial ACL and seasonal quotas.

**Any remaining quota from commercial Season 1 (March-August) transfers to Season 2 (September-February). Remaining quota from Season 2 is not carried forward.

Summary of Analyses

Commercial Sector

An analysis of three scenarios comparing when commercial sector landings would reach the proposed commercial sector ACLs under the various allocation alternatives for three landings scenarios are in Table 3 for Season 1. **Preferred Alternative 3** could result in a Season 1 closure as early as July 1 to no closure needed during the fishing year. Similarly, predicted closures are presented for Season 2 under two landings scenarios in Table 4. No closures were predicted for Season 2 for **Preferred Alternative 3** Scenarios 1 and 2.

Table 3. Projected commercial closure dates for Season 1 under the sector allocation alternatives considered for three landings scenarios: 1) a three-year average (2017/18 through 2019/2020), 2) a five-year average (2015/16 through 2019/2020), and 3) the maximum annual landings during the last five years (2015/16 through 2019/2020).

Alternative	Year	Commercial ACL Season 1 (lbs gw)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			Closure Date	Closure Date	Closure Date
1	2022/2023	1,027,447	None	None	None
	2024/2025	661,038	None	None	18-Aug
	2026/2027	626,086	None	None	3-Aug
2	2022/2023	754,034	None	None	None
	2024/2025	485,130	None	None	18-Jun
	2026/2027	459,479	None	25-Aug	12-Jun
Preferred 3	**2022/2023**	**884,423**	**None**	**None**	**None**
	2024/2025	**569,019**	**None**	**None**	**12-Jul**
	2026/2027	**538,933**	**None**	**None**	**1-Jul**
4	2022/2023	1,137,115	None	None	None
	2024/2025	731,596	None	None	None
	2026/2027	692,913	None	None	31-Aug
5	2022/2023	1,263,462	None	None	None
	2024/2025	812,885	None	None	None
	2026/2027	769,904	None	None	None

Table 4. Projected commercial closure dates for Season 2 under the sector allocation alternatives considered for two landings scenarios: 1) a three-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2017/18 through 2019/2020), and 2) the maximum landings in the last five years (2015/16 through 2019/2020). **Note: Scenario 3 is not included in the Season 2 analysis due to recent closures in 2016 and 2017.

Alternative	Year	Commercial ACL Season 2 (lbs gw)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
			Closure Date	Closure Date
1	2022/2023	684,965	None	None
	2024/2025	440,692	None	None
	2026/2027	417,391	None	None
2	2022/2023	502,689	None	None
	2024/2025	323,420	None	13-Feb
	2026/2027	306,319	None	1-Feb
Preferred 3	**2022/2023**	**589,615**	**None**	**None**
	2024/2025	**379,346**	**None**	**None**
	2026/2027	**359,288**	**None**	**None**
4	2022/2023	758,077	None	None
	2024/2025	487,731	None	None
	2026/2027	461,942	None	None
5	2022/2023	842,308	None	None
	2024/2025	541,923	None	None
	2026/2027	513,269	None	None

*Commercial ACLs (lbs ww) for greater amberjack are based on the revised total ACL from Preferred Alternative 2 in Action 1, and Alternative 1 (No Action) in Action 2.

Recreational Sector

The predicted closure dates for the recreational sector for the allocations alternatives considered under three landings scenarios are in Table 5. **Preferred Alternative 3** could result in a closure as early as July 15 to no closure needed during the fishing year. No closure dates were needed for landings Scenario 1 because the three-year average of the recreational landings generated landings below all of the recreational ACLs provided in Action 2.

Table 5. Projected recreational closure dates under three landings scenarios: 1) three-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2018/2019 through 2020/2021), 2) five-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2016/2017 through 2020/2021), and 3) the maximum landings in the last five years of complete data.

Alternative	Year	Recreational ACL (lbs ww)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			Closure Date	Closure Date	Closure Date
1	2022/2023	2,599,092	None	None	17-Sep
	2024/2025	1,672,201	None	None	12-Jul
	2026/2027	1,583,785	None	6-Feb	7-Jul
2	2022/2023	3,073,008	None	None	None
	2024/2025	1,977,109	None	None	29-Jul
	2026/2027	1,872,570	None	None	23-Jul
Preferred 3	**2022/2023**	**2,847,000**	**None**	**None**	**19-Jan**
	2024/2025	**1,831,700**	**None**	**None**	**21-Jul**
	2026/2027	**1,734,850**	**None**	**None**	**15-Jul**
4	2022/2023	2,409,000	None	None	29-Jul
	2024/2025	1,549,900	None	3-Feb	17-May
	2026/2027	1,467,950	None	12-Jan	12-May
5	2022/2023	2,190,000	None	None	22-Jun
	2024/2025	1,409,000	None	24-Dec	9-May
	2026/2027	1,334,500	None	24-Nov	5-May

*Commercial ACLs (lbs ww) for greater amberjack are based on the revised total ACL from Preferred Alternative 2 in Action 1, and Alternative 1 (No Action) in Action 2.

