



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Amendment 55

Re-organization of complexes, Rebuilding Schedule, Catch Level and Allocation Establishment for South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper, and Catch Level Modification for the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex

Discussion Document, March 2024

Background

- The South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex (SASWG) includes: gag, scamp, red grouper, black grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney, yellowmouth grouper, and yellowfin grouper. Under this complex, all species are subject to an annual spawning season closure.
- Gag, scamp, red grouper, and black grouper have individual catch levels and accountability measures.
- Red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney, yellowmouth grouper, and yellowfin grouper have a single catch level and accountability measure and are referred to as the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Groupers (OSASWG).
- SEDAR 68 Operational Assessment [OA] (2022) assessed scamp and yellowmouth grouper together due to identification issues between the species. The assessment indicated that the stock is overfished but not experiencing overfishing. The catch level recommendations based on this assessment are for both species, therefore the amendment needs to accomplish the following:

- Remove yellowmouth grouper from the OSASWG complex.
- Establish a new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.
- For the new complex, stock determination criteria, catch levels, allocations, accountability measures, and any management measures the Council see fit, need to be established.
- Modify the OSASWG ACL to remove the portion that was allotted for yellowmouth grouper, since this poundage will now be accounted for in the catch level of the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex.

Acceptable Biological Catch

Acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex for 2025 through 2029 (**Table 1**) were based on Scenario 7 ([SEDAR 68 Follow-Up Analysis Presentation, April SSC, Table 6](#)), which is $F=75\%$ $F_{40\%}$ SPR using the **recent low recruitment**. Landings and discards were combined since discards were a minor component. The ABC is provided in total removals. The Council typically sets ACLs in landings. Total removals comprise 95% landings and 5% dead discards (see Appendix D.1.2 of the draft amendment for methodology).

Table 1. OFL and ABC recommendations from the SSC (April 2023) in response to SEDAR 68 (2022). ABCs are based on projections at $F=75\%$ $F_{40\%}$ with recent average (low) recruitment. Total removals include landings plus dead discards.

OFL RECOMMENDATIONS		
Year	Total Removals (lbs ww)	
2025	97,000	
2026	119,000	
2027	171,000	
2028	227,000	
2029	270,000	
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS		
Year	Total Removals (lbs ww)	Total Removals (numbers)
2025	71,000	12,000
2026	76,000	12,000
2027	79,000	13,000
2028	82,000	13,000
2029	84,000	14,000
Year	Landings (lbs ww)	Dead Discards (lbs ww)
2025	67,450	3,550
2026	72,200	3,800
2027	75,050	3,950
2028	77,900	4,100
2029	79,800	4,200

Objectives for this AP Meeting (March 2024)

- Review actions, alternatives, and Council's selected preferreds
- Review analysis where provided
- Provide guidance to the Council for the June 2024 meeting.

Tentative Amendment Timing

✓ June 2023	Review decision document and approve for scoping
✓ Summer 2023	Conduct scoping
✓ September 2023	Review scoping comments and provide additional guidance
✓ October 2023	SG AP review
✓ December 2023	Review draft document and preliminary analysis and provide additional guidance
March 2024	Review updated analysis, select preferred alternatives
June 2024	Approve for public hearings
July/August	Conduct public hearings
September 2024*	Review public hearing comments consider final approval

Purpose and Need Statements

Purpose: The *purpose* of this amendment is to modify the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex by removing yellowmouth grouper from the complex and establishing a new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex. For the new complex, establish conservation and management measures, stock status determination criteria, a rebuilding plan, catch levels, sector allocations, and accountability measures based on the results of the SEDAR 68 operational assessment (2022) stock assessment. For the South Atlantic Other Shallow Water Grouper complex, modify catch levels.

