



Gag and Black Grouper
Recreational Vessel
Limits and Black Sea
Bass On-Demand Gear

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36 Scoping

February 2024

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HOUSEKEEPING

The purpose of this hearing is to gather the public's input on proposed actions for this amendment. Public input will help shape actions included and the Council's final decisions on the amendment.



FIRST, I will review the amendment in its entirety



NEXT, I will pause to answer any clarifying questions pertaining to this amendment



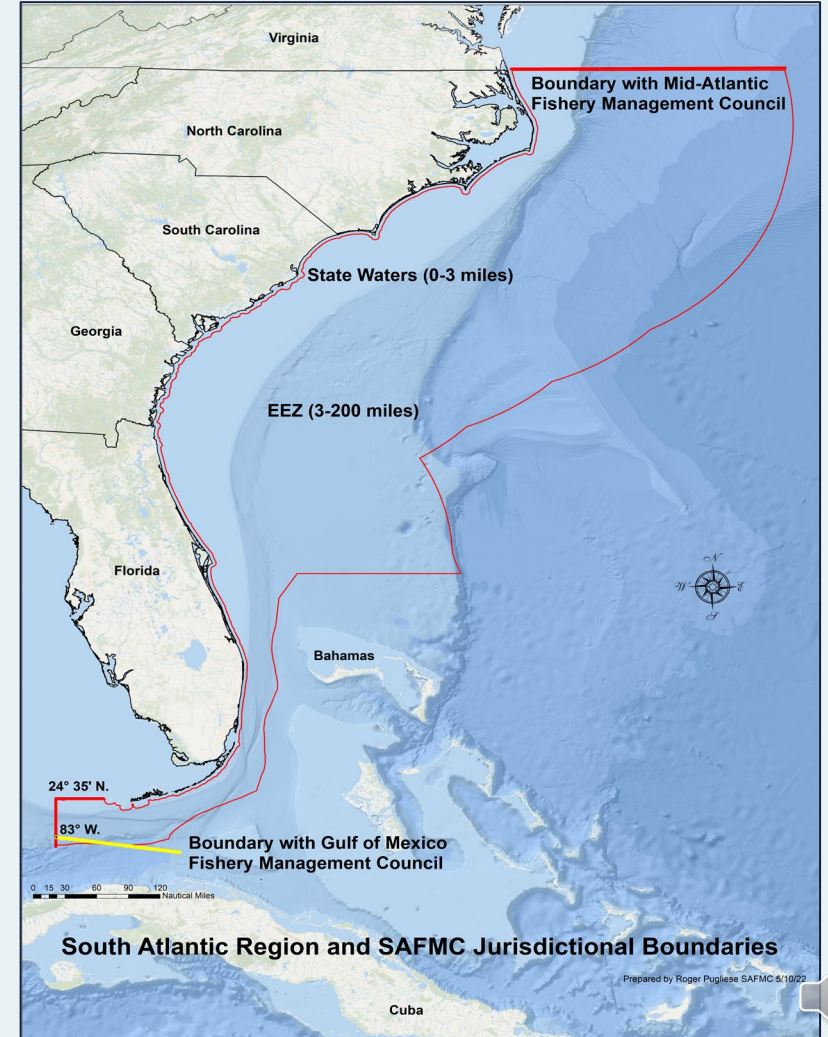
FINALLY, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, A COUNCIL MEMBER take public comment



ABOUT THE COUNCIL



- 1 of 8 regional fishery management Councils
- Jurisdiction:
 - Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) ranges from 3-200 miles
 - South Atlantic Region: NC, SC, GA, East Coast of FL
- Council Makeup:
 - Include recreational and commercial fishermen, state marine agency reps, and federal partners
 - 17 members, 13 voting, 4 non-voting
 - Representatives from each state in the region.
- The Council provides recommendations to NOAA Fisheries