Summary of Effects

Biological

- Biological effects are not expected to substantially vary among alternatives in Action 2, since each sector has aspects of its management (commercial spawning closure, different possession limits, different minimum size limits, etc.) that provide relatively greater biological benefits to the stock.
    - Additionally, Action 2 would not change the total harvest, which is limited to the total ACL specified in Action 1.
- **Alternative 5** would allocate the *highest* percentage of the total ACL to the commercial sector (50.00%), followed by **Alternative 4** (45.00%), **Alternative 1 (No Action)** (40.66%), **Preferred Alternative 3** (35.00%), and **Alternative 2** (29.84%)
- Conversely, **Alternative 2** would allocate the *highest* percentage of the total ACL to the recreational sector (70.16%), followed by **Preferred Alternative 3** (65.00**%), Alternative 1 (No Action)** (59.34%), **Alternative 4** (55.00%), and **Alternative 5** with the lowest recreational allocation (50.00%).

Economic

- A larger difference between the sector ACL and observed landings would allow for higher potential landings and reduce the likelihood of restrictive AMs being triggered that would lead to short-term negative economic effects (**Table 6**).
- For the commercial sector, **Alternative 5** would have the highest potential economic benefits followed by **Alternative 4**, **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, **Preferred Alternative 3**, and **Alternative 2**.
- For the recreational sector, **Alternative 2** would have the highest potential economic benefits followed by **Preferred Alternative 3**, **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, **Alternative 4**, and **Alternative 5**.

Table 6. Percent difference between the sector ACLs in Action 2 compared to 5-year average landings of greater amberjack from 2015/16-2019/20.[a]

Fishing Year	Commercial sector ACL (lbs gw)	Percent difference between 5-year average commercial landings and the sector ACL	Recreational sector ACL (lbs gw)	Percent difference between 5-year average recreational landings and the sector ACL
Alternative 1 (No Action)				
2023/24	1,263,979	69%	1,918,462	-5%
2024/25	1,101,730	47%	1,672,201	-17%
2025/26	1,055,205	41%	1,601,587	-21%
2026/27+	1,043,476	39%	1,583,785	-22%
Alternative 2				
2023/24	927,622	24%	2,268,273	12%
2024/25	808,549	8%	1,977,109	-2%
2025/26	774,405	3%	1,893,618	-7%
2026/27+	765,798	2%	1,872,570	-8%
Preferred Alternative 3				
2023/24	**1,088,029**	**45%**	**2,101,450**	**4%**
2024/25	**948,365**	**27%**	**1,831,700**	**-10%**
2025/26	**908,317**	**21%**	**1,754,350**	**-13%**
2026/27+	**898,221**	**20%**	**1,734,850**	**-14%**
Alternative 4				
2023/24	1,398,894	87%	1,778,150	-12%
2024/25	1,219,327	63%	1,549,900	-23%
2025/26	1,167,837	56%	1,484,450	-27%
2026/27+	1,154,856	54%	1,467,950	-28%
Alternative 5				
2023/24	1,554,327	107%	1,616,500	-20%
2024/25	1,354,808	81%	1,409,000	-30%
2025/26	1,297,596	73%	1,349,500	-33%
2026/27+	1,283,173	71%	1,334,500	-34%

[a]Assumes the total ACL in Preferred Alternative 2 of Action 1 to determine the sector ACL.

Social

- With **Alternative 2** and **Preferred Alternative 3**, there would be a decrease in the commercial percentage compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**
    - Could have some negative social effects if commercial fishermen have a negative perception of this change due to the decrease in fishing opportunity and concerns about long-term social effects
    - However, the increase in poundage may mitigate some of these concerns and result in positive social benefits associated with increased harvest in the short-term.
- Under the proposed total ACL in Action 1 (**Preferred Alternative 2**), projections indicate that the commercial ACL for greater amberjack would not be reached under any of the alternatives proposed in Action 2, apart from a possible closures in Season 1 and Season 2 under the high landings scenario (maximum landings over the last five years and three years, respectively)
- However, the recreational ACL could be reached in fishing year 2026-27 under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, **Alternative 4**, and **Alternative 5** using the five-year average landings. As a result, the recreational sector may experience negative social effects associated with AMs which, when triggered, can restrict harvest in the current season or subsequent seasons.

Snapper Grouper AP Recommendation

- For Action 2 (Sector Allocations), the AP recommended **Alternative 1 (No Action)** to be preferred. **This recommendation was maintained at the April 2022 AP meeting.**
    - Recommendation developed through compromise and working together between sectors and regions for most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. General consensus that the Snapper Grouper AP does not feel the stock is as healthy as suggested by the assessment.

Summary of Public Comments

- Most comments supported **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.
    - Including one letter from an organization.
    - Some comments stated the current allocation is fair and should remain in place.
- Two comments received during scoping supported **Preferred Alternative 3**.
    - One comment received during scoping stated secondary preference for **Preferred Alternative 3**, if **Alternative 1 (No Action)** is not selected.

Draft Conclusion

Current sector allocations were developed in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment through an equation that used historic catch data, which included recreational catch estimates from MRFSS. SEDAR 59 and the catch levels recommended by the SSC are based on data that include recreational catch estimates from the MRIP FES, which estimates recreational catch to be greater than was estimated through MRFSS. Greater recreational catch estimates would have a greater probability of exceeding the sector ACL under the current allocation percentages. Therefore, the

recreational allocation percentage should increase to account for the increase in recreational catch estimates under the new estimation method.

