

# Snapper Grouper Recreational Vessel Limits for Headboats

## Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Discussion Document

March 2024

In March 2024, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) received public comments requesting reconsideration of how recreational vessel limits are applied to headboats. Recreational vessel limits are not widely used in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. However, these limits have been considered and implemented for several species in recent years, in response to overfished statuses for species that already had low per person recreational bag limits. Snapper grouper stocks with recreational vessel limits, or for which recreational vessel limits are currently under consideration, are shown in Table 1. The Council also considered vessel limits for charter vessels and headboats but removed alternatives from further consideration prior to final approval citing concerns over potentially creating complications for headboats to manage their take amidst significant reductions in harvest. Analyses included in recent and ongoing amendments considering implementation of recreational vessel limits are shown in Figures 1-3.

Headboats typically carry a larger number of passengers than private recreational or charter vessels, which are licensed to carry up to 6 passengers. In response to public comment and recent considerations of recreational vessel limits, the Council requested the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) comment on the risks and benefits associated with recreational vessel limits and potential alternative ways to apply this management strategy.

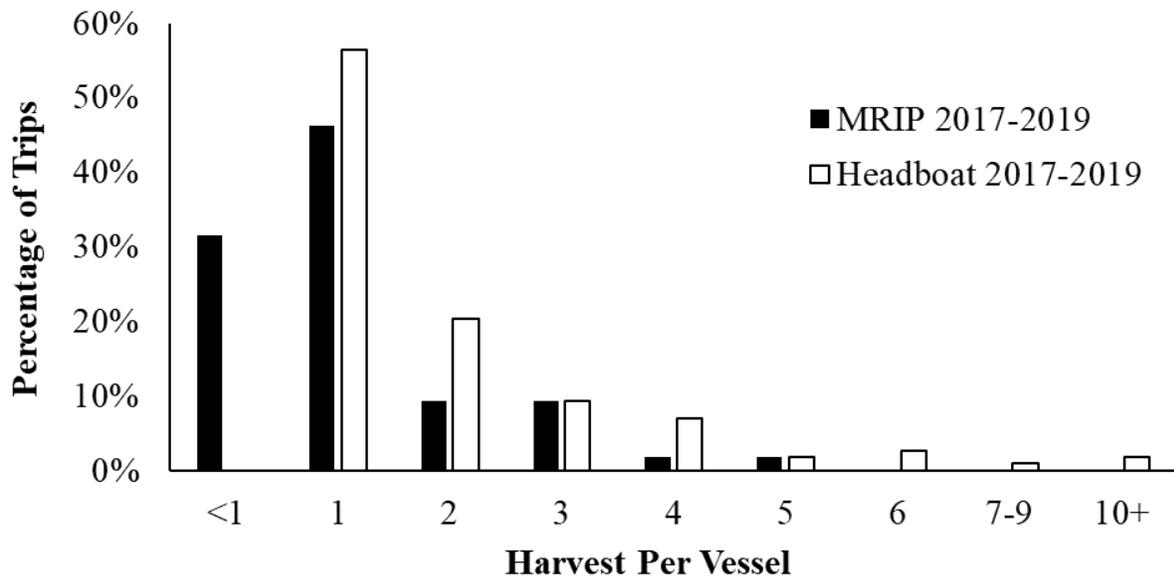
**Table 1.** Retention limits for South Atlantic snapper grouper stocks that have recreational vessel limits or for which recreational vessel limits are being considered.

Species	Bag limit	Vessel Limit	Additional info
Black Grouper	aggregate: 3/p/d bag: 1/p/d no retention by captain and crew (for-hire)	Private Rec: 2/v/day For-Hire (CH and HB): 2/v/trip *Aggregate limit with gag under consideration in SG Reg Am 36 <sup>1</sup>	no more than 1 black or gag/p/d within the aggregate; more restrictive limit applies

