

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**June 9-11, 2026**

The Committee approved the minutes from the March 2026 meeting and the agenda for the June 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 SERO on an existing exempted fishing permit (EFP) application. A previous EFP application from Cultimar Technologies, Inc. was open for comment through May 21, 2026, and is currently under review by NOAA Fisheries. For a summary of ongoing litigation concerning the red snapper state management EFPs see the Full Council I Summary Report).

**Update on Joint SAFMC and MAFMC Sub-Committee on Blueline Tilefish**

Council staff reported on a meeting of the Joint SAFMC and MAFMC Sub-Committee on Blueline Tilefish (Sub-Committee) that occurred on May 1, 2026. The Sub-Committee reviewed current and previous decisions for regional acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels and cross-jurisdictional allocation and management strategies for other stocks. The Sub-Committee also directed staff to gather information for review at the next Sub-Committee meeting, which is tentatively planned for July 2026.

**Vermilion Snapper Allocation Review Report**

At the March 2026 meeting, the Committee reviewed current sector allocations and recent landings information for Vermilion Snapper. In accordance with the Council's Allocation Review Guidelines, a draft summary allocations report was developed based on the Committee's discussion and presented to the Committee for approval. The Committee had no additional edits to the draft report and passed the following motion:

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE ALLOCATION REVIEW REPORT FOR VERMILION SNAPPER.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program Review**

At their March 2026 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on the next review of the Wreckfish ITQ program. Council staff presented a draft outline of the review, including how Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (ITQ program modernization), will be addressed given that it has been submitted for secretarial review but not yet implemented. The Council was comfortable with the proposed outline, including the addition of a section that would describe the actions

proposed in Amendment 48, the Council’s rationale, and their status.

### **Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Report and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Report**

The Snapper Grouper AP Vice Chair and SSC Chair presented recommendations for snapper grouper species from each body’s respective meeting in April 2026.

### **Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60)**

The Commercial Sub-Committee met on April 20-21, 2026. The Committee Chair summarized discussion points and directions to staff from this meeting. The Snapper Grouper AP Vice Chair presented the AP’s recommendations on Amendment 60 from their April 2026 meeting. SERO staff presented additional analyses of potential trip limit changes. The Committee had the following discussion and passed the following motions:

- The Committee discussed changes to the Purpose and Need statement, stating references to increased access should be removed. Further changes were discussed during Full Council.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this amendment is to increase long-term stability of the commercial fishery by maintaining the current number of permits and increase flexibility, ACCESSIBILITY (I.E., LOWERING THE BARRIER TO ENTRY), adaptability, and economic profitability in the snapper grouper commercial sector.

**Need:** The need for this amendment is to modify commercial snapper grouper permit requirements to maintain the current number of commercial participants, allow flexibility for changing fishing gear at sea, and modify trip limits to more consistently achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, commercial closures and other adverse social and economic effects, consistent with Executive Order 14276 – Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.

During Full Council, it was clarified that eliminating the 2 for 1 is not intended to expand the fishery or the size of the commercial fleet.

- The Committee directed staff to investigate revising the name of the Snapper Grouper Commercial Unlimited Permit to the SG 1 permit (removing the term ‘unlimited’) in the Code of Federal Regulations. The RA stated it would first be necessary to determine how such a change would affect permits, permit applications, etc.

MOTION 2: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1.

### **Action 1. Remove the Two-for-One Requirement for the Transferable Snapper Grouper (SG 1) Commercial ~~Unlimited~~ Permit**

**Alternative 2.** To acquire a limited access, transferable South Atlantic snapper grouper (SG 1) ~~unlimited~~ commercial permit, an entity must obtain and exchange **one** such permit for one new permit.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 2. Revise bottom longline gear stowage requirements and species that may be harvested while gear is on board and stowed**