Several recently completed assessments for other snapper grouper species have indicated poor stock status and necessitated reduced harvest of commercially significant snapper grouper stocks, making greater amberjack potentially more important to the commercial sector in future years. Therefore, while the recreational percentage allocation needs to be increased due to the change in recreational catch estimates, it does not need to be changed to the extent of applying the current allocation formula to landings that include the MRIP FES estimates (Action 2-**Alternative 2**). A less extreme shift in allocation toward the recreational sector could more fairly meet the needs of both sectors.

Preferred Alternative 3 increases the allocation percentage for the recreational sector, which lessens the probability of that sector exceeding its ACL under the new recreational survey method. **Preferred Alternative 3** is also an approximate midpoint between the current allocation percentages and those resulting from the same allocation equation using MRIP FES catch estimates for the recreational sector. **Preferred Alternative 3** with total ACL from Action 1-**Preferred Alternative 2** is also not expected to result in closures due to meeting the ACL for either sector, based on recent average harvest levels.

National Standard 4 requires that allocations be:

(1) Fair and equitable to all such fishermen.

(2) Reasonably calculated to promote conservation.

(3) Carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges.

Preferred Alternative 3 addresses National Standard 4 by:

- encouraging a rational use of the resource to optimize social and economic benefits for all sectors and components,
- providing fishing opportunities throughout the fishing year and throughout the South Atlantic region,
- and maintaining the greater amberjack resource to ensure it remains available to a diverse group of users.

Committee Action:

- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

Action 3. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack

Purpose of Action: In response to public feedback gathered during scoping of this amendment and given the current stock status, the Council is considering changes to minimum size limits to reduce the difference between the current recreational (28 inches fork length) and commercial (36 inches fork length) size limits. This action is intended to increase fairness and equity between sectors.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The commercial minimum size limit is 36 inches fork length.

Alternative 2. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit to 34 inches fork length.

Preferred Alternative 3. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit to 32 inches fork length.

Alternative 4. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit to 30 inches fork length.

Alternative 5. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit to 28 inches fork length.

Discussion

- Minimum size limits for the commercial and recreational sectors (Amendment 4, 1991):
  - Commercial: 36-inch fork length.
  - Recreational: 28-inch fork length.

Summary of Analyses

Changes to the commercial season based on reductions to the commercial minimum size limit were not able to be projected based on the available data. Undersized greater amberjack are not allowed to be harvested, thus data on their sizes and catch frequency is only captured through commercial observer data (**Figure 2**). The commercial observer data set for greater amberjack is not large enough to reasonably predict how reductions to the commercial minimum size limit would affect harvest rates and season length.

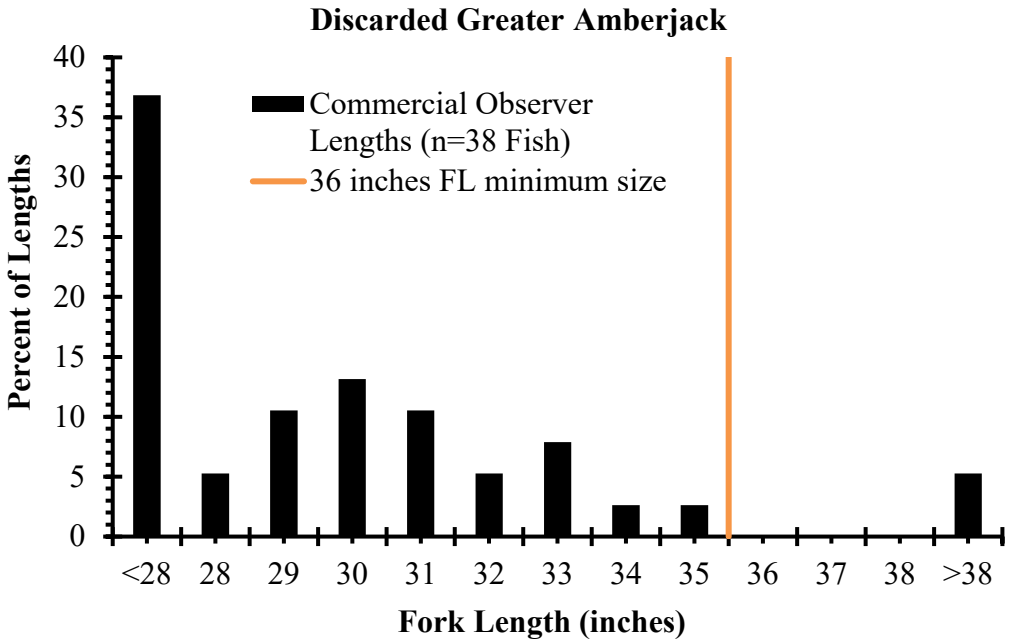

Figure 1. Length distribution (fork length) of greater amberjack released in the commercial sector from 2018 through 2020 in 1-inch length increments. The orange line represents the current commercial minimum size limit of 36 inches fork length.
Source: Commercial observer program (started in the South Atlantic region in 2018).

