

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
December 6-7, 2022

The Committee approved the minutes from the September 2022 meeting and the agenda for the December 2022 meeting.

Status of Amendments under formal review

NMFS SERO provided an update on progress of Snapper Grouper Amendment 50 (Red Porgy Catch Levels and Rebuilding) and Snapper Grouper Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack). Amendment 50 was formally submitted to NMFS SERO on May 3, 2022. The proposed rule for Amendment 50 published on September 9, 2022, with a comment period through November 8, 2022. Development of the final rule for Amendment 50 is in progress. Amendment 49 is pending submission by the Council.

Release Mortality Reduction & Red Snapper (SG Reg Amendment 35)

Regulatory Amendment 35 considers revisions to South Atlantic red snapper catch levels following the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 73) and gear changes intended to reduce dead discards throughout the snapper grouper fishery. The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Chair and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Chair presented comments and recommendations from the AP's and SSC's October 2022 meetings. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) presented results of a hypothetical run of the SEDAR 73 model that assumed discards to be 50% of estimated levels throughout the time series and 100% compliance with descending device usage when necessary. Council staff presented a Decision Document describing actions and alternatives as currently developed. The Committee also discussed development of the white paper requested in September 2022 that would describe long-term management options to reduce dead discards in the snapper grouper fishery. The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE EDITS TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS.

Purpose: The *purpose* of this **framework** amendment is to revise the **overfishing limit**, acceptable biological catch and annual catch limits for red snapper in the South Atlantic based on the results of the latest stock assessment; and implement management measures to reduce dead **discards** for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery.

Need: The *need* for this framework amendment is to ensure red snapper catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to **end address** overfishing of the South Atlantic red snapper stock **by reducing dead discards of snapper grouper species**, while minimizing negative social and economic effects to the extent practicable, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and its National Standards.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

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

Action 1. Reduce the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and sector annual catch limits, and establish an annual optimum yield for South Atlantic red snapper

Alternative 2. Reduce the red snapper acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and establish an annual optimum yield for red snapper and set them **equal to** the recommended acceptable biological catch. Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone during the commercial and recreational fishing seasons. The 2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Fishing Year	ABC (numbers of fish)	Annual OY=Total ACL (numbers of fish)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL (numbers of fish)
2023	28,000	28,000	77,016	19,119
2024	31,000	31,000	85,268	22,119
2025	33,000	33,000	90,769	24,119
2026	35,000	35,000	96,270	26,119
2027+	36,000	36,000	99,021	27,119

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 3: MOVE ALTERNATIVES 3 AND 4 UNDER ACTION 1 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Alternative 3. Reduce the red snapper acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and establish an annual optimum yield for red snapper and set them equal to **95%** of the recommended acceptable biological catch. Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone during the commercial and recreational fishing seasons. The 2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Alternative 4. Reduce the red snapper acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and establish an annual optimum yield for red snapper and set them equal to **90%** of the recommended acceptable biological catch. Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone during the commercial and recreational fishing seasons. The 2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 4: MOVE ACTION 2 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 2. Prohibit the use of electrically or hydraulically-powered reels to fish recreationally for snapper grouper species

Alternative 1 (No Action). There is no prohibition on the use of electrically or hydraulically powered reels by the recreational sector to fish for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone-

Alternative 2. Prohibit the use of electrically or hydraulically-powered reels by the recreational sector to fish for snapper grouper species, in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

DRAFT Alternative 3. Prohibit the use of electrically or hydraulically-powered reels by the recreational sector to fish for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone off:

Sub-Alternative 3a. North Carolina

Sub-Alternative 3b. South Carolina

Sub-Alternative 3c. Georgia

Sub-Alternative 3d. North Florida (counties include Nassau, Duval, Saint Johns, Flagler, Volusia)

Sub-Alternative 3e. Central Florida (counties include Brevard, Indian River, St Lucie)

Sub-Alternative 3f. South Florida (counties include Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe)

DRAFT Alternative 4. Prohibit the use of electrically or hydraulically-powered reels by the recreational sector while fishing for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone in an area associated with the following depths:

Sub-Alternative 4a. Less than 100 feet

Sub-Alternative 4b. 100 feet to 200 feet

Sub-Alternative 4c. 200 feet to 300 feet

Sub-Alternative 4d. Greater than 300 feet

ADDITIONAL SUB-ALTERNATIVE DERIVED FROM AP RECOMMENDATION ON ACTION 3:

Sub-Alternative 4e. Greater than 150 feet

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: MOVE DRAFT ALTERNATIVE 3 AND DRAFT ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 3 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 3. Prohibit the use of more than one hook per line for the snapper grouper recreational sector

DRAFT Alternative 3. Prohibit the use of more than one hook per line for the recreational sector to fish for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone off:

Sub-Alternative 3a. North Carolina

Sub-Alternative 3b. South Carolina

Sub-Alternative 3c. Georgia

Sub-Alternative 3d. North Florida (counties include Nassau, Duval, Saint Johns, Flagler, Volusia)

Sub-Alternative 3e. Central Florida (counties include Brevard, Indian River, St Lucie)

Sub-Alternative 3f. South Florida (counties include Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe)

DRAFT Alternative 4. Prohibit the use of more than one hook per line for the recreational sector to fish for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone in an **area associated with depth:**

Sub-Alternative 4a. Less than 100 feet

Sub-Alternative 4b. 100 feet to 200 feet

Sub-Alternative 4c. 200 feet to 300 feet

Sub-Alternative 4d. Greater than 300 feet

ADDITIONAL SUB-ALTERNATIVE DERIVED FROM AP RECOMMENDATION:

Sub-Alternative 4e. Greater than 150 feet

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF FOR ACTION 3 (MULTIPLE HOOKS):

- Clarify that this action addresses multiple separate hooks.
- Revise language by tying it to the existing circle hook regulations for the snapper grouper fishery.
- By tying to the existing snapper grouper circle hook regulations, fishing for bait using sabiki rigs would not be affected.

MOTION 6: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 35 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- In-person public hearings are tentatively scheduled as follows:
 - January 17, 2023 – Pooler, GA
 - January 18, 2023 – Charleston, SC
 - January 19, 2023 – Morehead City, NC
 - January 24, 2023 – Jacksonville, FL
 - January 25, 2023 – Cocoa Beach, FL
 - January 26, 2023 – Key Largo, FL
- An additional webinar hearing is tentatively scheduled for January 31, 2023

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Add more discussion to Regulatory Amendment 35 about other ongoing red snapper management activities, including the South Atlantic snapper grouper management strategy evaluation (MSE), Estimation of US Atlantic Red Snapper Abundance, and other studies

being conducted in the region. Include this discussion in the draft amendment that the Council will review in March 2023.

Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Update

The Council is conducting a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to explore long-term management strategies for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. Council staff, the Snapper Grouper AP Chair, and the SSC Chair provided updates and comments based on presentations by Blue Matter Science and subsequent discussions at the most recent AP and SSC meetings. The Committee made the following motion and gave the following guidance:

**MOTION 7: SCHEDULE THE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION CONTRACTORS TO PRESENT IN-PERSON AT THE MARCH 2023 COUNCIL MEETING.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

DIRECTION TO STAFF FOR MSE:

- Work with Blue Matter Science to develop a guidance document to inform on process steps and participants.
- Move John Walter's MSE presentation at the Council Seminar Series to an MSE webpage for wider distribution.
- Reference completed MSEs to note successful methods and challenges that can be considered when developing the snapper grouper MSE.

Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting (SG Amendment 46)

Amendment 46 considers the establishment of a private recreational permit for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. The Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Advisory Panel (Permitting AP) met November 21, 2022 via webinar and to provide feedback on the Council's previously identified items regarding private recreational permitting and reporting. Additionally, the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils recently convened a meeting of their joint workgroup to address Section 102: Fishery Management Measures of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 (Modern Fish Act). This workgroup met on October 12, 2022 and developed a series of recommendations for the Councils to consider in future management decisions affecting the recreational sector. After receiving summary updates from the Permitting AP and Section 102 Workgroup meetings, Council staff reviewed an options paper for Amendment 46. The Council provided the following guidance on options to consider in the amendment for scoping:

Option 1. Establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess Snapper Grouper species in the South Atlantic Region

Items to include in the amendment for scoping:

- 1) Continue consideration of developing a federal private recreational permit. Include options for:
 - a. A vessel-based permit.
 - b. An angler-based permit.
 - i. All anglers would need a permit.