- The Committee discussed at-sea notification requirements versus prior to leaving the dock, and noted that the at-sea notification provides a time stamp.
- For Alternative 3 (at-sea notification requirement), generalize the alternative language to describe communicating with NMFS prior to switching gears. Current available methods can be described in the Discussion, but are not needed in the alternative text, as approved communication methods may change over time.
- For Alternatives 2-4, change the bottom longline stowage requirement to either have hooks not baited or have the longline gear stowed below deck. This would allow a wider variety of longline configurations to participate in the added flexibility from this action.
  - Golden tilefish longline configurations are different from shark longline configurations. Some vessels do not have space to stow gear below deck.
- For Alternatives 2-4, it was clarified that wreckfish would be allowed to be possessed on vessels with bottom longline gear, but wreckfish would still not be allowed to be caught using bottom longline gear.
- SERO discussed that the interpretation of this action as ‘regulatory’ or ‘de-regulatory’ will come down to the cost/benefit analysis.
- Council members also directed staff to coordinate with HMS to identify any overlapping regulations and provide discussion of those in the amendment.

MOTION 3: SELECT 1,750 LBS GW FOR BOTH SEASONS AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES (SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2B AND 3B) FOR ACTION 3.

**Action 3. Revise commercial trip limit for greater amberjack**

**Alternative 2.** Increase the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack during Season 1 to:

**Sub-Alternative 2b.** 1,750 lbs gw.

**Alternative 3.** Increase the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack during Season 2 to:

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** 1,750 lbs gw.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (1 OBJECTION, NO ABS)

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee noted that the greater amberjack Season 2 trip limit was most recently changed in 2023.

MOTION 4: SELECT 1,500 LBS GW FOR BOTH SEASONS AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES (SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A AND 3B) FOR ACTION 4.

**Action 4. Revise commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper**

**Alternative 2.** Increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 1 to:

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** 1,500 lbs gw.

**Alternative 3.** Increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 2 to:

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** 1,500 lbs gw.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: REMOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A (1,250 LBS GW FOR SEASON 2) FROM ACTION 4.

**Alternative 3.** Increase the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper during Season 2 to:

~~**Sub-Alternative 3a.** 1,250 lbs gw.~~

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 5.

**Action 5. Revise commercial trip limit for red porgy**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not increase the commercial trip limit for red porgy. The current trip limit for red porgy during Season 1 (January through April) and Season 2 (May through December) is 15 fish.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Southeast Reef Fish Survey (SERFS) index for red porgy has been low for a long time and 2025 is the lowest of the time series
- The Committee noted that the red porgy trip limit was most recently changed in 2023.

The Committee also reviewed Actions 6-8 considering revised commercial trip limits for hogfish (GA-NC), red grouper, and gray triggerfish. The Committee decided to not select preferred alternatives for these actions prior to public hearings.

- Some concern was noted for the recent stock trajectory for gray triggerfish, based on the SERFS index.

MOTION 7: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (600 LBS GW) AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 9.

**Action 9. Revise commercial trip limit for golden tilefish (hook and line only)**

**Alternative 2.** Increase the commercial trip limit for golden tilefish (hook and line) to 600 lbs gw; 672 lbs ww.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Golden tilefish (hook and line) had some recent closures. Economic tradeoffs between increasing the trip limit and shortening the season versus keeping the current trip limit and having a longer season will need to be evaluated.

MOTION 8: ADD AN ACTION TO AMENDMENT 60 THAT REQUIRES THAT ALL SNAPPER GROUPEER COMMERCIAL HARVEST IS SOLD TO A PERMITTED DEALER.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The requirement from the new action described in Motion 8 should apply to all snapper grouper commercial harvest, regardless of permit.

- Current requirements already state that, if sold, federal snapper grouper harvest must be sold to federally-permitted dealers.
- Gulf regulations are being investigated by Council and NMFS staff, as well as General Counsel. A requirement to sell all commercial harvest in the Gulf does not seem to be explicitly stated, so draft language differs from the Gulf to more clearly align with the direction of the Committee's motion.
- The Committee requested draft language for the action from Motion 8 to be discussed in Full Council. Draft language is provided below:

**Draft Action. Require that all harvest by vessels with commercial permits be sold.**

**Draft Alternative 1 (No Action).** All commercial harvest of SG is not required to be sold, but if sold, it must be sold to a permitted dealer.

