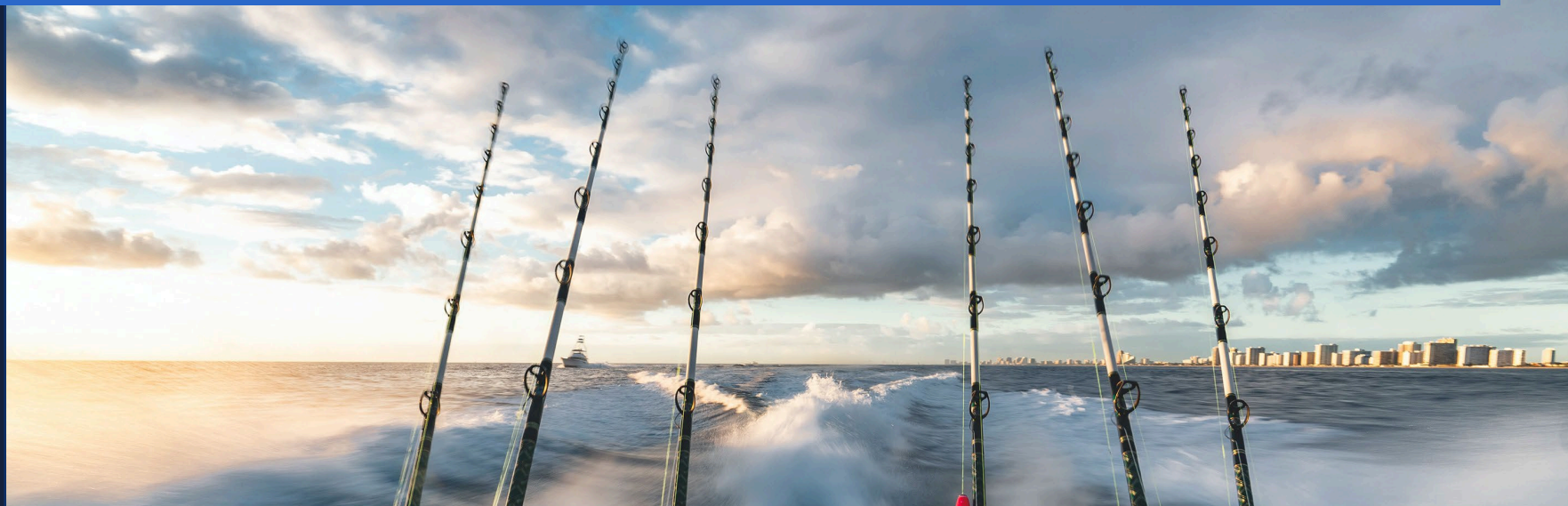




Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel



Spawning Special Management Zones: Update on Research and Evaluation

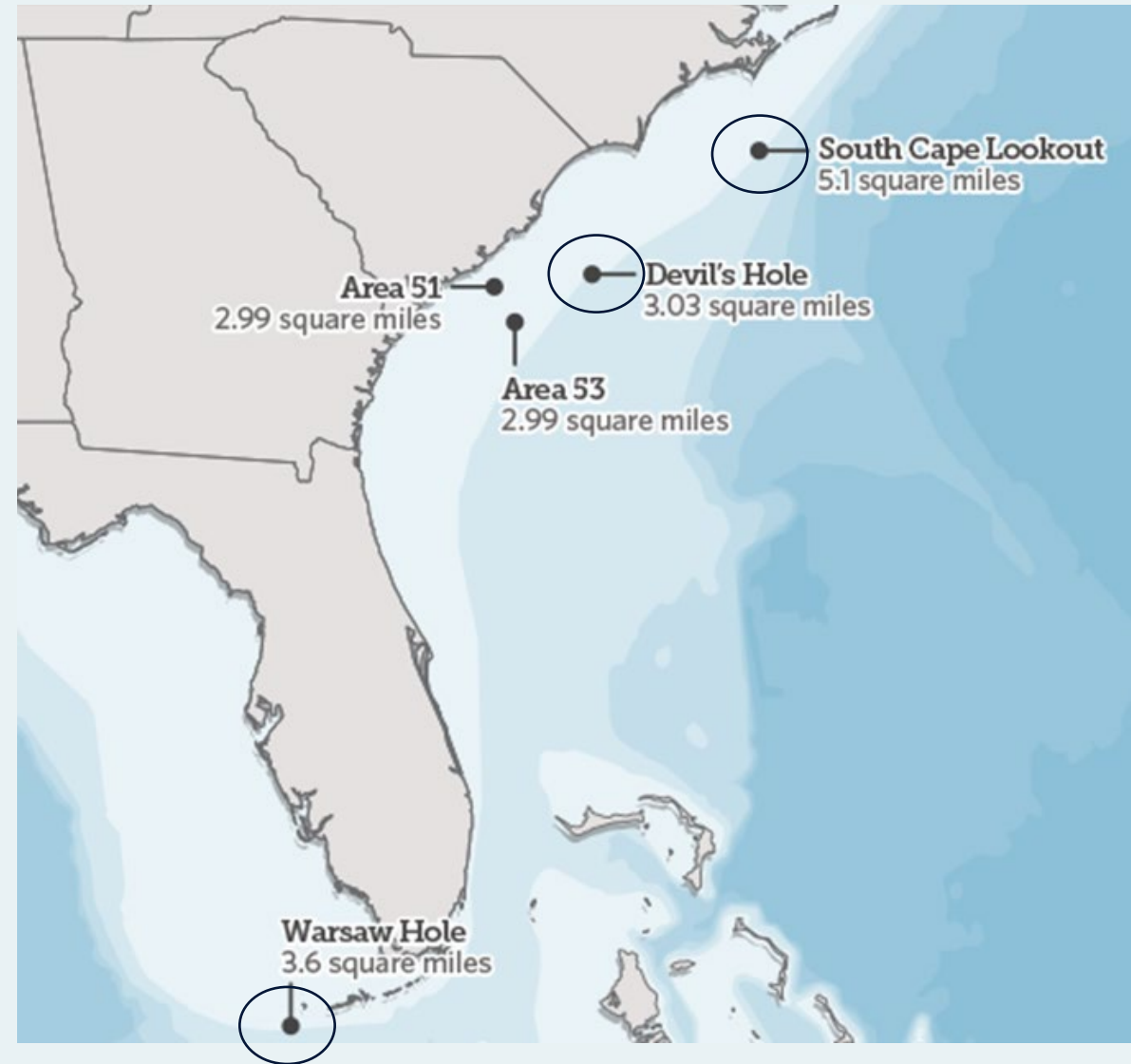
Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

Lewis Naisbett-Jones, LGL Consulting



What are Spawning Special Management Zones

- 5 protected areas from NC to Key West
- Protects areas for where spawning target species have been observed or suspected
- Have an upcoming sunset in July 2027 for circled areas, if not renewed.



