



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Carolyn N. Belcher, Ph.D., Chair | Trish Murphey, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

AGENDA

Snapper Grouper Committee

Villas by the Sea Resort
1175 N. Beachview Drive
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 8:30 AM – 3:45 PM

Thursday, March 7, 2024, 8:30 AM – 12:00 noon

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes (December 2023)

Briefing on Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Applications – NMFS SERO

Presentation on Projections for 2024 Recreational Seasons for Red Snapper and Gag – NMFS SERO

1. Wreckfish (SG Amendment 48) (***LE AP Report; Attachments 1a and 1b***)
 - a. Law Enforcement (LE) Advisory Panel (AP) Recommendations – Scott Pearce, LE AP Chair
 - b. Wreckfish Sub-Committee report – Christina Wiegand
 - c. **Committee Action:** Approve for public hearings.
2. Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper (Amendment 55) (***Attachments 2a and 2b***)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **Committee Action:** Review preliminary analyses and provide direction for further amendment development.
3. Gag and Black Grouper Vessel Limit and On-Demand Gear for Black Sea Bass (Regulatory Amendment 36) (***LE AP Report; Attachment 3***)
 - a. LE AP Recommendations – Scott Pearce
 - b. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
 - c. **Committee Action:** Review scoping comments and provide direction for further amendment development.
4. Black Sea Bass (Amendment 56) (***SSC Report; Attachments 4a and 4b***)
 - a. SEDAR 76 Assessment Projections Presentation – SEFSC

- b. Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Recommendations – Jeff Buckel, SSC Chair
 - c. Management Response Options Presentation – Council Staff
- 5. Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement (SG Amendment 46) (*LE AP Report; Attachments 5a and 5b*)
 - a. LE AP Recommendations – Scott Pearce
 - b. Overview – John Hadley
 - c. **Committee Action:** Consider modifications to actions. Provide direction for further amendment development and desired input from APs.
- 6. Red Snapper (Regulatory Amendment 35) (*LE AP Report; Attachments 6a and 6b*)
 - a. LE AP Recommendations – Scott Pearce
 - b. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
 - c. **Committee Action:** Consider modifications and additional actions to be included in the amendment.
- 7. Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (*SSC Report; Attachment 7*)
 - a. Update – Blue Matter Science
 - b. SSC Recommendations – Jeff Buckel
- 8. Overview of Commercial Permits – John Hadley (*Attachment 8*)
- 9. Agenda Topics for March 2024 Advisory Panel Meeting
- 10. Other Business

Adjourn

Committee Members:

Jessica McCawley, Chair
 Kerry Marhefka, Vice-chair
 Robert Beal
 Dr. Carolyn Belcher
 Gary Borland
 LT Cameron Box
 Tim Griner
 Judy Helmey
 Trish Murphey
 Tom Roller
 Robert Spottswood, Jr.
 Andy Strelcheck
 Laurilee Thompson
 Spud Woodward
 Mid-Atlantic Member: Sonny Gwin

Attachments:

SSC Report: SSC Meeting February 2024

LE AP Report: LE AP Meeting January 2024

Attachment 1a: Wreckfish Sub-Committee Report

Attachment 1b: Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) Draft Amendment

Attachment 2a: Amendment 55 (Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper) Decision Document

Attachment 2b: Amendment 55 (Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper) Draft Amendment

Attachment 3: Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag, Black Grouper, and Black Sea Bass On-Demand Pots) Decision Document

Attachment 4a: SEDAR 76 (Black Sea Bass) Stock Assessment Projections Presentation (*will be posted with Recent Documents by 02/28/2024*)

Attachment 4b: Black Sea Bass Management Response Options Presentation (*will be posted with Recent Documents by 02/28/2024*)

Attachment 5a: Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement) Decision Document

Attachment 5b: Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement) Draft Amendment

Attachment 6a: Regulatory Amendment 35 (Red Snapper and Release Mortality) Decision Document

Attachment 6b: Regulatory Amendment 35 (Red Snapper and Release Mortality) Draft Amendment

Attachment 7: Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Presentation

Attachment 8: Snapper Grouper Commercial Permits Discussion Document

Staff Lead: Michael Schmidtke (mike.schmidtke@safmc.net)

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee

The Committee will approve the minutes from the December 2023 meeting and the agenda for the March 2024 Committee meeting.

1. Wreckfish (SG Amendment 48) (*LE AP Report; Attachments 1a and 1b*)

Description: A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, including stakeholder concerns with offloading site and time requirements. At their June 2023 meeting the Council established a Wreckfish Sub-Committee to discuss continued development of Amendment 48. The Wreckfish Sub-Committee met on February 8th and recommended preferred alternatives for most actions. Staff will present Sub-Committee recommendations and draft document for the Committee to consider for public hearing approval.

Required Committee Action: Review recommendations in the Wreckfish Sub-Committee Report and consider for approval for public hearings.

2. Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper (SG Amendment 55) (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)

Description: The results of SEDAR 68 were reviewed by the Council in March 2023 and staff were directed to start a plan amendment to reorganize the Other Shallow Water Grouper Complex, establish the new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex and then establish a rebuilding plan, catch levels, allocations and AMs for this new complex. In December 2023, the Council reviewed the SG AP feedback, selected preferred alternatives for some actions and added additional management measure actions. At this meeting staff will review a decision document and draft amendment that includes an updated analysis.

Required Committee Action: Review the decision document and provide any guidance to staff on the range of actions and alternatives. Consider selecting additional preferred alternatives.