Summary of Effects

Biological

- Reducing the current 36-inch FL commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack under **Alternative 2**, **Preferred Alternative 3**, **Alternative 4**, and **Alternative 5** could be expected to increase the commercial harvest rate but reduce commercial discards and release mortality. However, overall harvest and fishing mortality would still be limited by the commercial ACL, which would have neutral biological effects to the stock relative to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.

Economic

- In general, the lower the size limit, the more that overall harvest will increase, thereby increasing economic benefits incurred from such harvest.
- The highest commercial economic benefits would occur under **Alternative 5**, followed by **Alternative 4**, **Preferred Alternative 3**, **Alternative 2**, and **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.

Social

- There is a social trade-off with reducing the commercial minimum size limit (**Alternative 2**, **Preferred Alternative 3**, **Alternative 4**, **Alternative 5**):
    - An increase in the harvest rate from a smaller minimum size limit can increase commercial trip profitability (positive social effect).

- An increase in the harvest rate from a smaller minimum size limit can also increase the chance of landings reaching the ACL and triggering AMs earlier in the season (negative social effect).

Snapper Grouper AP Recommendation

- **The AP recommended changing the commercial minimum size limit to 34 inches (April 2022).**
  - Recommendation developed through compromise and working together between sectors and regions for most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. General consensus that the Snapper Grouper AP does not feel the stock is as healthy as suggested by the assessment.
- A fish near 36 inches is quite large and means fish near this limit are more likely to need to be gaffed to be measured. This could impact survivorship of the fish after release.
- Smaller greater amberjack are preferred due to fewer potential for worms, less potential for ciguatera toxin, easier/quicker to board for increased trip efficiency and to reduce damage to fish that are potentially discarded due to the size limit.
- Increasing harvest of preferred, smaller fish may be biologically beneficial, as larger fish won't be harvested as often and will be left to spawn in the future.

Summary of Public Comments

- Action 3 received the most comments of any single action in Amendment 49.
- Most comments supported a reduction of the commercial minimum size limit.
  - Size limit recommendations ranged from 28-33 inches, and sizes within this range were fairly evenly mixed among comments.
  - Comments to reduce the commercial minimum size limit were supported by rationale that included reducing shark depredation, fewer parasites in smaller greater amberjack, and increased numbers of large spawning females.
- Some comments supported equal commercial and recreational minimum size limits. Recommended minimum sizes that accompanied these comments ranged from 28-36 inches.

Draft Council Conclusion

The Council added consideration of reducing the commercial minimum size limit after hearing a desire for consideration of this change from public comments during scoping and the initial Snapper Grouper AP input. The Council selected **Preferred Alternative 3** to decrease the commercial minimum size limit from 36 inches to 32 inches for similar reasons as those provided through public and Snapper Grouper AP comments: reduced regulatory discards, reduced risk of shark depredation and, greater commercial desirability for smaller fish. The Council discussed the uncertainty of catch projections used to develop ABC when fishing conditions, such as size limits, are changed. Because of this, the Council decided against setting the commercial minimum size limit equal to the recreational 28-inch minimum size limit, but also decided that a reduction to 32 inches likely would not jeopardize the positive stock status, given other management constraints on the commercial sector such as in-season accountability measures, trip limits, and split season quotas.

Committee Action:

- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

Action 4. Increase the seasonal commercial trip limits for greater amberjack

Purpose of Action: In response to public feedback gathered during scoping of this amendment and given the current stock status, the Council is considering increasing the Season 2 (September-February) commercial trip limit (1,000 pounds whole or gutted weight) to make it equal to the Season 1 (March-August) commercial trip limit. This action is intended to allow some increase to harvest of a stock that is not overfished and above its reference biomass level.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The March 1 through August 31 (Season 1) commercial trip limit is 1,200 pounds gutted or whole weight for greater amberjack, and the September 1 through the end of February (Season 2) commercial trip limit is 1,000 pounds gutted or whole weight.

Alternative 2. Modify the March 1 through August 31 (Season 1) commercial trip limit for greater amberjack to be:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 1,500 pounds gutted or whole weight.
Sub-Alternative 2b. 2,000 pounds gutted or whole weight.
Sub-Alternative 2c. 2,500 pounds gutted or whole weight.

Preferred Alternative 3. Modify the September 1 through the end of February (Season 2) commercial trip limit for greater amberjack to be:

Preferred Sub-Alternative 3a. 1,200 pounds gutted or whole weight.
Sub-Alternative 3b. 1,500 pounds gutted or whole weight.
Sub-Alternative 3c. 2,000 pounds gutted or whole weight.
Sub-Alternative 3d. 2,500 pounds gutted or whole weight.

Discussion

- The commercial ACL is allocated into two quotas: 60% to the period March 1 through August 31 (Season 1) and 40% to the period September 1 through the end of February (Season 2) (Regulatory Amendment 27 2019). Any remaining quota from Season 1 transfers to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 is not carried forward.
    - The Season 1 commercial trip limit is 1,200 pounds, and the Season 2 commercial trip limit is 1,000 pounds.

Summary of Analyses

Table 7. The projected commercial closure dates for Season 1 from increasing the trip limit and based on three landings scenarios: 1) three-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2017/18 through 2019/20), 2) five-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2015/16 through 2019/20), and 3) the maximum landings in the last five years of complete data

(2015/16 through 2019/20). Predictions assume preferred total ACL and sector allocations from Actions 1 and 2, respectively.