**Draft Alternative 2.** All commercial harvest of SG is required to be sold to a permitted dealer.

- The Purpose and Need statements need to be modified to incorporate this action.
- The Council's intent for this action is for better accounting of fish that are harvested aboard commercial vessels.
- This action reflects the Council's intent to professionalize the commercial industry, wanting fish caught by that sector to be used for commerce.
- Staff should note disposition codes used on trip tickets that reflect specific situations, such as spoilage.
- Florida trip tickets have a disposition code for personal consumption. North Carolina requires all harvest to be reported on trip tickets.

The Committee also discussed items that were removed from Amendment 60 by the Commercial Sub-Committee. These items addressed commercial trip limit and possession requirements (addressing issues of commercial possession and sale on days when fish houses are closed) and the speed of changing trip and bag limits.

**MOTION 9: APPROVE DRAFT AMENDMENT 60 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.**

**APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

- The Committee requested that staff develop and post online a video presentation.
- The Committee requested a mixture of webinar and in-person hearings. Potential locations include northern and southern North Carolina (or potentially one meeting in central NC); Charleston, South Carolina (during the September Council Meeting); and 3 locations spread through Florida, with the northernmost location being close enough that it can be accessed by Georgia stakeholders.
- Staff discussed the possibility of states and Council members hosting in-person hearings, during which the staff-prepared video presentation would be played and staff would be available online to assist in answering questions. This was not a preferred option due to past internet/equipment challenges in some locations.

MOTION 10: RECOMMEND TO THE FULL COUNCIL TO INITIATE AN AMENDMENT THAT WOULD MODIFY COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT AND POSSESSION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER, COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS, AND DOLPHIN WAHOO MANAGEMENT PLANS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 11: RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL TO INITIATE AN AMENDMENT THAT WOULD CONSIDER REVISION OF ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK PROCEDURES FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER, COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS, AND DOLPHIN WAHOO MANAGEMENT PLANS TO ALLOW MANAGEMENT MEASURES SUCH AS TRIP LIMITS AND BAG LIMITS TO BE CHANGED THROUGH THE ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK PROCESS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Staff investigated the current abbreviated framework procedures for reef fish in the Gulf Council (included in [Reef Fish Amendment 49](#)). Abbreviated framework amendments can only be used for trip or bag limits if the trip limit change is not more than 10% of the prior trip limit or if the bag limit change is not more than 1 fish.

### **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 14 species to evaluate whether they continue to need 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.

The Committee reviewed summary comments received from the Snapper Grouper AP. The Committee also provided input on the purpose and need statements and actions in the amendment. In doing so, the Committee provided the following motions and direction to staff:

MOTION 12: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The **purpose** of Amendment 61 is to evaluate the removal of select species from management and to evaluate the designation of additional ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

The **need** is to reduce regulatory burden, narrow the scope of species managed, free up management resources to dedicate towards species that need federal conservation and management, and support Executive Order 14276.

MOTION 13: APPROVE ALL ACTIONS, AS REVISED, FOR INCLUSION IN AMENDMENT 61.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

- Include draft Actions 1, 2, 3, and 5 for further consideration in Amendment 61.
- Draft Action 2 (Designate EC species)
  - Add bar jack to the species considered in the action.
- Draft Action 3 (Commercial and for-hire permit requirement)
  - Remove “unlimited” in reference to SG 1 permits.
  - Include both the existing and potential new ecosystem component species in consideration the action.
  - In discussion of the action, note that maintaining the commercial permit requirement (SG 1 or SG 2 permit) in Alternative 2 is being considered for the purposes of this multi-species fishery to help with enhanced data collection, bycatch mitigation, and to address other ecosystem issues by continuing to prohibit problematic gears that may damage habitat. These reasons are consistent with guidance provided in the National Standard Guidelines.
- Do not include draft Action 4 (Commercial trip limit for EC species) for further consideration in Amendment 61.
- Draft Action 5 (Recreational aggregate bag limit for EC species)
  - Include “cap” in the context of an EC species bag limit.
  - The bag limit for EC species would be separate from limits for managed species.

