



## Update on Snapper Grouper Amendments

April 2023

### *Amendment 50 (Red Porgy)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 60). Red porgy are overfished and overfishing is occurring. The Council is required to establish a rebuilding plan by June 2022 and adjust catch levels and management measures to end overfishing.

**Action Summary:** establish a rebuilding plan, revise annual catch limits (ACL), sector allocations, management measures for the commercial and recreational sectors, and accountability measures (AM) for the recreational sector.

**Key Events:**

- December 7, 2022: NMFS approval letter received.
- December 20, 2022: Final Rule published.
- January 19, 2023: Regulations effective.

### *Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 59). Greater amberjack are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

**Action Summary:** Adopt recommended ABC, adjust total ACL and annual OY, sector allocations (and sector ACLs), consider modifications to minimum size limits, seasonal commercial trip limits, and the April spawning closure, and remove recreational ACT for species managed under the Snapper Grouper FMP. Final actions described in [October 2022 Snapper Grouper AP Amendment Update](#).

**Key Events:**

- April 5, 2023: Amendment submitted.

### *Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 36 Update). Snowy grouper are overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council is required to adjust catch levels and management measures to end overfishing.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Approved for submission
- March 2, 2023: Amendment submitted

**Summary of Actions**

**Action 1: Revise the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for snowy grouper**

**Preferred Alternative 2:** ABC=SSC’s recommendation based on SEDAR 36 Update;  
Total ACL=Annual OY=ABC.

Year	ABC (lbs gw)	ACL (lbs gw)	Annual OY (lbs gw)
2023	119,654	119,654	119,654
2024	121,272	121,272	121,272
2025	122,889	122,889	122,889
2026	122,889	122,889	122,889

**Action 2: Revise the snowy grouper sector allocations and sector annual catch limits**

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Commercial allocation: 87.55% of total ACL; Recreational allocation: 12.45% of total ACL.

Year	Total ACL (lbs gw)	Total Commercial ACL (lbs gw) 87.55%	Season 1 (70%)	Season 2 (30%)
2023	119,654	104,757	73,330	31,427
2024	121,272	106,174	74,322	31,852
2025	122,889	107,589	75,312	32,277
2026+	122,889	107,589	75,312	32,277

Year	Total ACL (numbers of fish)	Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) Error! Bookmark not defined. 12.45%
2023	15,264	1,668
2024	15,264	1,691
2025	15,264	1,713
2026+	15,264	1,713

**Action 3: Modify the snowy grouper recreational season**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** May 1 – June 30.

**Action 4: Modify snowy grouper recreational accountability measures**

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Remove the current recreational in-season AM. If recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, reduce the length of the following year’s recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded in the following year. However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that it is not necessary.

*Amendment 52 (Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment for golden tilefish (SEDAR 66). Golden tilefish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The amendment would also respond to increased recreational effort on blueline tilefish.

**Action Summary:** Adjust catch levels and sector allocations for golden tilefish, consider modifications to commercial seasons (longline and hook-and-line) and accountability measures. Adjust the recreational bag limit for blueline tilefish and modify recreational accountability measures.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Approved for submission.

**Action 1: Revise the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** ABC=SSC’s recommendation based on SEDAR 66; Total ACL=Annual OY=ABC.

Year	ABC (lbs gw)	Annual OY (lbs gw)	Total ACL (lbs gw)
2023	435,000	435,000	435,000
2024	448,000	448,000	448,000
2025	458,000	458,000	458,000
2026+	466,000	466,000	466,000

**Action 2: Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Commercial allocation: 96.70% of total ACL; Recreational allocation: 3.30% of total ACL. Within the commercial sector, hook and line (HL) component allocation: 25%; longline (LL) component allocation: 75%.

Year	Total ACL=ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (96.7% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3.3% of Total ACL)
		Total	HL (25%)	LL (75%)	
2023	435,000	420,645	105,161	315,484	2,559
2024	448,000	433,216	108,304	324,912	2,635
2025	458,000	442,886	110,722	332,165	2,694
2026+	466,000	450,622	112,656	337,967	2,741

**Action 3. Modify the fishing season for the commercial golden tilefish hook and line and longline components**

**Preferred Alternative 3. Modify the fishing season for the commercial longline component.**

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 3a.** Modify the fishing season to start January 15.

**Action 4. Modify recreational accountability measures for golden tilefish**

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Remove the current recreational AM that closes the recreational sector in-season. NMFS will annually announce the length of the recreational fishing season based on catch rates from the previous season. The fishing season will start on January 1 and end on the date NMFS projects the recreational ACL will be met.

**Action 5. Modify blueline tilefish recreational bag limit**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Reduce recreational blueline tilefish bag limit to 2 fish per person per day.