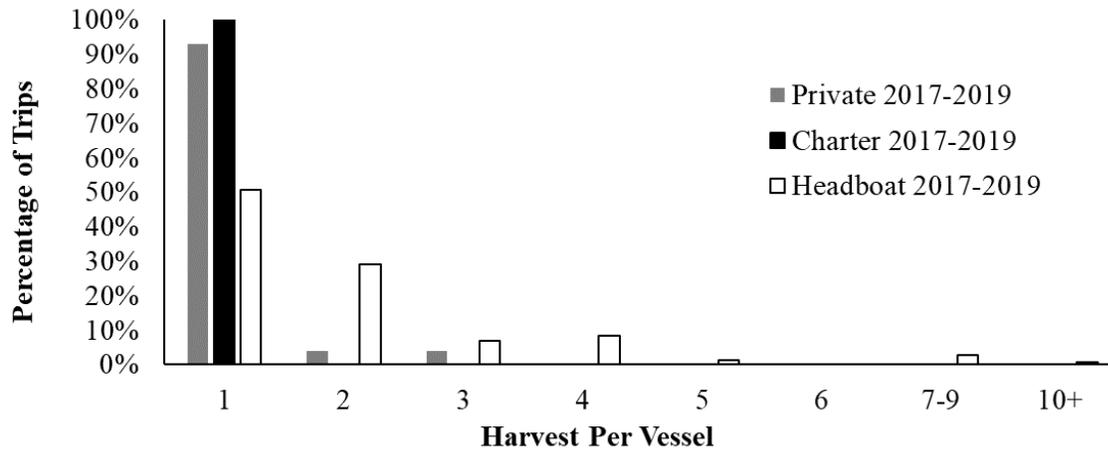
Species	Bag limit	Vessel Limit	Additional info
Gag	aggregate: 3/p/d bag: 1/p/d no retention by captain and crew (for-hire)	Private Rec: 2/v/day For-Hire (CH and HB): 2/v/trip *Aggregate limit with black grouper under consideration in SG Reg Am 36 <sup>1</sup>	no more than 1 black or gag/p/d within the aggregate; more restrictive limit applies
Scamp	aggregate: 3/p/d bag: 3/p/d	*Aggregate limit with yellowmouth grouper under consideration in SG Am 55 <sup>1</sup>	
Snowy Grouper	aggregate: 3/p/d 1/p/d	1/v/d	More restrictive limit applies
Wreckfish	1/p/d/	1/v/d	More restrictive limit applies
Yellowmouth Grouper	aggregate: 3/p/d bag: 3/p/d	*Aggregate limit with scamp under consideration in SG Am 55 <sup>1</sup>	

<sup>1</sup>In March 2024, the Council discussed setting equal vessel limits for the proposed gag-black grouper aggregate and scamp-yellowmouth grouper aggregate.

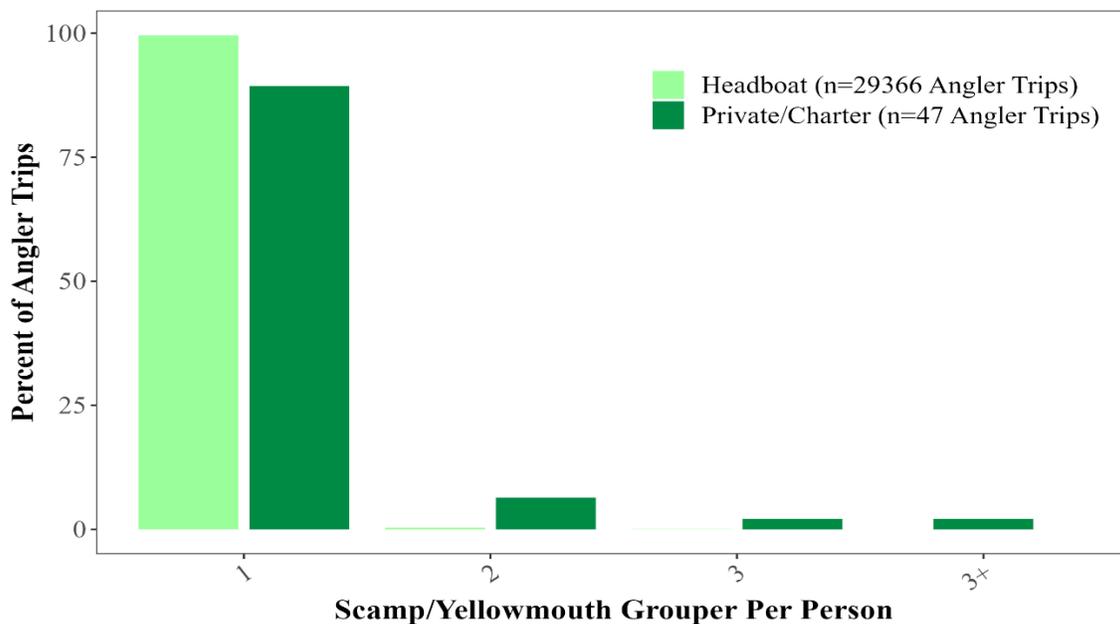
***Recreational Vessel Limit Analysis Figures from Recent Amendments***



**Figure 1.** Distribution of South Atlantic gag harvested per vessel trip from the two recreational datasets: MRIP FES (n = 54 trips), and headboat (n= 897 trips). (Snapper Grouper [SG] Amendment 53, 2023)



**Figure 2.** Distribution of South Atlantic black grouper harvested per vessel trip from the two recreational datasets: MRIP FES (n = 27 private trips and 9 charter trips), and SRHS (n= 144 headboat trips). (SG Amendment 53, 2023)



**Figure 3.** Distribution of scamp and yellowmouth grouper angler harvest from dockside intercept and headboat logbook data from 2018-2022, by recreational fleet. \*adjusted for MRIP grouped catch\* (SG Amendment 55, in progress)

**AP Action:**

Comment on recreational vessel limit application to headboats. Comment on risks and benefits for using this type of management strategy and, if possible, recommend a method in which they should be applied.