- ii. All anglers fishing from a private vessel would need a permit.
 - iii. At least one angler on a vessel would need a permit.
- 2) Species potentially covered by the permit:
- a. All species within the snapper grouper complex.
 - b. Assessed stocks within the snapper grouper complex.
 - c. Match the 13 species in Florida's State Reef Fish Angler designation.
 - i. Mutton snapper, yellowtail snapper, hogfish, red snapper, vermilion snapper, gag grouper, red grouper, black grouper, greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, almaco jack, and gray triggerfish.

Other notes:

- The permit would be a federal rather than state permit.
- Provide additional information at a future meeting on:
 - Renewal terms of a permit.
 - Charging a fee for a permit.
 - Potential to cover the administrative costs of permit.

Option 2. Establish an education component to obtain a private recreational snapper grouper permit

Items to include in the amendment for scoping:

- 1) Implement an education component immediately when establishing a permit.
- 2) Maintain the option to implement an education component in the future but not initially.
- 3) An education component would be:
 - a. Mandatory.
 - b. Voluntary.

Option 3. Implement reporting for private recreational anglers or vessels

- Do not further consider implementing reporting in this amendment.

MOTION 8: APPROVE AMENDMENT 46 AS MODIFIED (PRIVATE RECREATIONAL PERMITTING AND REPORTING) FOR SCOPING.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Conduct two scoping sessions via webinar ahead of the March 2023 meeting.
- Continue developing Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting) for review at the March 2023 meeting.

Gag and Black Grouper (SG Amendment 53)

Amendment 53 considers changes to catch levels and management measures for gag in response to the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 71). The Committee reviewed a decision document. The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Modify the purpose and need to reflect that the recreational accountability measures are not being changed for black grouper.

MOTION 9: MOVE SUB-ACTION 4B TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 4b. Modify the commercial spawning season closure for gag

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney).

Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to January 1 through May 31 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

Alternative 3. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to December 1 through April 30 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

Alternative 4. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to December 1 through May 31 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 10: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A AS PREFERRED FOR SUB-ACTION 5A.

Action 5a. Establish a recreational vessel limit for gag

Alternative 2. Establish a private recreational vessel limit for gag of:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 2 fish per vessel per day

Alternative 3. Establish a for-hire recreational vessel limit for gag of:

Sub-Alternative 3a. 2 fish per vessel per trip

Clarification: All alternatives that establish a vessel limit are still restricted by the current bag limit of 1 fish per person per day.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 11: MOVE SUB-ACTION 5B TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 5b. Modify the recreational spawning season closure for gag

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney).

Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to January 1 through May 31 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

Alternative 3. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to December 1 through April 30 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

Alternative 4. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). For gag only, revise the timing of these restrictions to December 1 through May 31 throughout the exclusive economic zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 12: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR SUB-ACTION 5C.

Action 5c. Prohibit the retention of gag by captain and crew

Alternative 2. The gag bag limit for captain and crew on a for-hire vessel with a Federal for-hire snapper-grouper permit is zero.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 13: SELECT THE SAME PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES FOR THE BLACK GROUPER SUB-ACTIONS (ACTION 7A-C) AS THE GAG SUB-ACTIONS (ACTIONS 5A-C).

Action 7a. Establish a recreational vessel limit for black grouper

Alternative 2. Establish a private recreational vessel limit for black grouper of:

Sub-Alternative 2a. 2 fish per vessel per day

Alternative 3. Establish a for-hire recreational vessel limit for black grouper of:

Sub-Alternative 3a. 2 fish per vessel per trip

Clarification: all alternatives that establish a vessel limit are still restricted by the current bag limit of 1 fish per person per day.

