

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**March 3-5, 2026**

The Committee approved the minutes from the December 2025 meeting and the agenda for the March 2026 meeting. The Committee received updates from SERO on the following amendments that have been submitted to NOAA Fisheries: Abbreviated Framework Amendment 5 (Blueline Tilefish), Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag and Black Grouper vessel limits and Black Sea Bass on-demand gear), Regulatory Amendment 37 (Black Sea Bass Short-Term Management Measures), Amendment 48 (Wreckfish), Amendment 54 (Commercial E-Logbook), and Amendment 55 (Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper).

**Exempted Fishing Permits**

The Committee received a briefing from the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO) on an application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) titled “Collection of American Red Snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) Broodstock for Marine Aquaculture Research and Hatchery Fingerling Production” by Cultimar Technologies, Inc. The proposed project would collect 200 red snapper from federal waters off Florida in 1-2 trips, each including 4 days of fishing and 5 days of transit, occurring between May 2026 and March 2027. These fish would be transported alive to be used as broodstock at a hatchery research facility in Puerto Rico. The broodstock would be used for fingerling production to develop aquaculture of red snapper in the United States. The Committee asked several questions related to reasoning for using South Atlantic red snapper, the rationale for 200 fish requested, and how any fish collected through this project would affect catch limits for the fishery.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** Prepare a letter in response to the EFP application, including:

- Should Florida’s EFP for state management be approved, the Governor has requested that the applicant **not** collect the fish during the same time period that Florida would be allowing harvest of red snapper.
- Express concern that collection for the EFP should not coincide with the opening of the commercial season for red snapper.

The Committee also discussed the red snapper state management EFP applications that have been submitted by each of the South Atlantic states. The Committee discussed how accountability measures would apply to red snapper caught through the EFPs, if approved. The Committee also discussed potential effects of these EFPs on the commercial sector, especially related to equity between the sectors. The Committee was reminded that the public comment period for the EFPs is open through March 10, 2026, and Council members can submit comments individually to NOAA Fisheries.

**Commercial Sub-Committee Report and Amendment 60 (Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency)**

The Commercial Sub-Committee met on March 2 and 3. The Sub-Committee received information from SERO staff on permits, trip limits, and potential establishment of a notification

system for gear changes to or from bottom longline gear during a fishing trip. The Sub-Committee reviewed and developed draft actions and alternatives and requested that Council and SERO staff work together outside of the meeting to develop some action and alternative language for review at Full Council. A description of the developing draft language is included in the Sub-Committee Report ([Appendix 1](#) of this report).

Amendment 60 was further discussed during Full Council, and the Sub-Committee Report was updated to reflect these discussions. The following motions concerning Amendment 60 were passed during Full Council:

**MOTION 1: REMOVE GRAY TRIGGERFISH FROM ACTION 2 (TRIP LIMIT REVISION).**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OPPOSED)**

- The Council clarified that the species included for trip limit revisions in Action 2 do not need to be the same species that are considered for temporary adjustments to trip limits under Action 3. Lists of species for each action are in the Sub-Committee Report.

**MOTION 2: REMOVE CONSIDERATION OF THE 3,000 LBS TRIP LIMIT FOR VERMILION SNAPPER (BOTH SEASONS)**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

### **Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZ)**

The Committee received a presentation on the five Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZs) created in 2017 where fishing for, harvest of, and/or possession of snapper grouper species is prohibited. Three of these SSMZs are natural sites with a sunset on regulations after 10 years, while two artificial-reef SSMZs did not have the sunset provision. The Council intended to use the 10-year period to gather additional information to determine whether the natural sites are functioning as effective spawning areas for the focal species listed in the System Management Plan for the SSMZs.

To support the evaluation of the SSMZs and other protected areas, the Council established the System Management Plan (SMP) Workgroup. The workgroup is in the process of finalizing an evaluation and conducting the review. Their report will be provided to the Council to consider extending regulations for the SSMZs or allowing the regulations to sunset. The Committee discussed concerns with fishing access, compliance and enforcement; the importance of the areas for spawning fish; and bycatch. The Committee approved a motion to initiate a framework amendment to remove or extend the sunset provision for the SSMZs.