Need: The *need* for this amendment is to rebuild the scamp and yellowmouth grouper stock, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effect.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

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

Purpose of Action: SEDAR 68 (RT [2021] and OA [2022]) assessed the South Atlantic scamp and yellowmouth grouper together due to misidentification issues between the species. The SSC provided catch levels, based on the assessment, for South Atlantic scamp and yellowmouth grouper combined; therefore, yellowmouth grouper must be removed from the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex (OSASWG) to establish a new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

	Complex/Stock Name	Species
Alternative 1 (No Action)	scamp	scamp ONLY
	Other SA Shallow Water Grouper complex	graysby, coney, red hind, rock hind, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper
Preferred Alternative 2	Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex (ACL established in Action 4)	scamp and yellowmouth grouper
	Other SA Shallow Water Grouper complex (OSASWG ACL modified, ABC and sector allocation percentages retained in Action 11)	graysby, coney, red hind, rock hind, yellowfin grouper

Discussion

The current commercial and recreational allocation percentages for scamp and for the OSASWG complex were implemented through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Snapper Grouper Amendment 25, 2011) using the following formula:

$$(50\% \times \text{average landings from 1986-2008}) + (50\% \times \text{average landings from 2006-2008})$$

Scamp has a separate ACL from the OSASWG complex, which currently contains yellowmouth grouper.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: Because the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex is being established through this amendment, status determination criteria must be defined for the new complex.

	Alternative	MSY (1,000 lbs)	MFMT	MSST (metric tons)	OY (1,000 lbs)
2a	Alternative 1 (No Action)	none	-	-	-
	Alternative 2 (MSY = $F_{30\%SPR}$)	416.20	-	-	-
	Preferred Alternative 3 (MSY = $F_{40\%SPR}$)	372.28	-	-	-
2b	Alternative 1 (No Action)	-	none	-	-
	Alternative 2 (F_{MSY} or proxy = $F_{30\%SPR}$)	-	0.52	-	-
	Preferred Alternative 3 (F_{MSY} or proxy = $F_{40\%SPR}$)	-	0.28	-	-
2c	Alternative 1 (No Action)	-	-	none	-
	Alternative 2 (SSB_{MSY} (1-M) or 0.5)	-	-	601.12	-
	Preferred Alternative 3 (75% of SSB_{MSY})	-	-	801.60	-
2d*	Alternative 1 (No Action)	-	-	-	none
	Alternative 2 (75% of MSY)	-	-	-	279.21
	Alternative 3 (90% of MSY)	-	-	-	335.05
	Alternative 4 (95% of MSY)	-	-	-	353.67

*Note: Alternatives 2 through 4 for Sub-Action 2d are based on an MSY proxy of $F_{40\%SPR}$

Discussion

- **MSY** is the largest long-term average catch that can be taken from the stock under current conditions.
 - The current MSY proxy for scamp and yellowmouth grouper with the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex is $F_{30\%SPR}$.
 - SEDAR 68 OA (2022) recommended an MSY proxy of $F_{40\%SPR}$.
- **MFMT** is the level of fishing mortality above which overfishing is occurring.
 - This alternative is based on the MSY proxy selected in Sub-Action 2a.
- **MSST** is the spawning stock biomass level at which the stock is declared overfished.
 - This alternative is based on the MSY proxy selected in Sub-Action 2a.
 - Alternative 2 uses the current method of defining MSST used for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.
 - Alternative 3 uses the updated method defined in Regulatory Amendment 21.
- **OY** is the long-term average yield desired from a stock or fishery. OY is reduced from MSY for the fishery based on relevant economic, social, and ecological factors.

- This alternative is based on the MSY proxy selected in Sub-Action 2a.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: The results of the SEDAR 68 OA (2022) stock assessment indicate that the South Atlantic stock of scamp and yellowmouth grouper is overfished but not experiencing overfishing. A rebuilding plan must be established to rebuild the stock. Establishing the timeframe for rebuilding is part of the rebuilding plan.

Alternative	Rebuilding Timeframe	End of rebuilding timeframe
Alternative 1 (No Action)	No timeframe for rebuilding	n/a
Alternative 2	Tmin - 5 years	2030
Preferred Alternative 3	Tmax - 10 years	2035

Discussion

- Rebuilding projections were based on the **long-term average recruitment**.
 - Rebuilding within 10 years ($T_{\max} = 10$) is possible but this is based on long-term average recruitment, which is higher than recent recruitment and assumes that recruitment will recover to previous levels.