Action 7b. Modify the recreational spawning season closure for black grouper

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney).

Clarification: This action, like Action 5b, will be moved to the considered but rejected appendix.

Action 7c. Prohibit the retention of black grouper by captain and crew

Alternative 2. The black grouper bag limit for captain and crew on a for-hire vessel with a Federal for-hire snapper-grouper permit is zero.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Consider revisions to the recreational vessel limit alternatives for gag (Action 5) and black grouper (Action 7) to address captain and crew retention. Consider captain and crew retention issues during MSE discussions.

MOTION 14: DIRECT STAFF TO CONDUCT TWO WEBINAR PUBLIC HEARINGS IN JANUARY 2023 FOR AMENDMENT 53.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Additional Item: Consider interim rulemaking to implement updated catch levels in the 2023 season for gag.

NOTE: The Regional Administrator suggested the Council consider requesting that NMFS issue an interim rule to adjust catch levels for gag given that rulemaking for Amendment 53 will take several months.

The Council discussed potentially requesting an interim rule but did not do so at this meeting due to the short time available to consider it and because public hearings are scheduled ahead of the next Council meeting.

Snowy Grouper (SG Amendment 51)

Amendment 51 considers changes to catch levels and management measures for snowy grouper in response to the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 36 update). The Committee reviewed a decision document. The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 15: APPROVE THE MODIFICATIONS TO ACTION 4, ALTERNATIVE 2

Action 4. Modify the snowy grouper recreational accountability measures

Alternative 2. Remove the current recreational in-season accountability measures. For the snowy grouper recreational sector, National Marine Fisheries Service will annually announce the recreational fishing season start and end dates in the Federal Register and by other methods, as deemed appropriate. The fishing season will start on May 1 and end

on the date National Marine Fisheries Service projects the recreational annual catch limit will be met.

NOTE: The May 1 date used in this alternative is dependent on the current Preferred Alternative 2 of Action 3.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 16: APPROVE AMENDMENT 51 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish (SG Amendment 52)

Amendment 52 considers changes to catch levels and management measures for golden tilefish in response to the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 66) and considers changes to accountability measures for golden tilefish and blueline tilefish. The Committee reviewed a decision document and provided the following guidance:

The Committee discussed Action 3 (Action 3. Modify the fishing season for the commercial golden tilefish hook-and-line and longline components) and clarified the purpose of the proposed change:

- Action 3 responds to an industry request to delay the onset of commercial harvest of golden tilefish with longline gear to avoid oversupplying the market in the first part of January and extend the harvest into the Lenten season when prices tend to be relatively high.
- Longline endorsement holders expressed preference for a January 15 opening to improve social benefits to families at the start of the year (e.g., have some time after the holidays to prepare to begin fishing and not have to rush to be ready by January 1).
- Between 2016 and 2021 the commercial golden tilefish longline component landed the full ACL by March. Therefore, delaying the onset of fishing by two weeks would not be expected to prevent the full ACL from being caught during the remainder of the year.
- With the increase in the ACL, analyses project that the longline fishery would extend into April.
- The Council discussed the problems that would arise with changing the fishing year versus just delaying the onset of the longline commercial season for golden tilefish:
 - The commercial longline and hook-and-line commercial fishing years begin on January 1. Therefore, modifying the fishing year for one commercial component and not the other (i.e., the hook-and-line component) would complicate tracking the overall commercial ACL.

- Issues could also arise as a result of different fishing years for compilation of information prior to a stock assessment.
- In the event that harvest would one day extend beyond the end of the calendar year, the Council could make adjustments to allow fishers the opportunity to harvest the entire ACL.

MOTION 17: MOVE ACTION 6 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 6. Modify blueline tilefish recreational season.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the blueline tilefish recreational season. The current recreational season is May 1-August 31.

Alternative 2. Modify blueline tilefish recreational season to May 1 through July 30.

Alternative 3. Modify blueline tilefish recreational season to June 1 through August 31.

