



Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel October 2022 Meeting Summary

December 2022 Council Meeting

Bob Lorenz, AP Chair



Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

Action 1 (Red Snapper Catch Levels)

- RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE: **Alt 2. ABC=ACL**
- AP continues to disagree with the stock status, catch recommendations based on SEDAR 73, and the need to reduce harvest given the stock's high abundance level and increasing biomass





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

Action 2 (Recreational Electric/Hydraulic Reels)

- **RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE: Alt 1. No Action**
- Electric reels not widely used throughout the recreational SG fishery
 - When used, typically for deep water species with fewer discards and lower chance of surviving release
- Concerns with restriction:
 - Access to deep water fish for older or disabled individuals
 - Enforcement concerns for trips that use electric reels to target other species – potential confusion about proper stowage
 - Will this restriction substantially contribute to reducing dead discards?
 - Minimal current use, so potential benefits may also be minimal





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

Action 3 (Recreational One Hook per Line)

- **RECOMMENDATION: Prohibit more than 1 hook per line for the recreational sector for 150 ft depth and deeper**
- Parts of the region have frequent use of more than one hook per line by the recreational sector
 - Typically used to target smaller (e.g. vermilion snapper, black sea bass, triggerfish) or a wider variety of species; also common on head boats
- Concern about maintaining ability to use sabiki rigs to fish for bait; this typically occurs in less than 150 ft depth
 - Depth-based restriction, or exempt sabiki rigs according to hook size
- Regulation could affect the size of harvested fish (esp. for fish with min size limit) and overall amount of catch and harvest – should be accounted for in future assessments





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

Overall Comments

- Actions 2 and 3 will be very difficult to enforce on the water
- Compliance will need to be accomplished through buy-in from the fishery
- Education/outreach will be critical to inform anglers of new regulations and educate on best practices and benefits of compliance





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

Additional Recommended Action: ESTABLISH A SMALL MARINE PROTECTED AREA OFF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE RANGE OF 60 AND 120 FEET DEPTH TO PROTECT GAG GROUPER AND TO HELP REBUILD RED SNAPPER (MAXIMUM HALF MILE SQUARED AREA).

- Potentially restrict recreational fishery from SMZs already closed to commercial fishing
- Consider inclusion of a sunset
- Involve fishermen in determining location to increase effectiveness and buy-in





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

BFP Usage Comments

- Members discussed local usage of descending devices (full details in report)
 - Frequent use of descending devices by professional (commercial and for-hire) fishermen
 - Infrequent use by private recreational component
- Venting is more common due to less time, but not everyone knows how to properly vent
- Amount of time to descend a fish can deter this practice, especially when fish are being hooked quickly
- More education on venting and descending device use and maintenance is needed





Reg Amendment 35: Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper

BFP Outreach Comments

- AP discussed communication methods for BFP education and promotion
- **Education should be tied to a recreational permit**
- Educational topics should include:
 - Descending device requirements, proper use, and maintenance
 - Venting education, including tools and proper technique
 - Value of compliance (e.g. show egg production of released fish and how compliance can increase access to fishing)
- Discussion of different media forms and collaborators to educate on and promote BFP use
- **Long-term, continued output is necessary**
 - Similar to non-smoking and seat belt safety campaigns that are now common and have continued for decades





Amendment 53: Gag and Black Grouper

Discussion on Commercial and Recreational Management of Gag

- Mixed opinions of how to adjust season by sector and location
- Opposition from both sectors and different areas to a closure for all of May
- Less opposition to closing only a portion of May and opening in the later half of the month
- Some prefer 200 lb commercial trip limit to closing entire month of May
- Some not opposed to 200 lb commercial trip limit and opening May 15th
- Some not opposed to aligning gag grouper closure with red grouper closure (Jan-Apr for GA & FL; Jan-May for NC & SC)
- Some not opposed to closing last part of December and first part of May





Amendment 53: Gag and Black Grouper

Recommended Preferred Alternatives

- **Sub-Action 5c (Captain and Crew Gag Bag Limit):**
 - **Alternative 2.** Captain and crew bag limit on for-hire vessels is 0.
- **Action 6 (Recreational Accountability Measures):**
 - **Preferred Alternative 4.** If recreational landings exceed the ACL, reduce the season length to not exceed in the next year.
- **Sub-Action 7b (Black Grouper Spawning Closure):**
 - **Alternative 1.** No Action
- **Sub-Action 7c (Captain and Crew Black Grouper Bag Limit):**
 - **Alternative 2.** Captain and crew on for-hire vessels may retain the same bag limit as passengers.
- **Continue to exclude commercial modifications to black grouper management from Amendment 53**



Other Items

- **Commercial Electronic Logbook Amendment**
 - General support for changing to electronic platform
- **NOAA Proposed Speed Regulations**
 - AP recommends the Council include the following in their response:
 - Use dynamic management zones only, for vessels 25-64 feet in length
 - Concentrate speed restrictions around only inlets where boating activity funnels
 - Describe the economic consequences to snapper grouper fishing, especially the charter/headboat industry
 - Leverage new technology to better monitor real-time North Atlantic right whale locations



Other Items

- **FL Keys Sanctuary Restoration Blueprint**

AP DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY ADDITIONAL FISHING CLOSURES WITHOUT FURTHER RESEARCH INTO OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING THE FLORIDA KEYS SANCTUARY (DEVELOPMENT, RUNOFF, DIVING, WATER QUALITY, ETC.). THE AP ALSO RECOMMENDS THAT SOME OF THE MANAGED AREAS BE CONSIDERED FOR FISHING ACTIVITIES ONLY (DIVING WOULD BE EXCLUDED).

- Council should recommend greater consideration be given to:
 - Equity between fishermen and divers
 - Effects of other harmful factors in area such as stormwater runoff
 - Large amount of population growth (including tourists and part-time residents) and development in the Keys
 - Responses to degradation other than limiting fishing areas
- **AP requests that Richard Gomez's transcribed comments be appended or included in the Council's letter**



Other Items

- **Black Sea Bass** – Consider reducing recreational minimum size limit (assessment ongoing)
- **Vermilion Snapper** – Consider increasing commercial trip limit or allow permit stacking; requested as an agenda item for a future AP meeting
- **Barrelfish** – Concern over a growing fishery; recommend adding barrelfish to the Snapper Grouper FMP
- Enable quicker switching of permits between vessels
- Will the Council set a target number of permits for reconsidering removal of the 2 for 1 policy



Other Items

- After review of the MSA, one member proposed the Council consider the following goals for future management:
 - Spatial closures by state with expiration dates
 - Rotating closed areas within each state
 - Require AIS for bottom fishing
 - Establish a recreational permit with educational and reporting requirements
 - Rebuild reef habitat
 - Promote aquaculture