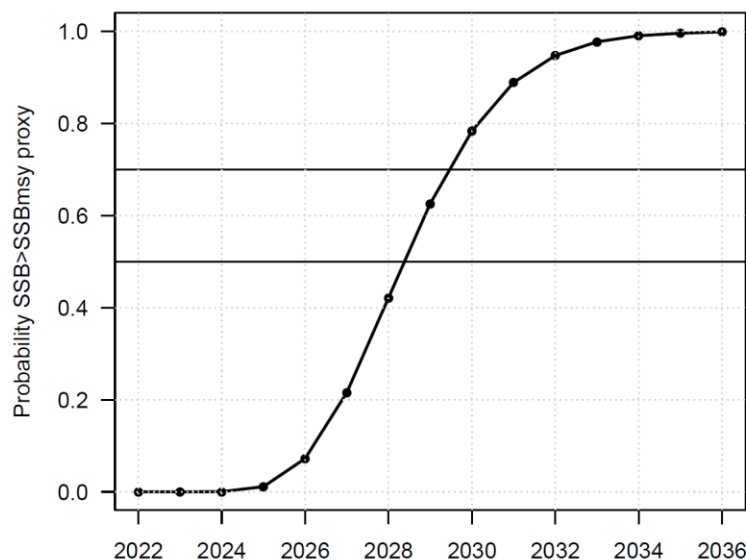


Figure 1. Projected probability of rebuilding under scenario 1—fishing mortality rate at $F = 0$ and long-term average recruitment. The curve represents the proportion of projection replicates for which SSB has reached the replicate-specific $SSB_{40\%}$, with reference lines at 0.5 and 0.7. Source: SEDAR 68 OA (2022), Figure 53.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: Catch levels are being established for the new South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex to respond to the most recent stock assessment, SEDAR 68 OA (2022). The recommended ABCs from SEDAR 68 OA (2022) are inclusive of recreational estimates from the MRIP-FES survey.

Alternative	ACL (pounds whole weight)				
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Alternative 1 (No Action, no ABC)	n/a				
Preferred Alternative 2 (ACL = ABC)	67,450	72,200	75,050	77,900	79,800
Alternative 3 (95% of ABC)	64,078	68,590	71,298	74,005	75,810
Alternative 4 (90% of ABC)	60,705	64,980	67,545	70,110	71,820

Discussion

- Alternatives for this action would set the ACL for the **Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex only** not the remaining five OSASWG species (red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, and yellowfin grouper).
- Overview of ACL usage in the scamp fishery:
 - Commercial sector: harvested an average of 44.9% of commercial ACL from 2012-2022¹.
 - Recreational sector: harvested an average of 30.9% of recreational ACL from 2012-2022².

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

¹ Based on ACL monitoring data accessed July 17th 2023, 2022 landings are preliminary.

² Recreational CHTS landings, based on ACL monitoring data accessed July 17th 2023, 2022 landings are preliminary.

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

***Purpose of Action:** Allocations need to be established for the new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex in response to catch levels provided by the SSC from the most recent SEDAR 68 (2022) stock assessment.*

ACL Alternatives	Allocation Alternative					
	Alternative 1 (No Action)		Committee Preferred Alternative 2 Split Reduction (2018-2022)		Alternative 3 Split Reduction (2013-2022)	
Total ACL (ACL=ABC) and Year	Commercial	Recreational	Commercial %, (lbs gw)	Recreational %, (lbs ww)	Commercial %, (lbs gw)	Recreational %, (lbs ww)
67,450 (2025)	NO ALLOCATIONS		64.90% (37,097)	35.10% (23,675)	63.40% (36,240)	36.60% (24,687)
72,200 (2026)			63.92% (39,110)	36.08% (26,050)	62.51% (38,247)	37.49% (27,068)
75,050 (2027)			63.39% (40,317)	36.61% (27,476)	62.04% (39,458)	37.96% (28,489)
77,900 (2028)			62.90% (41,525)	37.10% (28,901)	61.60% (40,666)	38.40% (29,914)
79,800 (2029)			62.59% (42,328)	37.41% (29,853)	61.32% (41,469)	38.68% (30,867)

Discussion

- The current allocation percentages for scamp are **65.34% commercial** and **34.66% recreational**.
- The [Split Reduction method](#) (**Alternatives 2 and 3**) was used to determine gag sector allocations in Amendment 53. The method reduces each sector's landings proportional to a baseline of historic average landings to achieve the updated catch levels.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

6. Reduce the recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper

Purpose of Action: Because of both the stock status indicated by SEDAR 68 OA (2022) and the reduced catch levels recommended by the SSC, the Council is considering modifying the fishing season to achieve the reduction in harvest needed to constrain catch to the updated ACLs.

Alternatives	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alternative 1												
Preferred Alternative 2												
Alternative 3												

Discussion

- Currently, scamp and yellowmouth grouper are subject to the shallow water grouper spawning season closure which is from Jan 1 – Apr 30. This closure is **not** being modified in any of the alternatives under **Action 6**.
- During the March Council meeting the Council decided to exclude the commercial sector from a season consideration.

Landings

- Landings trends from 2018-2022 show that landings are highest in May, after the annual spawning season closure ends, peaking in July/August and then tapering off mid-August, early September (Figure 2).

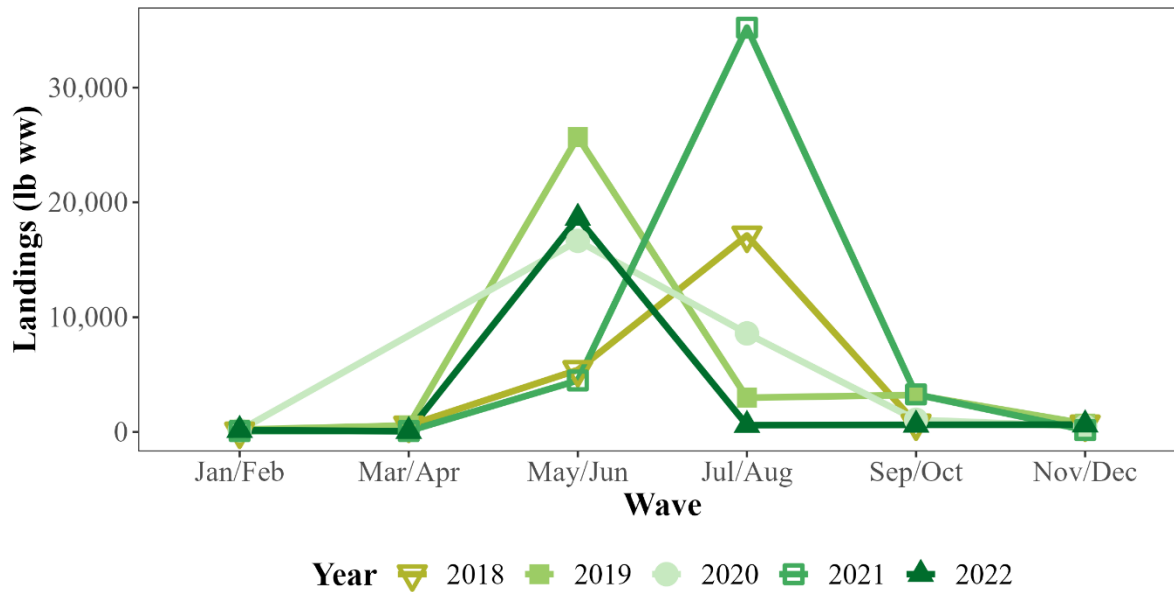


Figure 2. Observed recreational landing by wave, including MRIP-FES recreational landings from shore and private boat fishing modes, FHS landings for charter vessels, and SRHS landings for headboat vessels (Source: MRIP-FES Recreational data – August 2023).

Season Length Projections

- The projections show that the recreational season under the adjusted recreational ACL would last into Wave 4, at the “sweet spot” right before landings typically wane off for the season (Table 2).

Table 2. Predictions for when scamp/yellowmouth grouper ACLs would be met under the preferred allocation alternative (Action 5), the preferred catch level alternative, and each seasonal closure alternative (Action 6) for the recreational sector.

ACL=ABC Preferred Allocation Alternative (Action 5, Alternative 2)		
<i>Action 6: Alternative 1 – No Action (Fishing Season: May 1 through December 31)</i>		
Year	ACL Met	Approx. Days
2025	Wave 4	104
2026	Wave 4	114
2027	Wave 4	120
2028	Wave 5	154
2029	Wave 6	203
<i>Action 6: Preferred Alternative 2 (Fishing Season: May 1 through August 31)</i>		
Year	ACL Met	Approx. Days
2025	Wave 4	104
2026	Wave 4	114
2027	Wave 4	120
2028	-	123
2029	-	123
<i>Action 6: Alternative 3 (Fishing Season: May 1 through September 30)</i>		
Year	ACL Met	Approx. Days
2025	Wave 4	104
2026	Wave 4	114
2027	Wave 4	120
2028	-	153
2029	-	153

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

7. Modify the recreational retention limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper

Purpose of Action: *The Council is considering modifying the current bag limit or establishing a recreational vessel limit to achieve the reduction in harvest needed to constrain catch to the updated recreational ACLs, while maintaining recreational access.*

Action	Alternative	Bag limit	Recreational Component	Vessel limit
Sub-Action 7a	Alternative 1 (No Action)	3 fish within the grouper aggregate	private, for-hire	none
	Alternative 2	2 fish (either scamp or YM grouper) within the grouper aggregate	private, for-hire	none
	Alternative 3	1 fish (either scamp or YM grouper) within the grouper aggregate	private, for-hire	none
Sub-Action 7b	Alternative 1 (No Action)	3 fish within the grouper aggregate	private, for-hire	none
	Alternative 2a	Dependent on Sub-Action 7a	private	2 fish (either scamp or YM grouper)
	Alternative 2b	Dependent on Sub-Action 7a	private	4 fish (either scamp or YM grouper)
	Alternative 3a	Dependent on Sub-Action 7a	for-hire	2 fish (either scamp or YM grouper)
	Alternative 3b	Dependent on Sub-Action 7a	for-hire	4 fish (either scamp or YM grouper)

Background

- Currently scamp and yellowmouth grouper have a recreational bag limit of 3 fish within the grouper aggregate and do not have a vessel limit.
- The alternatives for the vessel limit were modeled off of the vessel limit for gag and black grouper in Amendment 53.
- The aggregate bag or vessel limit would lump the two species together, removing the need for anglers to identify between the two species.

Projections

Table 3. Percent reduction in landings for each bag limit under Sub-Action 7a and 7b based on landings for each recreational component from 2018-2022.

Action	Alternative	Private / Charter	Headboat
Action 7a	Alternative 1 (No Action)	0.00%	0.00%
	Alternative 2	-36.50%	-0.70%
	Alternative 3	-52.10%	-6.10%
Action 7b	Alternative 1 (No Action)	0.00%	0.00%
	Alternative 2a	-41.00%	-
	Alternative 2b	-22.60%	-
	Alternative 3a	-	-47.10%
	Alternative 3b	-	-21.50%

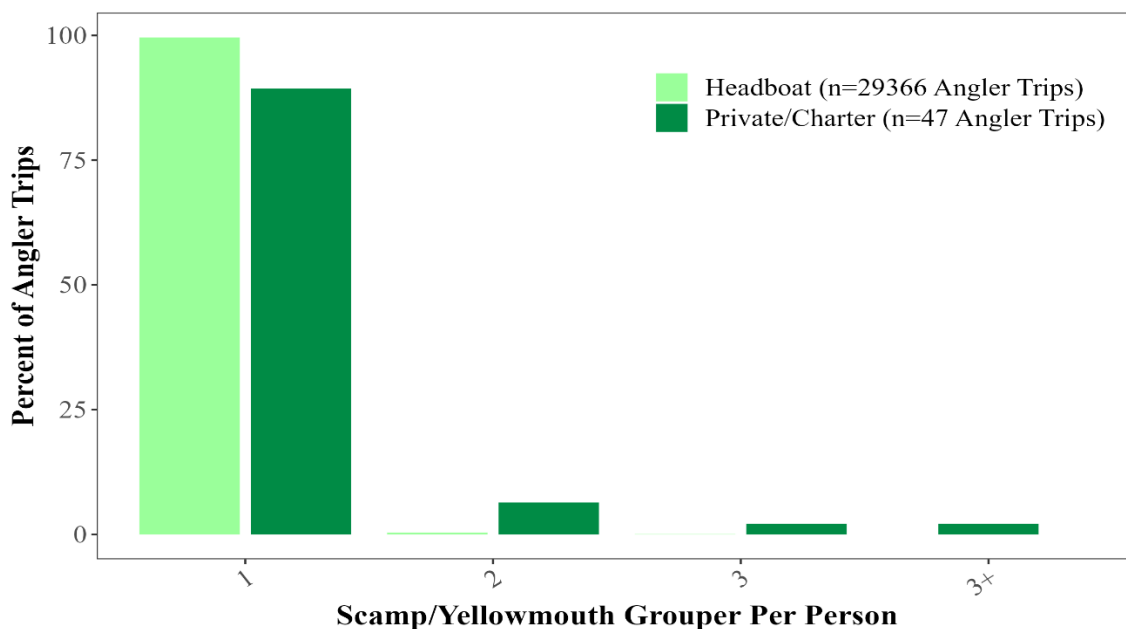


Figure 3. Distribution of scamp and yellowmouth grouper angler harvest from dockside intercept and headboat logbook data from 2018-2022, by recreational fleet. *adjusted for MRIP grouped catch*