Alternative 4. Modify blueline tilefish recreational season to May 1 through June 30.

Alternative 5. Modify blueline tilefish recreational season to July 1 through August 31.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 18: APPROVE AMENDMENT 52 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

AP recommendations for items not on the agenda

The Snapper Grouper AP met in October 2022 and discussed additional topics pertaining to the snapper grouper fishery. The AP Chair presented the Snapper Grouper AP's recommendations to the Committee on items not covered on the Committee's agenda.

Other Business

- Add discussion of Amendment 36 Special Management Zones (SMZ) evaluation and extension to future planning and priorities.
 - Consider the timing and prioritization of this discussion relative to the expiration of the SMZs on July 31, 2027.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 19: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Continue to develop Regulatory Amendment 35 (Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper) and Amendment 53 (Gag and Black Grouper) for the Committee's consideration of approval for formal secretarial review at the March 2023 meeting.
- Conduct public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 35 (Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper) and Amendment 53 (Gag and Black Grouper) prior to the March 2023 Council meeting. Conduct public hearings for Amendment 53 via webinar. Conduct in-person and webinar public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 35.
- Prepare Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper) and Amendment 52 (Golden Tilefish Blueline Tilefish) for submission for secretarial review.
- Conduct two scoping sessions for Amendment 46 via webinar ahead of the March 2023 meeting.
- Continue developing Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting) for review at the March 2023 meeting.
- Develop a guidance document for the management strategy evaluation (MSE).
- Request Blue Matter Science provide an overview presentation of the MSE at the March 2023 meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEE COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 6-8, 2023

The Committee approved the minutes from the December 2022 meeting and the agenda for the March 2023 meeting.

Status of Amendments under formal review

NMFS SERO provided an update on progress of Snapper Grouper Amendment 50 (Red Porgy Catch Levels and Rebuilding), Snapper Grouper Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack), Snapper Grouper Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper), and Snapper Grouper 52 (Golden and Blueline Tilefish). The final rule for Amendment 50 published on December 20, 2022. Amendment 51 was formally submitted to NMFS SERO on March 2, 2023. Development of the proposed rule for Amendment 51 is in progress. Amendment 49 and Amendment 52 are pending submission by the Council.

Management Strategy Evaluation for the Snapper Grouper Fishery

The Council is conducting a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to explore long-term management strategies for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. The Committee received a presentation on MSEs from Blue Matter Science. Blue Matter Science described preliminary information being included in the MSE, and discussions at the most recent Snapper Grouper AP and SSC meetings. The Committee recommended reviewing the Visioning Project and a report by Kari Buck on alternative recreational management approaches presented to the Council in March 2019 as potential sources of management approaches. The Committee provided guidance on conceptual management options and key uncertainties.

Red Snapper 2023 Recreational Season

NMFS SERO discussed information surrounding the 2023 recreational season for red snapper. Due to inclement weather during the 2022 season, catch estimates were notably lower. Discussions of whether and how these catch estimates should be used in determining the length of the 2023 recreational season are ongoing, and the season will be announced at a later date. Due to the expected timing of Regulatory Amendment 35 implementation, the 2023 season is being developed based on current red snapper catch levels rather than those considered in Regulatory Amendment 35.

Release Mortality Reduction & Red Snapper (SG Reg Amendment 35)

Regulatory Amendment 35 considers revisions to South Atlantic red snapper catch levels following the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 73) and gear changes intended to reduce dead discards throughout the snapper grouper fishery. Seven public hearings were held in January 2023 (6 in-person and 1 via webinar).

Staff presented the draft amendment, including a summary of public comment and draft rationale for each action. NMFS SERO discussed potential recreational opportunities for exempted fishing permits for red snapper. NMFS is developing a request for EFP proposals that will be

focused on reducing discards of red snapper and testing of potential management strategies. A separate path for experimental commercial fishing opportunities is being developed through internal funding.

The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE REVISED LANGUAGE FOR PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 2.