**MOTION 3: INITIATE A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO CONSIDER A RANGE OF OPTIONS TO REMOVE SUNSET PROVISION OR EXTEND THE SUNSET PROVISION BY 10 TO 20 YEARS FOR THE SPAWNING SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONES.**

**APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

### **Headboat Vessel Limits**

The Council requested an analysis exploring per-angler-based bag limits for federally inspected and permitted headboats as an alternative to vessel-based bag limits for gag, black grouper,

scamp, yellowmouth grouper, and snowy grouper. The Committee received a recap of previous discussions and recommendations, including input from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. Staff also presented analyses examining changes in landings associated with shifting from a vessel-based limit to a limit of one fish per six anglers.

Committee discussion focused on whether possession limits based on the number of anglers on board could help reduce the negative impacts that vessel-based limits may have on the headboat component of the recreational sector. The Committee was concerned with including snowy grouper in the amendment and ultimately decided to remove that species due to low level of discards, low number of vessels reporting landings, and concerns about the stock. Following discussion, the Committee approved a motion to initiate a framework amendment to consider possession limits of one fish per six anglers on headboats for gag, black grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth grouper.

**MOTION 4: INITIATE FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO ADJUST THE HEADBOAT LIMITS TO NUMBER OF FISH PER SIX PASSENGERS FOR GAG, BLACK GROUPE, SCAMP, AND YELLOWMOUTH GROUPE.**

**APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

#### **Allocation Review: Vermilion Snapper**

At the December 2023 meeting, the Council approved their [Allocation Review Guidelines](#) and updated their [Allocation Review Trigger Policy](#). The guidelines specify how sector allocations for managed species will be reviewed and documented while the policy specifies when allocation reviews will occur. One of the criteria that the Council chose to trigger an allocation review is time-based, noting that each species should have its sector allocations reviewed at least once every seven years.

For this meeting, the Council reviewed the current sector allocations for vermilion snapper since the species have met the time-based review criterion. In accordance with the guidelines, a summary allocations report will be developed based on the Council's discussion and presented to the Council for approval at the June 2026 meeting. The Council offered the following comments and guidance:

- The Council noted that existing sector allocations for vermilion snapper are sufficient for the fishery.
  - Neither the commercial nor recreational sectors are fully landing their sector annual catch limits (ACLs) in recent years with no early closures, thus the current allocations are meeting the needs of the current fishery.
    - The existing recreational allocation is working well for both the private and for-hire components of the fishery.
  - It was noted that the current ACL for the recreational sector includes Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates and revisions are currently underway to update landing estimates for the recreational sector. As such, revising sector allocations at this time and without a new stock assessment would be problematic.
  - The Innovation Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery and Snapper Grouper Amendment 60 (Commercial SG1 Permit and Trip Efficiency) are being

developed and may help guide the Council's future allocation decisions once implemented.

- Sector allocations for vermilion snapper should be revisited when the next stock assessment for the species has been completed and recreational landings from the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES) are integrated into the catch level recommendations.

### **Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision (Amendment 61)**

The Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) currently consists of 55 species, many of which are unassessed or have low landings. The Council is considering changes to the species composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU through Amendment 61 to streamline management of the fishery. In doing so, the Council has selected 17 species to evaluate whether they continue to need conservation and management under a federal plan. The Council has indicated that these species could be removed from the FMU altogether or could be designated as ecosystem component (EC) species or receive some other type of management.

The Committee reviewed summary comments received from the Law Enforcement AP. The Committee also provided input on the draft purpose and need statements and the species that will continue to be considered in the amendment. In doing so, the Committee provided the following guidance and direction to staff:

- Edit the draft purpose and need statements.
  - Add a discussion of managing species with the resources that are available.
  - Further edit the need statement to include topics in addition to executive orders. Also incorporate the discussion of agency funding priorities and narrowing the scope of species that are managed.

