



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

## **SG Private Angler Advisory Panel Meeting Summary Report, June 2024**



# Overview of the Private Angler AP Meeting



- The first meeting of the AP took place via webinar on May 7, 2024.
- Included an orientation and introduction to Amendment 46.
- The AP provided initial feedback on the purpose, perceptions, and messaging for a permit as well as Actions 1 and 2.
  - Also a few points made that are relevant to Action 5.
  - Other actions not covered due to time constraints but will be covered at the next AP meeting.
  - Will also elect an AP Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting.



# Purpose of a permit

- It is important to make sure that anglers understand the purpose of the permit and how it will be used.
- The Council should keep in mind what the vision for the future is after the permit is established.
  - Will there be a subsequent amendment geared towards data collection and reporting? If so, that will influence decisions made in this amendment.



# Perceptions and messaging

- Many anglers have lost trust in the Council and NMFS.
  - Anglers may be willing to get a permit, but not as willing to provide additional data.
  - This permit is an opportunity to rebuild some of that trust. It is important to communicate how this permit could improve recreational fishing data and management.
- The permit is going to be viewed by some as an additional constraint on fishing.
  - Would be helpful to note that the Council is not considering reporting.
  - Clarify to the fishing public that this will be an open access permit.
  - Creation of a permit is in pursuit of better recreational effort and catch estimates that will hopefully contribute to the prevention of future access restrictions.
    - If there are not better estimates provided, the Council will be left with fewer options and may have to consider alternatives that include access restrictions.

# Action 1. Establish a private recreational permit for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region



- A vessel-based permit would be a better option than an angler-based permit.
  - If there is an angler-based permit, it may deter some people from participating.
  - Several anglers participate in the fishery infrequently and if they have an additional regulatory burden, they may be deterred from participating all together.
- Anglers may not be as experienced in fishing and fish ID as vessel owners.
  - There's additional responsibility that comes with being in charge of operating a vessel.
  - A vessel-based permit would improve any subsequent sampling or data collection.
  - A vessel-based permit makes more sense if there is not a reporting requirement.
- A vessel-based permit would be easier to enforce on the water or at the boat ramp.
  - There would be only one permit to check versus multiple permits if angler-based.
- Satisfying the permit requirements should be the responsibility of the vessel operator.
  - It is preferable if the captain of the vessel is responsible for the education requirement and can better direct anglers onboard.



# Rental and boat club vessel topic

- Boat club vessels are not likely a major concern.
  - Boat club vessel operators must be certified and there are often restrictions on how far offshore they can go.
  - Not accountable for a notable portion of participation in the snapper grouper fishery off North Carolina, South Carolina, or Northern Florida.
- There are more and more rental boat companies out there and some have boats that are fishing for snapper grouper species in federal and state waters.
  - In some scenarios it may be unclear who is responsible for getting the permit.



## **Action 2. Specify the species that would be covered by a private recreational snapper grouper permit**

- It is an unnecessary burden on anglers to have to identify a subset of species that are covered by the permit.
  - Also if reporting eventually follows, it would be preferable to have the permit cover all species to facilitate reporting.
- The number of species covered is likely to affect estimates of participation.
  - The species covered could influence the universe of anglers and how well they represent actual participants in the fishery.
  - If the Council stays with all 55 snapper grouper species, consider implications for the Florida Reef Fish Survey.
    - Would Florida have to expand their program to cover all 55 species to allow the state to opt out of the federal permit requirement?



## Action 2. Specify the species that would be covered by a private recreational snapper grouper permit

- Including all snapper grouper species is a big ask.
  - Many in the recreational fishing community may be skeptical.
  - Perceive NOAA and the Council as picking away at species that can no longer be harvested or that have severe restrictions on harvest.
- A concern with including all SG species is that some species may be caught incidentally.
  - Example: Greater Amberjack are caught at times when trolling for highly migratory species.
  - May be requiring people to get a permit that do not participate in the snapper grouper fishery but incidentally interact with some of the species.
    - May affect your ability to measure the “true” number of participants in the fishery.
  - What is the Council’s goal? Is it to count the number of people who are *targeting* snapper grouper species or people who are *catching* the species.
    - Also is the intent to eventually require people to report?



## **Action 5. Establish an exemption to the federal private recreational snapper grouper permit and education requirements based on permitting and education by the states**



- 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.
- 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.

# Questions?

