

Overview

Snapper Grouper Committee

Charleston Marriott Hotel
170 Lockwood Blvd.
Charleston, South Carolina

The Committee will: (A) receive reports from SERO on the status of commercial and recreational catches versus the respective ACLs for snapper grouper species; (B) receive a status report from SERO staff on snapper grouper amendments under Secretarial review; (C) receive a briefing from SCDNR staff on deployment of artificial reef material in the Charleston Deep Reef MPA; (D) receive an overview from Council staff of public comments received on Regulatory Amendment 14, modify the document as appropriate, and approve the amendment and codified text for Secretarial review; (E) receive an overview of Amendment 29, and provide guidance to staff; (F) receive a presentation on Washington State's catch card program and receive an overview of Amendment 22, and provide guidance to staff; (G) receive an overview of Regulatory Amendment 16, and provide guidance to staff; (H) review the Purpose and Need for Regulatory Amendment 17, select proposed sites, and provide guidance to staff; and (I) address other business as necessary.

A. Status of landings for quota-managed snapper grouper species (*Attachments 1a & 1b*)

The Committee will receive an update on the status of landings (commercial and recreational) for snapper grouper species under ACLs.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

B. Status of Amendments Approved for Secretarial Review

The Committee will receive a status report from SERO staff on the following amendments:

- A. Regulatory Amendment 13/EA (MRIP Adjustments)
- B. Regulatory Amendment 15/EA (Yellowtail Snapper & Gag)
- C. Amendment 28/EA (Red Snapper Framework)
- D. Amendment 27/EA (Mgmt Authority/Fmwk/Crew Size/Blue Runner)
- E. Regulatory Amendment 18/EA (Vermilion and Red Porgy)
- F. Regulatory Amendment 19/EA (Black Sea Bass)

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

C. Briefing on Charleston Deep Reef MPA (Attachment 2)

Staff from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources will provide a briefing on recent and planned activity to deploy artificial reef material in the Charleston Deep Reef MPA. The latter is a 3.5 x 6 nautical mile area located approximately 50 miles southeast of the Charleston Harbor. The MPA was one of 8 Deepwater MPAs established through Amendment 14 to the Snapper Grouper FMP and implemented in February 2009.

D. Regulatory Amendment 14 (multiple species; Attachments 3a-d)

Council staff will present an overview of public comments received on the amendment. Council staff will review recommended changes to the amendment and provide clarification on analyses as needed. The amendment currently includes actions to modify the commercial and recreational fishing years for greater amberjack and black sea bass, modify the commercial fishing year for black sea bass, make changes to the length of commercial fishing seasons for vermilion snapper and the distribution of the ACL increase, modify the commercial trip limit for gag, and modify the recreational accountability measures for black sea bass and vermilion snapper.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Modify the amendment as necessary, select preferred alternatives as appropriate, and approve the amendment and codified text for Secretarial review.

E. Amendment 29 (ORCS and ABC Control Rule; Attachment 4)

Council staff will present a Decision Document with alternatives for amending the ABC Control Rule per the SSC's recommendations.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff on timing and content.

F. Amendment 22 (Recreational Tag Program; Attachments 5a & 5b)

Council staff will give a presentation on the Catch Record Card Program from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (*Attachment 5a*), which has been in place for 50 years. Staff will then review the Options Paper (*Attachment 5b*) and request guidance on continued development of the amendment.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff on content and timing.

G. Regulatory Amendment 16 (Black Sea Bass Pot Closure Removal; Attachment 6)

Council staff will review alternatives to address the proposed annual closure of black sea bass pots from November 1 to April 30. Regulatory Amendment 19, if approved, will implement this regulation as well as an increase to the black sea bass ACL.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff on content and timing.

H. Regulatory Amendment 17 (MPAs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper; Attachment 7)

At the March 2013 meeting, the Council approved the following motion:

MOTION #54: BRING THE MPA ISSUE BACK TO THE SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING TO DEVELOP A PURPOSE AND NEED AND POTENTIALLY CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR RECONFIGURATIONS AND SPAWNING.

Spawning: Council staff reviewed the March 5-6, 2013 snapper grouper committee minutes to clarify which species “spawning” included. On pages 162-163 Mr. Hartig indicated that spawning referred to spawning speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. This was reiterated in discussion about the motion on page 169 of those minutes.