#### **DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

#### **SPECIES THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR REMOVAL FROM THE FMU (POTENTIALLY):**

- BAR JACK
- MISTY GROUPE
- SPADEFISH

#### **SPECIES THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR ECOSYSTEM COMPONENT SPECIES OR AN ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH (POTENTIALLY):**

- OTHER PORGIES COMPLEX (PARTIAL OR TOTAL)
  - SCUP ONLY OPTION
- GRUNTS COMPLEX (PARTIAL OR TOTAL)
  - TOMTATE ONLY OPTION
  - MOVE WHITE GRUNT TO ITS OWN ACL OR SPECIES-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT AND MOVE THE REST OF THE GRUNTS TO EC OR ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT.
- DEEPWATER COMPLEX (PARTIAL OR TOTAL)
  - MISTY GROUPE (WITH OR WITHOUT)
- SPADEFISH

**SPECIES THAT WILL NOT BE FURTHER CONSIDERED IN AM 61 (will continue to be managed under the Snapper Grouper FMP with no immediate changes):**

- CUBERA SNAPPER
- QUEEN SNAPPER
- BANDED RUDDERFISH

**Black Sea Bass Follow-Up**

In June 2025, the Council paused work on Amendment 56 until updates to the SEDAR 76 stock assessment, including incorporation of updated recreational catch estimates from MRIP, have been made. Council staff reviewed the historical timeline of Amendment 56 and where it stood when work was paused. The next step in development of this amendment is the release of updated recreational catch estimates, currently scheduled for later in 2026. After this, the assessment will be completed and development of Amendment 56 will resume. Amendment 56 will address long-term management actions. Short-term actions were already addressed in Regulatory Amendment 37, which is being prepared for submission to NOAA Fisheries.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** SEND A LETTER TO THE NOAA FISHERIES OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REQUESTING EARLY ACCESS, IF POSSIBLE, TO RECREATIONAL ESTIMATES FOR BLACK SEA BASS TO BE USED IN THE STOCK ASSESSMENT.

**Yellowtail Snapper & Mutton Snapper (Amendment 44)**

Joint Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55 is in response to SEDAR 79 for mutton snapper and SEDAR 96 for yellowtail snapper, where both assessments indicated that the stocks are not overfished or experiencing overfishing. The amendment will establish the stock OFL and ABC and jurisdictional apportionment between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, establish regional ACLs, and modify South Atlantic sector allocations for each species. The Committee reviewed a decision document, discussed the updated amendment timeline, and data attributions for Monroe County. Staff also reviewed the actions and alternatives and started discussions on methods to update the weight conversion for the mutton snapper recreational ACL (Action 3). There was no committee action needed.

**Innovative Management Approach for the Snapper Grouper Fishery**

The proposed approach is intended as a reference document to help the Committee in their discussions. It is not a policy or in any way a binding document. There was a suggestion to add language to the overarching goal to clarify that this is a “living document” to help the Committee stay focused and intentional in their discussions. The Committee reviewed draft goalposts and principles and offered suggestions for clarifying language, including the Committee’s willingness to use non-traditional data sources (e.g., local knowledge, citizen science) to inform management decisions. The document will be cleaned up and included in the Council member binders for future Council meetings and is included here in [Appendix 2](#).

**Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation**

As part of the ongoing South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), recent research has examined angler preferences to better understand attitudes and fishing behavior within the recreational fishery. The results are intended to inform enhancements to the Snapper Grouper MSE and support future decision-making by the South Atlantic Fishery

Management Council. The research identified distinct groups of anglers with differing preferences for management approaches. Findings from this work will be presented to the Snapper Grouper MSE Workgroup for consideration in model development. The Committee recommended continuing with the previously recommended management approaches of aggregate bag limits, mandatory stopping, temporal management, and spatial management and suggested adding to the SG aggregate limit a component to stop bottom fishing once the SG aggregate limit is reached.