Action 1. Reduce the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and sector annual catch limits, and establish an annual optimum yield for South Atlantic red snapper

Preferred Alternative 2. Reduce the red snapper acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Reduce the total annual catch limit and establish an annual optimum yield for red snapper and set them equal to the recommended acceptable biological catch. Reduce the sector annual catch limits according to the revised total annual catch limit, current allocation method, and average weight estimates from the most recent stock assessment. Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone during the commercial and recreational fishing seasons. The 2027 total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield would remain in place until modified.

Fishing Year	ABC (numbers of fish)	Annual OY=Total ACL (numbers of fish)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL (numbers of fish)
2023	28,000	28,000	77,016	19,119
2024	31,000	31,000	85,268	21,167
2025	33,000	33,000	90,769	22,533
2026	35,000	35,000	96,270	23,899
2027+	36,000	36,000	99,021	24,581

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 2: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 2.

Action 2. Prohibit the use of more than one hook per line for the snapper grouper recreational sector

Alternative 2. The recreational sector is required to use one non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hook per line when fishing for South Atlantic snapper grouper species with hook-and-line gear and natural baits north of 28° N latitude, and no more than one hook per line may be used. The recreational sector is required to use one non-stainless steel hook per line when fishing for South Atlantic snapper grouper species with hook-and-line gear and natural baits south of 28° N latitude, and no more than one hook per line may be used.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 3: DIRECT NOAA FISHERIES TO PRESENT DATA ON THE SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF SG CATCH, BY SECTOR, IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 4: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 35 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Staff updated the Council on the Best Fishing Practice outreach expansion, notably the hire of Ashley Oliver as the Best Fishing Practices Outreach Specialist. Staff also updated the Council on progression of the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program. Additional funding from Public Law 117-328 has been made available for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to better understand discard rates and mortality in the snapper grouper fishery. The Council will develop guidance for this spending during Full Council.

Private Recreational Permitting (SG Amendment 46)

Amendment 46 considers establishing a private recreational permit and education component for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. In recent meetings, the Committee has received input and technical guidance from the Private Recreational Reporting Working Group, Joint Council Workgroup on Section 102 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act, and the Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel (AP). After reviewing this input, the Committee initiated development of the amendment and approved it for scoping at the December 2022 meeting. Scoping took place in January and February 2023, with webinars on January 30th and February 6th accompanied by a scoping comment period that ended February 10th. Council staff reviewed scoping comments that were received and a decision document for the amendment. The Committee held a discussion on potential permitting, education, and future reporting requirements and provided the following guidance:

- Continue development of actions that would establish a private recreational permit and education component.

The Committee also edited the purpose and need to read:

- The *purpose* is to develop a recreational permitting system that would better identify the universe of private anglers or vessels targeting South Atlantic snapper grouper species and would enhance the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data. Also work to promote best recreational fishing practices through education.
- The *need* for the amendment is to improve education on best fishing practices and the quality of effort and catch data for the private component of the recreational sector that targets South Atlantic snapper grouper species, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Restructure permit-related actions to separately cover permit type, species, and fishing location.
 - Additional options for other species, including SRFS + assessed species and deepwater species options.
- Restructure education component-related actions to separately cover establishing an education component, mandatory vs. voluntary measures, and the timing of implementation.
- Request that the Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical AP Chair or other appropriate AP member be available during Committee discussion of the amendment at future meetings.
- Examine whether the National Saltwater Angler Registry exemption for states or a similar framework could apply to a federal permit requirement.
 - Would this process need to be specified in the amendment?
 - State education and permitting requirements would need to be equivalent to federal requirements.
- Provide feedback and estimate of administrative cost for developing a private recreational permitting program. Including the options to secure funding to support the program.
- Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical AP topics:
 - Review and provide feedback and recommendations on actions and alternatives in the amendment.
 - Provide recommendations on species that should be covered by a permit.
 - Other?

Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Assessment Results (SEDAR 68)

SEFSC staff presented the results of the SEDAR 68 stock assessment for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. Staff provided an overview of management changes that are needed to incorporate the results from SEDAR 68 into management. This was followed by a [Fishery Overview](#) that includes information on the management history, fishery performance report developed by the Snapper Grouper AP, and descriptive graphs of the fishery.

MOTION 5: INITIATE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO SEDAR 68 TO MODIFY MANAGEMENT OF SCAMP AND YELLOWMOUTH GROUPEr APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Gag and Black Grouper (SG Amendment 53)

Amendment 53 considers establishing a rebuilding plan and changing catch levels for gag in response to the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 71) and proposes management measure modifications for gag and black grouper. Public hearings were held January 10th and 11th. The Committee reviewed public hearing comments and a decision document. The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 6: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED, AS MODIFIED.

The *purpose* of this fishery management plan amendment is to establish a rebuilding plan, and revise the acceptable biological catch, annual catch limits and sector allocations for South Atlantic gag based on the results of the most recent stock assessment. This plan amendment

would also make modifications to management measures for South Atlantic gag and black grouper and recreational accountability measures for South Atlantic gag.

The *need* for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic gag, rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The Regional Administrator stated that NMFS’ review of the amendment suggested that the probability of rebuilding under the Council’s preferred alternative for Action 1 (rebuilding timeframe) might be below 70% and suggested the Council consider including a buffer between the ABC and ACL under Action 2 to account for discards.

Rounding Clarification

A rounding error was found within Action 3. Sector ACLs were corrected for the highlighted years. Changes were limited to a single pound to ensure the sector ACLs combined equaled the total ACL. The codified text will be updated accordingly.

Action 3. Revise the gag sector allocations and sector annual catch limits

Preferred Alternative 4. Commercial and recreational allocation percentages would change each year from 2023 to 2032 (where they would remain in place until modified) based on:

Preferred Sub-Alternative 4b. Total average commercial and recreational landings from 2015-2019 (5-year average).

Year	Total ACL (lbs gw)	Commercial ACL (lbs gw)	Commercial Allocation %	Recreational ACL (lbs gw)	Recreational Allocation %
2023	175,632	85,326	49%	90,306	51%
2024	261,171	128,096	49%	133,075	51%
2025	348,352	171,687	49%	176,666/176,665	51%
2026	435,081	215,051	49%	220,030	51%
2027	524,625	259,823	50%	264,802	50%
2028	617,778	306,400	50%	311,379/311,378	50%
2029	711,419	353,220	50%	358,199	50%
2030	800,088	397,555	50%	402,534/402,533	50%
2031	879,758	437,390	50%	442,369/442,368	50%
2032	948,911	471,966	50%	476,945	50%

*Numbers highlighted were shifted a single pound to make sure rounding = total ACL. Exact changes will be made to the codified text.

MOTION 7: APPROVE ALL ACTIONS AS MODIFIED IN SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 53

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 8: APPROVE AMENDMENT 53 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Wreckfish (SG Amendment 48)

A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, particularly with respect to confidentiality issues and related constraints; moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and economic data collection. At their September 2022 meeting the Council selected preferred alternatives and approved the amendment for public hearings during the March 2023 meeting. Staff presented a decision document and a draft amendment for the Committee to discuss, and NMFS staff provided a presentation on cost recovery in ITQ fisheries.

The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 9: CHANGE THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE UNDER SUB-ACTION 7-2 TO ALTERNATIVE 4

Sub-Action 7-2. Collection of wreckfish individual transferable quota program cost recovery fees.

Alternative 4. Fees will be collected in the last quarter of the calendar year in which the fish is harvested.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF: HAVE THE AGENCY PRESENT INFORMATION IN SEPTEMBER 2023 ABOUT ENFORCEMENT OF COST RECOVERY FEE NON-PAYMENT.

MOTION 10: CHANGE THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE UNDER SUB-ACTION 7-3 TO ALTERNATIVE 2.

Sub-Action 7-3. Frequency of wreckfish individual transferable quota program cost recovery fee submission.

Alternative 2. Cost recovery fee will be submitted once per year.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF: BRING MORE INFORMATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN OF ACTUAL VS. STANDARD EX-VESSEL PRICE ON THE AGENCY AND MORE INFORMATION ADDRESSING STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS ABOUT ACTUAL

EX-VESSEL VALUE AS REPORTED BY THE FISHERMEN, INCLUDING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER ITQ PROGRAMS.