BACKGROUND – GAG & BLACK GROUPER



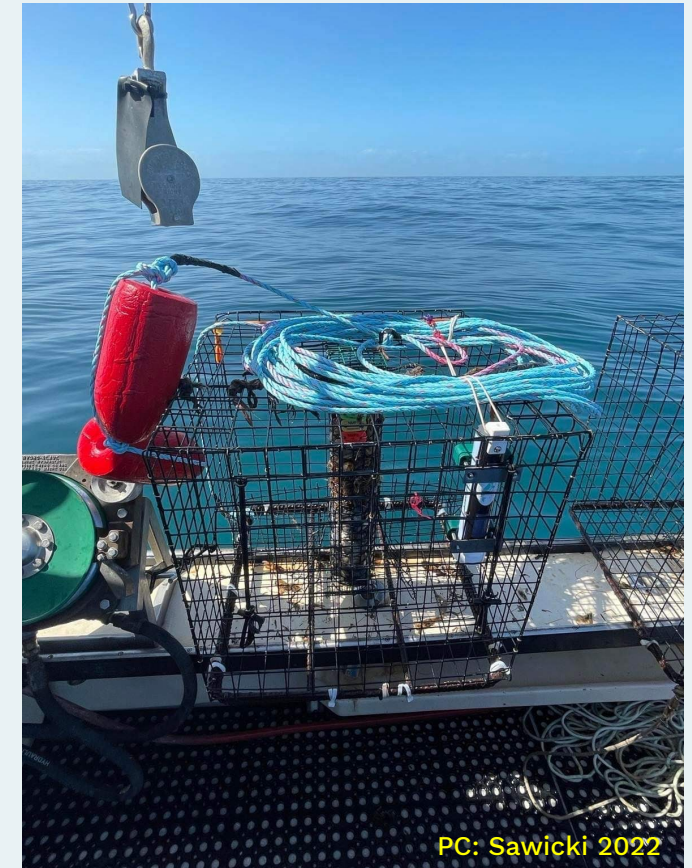
- SG Amendment 53 established recreational vessel limits of 2 gag and 2 black grouper per vessel per day (private)/trip (charter/headboat), implemented in October 2023
- The Council intended these limits to be aggregate limits of 2 fish (gag OR black grouper) per vessel per day/trip
 - Aggregate vessel limits would align with the current aggregate bag limit of 1 fish (gag OR black grouper) per person per day
 - Aggregate vessel limits would also help efforts to rebuild the overfished gag stock



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



- On-demand (a.k.a. ‘ropeless’) pots are black sea bass pots that are fished without a vertical line remaining in the water column
 - On-demand gear was developed to reduce whale entanglements
 - Some versions have a rope & buoy tied down the pot and released on a timer or using a remote control when ready to be retrieved
 - Other versions have no vertical ropes at all, instead using mechanisms like inflatables to bring the pot to the surface



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



PC: Sawicki 2022

- On-demand pots have been experimentally used in commercial fishery since 2021 under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), which expires in April 2025
- Workshop held in August 2023 presented results of the EFP study indicating on-demand pots were effective in reducing whale entanglements and catching black sea bass
 - Commercial fishermen that participated in the EFP project supported expanded use of on-demand gear in the S Atlantic



BACKGROUND – ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS



- Council is considering actions to accommodate the use of on-demand gear in times/areas where roped gear is already allowed
 - Examining regulations for marking, identification, stowage during transit, etc. to see what regulations changes are necessary & practical
 - Some BSB pot regulations are from the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) & not under Council's authority (working with NMFS Protected Resources Division to see if MMPA changes are necessary)
- Black sea bass recently assessed through SEDAR 76
 - SG Amendment 56 will address management response to that assessment
 - Any changes to allowable times/areas for black sea bass commercial pot fishing with on-demand gear would be considered in Am 56



WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS?



Timing	Council Action
December 2023	Reviewed decision document and approved for scoping
February 12 and 13, 2024	Scoping: What actions should be included in the amendment? What information is available to inform decisions?
March 2024	Review scoping comments, draft alternatives, and preliminary analyses
June 2024	Review modifications to the amendment and approve for public hearings
Summer 2024	Conduct public hearings
September 2024	Review public comment and approve for formal review
Early 2025	Regulations effective



WHAT INFORMATION DOES THE COUNCIL NEED?



- Should the Council establish an aggregate recreational vessel limit of 2 gag or black grouper per vessel per day/trip?
 - Current regulations allow 2 gag per vessel and 2 black grouper per vessel, subject to bag limit of 1 gag or black grouper per person
- What types of on-demand BSB gear should be allowed and are likely to be used?
 - Only vertical line/buoy on-demand gears, less regulatory change is necessary
 - For wider variety of on-demand gears, more regulatory changes may be necessary



WHAT INFORMATION DOES THE COUNCIL NEED?



- How should on-demand pot users indicate pots are not being fished while transiting through marine protected areas (MPA) and special management zones (SMZ)?
 - Current requirement for roped gear is that the buoy be detached.
 - Requirement for roped gear during transit through seasonal closed areas (non-MPA or SMZ) is for buoy to be detached OR stowed within the pot.
- For on-demand gear with a rope and buoy, is it practical to require the buoy be detached, stowed within the pot, or stowed in some other way?
- Would disconnecting the buoy from an on-demand pot take significant time away from fishing? If so, about how much?
- For on-demand gear without a rope and buoy, how should pots be stowed during transit through MPAs or SMZ?





WAYS TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

Scoping Webinars: February 12th and 13th at 6pm

Written comments: Use the online form available from the [Regulatory Amendment 36](#) page on the Council's website (www.safmc.net). Submit by 5:00 PM on February 16, 2024

Comments by mail: Send comments to John Carmichael, Executive Director, SAFMC, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405

Comments by fax: 843-769-4520

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