### **Topics for Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting**

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel is scheduled to meet in Charleston, SC, on April 21-23, 2026. Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Black Grouper Fishery Performance Report and Stock Risk Rating
- Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper)
- Amendment 60 (Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency)
- Amendment 61 (Fishery Management Unit Revision)
  - Include Risk Value matrix in the Committee Chair Update
- Black Sea Bass: Progress/Upcoming Actions for Overall Management, Framework Amendment for Nearshore Pot Re-Opening and Trip Limit Adjustment, and feedback on recent season
  - Include commercial catch by gear for recent years
- Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation
- Southeast Reef Fish Survey Presentation
- Recreational Golden Tilefish Season
- Discussion about SG 2 (225-pound) Snapper Grouper Permits
- Updates: Best Fishing Practices, SEDAR, Citizen Science, State Red Snapper EFP Projects, Innovation Plan, Ongoing/Recently-Initiated Amendments

### **Other Business**

#### Blueline Tilefish

In February 2026, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council sent a letter to the Council (available in 'Additional Materials') requesting population of the joint Council subcommittee to determine allocation of the blueline tilefish ABC north of Cape Hatteras, NC. Dewey Hemilright, Tom Roller, Amy Dukes, and Kerry Marhefka (as necessary) will serve as South Atlantic Council representatives on this subcommittee.

#### Commercial Trip Limits Applied to Sale

The Committee directed staff to include consideration of revisions to trip limit applications to sale of fish and clarification of trip completion to Amendment 60.

#### Black Sea Bass

The Committee directed staff to develop a framework amendment to consider re-opening the nearshore seasonal closed areas to on-demand black sea bass pot fishing and changing the trip limit for black sea bass pots. The Committee directed this item to be included on the AP's April agenda and to include an analysis of commercial catch by gear in recent years.

**MOTION 5:** INITIATE A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO CONSIDER RE-OPENING THE NEARSHORE SEASONAL CLOSED AREAS TO ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POT FISHING AND CHANGING THE TRIP LIMIT FOR BLACK SEA BASS POTS.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**Timing and Tasks:**

**MOTION 6:** DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 60 FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL IN JUNE 2026.
- CONVENE THE SNAPPER GROUPE ADVISORY PANEL IN APRIL.
- INITIATE DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK AMENDMENTS TO ADDRESS SPAWNING SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONES, HEADBOAT TRIP LIMITS, AND RE-OPENING OF NEARSHORE SEASONAL CLOSED AREAS FOR ON-DEMAND BLACK SEA BASS POTS.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 44 FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL IN JUNE, PENDING DATA AVAILABILITY.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 61 FOR REVIEW IN JUNE 2026.
- DEVELOP A DRAFT ALLOCATION REVIEW REPORT FOR VERMILION SNAPPER FOR APPROVAL IN JUNE 2026.
- CONVENE THE SNAPPER GROUPE COMMERCIAL SUB-COMMITTEE BEFORE THE JUNE 2026 COUNCIL MEETING.
- WRITE A LETTER TO OST REQUESTING EARLY ACCESS FOR BLACK SEA BASS CATCH ESTIMATES FROM MRIP.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

## APPENDIX 1

# Summary Report **Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee** **March 2-3, 2026**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee) met on March 2-3, 2026 to further develop Amendment 60 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region .

The Sub-Committee approved the agenda for the March 2026 meeting and minutes for the December 2025 meeting.

### **1. Amendment 60 (Commercial Permits and Trip Efficiency)**

Council staff updated the Sub-Committee on progress made since the December meeting, including draft actions and alternatives. NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff presented information on commercial snapper grouper permits, analyses of commercial trip limit changes, and information on a potential system for fishermen to notify law enforcement if they intend to switch gear within a snapper grouper trip. The Sub-Committee reviewed actions and alternatives as currently drafted and provided the following guidance for further amendment development:

\*\*\*The Council directed staff to schedule an additional Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee meeting for April 2026, ahead of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. This meeting will allow further discussion of the amendment ahead of consideration for public hearing approval in June 2026.

#### **Purpose and Need**

- Add 'long-term stability' to the Purpose statement
- Incorporate language from Executive Order 14276.

#### **Action 1. Remove the 2-for-1 snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy**

- The Sub-Committee discussed several aspects of SG 1 permits based on the presented information.
- Revise action and alternative language to specify this is the "unlimited permit".
- The Sub-Committee decided not to include consideration of a trigger for a permit pool in this action at this time.

