



Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

October 2021 Meeting Summary

December 2021 Council Meeting

Jimmy Hull, AP Chair

Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

- The AP discussed the Council's questions and measures proposed to reduce snapper grouper (SG) discards
 - (Major conclusions listed here; full details in AP Meeting Summary)

Gear Restrictions

- **Overall, due to diverse gear, fishing techniques, and species in the SG fishery, gear modifications best accomplished through best practices outreach and education rather than regulations**
- Need best practices to become “normal”; public education/outreach would be more effective for this than regulations
 - Fish handling, venting techniques, descending techniques, net use, etc.



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Spatial/Timed Seasonal Openings

- Too much diversity for blanket management of all SG species; not all SG species are discarded at high levels in all areas
- Regional differences and complementary state management needs to be considered
- Need more information on MPA effects, but some wreck locations could potentially be considered with sunset provisions (MPA removed after specified number of years or after an indicator stock reaches a status/reference point)
- Commercial ACL closures are effective at limiting harvest to the ACL already; prefer no set commercial season



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Spatial/Timed Seasonal Openings

- For red snapper, consider alternative recreational season timing to reduce discards; suggestions:
 - Open with red grouper on May 1
 - Fall season for SC and GA
- Closure of recreational bottom fishing would not be supported by recreational stakeholders
 - Prefer focus on increasing accountability (recreational permit) and increasing habitat and populations through programs like stocking or artificial reefs rather than reducing effort
 - Mixed opinions on whether recreational effort reduction is necessary or realistic
 - General agreement for increased recreational accountability



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Recreational Permit/License

- **AP continues to recommend a recreational snapper grouper permit/license and reporting mechanism**
- Council could poll recreational anglers to gauge overall interest in permit, as well as species to consider for catch and release fisheries
 - State saltwater licenses could be a start for the population to be polled
- Effort is an issue, but curbing effort may not be the solution; need better stewardship and more responsible use of the resource
- Big step towards recreational accountability is knowing the participants



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Red Snapper Slot Limit

- Slot limit does not address discards outside of the recreational mini-season, so may not make much of a difference
- Slot limit could also create more discards within the mini-season and lead to additional handling (reducing release survival)
- To reduce discards from high-grading, a recreational trip limit (by weight) could be considered



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Other Comments

- Potentially consider required retention (no discarding until bag limit is caught) to reduce discards from high-grading; could be difficult to enforce
- Potentially consider recreational poundage limit for red snapper to reduce discards from high-grading
- Best practices would encourage fishermen to release fish safely and move from fishing areas/depths where out of season or limited out species have just been released
- Need to find ways other than assessment information to motivate compliance



Snapper Grouper Discard Reduction

Questions?



Photo Credit: Gregg Swanson



Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit

- **Overall, mixed opinions on removing 2 for 1 policy at this time. More information could aid future evaluations and discussions.**
- AP requested some additional information:
 - How many SG 1 permits have been retired?
 - How quickly are commercial ACLs being reach, and how much quicker could they be reached with additional participants?
- SG stocks may not be healthy enough to sustain additional effort; few healthy stocks for commercially important species
 - High recreational fishing pressure also makes sustainability difficult for any additional commercial fishing



Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit

- **Overall, mixed opinions on removing 2 for 1 policy at this time. More information could aid future evaluations and discussions.**
- Concern about corporate transferability of SG 2 permits and loss of working waterfront
- Some comments on difficulty to enter the fishery, some local fleets aging out, but younger participation in other areas
- Andrew Mahoney circulated a Permit Plan earlier in 2021; could be further discussed at a future meeting.



Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit

Questions?