Alternative	Year	Commercial ACL Season 1 (lbs gw)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			Closure Date	Closure Date	Closure Date
1 (No Action) (1,200 lbs)	2022/2023	884,423	None	None	None
	2024/2025	569,019	None	None	12-Jul
	2026/2027	538,933	None	None	1-Jul
2a (1,500 lbs)	2022/2023	884,423	None	None	None
	2024/2025	569,019	None	None	5-Jul
	2026/2027	538,933	None	None	27-Jun
2b (2,000 lbs)	2022/2023	884,423	None	None	None
	2024/2025	569,019	None	None	27-Jun
	2026/2027	538,933	None	None	20-Jun
2c (2,500 lbs)	2022/2023	884,423	None	None	None
	2024/2025	569,019	None	None	21-Jun
	2026/2027	538,933	None	30-Aug	14-Jun

Table 8. The projected commercial closure dates for Season 2 from increasing the trip limit and based on two landings scenarios: 1) three-year average of the most recent years of complete data (2017/18 through 2019/20), and 2) the maximum landings in the last five years of complete data (2015/16 through 2019/20). Scenario 3 is not included due to recent closures in Season 2. Predictions assume preferred total ACL and sector allocations from Actions 1 and 2, respectively.

Alternatives	Year	Commercial ACL Season 2 (lbs gw)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
			Closure Date	Closure Date
1 (No Action) (1,000 lbs)	2022/2023	589,615	None	None
	2024/2025	379,346	None	None
	2026/2027	359,288	None	None
3a (1,200 lbs)	**2022/2023**	**589,615**	**None**	**None**
	2024/2025	**379,346**	**None**	**None**
	2026/2027	**359,288**	**None**	**None**
3b (1,500 lbs)	2022/2023	589,615	None	None
	2024/2025	379,346	None	24-Feb
	2026/2027	359,288	None	11-Feb
3c (2,000 lbs)	2022/2023	589,615	None	None
	2024/2025	379,346	None	4-Feb
	2026/2027	359,288	None	24-Feb
3d (2,500 lbs)	2022/2023	589,615	None	None
	2024/2025	379,346	None	20-Jan
	2026/2027	359,288	None	10-Jan

Summary of Effects

Biological

- Harvest rates could be expected to increase under an increased trip limit under **Alternative 2** (Season 1) and **Preferred Alternative 3** (Season 2) and their sub-alternatives, so the commercial fishing seasons may be shortened under current AMs if the quota is met in-season.
- However, predicted commercial landings included in Table 7 and Table 8 do not include years with the recently implemented (2020/2021 fishing year) commercial split season, which is intended to slow harvest rates and reduce commercial closures due to the ACL being reached.
- The biological effects of **Alternative 2** and **Preferred Alternative 3** and their sub-alternatives would not differ from **Alternative 1 (No Action)** in terms of the risk of overfishing as overall harvest would be limited to the commercial ACL or split-season quotas, and AMs would be triggered if the ACL or quotas were reached.
- Season 1 – Alternative 2 sub-alternatives:
    - The Season 1 quota could be reached as early as June 20 under **Sub-Alternative 2b**, June 27 under **Sub-Alternative 2a**, and June 14 under **Sub-Alternative 2c**. The most conservative projected landings are under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** in which Season 1 would retain the lowest trip limit at 1,200 pounds, resulting in a possible in-season closure by July 1.
- Season 2 –Alternative 3 sub-alternatives
    - The Season 2 quota could be reached as early as January 10 under **Sub-Alternative 3d**, February 4 under **Sub-Alternative 3c**, February 4 under **Sub-Alternative 3b**, and no in-season closures expected under **Preferred Sub-Alternative 3a.** The most conservative projected landings are under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** in which Season 2 would retain the lowest trip limit at 1,000 pounds, resulting in no expected closures.

Economic

- Generally, commercial trip limits are not considered to be economically efficient because they require an increase in the number of trips and associated trip costs to land the same amount of fish. However, the negative economic effects of this inefficiency can be offset by price support resulting from the supply limitations and the lengthening of seasons. Potential net economic benefits would be highest under **Sub-Alternative 3d**, followed by **Sub-Alternative 3c**, **Sub-Alternative 2c**, **Sub-Alternative 3b**, **Sub-Alternative 2b**, **Preferred Sub-Alternative 3a**, **Sub-Alternative 2a**, and **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.

Social

- In general, the potential social effects of a higher trip limit would depend on how fishermen are affected by either a higher trip limit and shorter season, or a lower trip limit and longer seasons.
- Given most of the projected commercial ACLs are not expected to be met, positive social effects of increased commercial harvest rates under **Alternative 2** and **Preferred**

Alternative 3 and their sub-alternatives could outweigh potential negative social effects of the commercial ACL being reached and closures occurring earlier in the season.

Snapper Grouper AP Input:

- **The AP recommended maintaining the current commercial trip limits for both commercial seasons (Action 4 – Alternative 1) (April 2022).**
    - Recommendation developed through compromise and working together between sectors and regions for most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. General consensus that the Snapper Grouper AP does not feel the stock is as healthy as suggested by the assessment.

Summary of Public Comments

- Most comments supported a 1500-pound trip limit for the entire year (**Sub-Alternative 2a** and **Sub-Alternative 3b**), noting the increased ACL and benefits of increased trip efficiency such as offsetting rising fuel and other fishing-related expenses.
- One comment supported increasing the commercial trip limit to 2,000 pounds (**Sub-Alternative 2b** for season 1 and **Sub-Alternative 3c** for season 2).
- One comment supported a 3-fish possession limit for both sectors.

Draft Council Conclusion

The Council added consideration of increasing the seasonal commercial trip limits after hearing a desire for consideration of this change from the Snapper Grouper AP during their initial input. The Council selected **Preferred Alternative 3 – Preferred Sub-Alternative 3a** to increase the commercial minimum size limit in season 2 (August-February) from 1,000 pounds to 1,200 pounds. The Council selected this option to have more regulatory consistency by having the same commercial trip limit throughout the year. Analyses considered in this amendment indicate that under this limit, the commercial sector is not expected to experience a closure in season 2 (Appendix F).

Committee Action:

- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

Action 5. Revise the April spawning closure for greater amberjack

Purpose of Action: In response to public feedback gathered during scoping of this amendment, the Council is considering revising the April spawning closure of the commercial fishery to be a closure of both the recreational and commercial fisheries in April. This action is intended to increase fairness and equity between sectors.

Alternative 1 (No Action). During April each year, no person may sell or purchase a greater amberjack harvested from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone and the harvest and possession limit is one per person per day or one per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

Preferred Alternative 2. Specify during April each year, no person may sell, purchase, harvest, or possess a greater amberjack from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone and the harvest and possession limits are zero. This closure would apply to both the recreational and commercial sectors.

Alternative 3. Remove the April spawning closure for greater amberjack. Allow purchase, harvest, and possession of greater amberjack from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone according to regulations specified for the rest of the year.

Discussion

- During April, each year, possession of greater amberjack on commercial or for-hire (charter and headboat) vessels is limited to one per person per day or one per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive. This limit is the same as the recreational bag limit; however, commercial and recreational vessels are still subject to their respective sector-specific minimum size limit (36 inches fork length for commercial; 28 inches fork length for recreational).
- The spawning closure was implemented through Amendment 9 as an expansion of the original closure established south of Cape Canaveral, FL, through Amendment 4. Council rationale for the expansion of the original closure included concern about the status of greater amberjack and uncertainty about the 1996 NMFS stock assessment.
- Also during April, commercial sale or purchase of greater amberjack from the South Atlantic region is prohibited.

Summary of Analyses

Commercial Sector

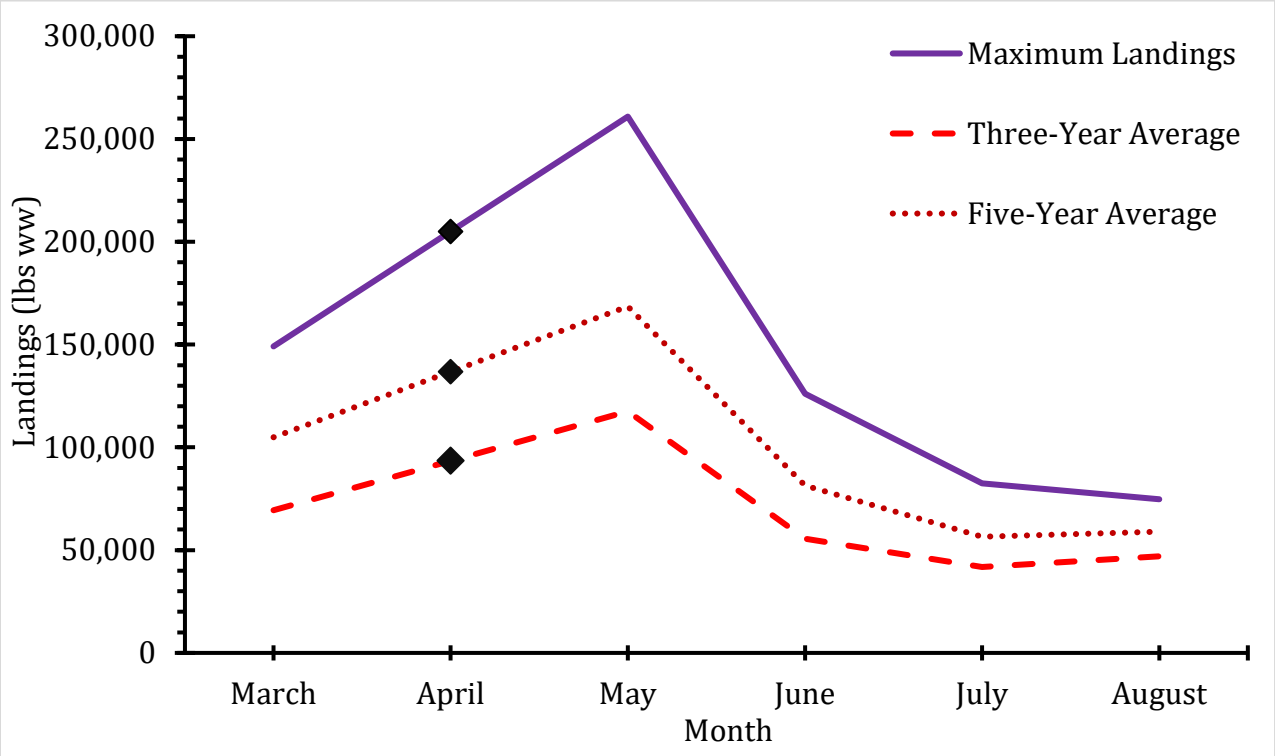

Figure 2. South Atlantic greater amberjack commercial landings in pounds whole weight by month for Season 1 from 2016 to 2020, three-year average, and five-year average with predicted April landings, if the commercial fishery operated in April with the same regulations as the rest of the year. Predicted April landings are represented with a black diamond.

Table 9. Projected commercial closure dates for Season 1 (under preferred total ACL and sector allocations from Actions 1 and 2, respectively) if the commercial sector were open to commercial harvest in April.[1] The closure dates were generated from three landings scenarios: 1) three-year average of the most recent years of complete data, 2) five-year average of the most recent years of complete data, and 3) the maximum landings in the last five years of complete data.

Year	Commercial ACL Season 2	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
		Closure Date	Closure Date	Closure Date
2022/2023	884,423	None	None	26-Aug
2024/2025	569,019	None	11-Aug	26-May
2026/2027	538,933	None	26-Jul	22-May

[1] For projected closure dates for the greater amberjack commercial sector season 1 that includes both the combined various trip limit increases from Action 4, and if the commercial sector was open to commercial harvest in April in Action 5, see Table 6 in Appendix F of Draft Amendment.

Summary of Effects

Biological

- Under either **Alternative 1 (No Action)** or **Alternative 2**, additional protection is afforded to the stock in April, during the peak spawning.
- While both alternatives offer some protection to the stock, overall, **Preferred Alternative 2** would indirectly provide the greatest biological benefit to the greater amberjack stock compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, due to reduced fishing mortality from harvest.
- **Alternative 3** would be expected to have negative biological effects due to a likely increase in fishing mortality during spawning, a time when historical information indicates that greater amberjack could be more easily caught.

Economic

- **Preferred Alternative 2** is expected to result in reduced harvest and reduced economic benefits for the recreational sector, compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.
- **Alternative 3** would be expected to increase commercial landings and net operating revenue. From a short-term economic benefits perspective, **Alternative 3** would provide the highest economic benefits followed by **Alternative 1 (No Action)** and **Preferred Alternative 2**.

Social

- Assuming that closing harvest during spawning ensures sustainable harvest of greater amberjack, long-term benefits to fishing communities in the form of consistent access to the resource would be highest under **Preferred Alternative 2**, followed by **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, and **Alternative 3**.
- Alternatively, short-term negative effects on fishing communities due to restrictions in fishing opportunities would be lowest under **Alternative 3** followed by **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, **and Preferred Alternative 2**.

Snapper Grouper AP Input:

- **The AP recommended maintaining the current April spawning closure (Action 5 – Alternative 1) (April 2022).**
    - Recommendation developed through compromise and working together between sectors and regions for most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. General consensus that the Snapper Grouper AP does not feel the stock is as healthy as suggested by the assessment.
- It is important to keep greater amberjack open, including April, as a larger species that can be retained on a recreational trip (South Carolina- Charter).

Summary of Public Comments

- Most comments supported removal of the April spawning closure (**Alternative 3**).
- Two comments supported the allowance to sell commercial greater amberjack harvested during the April spawning closure. One of these comments additionally stated that if commercial sale would remain closed, then there should be a complete closure of both sectors in April (**Preferred Alternative 2**).

- One comment supported maintaining the April spawning closure (**Alternative 1 (No Action)**).
    - This comment stated that the closure has helped the sustainability of the greater amberjack stock.

Draft Council Conclusion

The Council added consideration of revising the April spawning closure after hearing a desire for consideration of this change from the Snapper Grouper AP during their initial input. The Council selected **Preferred Alternative 2** to revise the April spawning closure to be a complete closure of both sectors during April. The Council selected this option to have more sector equity. Currently during April, the commercial sector is restricted to the recreational possession limit of 1 fish per person per day or one per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and is not allowed to sell that fish. During April, the recreational sector is allowed to operate under the same possession limits that they have the rest of the year. The Council determined that to protect greater amberjack during a portion of their peak spawning period (April-May), both sectors should fully participate in this effort by not allowing either sector to harvest greater amberjack.

Committee Action:

- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

Action 6. Remove recreational annual catch targets from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain recreational annual catch targets for species managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Preferred Alternative 2. Remove recreational annual catch targets for species managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Discussion

- Recreational annual catch targets (ACTs) for the Snapper Grouper FMP, established through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, have been in place since 2012, are not codified, and are not used for management purposes. **Preferred Alternative 2** would remove the need for ACTs to be evaluated and changed when changes are made to the recreational ACL.
- Some recreational ACTs are applied to individual species, while others are applied to species complexes. **Preferred Alternative 2** would remove ACTs from both individual species and complexes.