#### **DISCUSSION AT FULL COUNCIL:**

The Council acknowledged that:

- Some fishermen have expressed opposition to removing the 2 for 1 provision
- There have been comments re concern over leasing of vessels and the associated permits.

Council members discussed these concerns and NOAA Fisheries General Counsel (GC) clarified once more that NMFS doesn't allow leasing of permits. There may be ongoing situations where fishermen who aren't full-time commercial fishermen (e.g., recreational) are leasing vessels with SG1 permits to be able to exceed the recreational limit. It is not known how prevalent this situation is. The discussion will continue at the Sub-Committee meeting in April 2026 as well as the potential to consider limitations on permit ownership in Amendment 60.

FOR APRIL SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING: Request information from SERO Permits Office to inform the sub-committee's discussion on leasing.

**Action 2. Revise commercial trip limits for snapper grouper species**

- Include consideration of the following trip limits for the following species:
  - o Vermilion Snapper
    - Season 1: 1,000 lbs gw; 1,250 lbs gw; 1,500 lbs gw; 2,000 lbs gw; 3,000 lbs gw
    - Season 2: 1,000 lbs gw; 1,250 lbs gw; 1,500 lbs gw; 2,000 lbs gw; 3,000 lbs gw
  - o Greater Amberjack
    - Season 1: 1,200 lbs ww or gw; 1,500 lbs ww or gw; 2,000 lbs ww or gw; 2,500 lbs ww or gw
    - Season 2: 1,200 lbs ww or gw; 1,500 lbs ww or gw; 2,000 lbs ww or gw; 2,500 lbs ww or gw
  - o Red Porgy
    - Season 1: 15 fish, 30 fish, 45 fish
    - Season 2: 15 fish, 30 fish, 45 fish
  - o Gray Triggerfish
    - Season 1: 1,000 lbs ww; 1,500 lbs ww; 2,000 lbs ww
    - Season 2: 1,000 lbs ww; 1,500 lbs ww; 2,000 lbs ww
  - o Red Grouper: 200 lbs gw; 300 lbs gw
  - o Hogfish (GA-NC): 500 lbs ww; 1,000 lbs ww
- Some concern was expressed for the possibility of localized depletion from trip limits that are set too high, especially for groupers.

**DISCUSSION AT FULL COUNCIL:**

Council members expressed concern about including gray triggerfish in this action due to low trends of abundance in recent years, lack of a stock assessment, and also comment expressed by stakeholders during comment session in opposition to changing the gray triggerfish trip limit.

**MOTION: REMOVE GRAY TRIGGERFISH FROM ACTION 2**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OPPOSED)**

- The Council clarified that the species included for trip limit revisions in Action 2 do not need to be the same species that are considered for temporary adjustments to trip limits under Action 3.

Council members also discussed removal of red porgy from Action 2, but a motion to remove red porgy failed. The Council directed additional discussion about the potential for localized

depletion under increased trip limits and user conflicts on more accessible offshore reefs, especially regarding greater amberjack.

**MOTION: REMOVE CONSIDERATION OF THE 3,000 LBS TRIP LIMIT FOR VERMILION SNAPPER (BOTH SEASONS).**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**Action 3. Establish a process for temporary trip limit increases or decreases for snapper grouper species**

- The Sub-Committee reviewed draft language for step-ups and step-downs.
- Trip limit increases and decreases should be applied through an annual evaluation, such that years with landings significantly below the ACL would be followed with an increased trip limit in the following year and years with landings that result in early closures would be followed with a decreased trip limit in the following year.
- The process for adjusting the trip limit should be carried out through a temporary rule from the NMFS Regional Administrator (RA).
- Species to consider for this action: gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, hogfish (GA-NC), red grouper, red porgy, vermilion snapper, gag, and golden tilefish (hook and line)
- The Sub-Committee directed initial language to be developed to consider trip limit adjustments up to 25% higher or 25% lower than the trip limit.
- The Sub-Committee directed staff to work with SERO staff to develop revised language for temporary trip limit adjustments.
  - An initial template of this language has been developed. This language will require further review by the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT).
  - The process would involve annual RA consultation with the Council prior to the beginning of the next season, including projected landings for the ongoing season.
  - The Council would develop and recommend a trip limit for next season. If the RA decides an adjusted trip limit should be implemented, the RA will issue a temporary rule setting the adjusted trip limit for the next season.