**Preferred Alternative 4.** Do not allow retention of blueline tilefish by captain and crew.

**Action 6. Modify recreational accountability measures for blueline tilefish**

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Remove the current recreational AM that closes the recreational sector in-season. NMFS will annually announce the length of the recreational fishing season based on catch rates from the previous season. The fishing season will start on May 1 and end on the date NMFS projects the recreational ACL will be met.

*Amendment 53 (Gag and Black Grouper)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 71). Gag are overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council is required to establish a rebuilding plan and adjust catch levels and management measures to end overfishing.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Reviewed SG AP feedback, selected preferred alternatives
- January 10 and 11, 2023: Webinar public hearing conducted
- March 2023: Approved for submission.

**Summary of Actions**

**Action 1. Establish a rebuilding plan for gag**

**Preferred Alternative 3.** 10-year rebuilding plan from 2023-2032.

**Action 2. Revise the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for gag**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** ABC=SSC’s recommendation based on SEDAR 71; Total ACL=Annual OY=ABC.

Year	ABC (lbs gw)	Annual OY (lbs gw)	Total ACL (lbs gw)
2023	175,632	175,632	175,632
2024	261,171	261,171	261,171
2025	348,352	348,352	348,352
2026	435,081	435,081	435,081
2027	524,625	524,625	524,625
2028	617,778	617,778	617,778
2029	711,419	711,419	711,419
2030	800,088	800,088	800,088
2031	879,758	879,758	879,758
2032+	948,911	948,911	948,911

**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%	176,665	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%	311,378	50%
2029	711,419	353,220	50%	358,199	50%
2030	800,088	397,555	50%	402,533	50%
2031	879,758	437,390	50%	442,368	50%
2032*	948,911	471,966	50%	476,945	50%

**Action 4. Reduce the commercial trip limit for gag**

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Reduce the gag commercial trip limit to 300 pounds gutted weight.

**Action 5. Modify recreational management measures for gag**

**Sub-action 5a.** Establish a recreational vessel limit for gag

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

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2a:** 2 fish per vessel per day not to exceed the daily bag limit of 1 fish per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

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

**Preferred Sub-alternative 3a:** 2 fish per vessel per trip not to exceed the daily bag limit of 1 fish per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

**Sub-action 5b. Prohibit the retention of gag by captain and crew**

**Preferred 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.

**Action 6. Revise the gag recreational accountability measures**

**Preferred Alternative 4.** Retain the current recreational in-season AMs. If recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, reduce the length of the following year’s recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded in the following year. However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that it is not necessary.

**Action 7. Modify recreational management measures for black grouper**

**Sub-action 7a.** Establish a recreational vessel limit for black grouper

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

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2a.** 2 fish per vessel per day not to exceed the daily bag limit of 1 fish per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

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

**Preferred Sub-alternative 3a.** 2 fish per vessel per trip not to exceed the daily bag limit of 1 fish per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

**Sub-action 7b. Prohibit the retention of black grouper by captain and crew**

**Preferred 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.

*Regulatory Amendment 35 (Discard Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper Catch Levels)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment for Red Snapper (SEDAR 73). Red Snapper are overfished and overfishing is occurring, mainly due to the large number of Red Snapper that die after catch and release. Dead discards are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Council removed action to prohibit electric reels and approved for public hearings.

- January 2023: Public hearings (6 in person and 1 webinar)
- March 2023: Approved for submission.

**Summary of Actions**

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

**Preferred Alternative 2.** ABC=SSC’s recommendation based on SEDAR 73; Total ACL=Annual OY=ABC. Reduce the sector annual catch limits according to the revised total annual catch limit, current allocation method (Commercial: 28.07%; Recreational: 71.93%), and average weight estimates from the most recent stock assessment.

<b>Fishing Year</b>	<b>ABC (numbers of fish)</b>	<b>Annual OY=Total ACL (numbers of fish)</b>	<b>Commercial ACL (lbs ww)</b>	<b>Recreational ACL (numbers of fish)</b>
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

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

**Preferred 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.

*Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Program Modernization)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** The Council finished its second review of the Wreckfish ITQ program in September of 2019. As part of the review there were several recommendations made to modernize the program, which will be addressed in this amendment.

**Action Summary:** moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; fishing season and spawning closure; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and vessel monitoring system requirements.

**Key Events:**

- March 2023: Public hearings held as part of meeting public comment session, requested the addition of an action to consider hail-in and hail-out requirements.
- April 2023: SG AP input.

*Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Address deficiencies in recreational data through the creation of a permit requirement for private recreational vessels or anglers. Additionally, consider

establishing an education component to encourage best fishing practices and reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery.