**Headboat Vessel Limits (Regulatory Amendment 38)**

Regulatory Amendment 38 proposes a headboat-specific, per-six-passengers vessel limit for black grouper, gag, and scamp/yellowmouth grouper. The Council received a background presentation that described how the proposed vessel limit would be implemented and additional considerations such as amendments for these species currently in the rulemaking phase. Staff noted that a per-six-passenger limit only benefits headboats when a vessel limit is already in place. Since there is not a vessel limit in place or proposed for scamp/yellowmouth grouper, the Council will not consider establishing one through this amendment. The Committee discussed applying a “per-six passenger” vessel limit for all recreational vessels that carry more than 6 passengers. However, it was ultimately decided to move forward with the intent that this limit be applied to headboats only. The Committee discussed how to define a headboat, noting that the USCG issued COI definition may not include all vessels participating in the SRHS. Staff then reviewed a decision document including initial actions and alternatives, and the Committee made the following recommendations and motions:

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

- Draft language to identify headboat vessels for the purpose of a per-six-passengers vessel limit for review at the September meeting.
- Remove Alternative 2 from Action 1:

**Action 1. Revise the for-hire vessel limit for gag and black grouper.**

**Alternative 2.** Revise the for-hire vessel limit to **1 gag or black grouper, combined per 6 passengers** for vessels with the South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Open Access permit and a valid US Coast Guard-issued certificate of inspection. The maximum number of gag or black grouper combined that can be retained per vessel is 12 fish. Any vessel that does not hold a valid US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection would have a vessel limit of 2 gag or black grouper combined per vessel per day. Captain and crew may not retain gag or black grouper.

- Include Sub-Alternatives under Action 1 Alternative 3 (now Alternative 2) that provide options for a maximum number of fish per vessel.

**Alternative 2.** Revise the for-hire vessel limit to 2 gag or black grouper, combined per 6 passengers for vessels with the South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Open Access permit and a valid US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection. ~~The maximum number of gag or black grouper combined that can be retained per vessel is 12 fish.~~ Any vessel that does not hold a valid US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection would have a vessel limit of 2 gag or black grouper combined per vessel per day. Captain and crew may not retain gag or black grouper.

**Sub-Alternative 2a.** The maximum number of gag or black grouper, in any combination, is 12 fish.

**Sub-Alternative 2b.** The maximum number of gag or black grouper, in any combination, is 10 fish.

**Sub-Alternative 2c.** The maximum number of gag or black grouper, in any combination, is 8 fish.

**MOTION 14: MOVE ACTION 2 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED.**

**Action 2. Establish a vessel limit for scamp/yellowmouth grouper.**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Within the 3-fish combined grouper and tilefish aggregate bag limit, the aggregate complex bag limit is 1 fish, either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined, per person per day. There is no separate vessel limit for private, charter or headboat vessels.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a vessel limit to **1 scamp or yellowmouth grouper, combined, per 6 passengers** for vessels with the South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Open Access permit and a valid US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection. The maximum number of scamp or yellowmouth grouper, combined, that can be retained per vessel, is 12 fish. Any vessel that does not hold a US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection would be limited to the bag limit of 1 scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined per person per day.

**Alternative 3.** Establish a vessel limit to **2 scamp or yellowmouth grouper, combined, per 6 passengers** for vessels with the South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Open Access permit and a valid US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection. The maximum number of scamp or yellowmouth grouper, combined, that can be retained per vessel, is 12 fish. Any vessel that does not hold a US Coast Guard issued certificate of inspection would be limited to the bag limit of 1 scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined per person per day.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Evaluate Sunsetting of Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZ) (Regulatory Amendment 39)**

Regulatory Amendment 39 addresses the sunset provision for the South Cape Lookout, Georgetown/Devil’s Hole, and Warsaw Holes spawning special management zones. Staff reviewed a decision document with an initial set of actions addressing the sunset provisions for each SSMZ. The Committee made the following recommendations:

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

- Recommend the System Management Plan Workgroup discuss future sampling of the SSMZs.
- Modify the Purpose and Need statements.