**DISCUSSION AT FULL COUNCIL:**

- The Council added gag and golden tilefish (hook and line) to the list of species for consideration under Action 3.
- The Council directed staff to begin analyzing the range of temporary trip limit increases using 50% higher or lower than the trip limit, and having further conversations about specific poundage limits for species in April.
- In April, staff will also provide draft language indicating the triggers for considering a trip limit increase or decrease, and request Sub-Committee feedback.

**Action 4. Revise bottom longline gear stowage requirements and species that may be harvested while gear is on board and stowed**

- The Sub-Committee clarified that bottom longline gear is specifically noted because it is already a legal gear in the snapper grouper fishery; therefore, it is not subject to the same restrictions as for unauthorized gear.

- The Sub-Committee discussed the possibility of a notification requirement for vessels that intend to switch from or to bottom longline gear during a trip.
  - The Sub-Committee discussed the timing of notification to be prior to trip departure or at-sea and preferred the notification to occur prior to trip departure.
- Add another alternative that is the same as **Alternative 2**, except add a notification requirement for prior to departure.

[Return to Committee Report](#)

**APPENDIX 2**  
**REVISED INNOVATION PLAN DOCUMENT**  
**(yellow highlights indicate items added/modified at this meeting)**

**Snapper Grouper Innovation Plan**

March 2026

*“The Council is where fisheries science meets reality.”*

~ Eugenio Pineiro Soler, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

The Snapper Grouper Innovation plan is a way to bring together the current priorities of the SG committee, the priorities and realities expressed by NOAA Fisheries, and consider a new path to improve how the committee operates. The intent of this plan is to reflect the Presidential Executive Orders, the changes in the type and amount of data for species within the Fishery Management Unit, and accept a greater level of uncertainty and risk by the SG committee when managing this species complex. **The committee and this plan will consider the sustainability of the species in the complex.**

**Overarching goal – Establish goalposts and principles for SG committee discussions. Consider ways to streamline and be more efficient during SG committee discussions. This document does not override or replace any obligations to MSA and the National Standards.**

**Goal for March meeting** – Review Goalposts, Principles, and Committee Streamlining suggestions. Consider any additional edits and seek to finalize this living document at this meeting. Begin incorporating concepts into committee discussions **and print for Council member notebook that comes to every meeting.**

**Goalposts**

- **Recreational yield (opportunity) is about access and having SG species available to harvest**
  - Recreational anglers want to be able to have the opportunity to harvest SG species when their schedule allows (e.g., weather/life circumstances). Recreational anglers want optimum opportunity and year-round access to harvest SG species. Anglers throughout the Council region have different preferences on what SG species they prefer to harvest at certain times of the year. Anglers also want good quality opportunities for harvest. **Opportunity for recreational anglers could be defined as time on the water.**
- **Commercial yield is about providing access to seafood for consumers**
  - Commercial fishermen need prioritization of efficient harvest (maximum harvest value with minimum effort). Commercial fishing is about access at all levels,

including the harvester, dealer, market, truck drivers, restaurant, and consumers. MSA defines this as greatest benefit to the nation.

- **Optimize year-round access to SG species for commercial and recreational sectors, to the extent possible**
  - The committee intends to optimize access. This optimization could result in consistent, year-round availability and access to SG species. This concept could help restaurants that are challenged in being able to find year-round local fish to satisfy menus. The overall intent is to allow fishermen the opportunity to harvest the resource when weather, personal schedules or markets are favorable.
- **Consider regional and temporal management of fisheries to account for differences across the Council region**
  - The committee can consider split-seasons to spread access throughout the region. The committee also intends to use approaches that consider local seasons and preferences, including times of the year and holidays. This may include a range of spatial scales (e.g., sub-regions and state by state).
- **Consider holistic view of the SG fishery/ Consider multi-species nature of this fishery when making decisions**
  - The committee will consider the multi-species nature and regime shifts of species when making decisions.
  - The focus on single species management that has developed in response to ACL-based management isn't serving the fishery well. The committee will consider ways to manage co-occurring species together since targeting one SG species often results in the bycatch of other SG species. The committee will consider how other councils manage their fisheries to consider ways to innovate.
- **Maximize trip efficiencies or ROI for commercial sector**
  - There is widespread support for being more efficient, but the committee needs to consider how to define efficiency across the sectors and then develop ways to increase efficiency. There may be trade offs
  - Efficiency is hard to define and the definition of efficiency or satisfaction will likely vary for recreational and commercial sectors while reflecting the different desires and needs of the sectors. In general, actions that promote each sector achieving its yield (see above) while reducing its costs and expenses could be considered to promote efficiency. The Committee could evaluate an action's impact on efficiency by considering how it affects yield (pounds, access, opportunity, flexibility) and