Spawning Special Management Zones

Direct Evidence
of Spawning



Indirect Evidence
of Spawning



Video by Chris Parsons



Spawning Special Management Zones

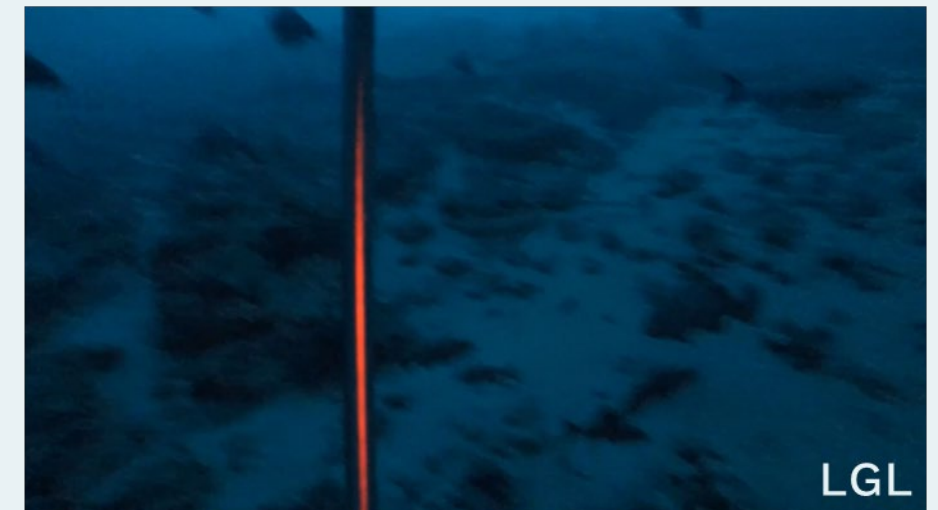
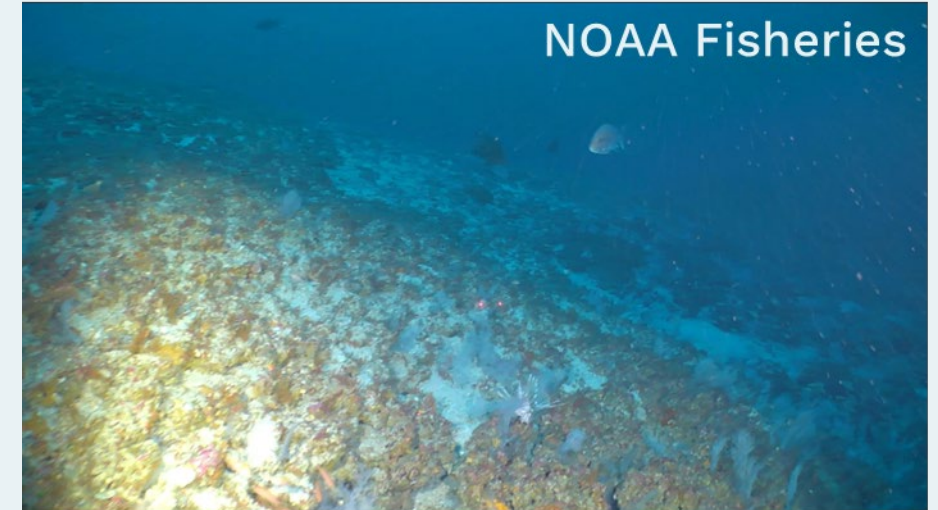
Direct Evidence
of Spawning