The *purpose* of this framework amendment is to ~~retain, remove, or revise~~ evaluate the sunset provisions, for the following spawning special management zones: South Cape Lookout, Georgetown Hole/Devil’s Hole, and Warsaw Hole/50 Fathom Hole.

The *need* for this framework amendment is to continue to protect spawning fish and spawning habitat, prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield (National Standard 1); reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality of economically and ecologically important snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper to the extent practicable (National Standard 9); and achieve conservation goals while minimizing to the extent practicable negative social and economic effects to snapper grouper fishermen and fishing communities (National Standard 8) within the aforementioned spawning special management zones.

- Add an alternative for Actions 1 through 3 that extends the sunset provision by 7 years.

### **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. Staff reviewed an updated decision document including catch levels, a preliminary analysis, and June 2026 Gulf feedback. The Council made the following motions/recommendations:

**MOTION 15: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3B FOR ACTION 1 AS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.**

#### **Action 1. Modification of Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Jurisdictional Apportionment, and Regional Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)**

**Preferred Option 3b:** Use 50% of the average landings from 2014 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 15% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 85% to the South Atlantic Council.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 16: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4B FOR ACTION 2 AS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

**Action 2. Modification of Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Jurisdictional Apportionment, and Regional Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)**

**Preferred Alternative 4:** Modify the OFL and ABC and the jurisdictional apportionment of the yellowtail snapper ABC and the regional ACLs using the average of historic and recent landings, based on the recommendations of the Councils' SSCs for 2026 – 2028 and subsequent years. Use 50% of the average landings from 2014 – 2023 and 50% of the average landings from 2021 – 2023. This method apportions 17% of the stock ABC to the Gulf Council, and 83% to the South Atlantic Council. The South Atlantic Council's regional ACL will be set equal to its apportionment of the stock ABC. Catch limits shown below are in lb ww and rounded to the nearest whole pound.

**Option 4a:** The Gulf regional ACL will be reduced 11% from the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC, consistent with the buffer established in the Gulf Generic ACL/Accountability Measures Amendment in 2012.

**Option 4b:** The Gulf regional ACL will be set equal to the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

- Determine the appropriate language for the No Action Alternative for Actions 3 and 4. Staff consulted the writing guidelines, and will remove the current Alternative 1, the non-viable alternative, from Actions 3 and 4.
- This will shift alternatives, therefore the preferred alternative (Alternative 2) expressed in Motions 18 and 19 would now be Alternative 1 (No Action) for both actions. Since these are viable alternatives, staff can analyze and include them in the draft document.

**Action 3. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 1 (No Action):** Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 17.02% and 82.98%, respectively, of the **revised South Atlantic total annual catch limit** for mutton snapper.

**Action 4. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 52.56% and 47.44%, respectively, of the **revised South Atlantic total annual catch limit** for yellowtail snapper.

MOTION 17: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 AND ALTERNATIVE 6 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED FOR ACTION 3.

**Action 3. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 5.** Allocate 9.29% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the commercial sector in year one, 9.69% in year two, and 9.98% in year three and thereafter. Allocate 90.71% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the recreational sector in year one, 90.31% in year two, and 90.02% in year three and thereafter.

**Alternative 6.** Allocate 9.85% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the commercial sector in year one, 10.24% in year two, and 10.53% in year three and thereafter. Allocate 90.15% of the revised total annual catch limit for mutton snapper to the recreational sector in year one, 89.76% in year two, and 89.47% in year three and thereafter.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 18: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 3.

**Action 3. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Mutton Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action):** Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 17.02% and 82.98%, respectively, of the revised **South Atlantic total annual catch limit** for mutton snapper.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 19: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 AND ALTERNATIVE 6 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED FOR ACTION 4.

**Action 4. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 5.** Allocate 55.28% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the commercial sector in year one, 55.30% in year two, and 55.29% in year three and thereafter. Allocate 44.72% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the recreational sector in year one, 44.70% in year two, and 44.71% in year three and thereafter.