costs (fuel, time, discarding, lost opportunity). The Committee will consider more than just simple economic efficiencies and costs in addressing this item.

- For the commercial sector, efficiency may not be the correct word. It may be more appropriate to consider “Return on Investment” as the metric to optimize.
- Spreading harvest out to be more predictable and steady can be more economically efficient (avoid flooded markets, be able to shop around for better price) in the commercial sector, and may help provide year-round access in the recreational sector.
- There is a strong likelihood that opposing objectives will make improving efficiency and satisfaction challenging. For example, higher trip catches may necessitate shorter seasons or other access limitations.

- **Maximize trip satisfaction for recreational sector**

- Spreading harvest out to be more predictable and considering how to provide year-round access in the recreational sector.

- **Take more risks in making decisions**

- The committee intends to take more risks in making decisions. The committee recognizes that limited amount of available quota for some species may work against flexibility and risk-taking.
- The committee intends to learn from other Councils’ processes to try new management actions and find ways to move management actions/changes more rapidly.
- **ACTION ITEM:** The Committee expects to be provided scientific recommendations from the Science Center and the SSC that define the risk of various harvest levels but do not make risk determinations on behalf of the Council. The Committee also expects to be provided analyses that are risk neutral.

- **Don’t let the search for perfection stop progress**

- Don’t be paralyzed by uncertainties, challenges, or imperfect data.
- Perfect decisions are functionally impossible in the uncertain world of fisheries.
- Decisions taken by the Committee can be changed in the future and are subject to change as new information becomes available.
- Make better use of non-traditional data sources

- **We will never have the perfect solution for everyone**

- The committee seeks to balance expectations and manage tradeoffs among user groups.
- This approach could result in an improvement in trust but also may result in unpopular management decisions.

### Principles to get to Goalposts

In our role as Council members of this SG committee, we intend to consider the following principles to help us achieve our goalposts when conducting our committee business.

This list includes items that could be considered now and items that are aspirational for when more data could be available in the future.

#### Can be considered now

- Ensure local knowledge is factored into management decisions
- Take more risks and try new things to achieve goals and in making management decisions
- Be proactive
  - Get ahead of an issue; don't wait to react to a stock assessment and don't wait for the Cadillac (or perfect) stock assessment. Some of the tools that are available for being proactive include: SAFE Report, SERFS report, interim analyses, Fishery Performance Reports, public comments, ACL monitoring, more real-time detailed quota monitoring access.
  - The committee intends to act on the information they have not the information they hope to have.
- Minimize wasted fish
  - Turn discards into landings. This could lead to higher trip satisfaction and trip efficiency.
- Focus on management tools available to us now

#### Economic

- Consider how SG commercial fishermen operate as portfolio fishermen
  - Conduct regular economic evaluations of the fishery.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Conduct an economic portfolio evaluation of the snapper grouper fishery. Consider the portfolio approach presented by Steve Cadrin to the SSC and

the prior staff work by Kari Buck. Update this information periodically and provide an economic overview in Council notebook.