Photo Credit: SAFMC



Snowy Grouper

Commercial Trip Limit

- **Keep fishery open as long as possible; modify trip limits to reduce effort**
 - Trip limit reduction may make the trip to fishing grounds not worth the cost/effort in some areas
 - Prefer the 200 pound trip limit, if possible



Snowy Grouper (Amendment 51)

Spawning Season Closure

- **Willing to consider a spawning closure to retain the 200 pound trip limit**
- Having snowy grouper commercially open earlier in the year is crucial; spawning closure should be considered for later in the year
- Modify recreational season to not coincide with peak spawning (May-August)
- Snowy fishing important during SWG closure (Jan-Apr)



Snowy Grouper (Amendment 51)

Recreational Management

- **Stamp/permit needed for the private recreational fishery**
- Greater recreational data collection, possibly census, is necessary due to low MRIP intercepts
- Recreational effort and accessibility increasing as technology advances

Recreational Accountability

- Mixed opinions from the AP
- Some members desire functioning in-season closures for both sectors
- Some note small recreational landings, so AMs should not become more restrictive



Snowy Grouper (Amendment 51)

Questions



Photo Credit: SAFMC



Golden Tilefish (Amendment 52)

- **Recommend that the private recreational component has a census method of reporting deep water catch**
- **Recommend that the Council:**
 - **Set the total ACL equal to the updated ABC**
 - **Retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish**
- **Consider changing commercial hook-and-line season to be different from longline**
- **Consider measures to extend the longline season (possibly through individual fishing quotas) without reducing the trip limit**



Golden Tilefish (Amendment 52)

Questions



Photo Credit: SAFMC



Gag Grouper (Amendment 53)

Commercial Management Priorities

- Ensure there is some available harvest for both sectors (bycatch fishery)
 - Fishery-dependent data collection
 - Closing fishery could increase discard mortality
 - Need summer harvest for seasonal grouper market

Commercial Measures

- 50-250 pound trip limit for gag (anything but 0)
 - If all shallow water grouper, would need a higher limit
- Consider expanded spawning closure through May for some parts of the region
 - Consider impacts since enactment of current closure



Gag Grouper (Amendment 53)

Recreational Management Priorities

- Ensure there is some available harvest for both sectors (bycatch fishery)
 - Fishery-dependent data collection

Recreational Measures

- **The AP maintains its previous recommendation to establish a recreational permit/license.**
- Consider slot/size limit to protect spawning females (from size at maturity to size at transition to male)



Gag Grouper (Amendment 53)

Other Comments

- Consider support of aquaculture efforts to raise juveniles for stocking
- Consider expanded use of artificial reefs to provide more habitat
 - Complementary state measures needed to protect inshore, juvenile habitat as well
- Problems with identification between gag and black grouper; management measures may need to include the entire SWG aggregate



Gag Grouper (Amendment 53)

Questions?



Photo Credit: Don DeMaria



Yellowtail Snapper (Amendment 44)

- **Recommend that the Council:**
 - Retain the current jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico
 - Retain the current sector allocations for the South Atlantic
 - Adopt the constant catch level of the lowest recommended ABC for the South Atlantic as the total ACL for the South Atlantic
- Trip limits may not be needed since commercial landings not hitting ACL the last couple years



Yellowtail Snapper (Amendment 44)

Questions?



Photo Credit: Don DeMaria



Red Porgy (Amendment 50)

- One AP member suggested consideration of a constant total ACL for red porgy
- Possible 10-month closure would be a big change for the fishery
- One AP member suggested the recreational bag limit be 1 fish per person per day with an exception for for-hire vessels to be 1 fish per person per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive
- Some AP members suggested that “per trip” could be removed from **Action 5 – Sub-Action 5a** (recreational bag limit)
 - Would allow multiple days’ worth of limits for overnight trips for all recreational vessels
 - Should possibly mirror limits for other snapper grouper species – multiple bag limits are allowed to be possessed for other snapper grouper species with documentation of multiple days of fishing
 - Suggested maximum of 2 days’ worth of limits



Red Porgy (Amendment 50)

Questions?



Photo Credit: Mark Marhefka



Other Items

Gray Triggerfish

- AP responded to questions for the Fishery Performance Report; responses will be compiled and provided for SEDAR 82

Vermilion Snapper

- No widespread support for a 1,500 pound trip limit
- Preference for a stepdown regardless of the trip limit
- Fishery is important, but changing the trip limit is not top priority

Barrelfish

- Becoming more popular in restaurants; more recreational targeting in FL
- Reduced catch noticed in recent years
- Caught with wreckfish, so could have complementary or co-management with that fishery

Aquaculture

- Invite Waddell Mariculture Center to present at next AP meeting



Other Items

Questions?



Photo Credit: Gregg Swanson