Indirect Evidence
of Spawning

Coloration
that may be
indicative of
spawning



Higher than
normal
abundance
during spawning
season

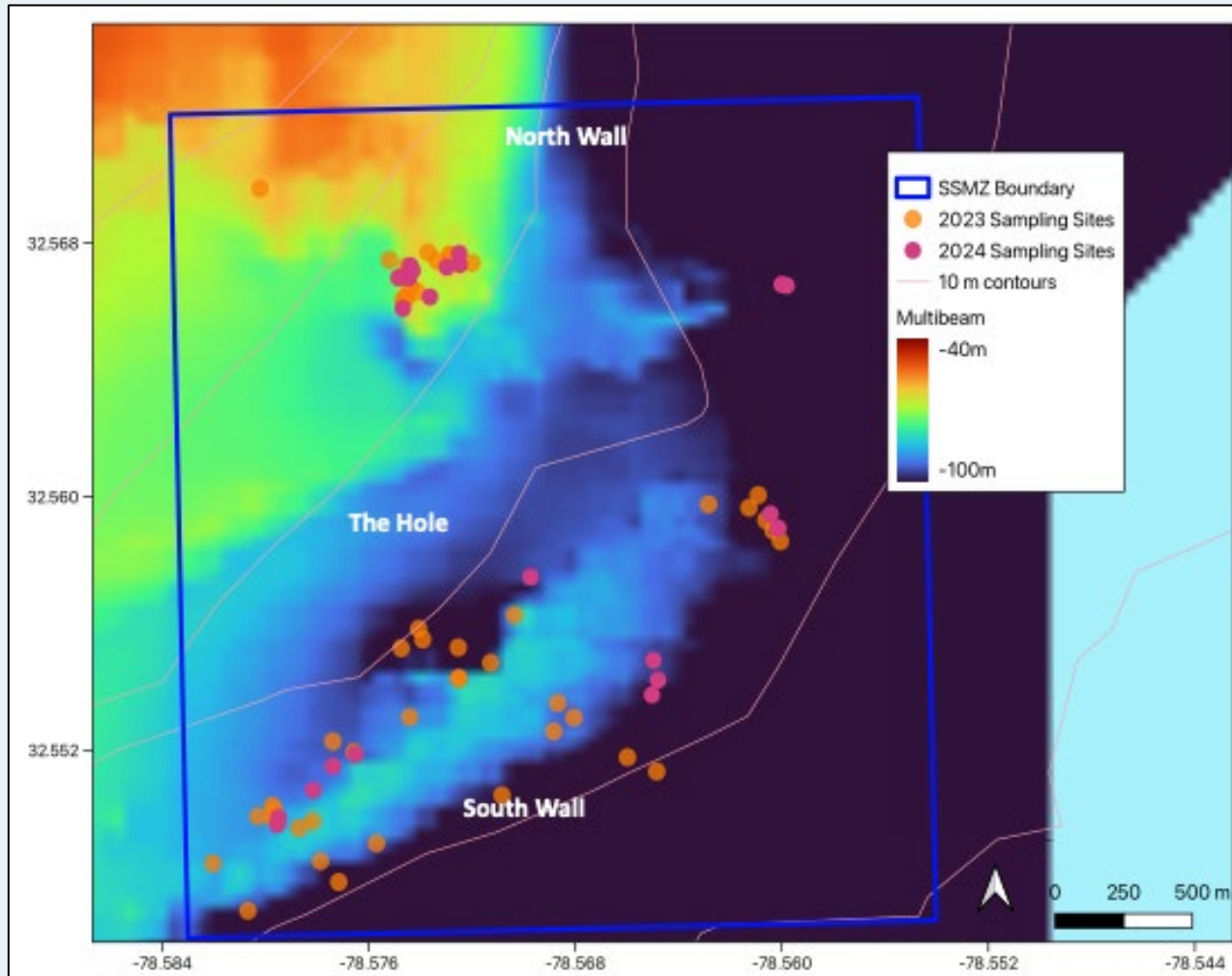




Recent and Proposed Work in SSMZ

	Site Visit 1	Site Visit 2	Site Visit 3
Georgetown Hole (Devil's Hole)	Completed April 2023 Secured funding source: TNC-SC	Completed April 2024 Secured funding source: TNC-SC	Hopeful Spring 2025 Funding source: TBD
Warsaw Hole	Completed June 2024 Secured funding source: NOAA-SAFMC	Planned Spring 2025 Potential funding source: NOAA-CRP	Hopeful Spring 2026 Funding source: TBD
South Cape Lookout	Planned Spring 2025 Potential funding source: NOAA-CRP	Planned Spring or Fall 2025 Potential funding source: NOAA-CRP	Hopeful Spring 2026 Funding source: TBD

Georgetown Hole 2023-2024



- 2023: April 18-22nd
- 2024: April 8th-10th
- Captain Andy McGraw
F/V Can Do II

Georgetown Hole Direct Evidence



	April 2023	April 2024
# Females Sampled	7 (7)	15 (14)
% Spawning	100	93%
Mean Age	9.5	10.5



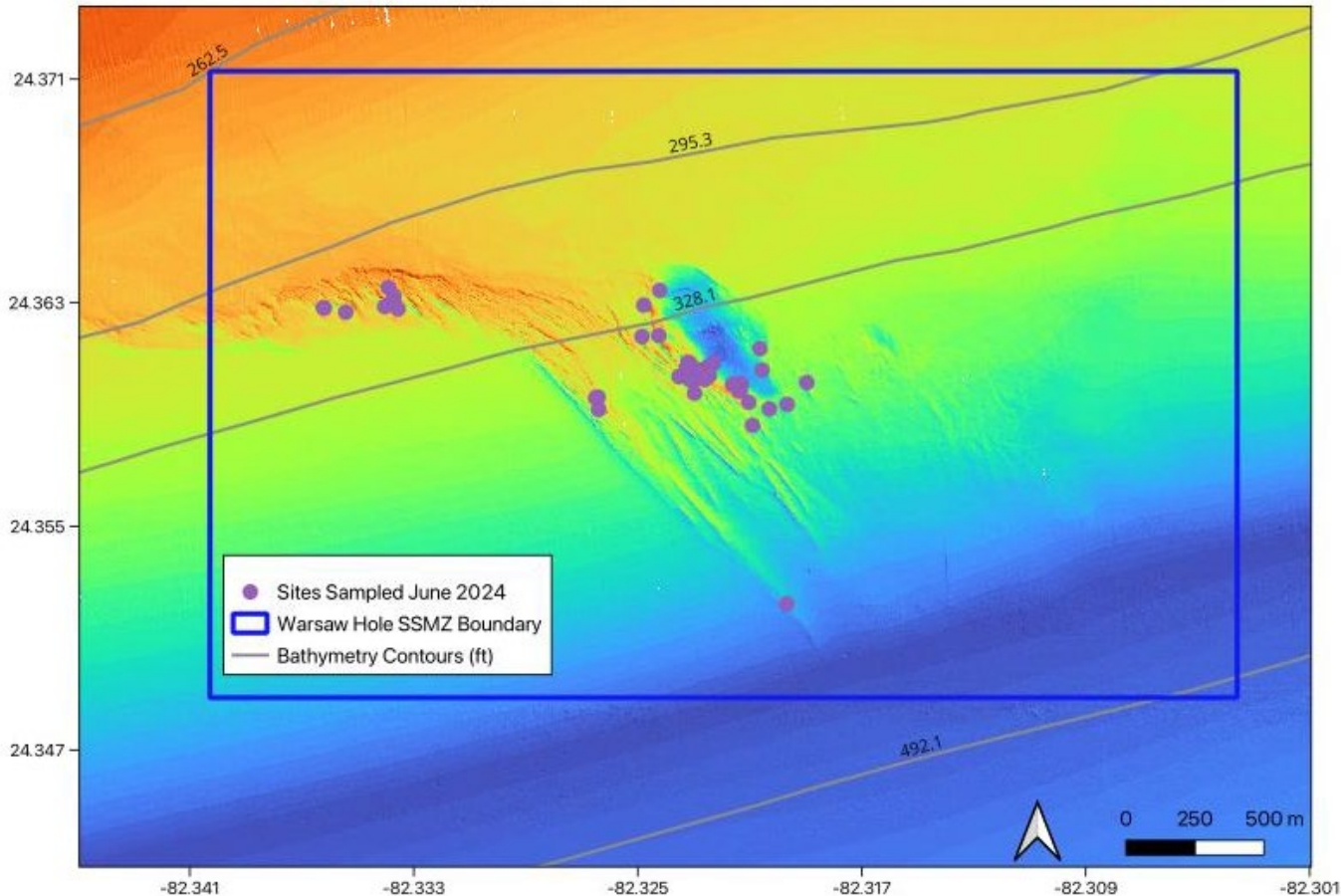
	April 2023	April 2024
# Females Sampled	NA	8 (7)
% Spawning	NA	88%
Mean Age	NA	8.9



	April 2023	April 2024
# Females Sampled	8 (4)	9 (3)
% Spawning	50%	33%

() = Number of fish in spawning condition

Warsaw Hole 2024-2025



- 2024: June 24-28th
- 2025 (forthcoming): April 10-14th
- Previous trips targeted spawning times for Warsaw Grouper
- Future trips targeting other species (i.e. Greater Amberjack)

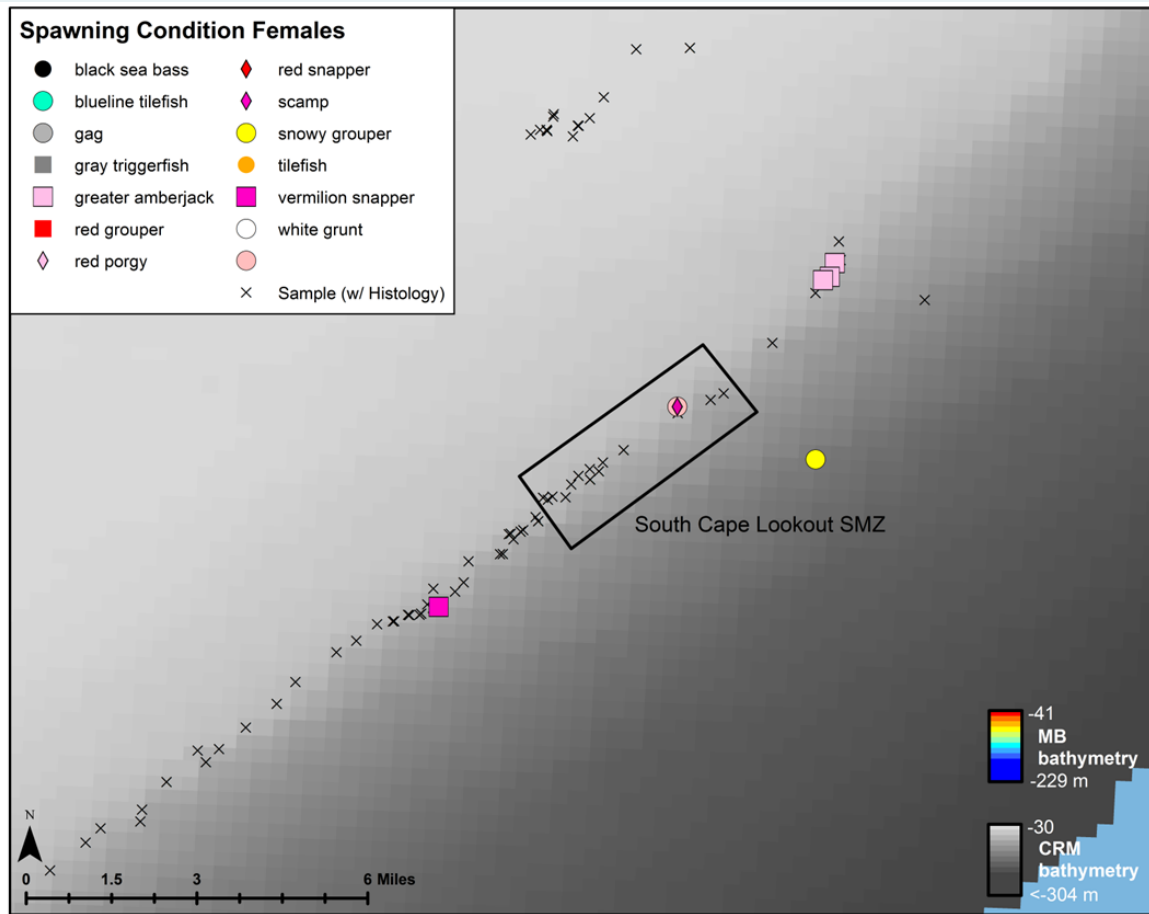
Warsaw Hole 2024



- Two female Warsaw grouper:
 - 1119 mm TL, 44 lbs, 9 years
 - 1084 mm TL, 44 lbs, 8 years
 - <25 meters from 2018 sampling location
 - Early developing and regressing (GSI 1.4%)



South Cape Lookout



- Most of the SSMZ is hard mud or sediment, and gentle shelf break
- Most likely red grouper spawning habitat
- Future sampling to target red grouper

LGL Sampling, May 2016

South Cape Lookout Direct Evidence



LGL Sampling, May 2016

Species Observed in Spawning Condition

- Scamp
- Rock Hind
- Almaco Jack

In Development

- Red Grouper
- Red Snapper
- Vermilion Snapper

Next Steps

- Continue gathering data for the areas
- Develop the evaluation
- Present findings to Council and Advisory Panels





Evaluation of the SSMZs

- System Management Plan Workgroup
 - Data collection efforts in natural areas
 - Larval dispersal models
 - *Law enforcement and compliance*
 - *Data collection efforts in artificial reef areas*
- Developing an evaluation form to be completed by workgroup
- Future presentation (April 2026) to the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel for input
 - Likely to be an online form to be completed by each member and then have a consolidated recommendation.

Questions?