- Consider/Continue opportunities for new entrants for permitted fisheries and limited entry fisheries

#### Science and data collection

- SG committee will consider simplified science to meet management needs
- The committee supports interim assessments, more timely data on stock status for a prioritized list of species, and stock assessments that match the available data. The committee realizes that fewer traditional stock assessments may be available in the coming years and seeks to put more confidence in simpler methods to assess stock statuses. The committee supports and promotes efforts to provide/obtain ecosystem and multi-species analyses for supporting catch recommendations and evaluating management alternatives.
- The committee seeks to use more cooperative research projects to obtain critical data
  - Cooperative research will provide more engagement with stakeholders. Cooperative research will also support the council's citizen science initiative.
- Continue to support the Council's Citizen Science Program
- The scientific advice provided to the Committee must move beyond single species assessments and recommendations to support the Committee's effort to move beyond single species management solutions.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Request that Council staff, SSC and SEFSC work together to develop a plan to address the above committee expectations.
  - Provide more timely stock status evaluations using simpler approaches that can be supported given future resource expectations
  - Develop multi-species and ecosystem-informed catch recommendation approaches
  - Identify data gaps that can be addressed through cooperative research projects
  - Identify timelines and deliverables
  - Consider a workgroup or a workshop to develop this action item
- **ACTION ITEM:** Request that NOAA Fisheries provide a thorough explanation of how discards (rec and comm) are handled, from data collection to estimation to use in stock assessment to use in stock projections to developing fishing level recommendations (OFL/ABC/ACL/ACT). Thoroughly compare how discards are addressed in the South Atlantic

with the Gulf, and summarize how discards are addressed in other regions noting key differences in data collection, analysis, and catch specifications.

### **Ideas for Process of SG committee and committee efficiency principles**

In our role as Council members of this SG committee, we will consider the following items when conducting our committee business.

- **Booklet of commonly requested information provided at each Council meeting and on the website**
  - The council staff will provide binders for SG committee members that include commonly used items such as this innovation plan, SEDAR schedule, workplan, types of Amendments, etc. Each Council member will be required to bring this binder to each meeting. The Council staff will also have these items available electronically on the Council website.
    - **ACTION ITEM:** Completed by staff for the December 2025 meeting, with updates planned as needed at subsequent meetings.
- **Maximize meeting time of the SG committee**
  - The committee will maximize our allotted meeting time by using subcommittees to tackle niche issues (e.g., wreckfish subcommittee) that can save time during full SG committee discussions. The subcommittee could be comprised of a subset of members of the SG committee with expertise in the topic that will make recommendations to the SG committee.
  - The SG committee will also consider the use of a “process word/safe word” that can be used to stop or redirect the discussion and call the question quicker for motions.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Request that staff remind the Council to think about the Innovation plan during discussion at the following points in management discussions:
    - **When developing the rationale for purpose and need of an Amendment/Framework**
    - **When discussing individual management action alternatives in a plan amendment/framework and Council rationale.**
- **Be more responsive and timely**
  - The SG committee seeks to be more responsive and timely to SG fishery issues. The committee seeks to make hard decisions more rapidly and will find the proper vehicle for its actions in order to made actions move faster through the process. The committee seeks to optimize the use of expedited procedures (e.g., expedited

framework actions) to move items faster. The committee seeks to have more timely responses to assessment information and use their informed judgement when presented with conflicting and incomplete information instead of being paralyzed by inaction.

- **Get out of the rut and be more innovative and efficient**
  - The committee seeks to operate in a solution-oriented way, getting away from single species management when possible, and is willing to test new and innovative ideas, and makes difficult decisions when needed that are in alignment with fishery goals.
- **More communication and collaboration between states and NOAA outside the Council meeting**

In order to tackle challenges between meetings and allow the committee meetings to operate more efficiently NOAA and state agency representatives should work collaboratively.

### Words matter

As we conduct our business as the SG committee:

- Encourage committee members to use tact and know that words matter
- Seek to avoid broad, blaming/shaming statements, especially those directed at particular sectors, industries, or organizations

### Responsibility to Stakeholders

In our role as Council members on this committee we:

- Seek to understand our audience better
- Desire stakeholder and fishermen satisfaction
- Seek to keep fishermen engaged
- Desire to improve the confidence of stakeholders in the federal fishery management process

**NEXT STEP – UPDATE, INCLUDE FINAL INNOVATION PLAN IN BINDER**

### [Return to Committee Report](#)