**Alternative 6.** Allocate 55.44% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the commercial sector in year one, 55.45% in year two, and 55.45% in year three and thereafter. Allocate 44.56% of the revised total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper to the recreational sector in year one, 44.55% in year two, and 44.55% in year three and thereafter.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 20: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 4.

**Action 4. Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Sector Allocations in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations as 52.56% and 47.44%, respectively, of the revised South Atlantic total annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Black Sea Bass Pot Nearshore Closed Areas and Commercial Trip Limit Modification (Regulatory Amendment 40)**

Regulatory Amendment 40 was initiated in March 2026 to 1) evaluate whether to allow fishing for black sea bass with pots equipped with on-demand retrieval systems (on-demand gear) in nearshore areas that are closed seasonally to protect North Atlantic right whales, and 2) explore whether a reduction to the commercial trip limit for pots is warranted to ensure landings remain at or below the commercial annual catch target proposed in Regulatory Amendment 37 (under review). The Committee received feedback from the Snapper Grouper AP that a reduction to the trip limit for pots would not benefit the fishery because trips would no longer be profitable. The Committee directed retaining only the action to re-open seasonal closed areas in the amendment and modified the purpose and need accordingly (see below). The Committee discussed possibly considering a separate catch level (ACL or ACT) for the pot sector of the commercial fishery in Amendment 56, which will address the completed stock assessment and will be developed once that assessment is finalized. The Committee provided the following guidance:

- Because fishing year starts January 1, reword alternatives to reflect this better. Also note that the spawning season closure (when implemented through Regulatory Amendment 37) will be February and March.
- Add an option for a pot season that would be open from December through January to pots with on-demand gear. Traditional (roped) pots would be allowed outside the closed area.

**The Council made the following modifications to the amendment’s purpose and need:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this framework amendment is to re-open nearshore seasonal closed areas to the harvest of black sea bass using pots equipped with on-demand retrieval systems to lower the probability of negative interactions with marine mammals, and to reduce the commercial trip limit for black sea bass pots to maintain harvest at or below the commercial annual catch target.

**Need:** The need of this framework amendment is to allow increased access to the black sea bass resource to commercial fishermen using black sea bass pots equipped with on-demand retrieval systems while lowering the probability of negative interactions with marine mammals and minimizing negative social and economic effects to the extent practicable.

### **Black Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Update**

Staff provided the Committee an update on the Southeastern Black Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), which was initiated in response to data limitations identified during SEDAR 48. The current phase of the MSE focused on developing an indicator to monitor stock status and inform future management decisions. Development of the MSE is nearing completion, and the results are scheduled for review by a joint SSC sub-group composed of members from the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' Scientific and Statistical Committees in October 2026.

### **Other Business**

#### Red Snapper

The Committee discussed (a motion was made that failed by a count of 4-5, with 3 abstentions) a request for the Science Center to evaluate total removals of red snapper and compare that to the sector allocation percentages applied to landings. The Committee decided not to make that request at this time, due to the ongoing litigation concerning red snapper, pending revised MRIP FES recreational catch estimates, and the ongoing SEDAR 90 stock assessment.

#### **Timing and Tasks:**

MOTION 21: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WRECKFISH ITQ REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION AT THE SEPTEMBER 2026 MEETING.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 60. CONDUCT PUBLIC HEARINGS PRIOR TO AND AT THE SEPTEMBER 2026 COUNCIL MEETING.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 61 FOR REVIEW AT THE SEPTEMBER 2026 MEETING AND FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL AT THE DECEMBER 2026 MEETING.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF REGULATORY AMENDMENTS 38 (HEADBOAT VESSEL LIMITS) & 39 (SPAWNING SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONES) FOR REVIEW IN SEPTEMBER 2026.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 44 (YELLOWTAIL & MUTTON SNAPPER) for CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL IN SEPTEMBER 2026.
- PREPARE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 40 (BLACK SEA BASS CLOSED AREAS) FOR APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS AT THE MARCH 2027 MEETING.
- REQUEST DATA FOR BLACK GROUPE MSE FROM SEFSC.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL