



Update on Snapper Grouper Amendments

October 2024

Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment

Purpose of Amendment: 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 modifies 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.

Development level: Under review. Amendment submitted on February 27, 2024

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; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and monitoring requirements.

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Public hearings held at the Council meeting. Approved for formal review.

Summary of Actions

Action 1. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for wreckfish.

Preferred Alternative 2. Allocate 98% of the total annual catch limit for wreckfish to the commercial sector. Allocate 2% of the total annual catch limit for wreckfish to the recreational sector.

Action 2. Implement an electronic reporting system for the wreckfish individual transferable quota (ITQ) program.

Preferred Alternative 2. Implement an electronic system of reporting for the Wreckfish ITQ program to electronically track ownership and transfers of quota shares and allocation (quota pounds), record wreckfish landings, and deduct wreckfish landings from shareholder's allocation. Replace the wreckfish logbook with the coastal fisheries logbook program.

Action 3. Modify the requirement to commercially harvest or sell wreckfish.

Preferred Alternative 3. To commercially harvest or sell wreckfish, a commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper (unlimited) must have been issued to the vessel, the permit must be on board, and the permit holder must be a wreckfish shareholder.

Action 4. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Online Shareholder Account Eligibility

Preferred Alternative 2. To be eligible to open a wreckfish individual transferable quota shareholder account, individuals must be entities who are United States citizens, permanent resident aliens, or a corporation, partnership, or other entity eligible to own or control a United States fishing vessel and hold a valid commercial snapper grouper unlimited permit.

Action 5. Requirements for Obtaining and Maintaining Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Shares in the Online System

Preferred Alternative 3. To obtain (transfer into a shareholder account) all shareholder accounts must be associated with entities who are United States citizens, permanent resident aliens, or a corporation, partnership, or other entity eligible to own or control a United States fishing vessel and hold a valid commercial snapper grouper (unlimited) permit. To maintain shares (hold existing shares in a shareholder account) an account must hold a valid or renewable commercial snapper grouper (unlimited) permit, or the shares will be reclaimed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. A shareholder account is associated with a permit if the permit has the exact same entities listed on both the shareholder account and permit.

Action 6. Share Divestment for Permit-Required Accounts

Preferred Alternative 2. Shareholder accounts must be in compliance with the requirements to maintain shares, or the National Marine Fisheries Service will reclaim all shares in a shareholder account:

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. 1 year following the effective date implementing requirements to maintain Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota shares.

Preferred Alternative 3. After implementation of this amendment, if a shareholder is no longer in compliance with the requirements to maintain shares, the shareholder(s) must divest of the account's shares, or the shares will be reclaimed by NMFS:

Preferred Sub-alternative 3a. 1 year following the end date on a shareholder's snapper grouper (unlimited) permit.

Action 7. Redistribution of reclaimed shares to remaining shareholders.

Preferred Alternative 4. Redistribute reclaimed shares to remaining shareholders based on landings history, subject to the share cap.

Preferred Sub-alternative 4b. Proportion of total wreckfish landings over the most recent three fishing years.

Action 8. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Requirements to Obtain Annual Allocation from Shares.

Preferred Alternative 3. To obtain annual allocation from shares, an account must hold active wreckfish individual transferable quota shares and be in compliance with respect to:

Preferred Sub-alternative 3a. Collection and submission of cost recovery fees.

Action 9. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Requirements to Obtain Annual Allocation through Transfer.

Preferred Alternative 2. Individual transferable quota annual allocation can be transferred only to individual transferable quota accounts holding shares. Eligible accounts must be held by individuals who are United States citizens or permanent resident aliens.

Preferred Alternative 3. Individual transferable quota annual allocation can be transferred only to accounts with an associated valid snapper grouper (unlimited) permit. Eligible accounts must be associated with individuals who are United States citizens or permanent resident aliens.

Action 10. Retaining Annual Allocation before a Commercial Annual Catch Limit Reduction

Preferred Alternative 2. Provide the Regional Administrator with the authority to withhold the amount of wreckfish annual allocation before distribution at the beginning of a year in which a commercial annual catch limit reduction is expected to occur. Withheld wreckfish annual allocation will be distributed to shareholders if the effective date of the final rule implementing the quota reduction has not occurred by:

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. June 1.

Action 11. Modify the fishing year for wreckfish.

Preferred Alternative 2. The fishing year for wreckfish begins on January 1 and ends on December 31.

Action 12. Pre-landing Notification Requirement for Commercial Vessels Participating in the Wreckfish Component of the Snapper Grouper Fishery.

Preferred Alternative 2. The owner or operator of a commercial snapper grouper unlimited permitted vessel participating in the wreckfish component of the snapper grouper fishery is responsible for ensuring that the National Marine Fisheries Service is contacted at least three hours, but no more than 24 hours, in advance of landing using a National Marine Fisheries Service approved method. When providing advance notice of landing, they must include the expected date and time of landing, the pre-approved landing location, the estimated weight of wreckfish on-board the vessel, the dealer where the wreckfish are to be received, and the identity of the shareholder and vessel.

Action 13. Modify offloading site requirements and establish approved landing locations for wreckfish.

Preferred Alternative 2. Remove the offloading site requirements for wreckfish. Individual transferable quota wreckfish must be landed at an approved landing location. Landing locations must be approved by NMFS Office for Law Enforcement prior to a vessel landing individual transferable wreckfish at these sites. Landing locations must be publicly accessible via freely traversable roads or navigable waters and no other condition may impede free and immediate access to the site by an authorized law enforcement officer.

Action 14. Modify offloading time requirements for wreckfish.

Preferred Alternative 2. Wreckfish may only be offloaded between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., local time.

Action 15. Implement a cost recovery plan and associated conditions for the wreckfish individual transferable quota program.

Sub-Action 15-1. Implement a cost recovery plan for the wreckfish individual transferable quota program.

Preferred Alternative 2. Implement an individual transferable quota cost recovery plan. The transferable quota shareholder landing wreckfish would be responsible for collection and submission of the cost recovery fee to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Sub-Action 15-2. Collection of wreckfish individual transferable quota program cost recovery fees.

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

Sub-Action 15-3. Frequency of wreckfish individual transferable quota program cost recovery fee submission.

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

Sub-Action 15-4. Determination of wreckfish individual transferable quota program cost recovery fees.

Preferred Alternative 2. The cost recovery fee will be based on actual ex-vessel value of the wreckfish landings.

Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permit and Education Requirement)

Purpose of the Amendment: Address deficiencies in recreational data through the creation of a permit requirement for private recreational vessels or anglers. Additionally, considers establishing a required education component to encourage best fishing practices that help reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery.

Action Summary: This amendment considers establishing a permit and education requirement for anglers or vessels to participate in the private recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery.

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Reviewed feedback from APs. Directed staff that the next discussion of the amendment would take place at the December 2024 meeting. At the September 2024 meeting, hold a discussion on MRIP revisioning and improvements.

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.

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Reviewed an updated decision document and decision tool for recreational management measure actions, selected the remaining preferreds and approved for public hearings.
- August 2024: hearings held on the 13th and 14th via webinar.
- September 2024: Approved for submission.

Summary of Actions

Action 1. Reorganize the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex and establish a new South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 2. (Reorganize the complex and create a new scamp/yellowmouth grouper complex) Remove yellowmouth grouper from the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex and establish a new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex. The reorganized Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex would contain rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, and yellowfin grouper.

Action 2. Establish the maximum sustainable yield, maximum fishing mortality threshold, minimum stock size threshold, and optimum yield for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Sub-Action 2a. (MSY) Establish the maximum sustainable yield for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Preferred Alternative 3. ($MSY = F_{40\%SPR}$) Establish the maximum sustainable yield proxy as the yield when fishing at the fishing mortality rate that produces a spawning potential ratio of 40% for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Sub-Action 2b. (MFMT) Establish the maximum fishing mortality threshold for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Preferred Alternative 3. ($MFMT = F_{40\%SPR}$) Establish the maximum fishing mortality threshold equal to the fishing mortality rate that produces a spawning potential ratio of 40% for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Sub-Action 2c. (MSST) Establish the minimum stock size threshold for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Preferred Alternative 3. ($MSST = 75\%$ of $SSB_{F_{40\%SPR}}$) Establish the minimum stock size threshold equal to 75% of the spawning stock biomass at a fishing mortality rate of 40% of spawning potential ratio.

Sub-Action 2d. (OY) Establish the optimum yield for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Preferred Alternative 3. ($OY = 95\%$ of MSY) Establish an optimum yield of 95% of maximum sustainable yield for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Action 3. Establish a rebuilding timeframe for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 3. Establish a rebuilding timeframe equal to T_{max} . This would equal 10 years with the rebuilding period ending in 2035. 2025 would be Year 1.

Action 4. Establish the acceptable biological catch and total annual catch limit for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 3. ($ACL = ABC$)

Establish the acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Establish the total annual catch limit for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex and set it equal to the recommended acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey.

Action 5. Establish sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 2. (Split Reduction Method based on 2018-2022)

Commercial and recreational allocation percentages and sector annual catch limits would change each year from 2025-2029, where they would remain in place until modified, based on the total average commercial and recreational landings of scamp and yellowmouth grouper from 2018 through 2022.

Action 6. Modify the recreational bag limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper

Preferred Alternative 3. Establish an aggregate complex bag limit of 1 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per person per day within the 3 fish grouper and tilefish combined aggregate.

Action 7. Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper

Preferred Alternative 3. Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 300 pounds gutted weight.

Action 8. Establish commercial accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 3. (In-season AM, uncoupled post-season ACL payback AM) If commercial landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex reach or are projected to reach the complex commercial annual catch limit, commercial harvest of scamp and yellowmouth grouper is closed for the remainder of the fishing year.

If commercial landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex exceed the complex commercial annual catch limit, regardless of stock status or whether the total annual catch limit was exceeded, the complex commercial annual catch limit for the following fishing year will be reduced by the amount of the complex commercial annual catch limit overage in the prior fishing year.

Action 9. Establish recreational accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 5. (No in-season AM, uncoupled post-season season reduction AM) If recreational landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex exceed the complex recreational annual catch limit, the length of the following year's recreational fishing season for the complex will be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational annual catch limit for the complex from being exceeded in the following year, regardless of stock status.

Action 10. Revise the total annual catch limit and sector annual catch limits for the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex

Preferred Alternative 2. (No modifications to OSASWG ABC, remove 4,039 lbs allocated for YM grouper from the ACL, reduce sector ACLs proportionally, retaining CHTS units across the board) The acceptable biological catch for the updated Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex (contains rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, and yellowfin grouper, and excludes yellowmouth grouper) is 104,190 pounds whole weight.

The total annual catch limit for the updated Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex is 100,151 pounds whole weight and is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Coastal Household Telephone Survey. The commercial annual catch limit is 53,380 pounds whole weight and the recreational annual catch limit is 46,771 pounds whole weight.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag and Black Grouper; On-Demand Gear)

Purpose of Amendment: Revise recreational vessel limits for gag and black grouper and specify requirements for on-demand black sea bass pots while transiting through closed areas

Action Summary: Revise the recreational vessel limits for gag and black grouper to be an aggregate bag limit including both species. Revise transit requirements for on-demand black sea bass pots.

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Approved for public hearings.
- July/August 2024: Public hearings held on July 31 and Aug 1.
- September 2024: Approved for submission.

Summary of Actions

Action 1. Revise Recreational Vessel Limits for Gag and Black Grouper

Preferred Alternative 2. Remove the single species recreational private vessel limits for gag and black grouper. Establish an aggregate **private recreational vessel limit** of two gag or black grouper per vessel per day, not to exceed the daily bag limit of one gag or black grouper per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

Preferred Alternative 3. Remove the single species recreational for-hire vessel limits for gag and black grouper. Establish an aggregate **for-hire (charter and headboat) recreational vessel limit** of two gag or black grouper per vessel per trip, not to exceed the daily bag limit of one gag or black grouper per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

Action 2. Revise Transit Stowage Requirements for Black Sea Bass Pots With On-Demand Gear

Preferred Alternative 2. Transit through a marine protected area (MPA) or spawning special management zone (SMZ) with a black sea bass pot on board is allowed with fishing gear appropriately stowed. Transit means direct, non-stop progression through the MPA or spawning SMZ. Fishing gear appropriately stowed means on-demand black sea bass pots are not baited but may have buoys connected to the gear.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass)

Purpose of Amendment: Respond to most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 76).

Action Summary: Revise catch levels and status determination criteria, consider revision of sector allocations, other black sea bass management measures.

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Approved for scoping. Directed staff to conduct scoping webinars after the September 2024 Council meeting. Council requested additional projections and SSC

consideration of alternative ABC and OFL levels that account for management changes in addition to lowering the annual catch limits, such as changes to minimum size limits or closed seasons.

- August 2024: SSC provided additional direction on the projections and corresponding assumptions to the assessment analysts.
- September 2024: Council directed staff to:
 - Explore federal snapper grouper recreational trip data to determine whether past closures of black sea bass or other snapper grouper species provide insight as to whether changes in recreational catch (landings and releases) or trips could be expected if a January-April recreational black sea bass retention closure were to be implemented.
 - Coordinate with the SEFSC to discuss how expected effort changes can be incorporated into the applicable catch projections.
 - Work further with the SSC and Science Center to develop a method to allocate projected removals and subtract discards of black sea bass for presentation at the December 2024 Council meeting.
 - Conduct scoping after the December 2024 Council meeting.

Comprehensive Recreational For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment

Purpose of Amendment: To establish limited entry for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries.

Action Summary: TBD

Recent Key Events:

- March 2024: Reviewed a discussion document on the existing control date for the for-hire fishery, previous consideration of limited entry in the snapper grouper for-hire fishery, and permit information through 2020.
- June 2024: Paused development until permits data are available.

Comprehensive SEFHIER Improvement Amendment

Purpose of Amendment: To improve compliance with SEFHIER reporting requirements

Action Summary: TBD

Recent Key Events:

- June 2024: Direction to initiate amendment to improve the SEFHIER program in the South Atlantic.
- September 2024:
 - Appointed some members to the For-Hire reporting AP. Additional appointments will occur in December 2024.
 - Revised Purpose and Need statement to include economic data.
 - Reviewed draft list of actions and requested additional information from SERO to be presented at the December 2024 meeting.