**Action Summary:** This amendment will investigate establishing a permit and education requirement for anglers to participate in the recreational snapper grouper fishery.

**Key Events:**

- November 2022: AP convened
- December 2022: Removed consideration of reporting requirement, included consideration of an education component, and approved for scoping.
- Jan/Feb 2023: Scoping hearings (Jan 30 and Feb 6 via webinar)
- March 2023: Reviewed scoping comments.

*Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/ Reef Fish Amendment 55 (Yellowtail Snapper)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 64). Yellowtail snapper are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

**Action Summary:** adopt recommended ABC, adjust jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils, adjust ACLs, and sector allocations (SA only).

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Direction to resume work on the amendment in June 2023.

*Amendment 55 (Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 68).

**Action Summary:** Establish a scamp/yellowmouth grouper complex, remove yellowmouth grouper from the shallow water grouper (SWG) complex, establish catch levels and sector allocations for the new complex, adjust catch levels and sector allocations for the SWG complex.

**Key Events:**

- March 2023: Overview of the assessment and direction to staff to begin work on a plan amendment

*Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment*

**Purpose of Amendment:** To modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the MSA and revise how uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs.

**Action Summary:** modify the ABC Control Rule, including specification of scientific uncertainty and management risk components, application of the Control Rule to rebuilding stocks, criteria and procedures for phase-in of ABC changes, criteria and procedures for carry-over of unused portions of the annual catch limit, and establishment a framework procedure to allow carry-overs.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: Approved for submission.



## **Summary of Actions**

### **Action 1. Modify the acceptable biological catch control rule**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Revise ABC Control Rule. The Council specifies accepted probability of overfishing (P\*) using relative stock biomass and stock risk rating. SSC determines overfishing limit and uncertainty when possible. The Council specifies stock rebuilding plans for overfished stocks.

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b.** Council can deviate, up or down, from the default P\* for a stock by up to 10%. Accepted probability of overfishing may not exceed 50%.

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 2c.** When requested by the Council, the SSC will specify the ABC for up to 5 years as both a constant value across years and as individual annual values.

### **Action 2. Allow phase-in of acceptable biological catch changes**

#### **Sub-Action 2.1. Establish criteria specifying when phase-in is allowed.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Allow phase-in of increases to ABC, as specified by the Council. Allow phase-in of decreases when a new ABC is less than:

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 2c.** 80% of the existing ABC.

#### **Sub-Action 2.2. Specify the approach for phase-in of acceptable biological catch changes.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Phase-in ABC decreases over no more than 3 years. ABC increases may be phased-in as specified by the Council.

### **Action 3. Allow carry-over of unharvested portion of the annual catch limit**

#### **Sub-Action 3.1. Establish criteria specifying circumstances when an unharvested portion of the originally specified sector annual catch limit can be carried over from one year to increase the available harvest in the immediate next year.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Allow carry-over of unharvested ACL if the stock status is known, the stock is neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing, an overfishing limit for the stock is defined,

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 2d.** Acceptable biological catch decreases are not being phased-in, and

**Preferred Sub-Alternative 2e.** There are measures that restrict annual landings to the ACL and post-season AMs that reduce the ACL in the following year according to any landings overages in place for that stock and sector (i.e. payback).

#### **Sub-Action 3.2. Specify limits on how much of the unharvested portion of a sector annual catch limit may be carried over from one year to increase the sector annual catch limit in the next year.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** The temporary ABC may not exceed the OFL. The revised total ACL may not exceed the temporary ABC or the total ACL plus the carried over amount, whichever is less. If both sectors are eligible, both the commercial and recreational sectors may use carry-over in the same year.

**Action 4. Modify framework procedures for the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Golden Crab Fishery Management Plans**

**Sub-Action 4.1. Modify Section I of the Snapper Grouper Framework Procedure to include a framework process to approve carry-overs.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Modify the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan Framework Procedure to include carry-overs.

**Sub-Action 4.2. Modify the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan Framework Procedure to include a framework process to approve carry-overs.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Modify the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan Framework Procedure to include carry-overs.

**Sub-Action 4.3. Modify the Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan Framework Procedure to include a framework process to approve carry-overs.**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Modify the Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan Framework Procedure to include carry-overs.

*Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment*

**Purpose of Amendment:** To provide the authority to allow submittal of electronic commercial logbooks.

**Action Summary:** This amendment is being developed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The amendment would modify the FMPs for South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Gulf Reef Fish to require commercial logbooks be submitted via electronic reporting forms instead of the currently used paper-based forms.

**Key Events:**

- December 2022: revised development timeline (final approval by both councils expected in June 2023)
- March 2023: SA Council approved for public hearings.