3. Gag and Black Grouper Recreational Vessel Limits and On-Demand Gear for Black Sea Bass (Regulatory Amendment 36) (*LEAP Report; Attachment 3*)

Description: Regulatory Amendment 36 considers revising the gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits and revising commercial black sea bass pot requirements to accommodate the use of on-demand black sea bass pots. The Council initiated this amendment in September 2023 and approved for scoping in December 2023. Scoping was conducted in February 2024. Council staff will summarize scoping comments and a decision document outlining amendment development thus far.

Required Committee Action: Provide direction to staff on actions and alternatives to develop for the framework amendment.

- 4. Black Sea Bass (SG Amendment 56) (SSC Report; Attachments 4a and 4b)**
Description: SEDAR 76 included data through 2021 and indicated that the Black Sea Bass stock in the South Atlantic is overfished. The assessment estimated recruitment to be lower than average since 2011 and declining in each of those years. Despite declines in landings over the same period, spawning biomass has also declined, while fishing mortality has increased. The Council received a presentation on the assessment in June 2023. Since then, the SSC has reviewed additional work and discussed projections of future catch that are used to recommend overfishing limits (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) will present the revised projections of future catch used for setting ABC and a rebuilding timeline. Jeff Buckel, SSC Chair, will deliver the SSC's ABC, OFL, and rebuilding recommendations and comments. Council staff will present initial management issues to be considered while developing Amendment 56, based on the results of SEDAR 76.
Required Committee Action: Provide guidance to staff on regulatory changes that should initially be considered in Amendment 56.
- 5. Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement (SG Amendment 46) (LE AP Report; Attachments 5a and 5b)**
Description: Amendment 46 considers establishing a private recreational permit and education requirement for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. Over multiple meetings, the Council has received input and technical guidance from the Private Recreational Reporting Working Group, Joint Council Workgroup on Section 102 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act, and several advisory panels (APs). After reviewing this input, the Council began work on the amendment and approved it for scoping at the December 2022 meeting. Of note at this meeting was also the removal of a reporting component from further consideration in the amendment.
The Council has since further developed Amendment 46, with the amendment being most recently reviewed by the Law Enforcement AP at their January 2024 meeting. The Committee will be provided with summary AP feedback and then Council staff will review a decision document for Amendment 46.
Required Committee Action: Review AP comments and the decision document. Consider additional input that is desired from the Snapper Grouper Permitting and Reporting Technical AP and the Snapper Grouper Private Angler AP at their upcoming meetings in the Spring 2024.
- 6. Red Snapper (Regulatory Amendment 35) (LEAP Report; Attachments 6a and 6b)**
Description: In December 2023, the Council rescinded its approval of Regulatory Amendment 35 and directed staff to compile additional information that will assist the Council in determining if additional or different regulatory actions should be taken at this time. Council staff will present the requested information, and receive the Committee's feedback.
Required Committee Action: Provide direction to staff on further development of Regulatory Amendment 35 or other management responses to the SEDAR 73 (2021) stock assessment of South Atlantic red snapper.

7. Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (SSC Report, Attachment 7)

Description: Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) is internationally recognized as best practice for evaluating the performance of alternative management approaches and identifying the mode of management that is most likely to meet the various management objectives of a fishery. The MSE process is designed to support evidence-based decision-making in the face of uncertainty on the status and dynamics of a fishery system. It was developed in response to a common situation where there were conflicting interpretations of a stock assessment process, and there was no clear path for making an informed and transparent management decision. In short, the MSE process involves building a range of models which span the key uncertainties in the fishery system and using computer simulations to evaluate the performance of alternative management methods against established management objectives.

The SSC reviewed and discussed the Snapper Grouper MSE at their February webinar meeting, which included feedback on the spatial structure of the base model, and potential additional operating models and management strategies.

Blue Matter Science will present a progress update on the development of the Snapper Grouper MSE. The Council will review progress and provide information to help inform the types of management strategies being evaluated.

Required Committee Action: Provide input on management strategies being evaluated.

8. Snapper Grouper Commercial Permits (Attachment 8)

At their October 2023 meeting the Snapper Grouper AP discussed commercial permits under Other Business, specifically focusing on whether or not consolidation of Snapper Grouper Unlimited (SG 1) permits is still needed and the ongoing transfer of 225 pound trip limited (SG 2) permits. A summary of the AP's discussion was subsequently reviewed at the Council's December 2023 meeting and the Council directed staff to update the commercial "2 for 1" discussion document as well as information on 225 commercial permits for review at the March 2024 meeting.

Required Committee Action: Provide direction on next steps for examining commercial permits.

9. Agenda Topics for March 2024 Advisory Panel Meeting

Description: The Snapper Grouper AP is scheduled to convene on March 26-28, 2024.

Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Hogfish Fishery Performance Report
- Management Strategy Evaluation Update and Discussion
- Discussion of Limited Entry into the Snapper Grouper For-Hire Fishery
- Commercial Permits Discussion
- Regulatory Amendment 35 (Red Snapper and Release Mortality) [if necessary]
- Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag, Black Grouper, and Black Sea Bass On-Demand Pots)
- Amendment 55 (Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper)
- Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass Assessment Response)

- Amendment Updates: Amendment 46 (Recreational Permitting), Amendment 48 (Wreckfish)
 - Other Updates: Best Fishing Practices, Citizen Science, SEDAR
- Required Committee Action:** Modify list of topics as needed and approve.

10. Other Business