

Summary Report

Snapper Grouper Private Angler Advisory Panel

Meeting 2: November 4, 2024

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Snapper Grouper Private Angler Advisory Panel (AP) convened via webinar on November 4, 2024.

AP members approved the agenda for the meeting. There was no public comment offered at the beginning of the meeting.

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The AP voted to elect Marha Guyas as Chair and Trip Aukeman as Vice-Chair.

2. Comment on potential Council actions in Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting)

At the May 2024 meeting, the AP reviewed the first two actions in the amendment but did not have time to discuss the education component (Actions 3 and 4) and the exemption from the federal permit requirement (Action 5). At this meeting, the AP reviewed summary recommendations made so far and offered feedback on the remaining actions in the amendment. The AP provided the following comments and recommendations for the Council's consideration:

Action 3. Establish an education component in conjunction with a private recreational snapper grouper permit

AND

Action 4. Specify the timing of the education component requirement for the private recreational snapper grouper permit

Timing of an education course (Action 3)

- Most AP members felt that an education requirement needs to be required before initial issuance of a permit (**Action 3, Alternative 2**).

How often an education course needs to be completed (Action 4)

- AP members suggested communicating with state agencies regarding the efficacy of existing "one-time only" education requirements such as boating or hunter safety courses.
- Some AP members felt that an initial education course with a refresher if education materials are updated was appropriate (**Action 4, Alternative 5**).
 - Noted that it makes sense to keep anglers up to date on changing regulations, best practices, etc.

- Other AP members noted that communicating the need for all permit holders to re-complete an education requirement at an unspecified date (**Action 4, Alternative 5**) is going to be a challenge and that a known, regular interval would be better.
 - Unless there is a way to effectively communicate when the education component is updated, then the requirement should be one-time only or once a year (**Action 4, Alternative 2** or **Alternative 4**).

Considerations for how long an education module should take to complete

- If the education component is designed as a “one-time only” requirement, it should be developed as a longer and more complete education course.
 - The design of the education requirement should be a tradeoff between the timing and frequency of it and the length and level of detail required for the permit holder to complete.
 - The length of time to complete a course should be inverse to how often the course needs to be taken.
 - A “one-time only” requirement should be longer than a course that is renewed annually.
 - If taken multiple times, the initial course could be longer while a refresher course should be shorter.
- Opinions varied on the maximum amount of time an education course should take to complete.
 - If “one-time only” or the initial course, times mentioned included:
 - No more than 15 minutes.
 - 20 minutes.
 - 30 minutes to an hour.
 - 1-2 hours.
 - If the education requirement is annual or a “refresher course” then suggested times were considerably shorter.
 - Suggestions were around 15 minutes.
 - Also the education course length recommendation may vary depending on the permit type, with more time being reasonable for an education requirement associated with a vessel-based permit, whereas the course should be shorter for an angler-based permit.

Components of education requirement:

- Prioritize content on best fishing practices (BFP) and barotrauma mitigation in the education materials. The purpose and need of this permit is partially to reduce recreational fishing mortality.
- Agree with OC AP’s recent recommendations. The current list of topics that the Council identified at the March 2024 meeting is too lengthy. Need to streamline to BFP and descending device use.
- Include information on why the permit and education requirement is important. People will want to know why they are being asked to do it.

- Outreach is going to be very important – have dedicated staff or ambassadors and demonstrate the education module.
 - Consider the opportunity to have in-person education as well as an online course.
 - Would go a long way to rebuilding trust with the recreational fishing community.
 - Potentially “get credit” for attending a Council-based best fishing practices outreach event. Attending an event would satisfy the education requirement.

Example programs and education materials

- Examine how the Highly Migratory Species private recreational permit and education requirement is designed.
- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission shore-based shark fishing permit also includes a required online educational course online.
 - When the permit is renewed annually, there is a shorter associated education module.
- Also consider education materials developed for the exempted fishing permit for red snapper in Florida and Return Em Right.

Other comments

- Most AP members expressed interest in some kind of reporting being associated with the permit.
 - It was noted that there is a range of possibilities when it comes to reporting. A reporting requirement could vary from reporting catch on every trip to reporting effort annually.
 - Some AP members felt that a permit needs a reporting requirement to be useful.
- The more substantial the education requirement, the more likely some anglers will be deterred from participating in the Snapper Grouper fishery. This notion supports a vessel-based permit as opposed to an angler-based permit. There are similar considerations for an education requirement that can be readily satisfied.
 - Noted that many first time or irregular anglers participating in the Snapper Grouper fishery are often invited on fishing trips on short notice. Not being able to satisfy a permit or education requirement is going to deter this type of angler from fishing.
- The Council needs to clarify exemptions and how lifetime license holders will be addressed under the new permit requirement.
- The Council needs to make a final decision on a vessel-based or angler-based permit before requesting further guidance from the AP. Recommendations may change based on the Council’s decision.

Action 5. Establish an exemption to the federal private recreational snapper grouper permit requirement based on permitting by the states

- There was not consensus among AP members whether state or federal agencies would be better able to administer a permit requirement.

- Many AP members felt that states are better equipped to administer a permit, but others did not.
- It was noted that if a permit requirement is established, it will likely remain indefinitely.
 - It would be preferable if the permit could be an endorsement on the existing saltwater fishing license rather than requiring anglers to obtain a separate permit.
 - This would help make it as non-invasive and unrestrictive as possible.
- Some AP members felt that it would be easier for anglers if state agencies administered the permit.
 - States already have apps and saltwater licensing infrastructure that anglers are used to, so it would make compliance much easier.
 - Anglers are often more trusting of state agencies.
- Maintain the option for the federal permit exemption to avoid dual permitting for the snapper grouper fishery. Dual permitting would be overwhelming for anglers and would likely compromise existing state efforts as well as the federal effort to improve recreational data.
- If there is a state exemption, then there needs to be reciprocity between states on the permit and education requirement. A permit from one state should work in all states in the Southeast.

Other Business

There were no items under other business.

Advisory Panel Members present

Martha Guyas, FL (Chair)

Trip Aukeman, FL (Vice-Chair)

Logan Barnes, SC

John Cooper, SC

Clement Cullens, GA

Austin Dohrn, GA

Daniel Leschorn, SC

Brendan Runde, NC

Bradley Schenk, SC

Darrin Willingham, FL