MOTION 11: REMOVE ACTION 5 AND SEND TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.

Action 5. Require all commercial vessels with a South Atlantic Unlimited Snapper-Grouper Permit participating in the wreckfish portion of the snapper grouper fishery to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Commercial vessels with a South Atlantic Unlimited Snapper-Grouper Permit are not required to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems when participating in the wreckfish portion of the snapper grouper fishery.

Alternative 2. Require all commercial vessels with a South Atlantic Unlimited Snapper-Grouper Permit participating in the wreckfish portion of the snapper grouper fishery to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 12: DIRECT STAFF TO INCLUDE A HAIL-IN/HAIL-OUT PROVISION AND BRING THAT BACK TO THE JUNE 2023 COUNCIL MEETING.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF: BRING THE OFFLOADING SITE AND TIME REQUIREMENT ACTION(S) TO THE JUNE 2023 MEETING FOR DISCUSSION. INCLUDE INFORMATION ON WHY THESE OFFLOADING SITE AND TIME REQUIREMENTS WERE ORIGINALLY INCLUDED IN THE FISHERY. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY ISSUES/PROBLEMS THAT NEED TO BE SOLVED?

Approve Topics for Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

The Snapper Grouper AP is scheduled to convene on April 25-27, 2023. Below is a list of proposed topics to develop the AP's agenda:

- Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report Update
- Management Strategy Evaluation Update and Discussion
 - A scoping session will be conducted in the evening on one of the AP meeting dates.
- Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Fishery Overview
- Amendment 46 (Recreational Permitting)
- Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper)
- Amendment 48 (Wreckfish)
- Review Research Recommendations
- Effects of Space Launches on Fishing Activities
- Amendment Updates: Regulatory Amendment 35 (Red Snapper and Release Mortality Reduction), Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper), Amendment 52 (Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish), Amendment 53 (Gag Grouper)
- Other Updates: Citizen Science, SEDAR, Climate Change Scenario Planning, Reef Fish Fellowship, SERFS

Other Business

1. The Committee also discussed timing of Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper).
2. The Committee requested future presentations and discussions by the Council and SSC about regime shift evaluation and development and interpretation of catch projections.
3. The Committee discussed the challenges with the gag grouper stock and requested a potential future presentation on Gulf gag grouper life history research from FWRI and NMFS.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 13: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Develop a guidance document or road map for the development of the Management Strategy Evaluation.
- Finalize and submit Regulatory Amendment 35 (Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper) and Amendment 53 (Gag and Black Grouper) for formal secretarial review.
- Continue developing Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting) for review at the June 2023 meeting.
 - Convene Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical AP to review and provide recommendations on actions and alternatives in the amendment (either before the June or September 2023 Council meetings).
- Begin development of a plan amendment to adjust catch levels for scamp and yellowmouth grouper based on SEDAR 68.
- Continue developing Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) for final action at the September 2023 meeting but review actions pertaining to offloading site and times requirements at the June 2023 meeting.
- Per request from the Gulf Council, try and move Yellowtail Snapper Amendment as fast as possible before the data are too old again.
- Request the SSC initiate discussion (or form a workgroup) of how regime shifts might affect the snapper grouper fishery and discuss with the Council.
 - Have Council staff brief the Council on how regime shifts could affect fisheries management.
 - Investigate what is allowed and not allowed in the MSA.
- Schedule presentation from SERO on gag management in the Gulf and Sue Barbieri research on gag life history. – schedule for *after* Gulf’s SSC presentation in summer 2023.
- Request a presentation from the SEFSC on the handling of discards and landings in assessment projections be provided to the SSC.
 - Review how projections have been prepared in the past and address the recommendation that estimated discards will be tied to management action in future projections.
 - Address how this could impact the development of management actions, sector allocations, and ACLs in future amendments.

- Include discussion of how to communicate better between Science Center, SSC, and Council to coordinate planned management actions with projection assumptions.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL