

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPE 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

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPE COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
September 15-17, 2026

The Committee approved the minutes from the June 2026 Snapper Grouper Committee and the April 2026 Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee meetings and the agenda for the September 2026 meeting.

The Committee received an update 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). The agency updated that the proposed rule for Abbreviated Framework 5 published on July 13, 2026, and comments were due no later than August 12, 2026.

The Committee received an update from SERO on exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications. The EFP application from Cultimar Technologies, Inc., that was reviewed by the Council at a previous meeting has been approved, with the condition that harvest under this EFP would not coincide with an open red snapper season, as recommended by the Council. In July 2026, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina submitted EFP applications for recreational harvest of red snapper to test state management and data collection strategies. The comment period for these EFPs ended on August 25, 2026, and comments for those applications are currently being reviewed by NOAA Fisheries.

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. Additionally, Amendment 61 considers establishing a permit and reporting requirement to fish for or harvest EC species commercially or onboard for-hire vessels and an aggregate recreational bag limit for EC species.

The Committee reviewed the purpose and need statements and actions in the amendment. In doing so, the Committee provided the following motion and direction to staff:

MOTION 1: APPROVE DRAFT ALTERNATIVE 6 FOR INCLUSION IN ACTION 2.

Action 2. Designate additional ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and adjust annual catch limits

DRAFT Alternative 6. Designate **bar jack** as ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- In the tables covering recreational landings, include associated error estimates.
- At the next meeting, include additional information on landings in state versus federal waters.
- Move Action 3 to be the first action in the amendment, since subsequent decisions by Committee members are dependent upon the preferred alternative selected in that action.
- In Action 3, revise the wording of Alternative 3 to clarify that the intent is for the permit requirement to only apply on board federal for-hire vessels. Make mention of for-hire vessels earlier in the alternative wording rather than at the very end.
- Request that NMFS provide information on policy guidelines for establishing permit requirements for EC species. Specifically, other examples of where this has occurred and whether other Councils have implemented such a permit or whether this Council may require limited entry commercial permits as the sole commercial permit option to harvest EC species.
- Change the sub-alternatives of Action 4 to include 10, 15, or 20 fish.
- Prepare the amendment for approval for public hearing approval at the March 2027 meeting.

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, draft amendment, and August 2026 Gulf Council Action. The Council made the following motions/recommendations:

MOTION 2: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 44 REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Evaluate Sunseting 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 and draft amendment, including feedback from the SSC and System Management Plan Workgroup. The Committee made the following recommendations:

Direction To Staff: Modify the Purpose and Need statement

MOTION 3: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED FOR REGULATORY AMENDMENT 39.

The *purpose* of this framework amendment is to examine the current spawning protections provided by the established South Cape Lookout, Georgetown Hole/Devil's Holes, and Warsaw Hole spawning special management zones and modify the sunset provisions to allow for continued protection, research, and monitoring to occur within the areas.

The *need* for this framework amendment is to continue to protect spawning fish and spawning habitat in the established spawning special management zones and allow for continued research and monitoring within these areas which would contribute to achieving optimum yield and providing positive social and economic effects for snapper grouper fishermen and fishing communities.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 4: SELECT OPTION 3 AS THE PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1.

Action 1. Modify the sunset provision for the South Cape Lookout spawning special management Zone.

Preferred Option 3. Extend the sunset provision for the South Cape Lookout spawning special management zone by **10 years**, starting August 3, 2027, and ending August 2, 2037.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: SELECT OPTION 3 AS THE PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2.

Action 2. Modify the sunset provision for the Georgetown Hole spawning special management Zone.

Preferred Option 3. Extend the sunset provision for the Georgetown Hole spawning special management zone by **10 years**, starting August 3, 2027, and ending August 2, 2037.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: SELECT OPTION 3 AS THE PREFERRED FOR ACTION 3.

Action 3. Modify the sunset provision for the Warsaw Hole spawning special management Zone.

Preferred Option 3. Extend the sunset provision for the Warsaw Hole spawning special management zone by **10 years**, starting August 3, 2027, and ending August 2, 2037.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 7: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 39 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Direction to Staff: The Council highlighted issues that spot lock technologies built into trolling motors may pose with the SSMZ regulations:

- Currently a person on board a fishing vessel may not anchor, use an anchor and chain, or use a grapple and chain while in the spawning SMZs (50 CFR 622.183(a)(2)(i)).
- Currently for a fishing vessel to possess snapper-grouper species on board while in a spawning SMZ, the vessel must be in transit, and fishing gear must be appropriately stowed (50 CFR 622.183(a)(2)(i)).
- Spot lock technology may allow a vessel to stay in the areas without a traditional anchor.
- Staff were directed to investigate and consider modifying language that would stipulate that having spot lock gear turned off would be included in the definition of gear stowed (Appendix I). THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED INCLUDING THIS INFORMATION IN THE AMENDMENT BUT NO ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN.

Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60)

The Committee reviewed comments provided through public hearings and the public comment process conducted from July 27, 2026, through September 1, 2026. Additional comments are still being received through September 18, 2026. NOAA Fisheries staff from the Office of Law Enforcement and Limited Access Permit Program presented information on vessel monitoring systems and how information on gear changes could potentially be communicated to law enforcement. The Committee reviewed the amendment's actions and alternatives, had the following discussion, and passed the following motions:

- The Committee had no suggested changes for the Purpose and Need statements, but did direct staff to incorporate specific discussion about the economic benefits of the included actions, specifically with respect to current high fuel prices.
- The Committee discussed concerns about potential timing delays that could occur due to the establishment of new systems resulting from Action 2 (bottom longline stowage and species restriction). The Committee requested that NOAA Fisheries consider delayed implementation of Action 2 relative to other actions in Amendment 60 that could be implemented more quickly.

MOTION 8: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 (REQUIRE VMS TO SWITCH TO/FROM BOTTOM LONGLINE GEAR) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 2.

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

Alternative 4. Modify the regulations restricting possession of snapper grouper species to allow possession of any snapper grouper species on commercial trips with bottom longline gear on board. Species other than snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish may only be harvested if bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed. Appropriately stowed means longline hooks are not baited or are not on the deck of the vessel. Vessel operators who intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear on a single trip are required to carry an active and approved vessel monitoring system on board and send a notification via the vessel monitoring system to the National Marine Fisheries Service before each gear change on that trip.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (1 ABSTENTION)

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee discussed that the requirements for vessel monitoring systems would be that the systems must have satellite connectivity, be turned on for any trips during which the vessel intends to switch to or from bottom longline gear within the trip, and must submit positioning information (i.e. ping rate) hourly.
- The Committee discussed potential conflicts with Highly Migratory Species (HMS) specifications and directed staff to develop alternatives and discussions to reduce conflicts with HMS as much as possible.
 - Staff informed the Committee that one potential conflict resulting from several snapper grouper species being demersal indicator species for HMS longline vessels is under consideration for removal and anticipated to be removed prior to implementation of this action.
- The Committee continues to emphasize that the preferred VMS requirement is only for commercial vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip; VMS would not be required for most commercial vessels, based on current gears and methods of operation.
- The Committee discussed red porgy trip limits, noting the stock's long-time overfished status no notable progress toward rebuilding, as well as a relatively large amount of harvest occurring outside the South Atlantic region.

MOTION 9: MOVE ACTION 5 (RED PORGY TRIP LIMITS) TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED.

Action 5. Revise commercial trip limit for red porgy

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee discussed hogfish (GA-NC) trip limits, noting the stock's unknown stock status, ease of harvest and high desirability among spearfishermen, and economic benefits of a higher trip limit.

MOTION 10: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (INCREASE TRIP LIMIT TO 750 LBS WW) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 6 (HOGFISH).

Action 6. Revise commercial trip limit for hogfish (Georgia-North Carolina)

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for hogfish from Georgia-North Carolina to 750 lbs ww.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (1 OBJECTION)

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee discussed red grouper trip limits. Some concern was expressed about the principle of increasing a trip limit for an overfished stock, with some specific concerns for the stock's health off North Carolina.
- Some members stated that the annual catch limit provides a sustainable level of harvest and prevents negative biological effects. Members also noted that fishery-independent information may indicate some amount of recovery in recent years.

MOTION 11: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (300 LB GW TRIP LIMIT) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 7 (RED GROUPE).

Action 7. Revise commercial trip limit for red grouper

Alternative 2. Increase the commercial trip limit for red grouper to 300 lbs gw; 354 lbs ww.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (6-4-1ABS)
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee discussed gray triggerfish trip limits. Some concern was expressed about the stock's unknown status and recent declines in fishery-independent indices. The Committee intends to receive input from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel to further inform the consideration of a trip limit change.

MOTION 12: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 8 (GRAY TRIGGERFISH).

Action 8. Revise commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not increase the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish. The current trip limit for gray triggerfish is 1,000 lbs ww.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- The Committee discussed the action to require sale of all snapper grouper caught on commercial trips. Through this discussion, the Committee decided that this action could be more appropriately addressed through another amendment currently under development to address other commercial sale considerations.

MOTION 13: MOVE ACTION 10 (COMMERCIAL SALE REQUIREMENT) TO THE 'SUNDAY SALE' AMENDMENT.

Action 10. Require sale of all snapper grouper caught on commercial trips

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 14: APPROVE ALL ACTIONS FOR AMENDMENT 60.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Headboat Vessel Limits (Regulatory Amendment 38)

Regulatory Amendment 38 proposes a headboat-specific, per six passenger vessel limit for gag and black grouper. This vessel limit would allow headboats that meet specified criteria to increase the amount of gag and black grouper they may retain as they carry more passengers. Staff reviewed an updated decision document including the updated criteria for a headboat to retain a "per-6 passenger" limit and preliminary analysis. Discussion focused on the criteria a vessel must meet to retain this vessel limit. The recommended criteria were that a vessel must have the federal charter for-hire permit and participate in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS). The Committee expressed concerns about "true" headboats operating outside of this survey and how possible changes to the survey would affect the ability to retain the vessel limit. The Committee also discussed certificate of inspection (COI) criteria and how this should be required since it is needed to take more than 6 passengers on a vessel. The Committee made the following recommendations:

Direction to Staff: With regards to the criteria a vessel must meet to retain the proposed headboat vessel limit:

- Remove the requirement of participation in the SRHS.
- Add the requirement of a valid COI.

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

Alternative 1 (No Action). Within the 3-fish combined grouper and tilefish aggregate bag limit, the daily bag limit is one gag or black grouper, combined. The for-hire vessel limit for gag and black grouper is 2 fish per trip in any combination; the more restrictive limit applies. Captain and crew may not retain gag or black grouper.

Alternative 2. Modify the for-hire vessel limit to be **2 gag or black grouper, in any combination per 6 passengers** for vessels with the South Atlantic Charter/Headboat for Snapper-Grouper For-Hire Fishing Permit (Open Access), **and have a valid certificate of inspection (COI)**. Any vessel that has a valid South Atlantic Charter/Headboat for Snapper-Grouper For-Hire Fishing Permit (Open Access) and **does not have a valid certificate of inspection (COI)** 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, combined, is 8 fish per vessel.

Sub-Alternative 2b. The maximum number of gag or black grouper, combined, is 10 fish per vessel.

Sub-Alternative 2c. The maximum number of gag or black grouper, combined, is 12 fish per vessel.

MOTION 15: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED FOR REGULATORY AMENDMENT 38.

Purpose: The **purpose** of this framework amendment is to revise the for-hire vessel limit for gag and black grouper, to allow vessels that have a valid South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Charter/Headboat (Open Access) Permit and a **valid certificate of inspection (COI)** to retain a per-six-passenger limit of gag and black grouper.

Need: The **need** for this framework amendment is to allow for greater efficiency and increased profitability for federally permitted headboats that meet the criteria for the headboat vessel limit, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

NOTE: THE COUNCIL ADDED AN ACTION TO THIS AMENDMENT TO ADJUST CATCH LEVELS FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH SO THE PURPOSE AND NEED WILL BE REVISED.

MOTION 16: INITIATE A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH A RECREATIONAL FISHING SEASON FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH WITH THE GOAL OF IT ALIGNING WITH THAT FOR OTHER DW SPECIES (BLUELINE, SNOWY).

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Updates

Staff provided the Committee updates on the Southeastern Black Grouper, South Atlantic, and Wreckfish Management Strategy Evaluations (MSE). The Black Grouper MSE 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.

Project leads working on the South Atlantic MSE project have been working on analyzing the aggregate bag limit and better incorporating stock assessments into the MSE. Blue Matter staff have been updating the MSE software to allow results from multiple stock assessments to be incorporated into a single MSE framework. Due to delays in the availability of recreational data needed for the Red Snapper and Black Sea Bass stock assessments, completion of the MSE will be delayed until next year.

The Wreckfish Adaptive Implemented Management (AIM) project continues to engage stakeholders to gather input for the project. Project leads conducted one-on-one meetings with several stakeholders to better understand the fishery, stakeholder perspectives, and management priorities.

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. The draft Wreckfish ITQ was not ready for review at this meeting. To ensure the review stays on schedule, the Council was comfortable with the Wreckfish Advisory Panel reviewing the document first at their November 2026 meeting and providing their perspective on possible conclusions and recommendations. The Council will review their input during the December 2026 meeting and finalize the ITQ review.

Blueline Tilefish Joint Sub-Committee Report

Council staff reported on a meeting of the Joint SAFMC and MAFMC Sub-Committee on Blueline Tilefish (Sub-Committee) that occurred on July 20 and 22, 2026. The Sub-Committee reviewed recent data, provided initial guidance for staff to develop a rubric for apportioning the acceptable biological catch between regions ahead of the next stock assessment, and recommended maintaining the current apportionment percentages until that rubric is developed. The Committee agreed with the Sub-Committee's recommendations to continue to meet and develop the apportionment rubric.

Topics for Fall Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) is scheduled to meet in Charleston, SC, on October 6-8, 2026. Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report
- Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper)
- Amendment 38 (Headboat Vessel Limits)
 - With the addition of golden tilefish catch levels
- Framework Amendment X - establishing a golden tilefish recreational season that begins aligns with other DW species recreational seasons (May 1).

- Regulatory Amendment 40 (Black Sea Bass Closed Areas)
- Amendment 60 (Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency)
 - Request a presentation on VMS from OLE/LAPP
- Amendment 39 (SSMZ Sunset Provision)
- Amendment Updates: Amendment 61 (Fishery Management Unit Revision)
- Other Updates: Best Fishing Practices, SEDAR, Citizen Science, State Red Snapper EFP Applications
- TBD ‘Sunday Sale’ Amendment
 - Discussion about what professionalization of the commercial fishery looks like
 - How to ensure that people with commercial permits are actually fishing commercially
- Discussion on improving commercial discard data collection
 - Request a presentation from Mote

The Committee also noted that discussions about recreational discard data collection and shark depredation should be scheduled for the April AP meeting.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 17: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- CONVENE MEETINGS OF THE SNAPPER GROUPER AND WRECKFISH ADVISORY PANELS IN FALL 2026.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WRECKFISH ITQ REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NOVEMBER 2026 WRECKFISH AP MEETING AND THE DECEMBER 2026 COUNCIL MEETING.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 60 FOR CONSIDERATION OF FINAL COUNCIL APPROVAL AT THE DECEMBER 2026 COUNCIL MEETING.
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 61 FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL AT THE MARCH 2027 MEETING.
- DEVELOP REGULATORY AMENDMENT 40 (BLACK SEA BASS CLOSED AREAS) FOR CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL IN DECEMBER 2026.
- CONDUCT WEBINAR PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR AMENDMENT 44 (YELLOWTAIL & MUTTON SNAPPER) IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GULF COUNCIL.
- CONDUCT A WEBINAR PUBLIC HEARING FOR REGULATORY AMENDMENT 39 (SUNSET PROVISION FOR SSMZs).
- CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 38 (HEADBOAT) AND ADD GOLDEN TILE CATCH LIMIT ADJUSTMENT
- INITIATE A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS A GOLDEN TILEFISH RECREATIONAL FISHING SEASON.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Appendix I.

Below is information from the Code of Federal Register pertaining to anchoring, transiting, and stowing gear within the spawning special management zones

Anchoring

50 FR 622.183(a)(2) Spawning SMZs.

- (i) "...For a fishing vessel to possess snapper-grouper species on board while in a spawning SMZ, the vessel must be in transit and fishing gear must be appropriately stowed, as specified in [paragraph \(a\)\(2\)](#)...A person on board a fishing vessel may **not anchor**, use **an anchor and chain**, or use **a grapple and chain** while in the spawning SMZs..."

Transiting and Stowing Gear

50 CFR 622.183(a)(2) Spawning SMZs.

- (vii) For the purpose of [paragraph \(a\)\(2\)\(i\)](#) this section, **transit means direct, non-stop progression through the spawning SMZ**. Fishing gear appropriately stowed means-

- (A) A longline may be left on the drum if all gangions and hooks are disconnected and stowed below deck. Hooks cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear; however, buoys may remain on deck.
- (B) Trawl doors and nets must be out of the water, but the doors are not required to be on deck or secured on or below deck.
- (C) A gillnet, stab net, or trammel net must be left on the drum. Any additional such nets not attached to the drum must be stowed below deck.
- (D) **Terminal gear** (*i.e.*, hook, leader, sinker, flasher, or bait) used with an automatic reel, bandit gear, buoy gear, handline, or rod and reel **must be disconnected and stowed separately from such fishing gear. Sinkers must be disconnected from the down rigger and stowed separately.**
- (E) A crustacean trap, golden crab trap, or sea bass pot cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear; however, buoys may remain on deck.

Some things to think about: If a vessel is in possession of snapper grouper species and was using spot lock to remain in one place (not moving) in the SSMZ and/or if gear is not stowed, it can be assumed they would be in violation, however since there is a motor running and the vessel could still be moving slightly, would this qualify as non-stop progression? The goal of the anchoring provision was to protect habitat so using a spot lock would not affect the habitat.