Type 1 versus Type 2: The issue of Type 1 (no fishing) versus Type 2 (no bottom fishing; no snapper grouper species) was discussed on page 148 of the March 5-6, 2013 committee minutes. The Expert Workgroup has recommend Type 1 while the committee/Council made the decision during the June 2012 meeting that these MPAs were going to be Type 2 MPAs, which allow for pelagic trolling (no fishing for, possession, or retention of snapper grouper species allowed). The use of shark bottom longline gear is prohibited. Vessels (both commercial and recreational) may transit (direct, non-stop progression) through the MPAs with snapper grouper species onboard with fishing gear appropriately stowed (see regulations for definition).

Purpose & Need: Council staff and NMFS staff prepared a draft statement and provided it to the IPT on July 31, 2013 with a request for input by COB Monday, August 12, 2013. Comments were addressed by the Council/NMFS IPT Leads, and a consensus statement of the Purpose & Need is included. Note: The Purpose & Need from Snapper Grouper Amendment 14 (MPAs; July 2007) is included as well. This helps to clarify the Council’s original request and how the Council is now proposing to refine the approach to provide additional protection for two species.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:

1. Discuss/modify the Purpose & Need
2. Approve the Purpose & Need

Reconfigured/Spawning Sites: Council staff reviewed the recommended sites included in the MPA Expert Workgroup report dated 2/26/13 (version presented to the committee/Council at the March 2013 meeting) and prepared a set of tables. The first TAB “Sites Meeting Council Motion” represents our interpretation of which of the sites recommended by the Expert Workgroup (second TAB “MPA Expert Workgroup Sites”) are reconfigurations (including one reduction in size and one increase in size) and include spawning speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. Spawning of other snapper grouper species is also indicated. We also included the existing 8 MPAs established through Amendment 14 and the Oculina Experimental Closed Area. The Council’s discussion on page 45 of the March 8, 2013 Council meeting minutes clarifies that

staff are to provide a list of potential sites and the committee/Council would select the alternatives to include in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 17.

The committee/Council can move additional sites from the Expert Workgroup's recommendations to the list to be analyzed. If additional sites were added, the criteria used would need to be added to the Purpose and Need statement.

In Snapper Grouper Amendment 14, the Council structured the actions/alternatives with one action for each MPA site and alternatives for different locations and No Action. The Council may want to structure the actions/alternatives in Regulatory Amendment 17 with one action per state and alternatives, including No Action, for each state.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:

1. Discuss the list of potential sites and add to/modify as necessary
2. Approve a list of potential sites to be further analyzed
3. Provide guidance on how to structure the actions/alternatives
4. Other guidance as necessary

Monitoring Plan: The need for a monitoring/research plan and enforcement for existing and proposed MPAs was discussed by the committee in March 2013 (see pages 156-159 of the committee minutes). Research, Outreach, and Enforcement Needs were identified in Snapper Grouper Amendment 14 (MPAs; July 2007). It would be helpful to receive reports from Law Enforcement and the SEFSC on which of these needs have been met and which are still outstanding. Discussions during the Expert Workgroup meeting identified that we do not have a research/monitoring/evaluation plan for the existing 8 MPAs.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:

1. Discuss the need for a Monitoring Plan addressing research, monitoring, and evaluation
2. Provide guidance on requesting presentations at the December 2013 meeting
3. Provide guidance on whether to include a Monitoring Plan in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 17
4. Other guidance as necessary

Timing: During the March 2013 meeting, the committee discussed several timelines and finally approved a motion for staff to bring recommendations back to the committee in September 2013. Assuming the committee/Council approve a Purpose & Need statement and select potential sites to be analyzed, a draft regulatory amendment document could be produced for the December 2013 meeting. At the December 2013 meeting, the committee/Council could review draft, preliminary analyses, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings to be held in January 2014. There are a number of other amendments that will be at the scoping/public hearing stage, and the committee/Council should indicate whether they want a separate set of hearings for the consideration of MPAs. A second set of hearings are planned for August 2014 but the committee/Council could schedule a separate round of hearings in April 2014 for MPAs as was done for VMS this year.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:

1. Discuss the timing
2. Provide guidance on timing

Background Information: The following material is included as background to assist in making the necessary decisions.

1. MPA Expert Workgroup Report (6/1/12) from the May 16-17, 2012 meeting
2. MPA Expert Workgroup Report (2/26/13) from the February 4-6, 2013 meeting
3. MPA Expert Workgroup Minority Report (3/3/13)
4. MPA Expert Workgroup Minutes from the February 4-6, 2013 meeting
5. MPA Expert Workgroup Presentation to the Committee in March 2013
6. Spreadsheet used during presentation to the Committee in March 2013
7. April 2012 SSC Recommendations on MPAs
8. March 2013 Snapper Grouper Committee minutes
9. MPA Rankings Spreadsheet provide by Nick Farmer (August 14, 2013)

I. Other Business

The Committee will address items as needed.