



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

AGENDA

Snapper Grouper Committee

Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston
2934 West Montague
North Charleston, SC 29418

Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 3:45 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Minutes (June 2026 and April 2026 Commercial Sub-Committee) ([June 2026 Snapper Grouper Committee Report](#))
- Update on submitted amendments – NMFS SERO
- Update on exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications – NMFS SERO

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

1. Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision (Amendment 61) (*Attachment 1*)
 - a. Overview – John Hadley
 - b. **Committee Action:** Review actions and alternatives

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 8:30 A.M. – 3:45 P.M.

8:30 am – 10:00 am

2. Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper (Amendment 44) (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **Committee Action:** Approve for public hearings

--- Break ---

10:15 am – 12:00 pm

3. Evaluate Sunsetting of Spawning Special Management Zones (Regulatory Amendment 39) (*Attachments 3a and 3b*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **Committee Action:** Select preferreds and approve for public hearings.

--- Lunch ---

1:30 pm – 3:45 pm

4. Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60) (*Attachments 4a-4c*)
 - a. Public Hearing Comment Summary – Michael Schmidtke
 - b. Vessel Monitoring System and Notifications Presentation – Jessica Stephen and Kelly Spalding, NOAA Fisheries

- c. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
- d. **Committee Action:** Review public comment and approve all actions.

Thursday, September 17, 2026, 8:30 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

8:30 am – 10:00 am

- 5. Headboat Vessel Limits for Snapper Grouper Species (Regulatory Amendment 38) (*Attachment 5*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **Committee Action:** Review actions and alternatives and select preferred alternatives.

--- Break ---

10:15 am – 11:00 am

- Management Strategy Evaluation Updates
 - Snapper Grouper
 - Wreckfish
 - **Committee Action:** None.

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

- 6. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program Review (*Attachments 6a and 6b*)
 - a. Overview – Christina Curtis
 - b. **Committee Action:** Provide comments and review draft conclusions and recommendations for AP review.

--- Lunch ---

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm

- 7. Blueline Tilefish Joint Sub-Committee Report (*Attachment 7*)
 - a. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
 - b. **Committee Action:** Review recommendation for process to allocate the ABC between the SAFMC and MAFMC jurisdictions.

2:00 pm – 2:15 pm

- 8. Topics for Fall 2026 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm

- 9. Other Business

Adjourn

Committee Members:

Jessica McCawley, Chair
Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair
Robert Beal

Carolyn Belcher
Gary Borland
Amy Dukes
LT Jonathon Haksteen
Judy Helmey
Dewey Hemilright
Jimmy Hull
Trish Murphey
Charlie Phillips
Tom Roller
Robert Southwick
Andy Strelcheck

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

Attachments:
[SAFE Report](#)

Attachment 1: Amendment 61 (Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision) Decision Document

Attachment 2a: Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper & Mutton Snapper) Decision Document

Attachment 2b: Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper & Mutton Snapper) Draft Amendment

Attachment 3a: Regulatory Amendment 39 (Spawning SMZs) Decision Document

Attachment 3b: Regulatory Amendment 39 (Spawning SMZs) Draft Amendment

Attachment 4a: Amendment 60 (Commercial Management Measures) Decision Document

Attachment 4b: Amendment 60 (Commercial Management Measures) Draft Amendment
(available on 9/9)

Attachment 4c: Amendment 60 Vessel Monitoring System Presentation (available on 9/9)

Attachment 5: Regulatory Amendment 38 (Headboat Vessel Limits) Decision Document

Attachment 6a: Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Program Discussion Document
(available on 9/9)

Attachment 6b: Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program Review Report
(available on 9/9)

Attachment 7: SAFMC and MAFMC Sub-Committee on Blueline Tilefish July 2026 Meeting Report

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee

The Committee will approve the minutes from the June 2026 meeting and the agenda for the September 2026 Committee meeting.

June 2026 Snapper Grouper Committee Report

1. Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision (Amendment 61) (*Attachment 1*)

Description: The Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) currently consists of 55 species, many of which are unassessed or have very low landings. The Council is considering changes to the species composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU through Amendment 61 to streamline ongoing management of the FMU. In doing so, the Council has selected 14 species to further evaluate if there is a continued need for conservation and management. The Council has indicated that these species may be removed from the FMU altogether or be designated as ecosystem component (EC) species.

At the June 2026 meeting, the Council reviewed and approved the purpose and need statements as well as the actions for the amendment. At this meeting, the Committee will review the amendment and provide direction to staff to help prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings at the December 2026 meeting.

Committee Action: Review the Amendment 61 decision document and consider directing staff to prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings at the December 2026 meeting.

2. Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper (Amendment 44) (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)

Description: The Southeastern stocks of mutton and yellowtail snapper were recently assessed through SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96, respectively. The stocks for both species are considered a single unit in the Gulf and South Atlantic and therefore catch levels will be modified via a joint amendment, with the Gulf Council as administrative lead. This amendment will establish the stock OFL and ABC, update jurisdictional apportionment of each stock's ABC between the Councils, update regional ACLs, and update the South Atlantic sector allocations for both species. At this meeting, the Committee will review the preferred alternatives and an updated analysis and consider approval for public hearings.

Committee Action: Approve for public hearings.

3. Evaluate Sunsetting of Spawning Special Management Zones (Regulatory Amendment 39) (*Attachments 3a and 3b*)

Description: The Council established five Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZs) in 2017, where fishing for, harvest of, and/or possession of snapper grouper species is prohibited. Three of these SSMZs are natural sites with a sunset on regulations after 10 years, while two artificial-reef SSMZs did not have the sunset provision. The Council intended to use the 10-year period to gather additional information to determine whether the natural sites are functioning as effective spawning areas for the focal species listed in the System Management Plan for the SSMZs. At this meeting, the Committee will review an updated decision document and public hearing draft amendment, consider selecting preferred options, and approve for public hearings.

Committee Action: Select preferred options and approve for public hearings.

4. Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60) (*Attachments 4a-4c*)

Description: Amendment 60 considers revisions to the commercial snapper grouper unlimited (SG 1) permit and changes to management measures intended to increase commercial trip efficiency. In June 2026, the Snapper Grouper Committee reviewed a draft of Amendment 60 and approved the amendment for public hearings. Four public hearings were held in August, and another hearing will be held in conjunction with the Council’s public comment session on September 16, 2026. SERO staff will present information on vessel monitoring systems and their potential use to provide information for vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear. Council staff will present a decision document describing actions, alternatives, comments received during public hearings, and preliminary summaries of action effects. The Committee will review public comments, actions, and alternatives; select preferred alternatives, as necessary; and provide further discussion and direction for amendment development. Finally, the Committee will consider approval of all actions for the amendment.

Committee Action: Review public comment and approve all actions.

5. Headboat Vessel Limits for Snapper Grouper Species (Regulatory Amendment 38) (*Attachment 5*)

Description: The Council is exploring per-vessel catch limits for federally inspected and permitted headboats (those carrying more than six passengers) as an alternative to angler-based bag limits for certain snapper grouper species. In March, the Council initiated work on this framework amendment, which will propose a “per 6 people” vessel limit for headboats for gag and black grouper. During the June meeting, discussion focused on the criteria a vessel must meet to be able to retain the proposed headboat limit. At this meeting, the Committee will review an updated decision document including a preliminary analysis, discuss specific criteria recommended by the planning team, approve the purpose and need, and select preferred alternatives.

Committee Action: Review actions and alternatives and draft purpose and need.

• **Management Strategy Evaluation Updates**

Council staff will update the Committee about the ongoing Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation.

6. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Review Report (*Attachments 6a and 6b*)

Description: At their March 2026 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on the next review of the Wreckfish ITQ program. This review will examine how the Wreckfish ITQ program has changed since the last review time period (2012/2013 – 2016/2017 fishing years) and this review time period (2017/2018 – 2024/2025 fishing years) with respect to various social, economic, biological, and administrative factors. Council staff will present a draft of the review, including draft conclusions and recommendations for the Council to discuss.

Committee Action: Provide comments and review draft conclusions and recommendations for AP review.

**7. Update on Joint SAFMC and MAFMC Sub-Committee on Blueline Tilefish
(Attachment 7)**

Description: This joint sub-committee was formed to provide an opportunity for Council members and SSC representatives from the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Councils to discuss allocation considerations for the blueline tilefish stock north of Cape Hatteras and to recommend an approach for future allocations for consideration by both Councils.

The joint subcommittee is comprised of 3 Council members and 1 SSC member from each Council. Staff from both Councils support and facilitate the subcommittee's work. The subcommittee met via webinar in July 2026 to review information and decisions that went into the current jurisdictional allocation, review other ways in which Councils have addressed jurisdictional allocation for other stocks, and consider a rubric approach to allocating the blueline tilefish ABC for the portion of the stock north of Cape Hatteras between the two Councils. Staff will review the sub-committee's discussions and recommendations for developing an allocation rubric.

Committee Action: Review and discuss the subcommittee's recommendations.

8. Topics for Fall Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting

Description: The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel is scheduled to meet in Charleston, SC, on October 6-8, 2026. Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Red Grouper FPR
- Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper)
- Amendment 38 (Headboat Vessel Limits)
- Regulatory Amendment 40 (Black Sea Bass Closed Areas)?
- Amendment 60 (Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency)
- Amendment Updates: Amendment 39 (SSMZ Sunset Provision), Amendment 61 (Fishery Management Unit Revision)
- Other Updates: Best Fishing Practices, SEDAR, Citizen Science, State Red Snapper EFP Applications

Committee Action: Review the proposed list of AP agenda topics and modify as needed.

9. Other Business