Summary of Effects

- There are no expected biological, economic, or social effects associated with removal of the ACTs as they are not connected to any AMs or other management functions (**Preferred Alternative 2**).
- Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, recreational ACTs must be specified whenever recreational ACLs change. However, because the recreational ACT alternatives as they are presented here do not trigger any corrective or preventative action, no additional in-season monitoring is required regardless of where the recreational ACT level is set. Therefore, administrative burden is expected to be reduced in a small amount under **Preferred Alternative 2**, compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**.

Snapper Grouper AP Input:

- **The AP recommended to remove recreational ACTs from the Snapper Grouper FMP (Action 6 – Preferred Alternative 2) (maintained in April 2022).**

Summary of Public Comments

- One comment supported **Preferred Alternative 2**.
  - This comment was included in a letter submitted by an organization.

Draft Council Conclusion

The Council does not currently use recreational ACTs in its management of snapper grouper species, but the ACTs must be updated when the recreational ACLs change under the FMP. Removal of recreational ACTs from the FMP (**Preferred Alternative 2**) would reduce an administrative burden without affecting the Council's ability under the FMP to manage the

snapper grouper fishery. The Council determined that ACTs were not necessary because the Council accounts for any management uncertainty when setting ACLs. Additionally, if use of an ACT were desired in the future, the Council could add an ACT back into the FMP on a case-by-case basis through a future amendment.

Committee Action:

- REVIEW DRAFT CONCLUSION AND MODIFY AS NEEDED.

- CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT 49 FOR FORMAL REVIEW

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE AMENDMENT 49 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

Appendix A

Recommended Acceptable Biological Catch and Overfishing Limit for Greater Amberjack

The SSC reviewed SEDAR 59 (2020) during their April 2020 meeting and found that the assessment addressed the terms of reference appropriately, was conducted using the best scientific information available, is adequate for determining stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations, and the methods to address uncertainty were consistent with expectations and available information. The SSC recommended revising the OFL based on projections under a fishing mortality rate that would produce maximum sustainable yield ($F = F_{MSY}$) and applied the ABC control rule to recommend the ABC for greater amberjack. These recommendations were updated to account for additional projections from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) that applied management from 2022 through 2026 (*Table App A 1*). Discards were projected as separate values from the landings shown in Table App A 1.

When developing options for ACLs, years for annual ABCs were considered to apply to the start of the non-calendar fishing year used for greater amberjack (March-February). For example, the 2022 ABC from Table App A 1 would be used to define the ACL for the March 2022-February 2023 fishing year.

Table App A 1. South Atlantic greater amberjack OFL and ABC recommendations, in pounds whole weight (lbs ww), based on projections from SEDAR 59 (2020). The assessment and these projections use recreational data calibrated to the MRIP FES.

Year	OFL (lbs ww)	ABC (lbs ww)
2022	4,615,000	4,380,000
2023	3,283,000	3,233,000
2024	2,839,000	2,818,000
2025	2,719,000	2,699,000
2026	2,691,000	2,669,000

Stock Status Determination Criteria

Table App A 2. South Atlantic greater amberjack stock status criteria recommendations based on the results of SEDAR 59 (2020) (SSC Meeting Report, April 2020).

Criteria	Deterministic	Probabilistic
Overfished evaluation (SSB/SSB_{MSY})	2.10	2.39
Overfishing evaluation	0.40	0.28
MFMT (F_{MSY})	0.69	1.07
SSB_{MSY} (mt mature female biomass)	3,291	2,642
MSST (mt mature female biomass)	2,468	2,066
MSY (1000 lbs.)	2,342	2,474

Snapper Grouper FMP Goals and 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 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 was 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 App A 3***). These goals and objectives have been reviewed and recommended for adoption in the Snapper Grouper FMP by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel. By including them in Snapper Grouper Amendment 49, the Council intends to formally adopt them as the goals and objectives of the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Table App A 3. 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.	
Objective 1	Promote collection of quality data to support management plans and programs considered by the Council.
Objective 2	Encourage development of mechanisms to effectively engage and collaborate with stakeholders on cooperative research, data collection and analysis.
Objective 3	Improve knowledge about the social and economic elements of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic.
Objective 4	Support improved and expanded monitoring and reporting programs for the snapper grouper fishery.
Objective 5	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.	
Objective 1	Develop management measures that consider sub-regional differences and issues within the fishery.
Objective 2	Develop innovative management measures that allow consistent access to the fishery for all sectors.
Objective 3	Ensure that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors.
Objective 4	Develop management measures that reduce and mitigate discards.
Objective 5	Support management measures that incorporate ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.
Objective 6	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.	
Objective 1	Develop communication approaches that provide streamlined and timely information to increase awareness and engage stakeholders.
Objective 2	Ensure that Council communication encourages and supports engagement with a diverse audience of stakeholders.
Objective 3	Improve awareness and understanding of fishery science and research and how these inform management.
Objective 4	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.	
Objective 1	Create an accountable and flexible decision-making process for development and evaluation of management measures.
Objective 2	Build capacity to streamline management efforts and better coordinate with management partners.
Objective 3	Improve communication with stakeholders to ensure the needs of the fishery are understood and considered throughout the Council process.