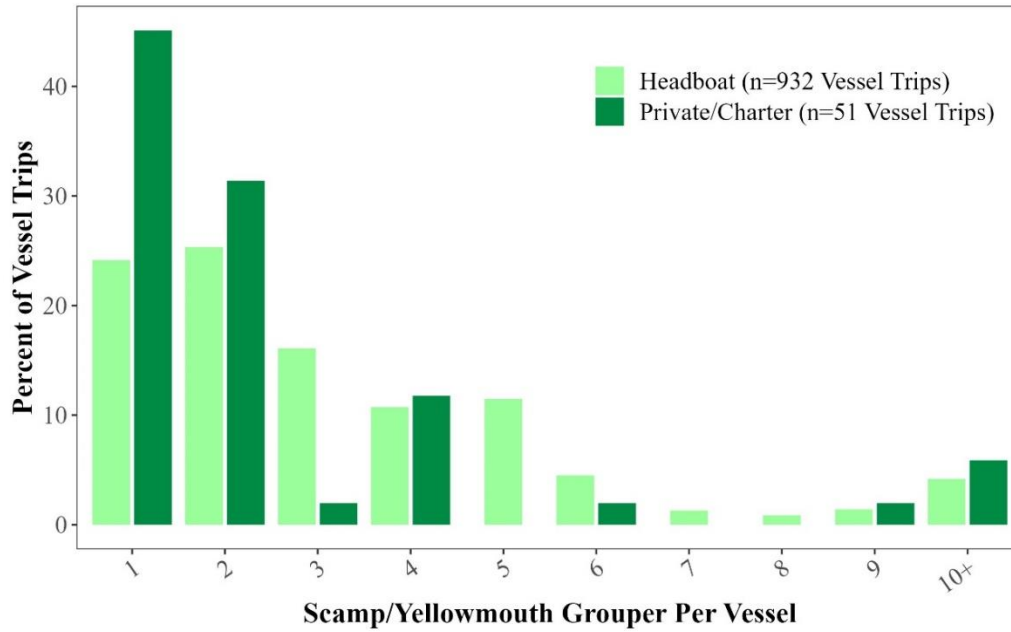


Figure 4. Distribution of scamp and yellowmouth grouper vessel harvest from dockside intercept and headboat logbook data from 2018-2022, by recreational fleet.

Discussion

- Does the AP recommend the Council modify the bag limit?
 - The current bag limit allows an angler to retain 3 fish (a combination of scamp, yellowmouth grouper, or any of the other shallow water grouper species in the grouper aggregate). The two species are seen as separate under the aggregate bag limit.
 - The bag limit under **Alternatives 2 and 3** would add an additional caveat to the grouper aggregate bag limit where an angler could only retain 2 or 1 scamp or yellowmouth grouper respectively. These alternatives would treat the species as a single species within the aggregate and reduce the retention of them within the aggregate – similar to gag.
- Does the AP recommend the Council establish a vessel limit?
 - If the Council establishes a vessel limit, the bag limit will remain in place and in certain circumstances would be the more restrictive limit, for example:
 - If the bag limit is 3 people and the vessel limit is 4 fish per vessel, and there is only one person on the vessel they would be limited to the bag and not the vessel.
- Regulation Complexity – there are currently 11 different caveats for the 3-grouper aggregate bag limit, adding more will further complicate the bag limit for the fishermen.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW DISCUSSION POINTS AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK.

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

Purpose of Action: *The Council is considering establishing a commercial trip limit to achieve the reduction in harvest needed to constrain catch to the updated commercial ACLs, while maintaining an extended commercial season.*

Alternative	Commercial Trip Limit (lbs gw)
Alternative 1 (No Action)	No Trip Limit
Alternative 2	200 lbs gw
Preferred Alternative 3	300 lbs gw
Alternative 4	400 lbs gw
Alternative 5	500 lbs gw

Projections

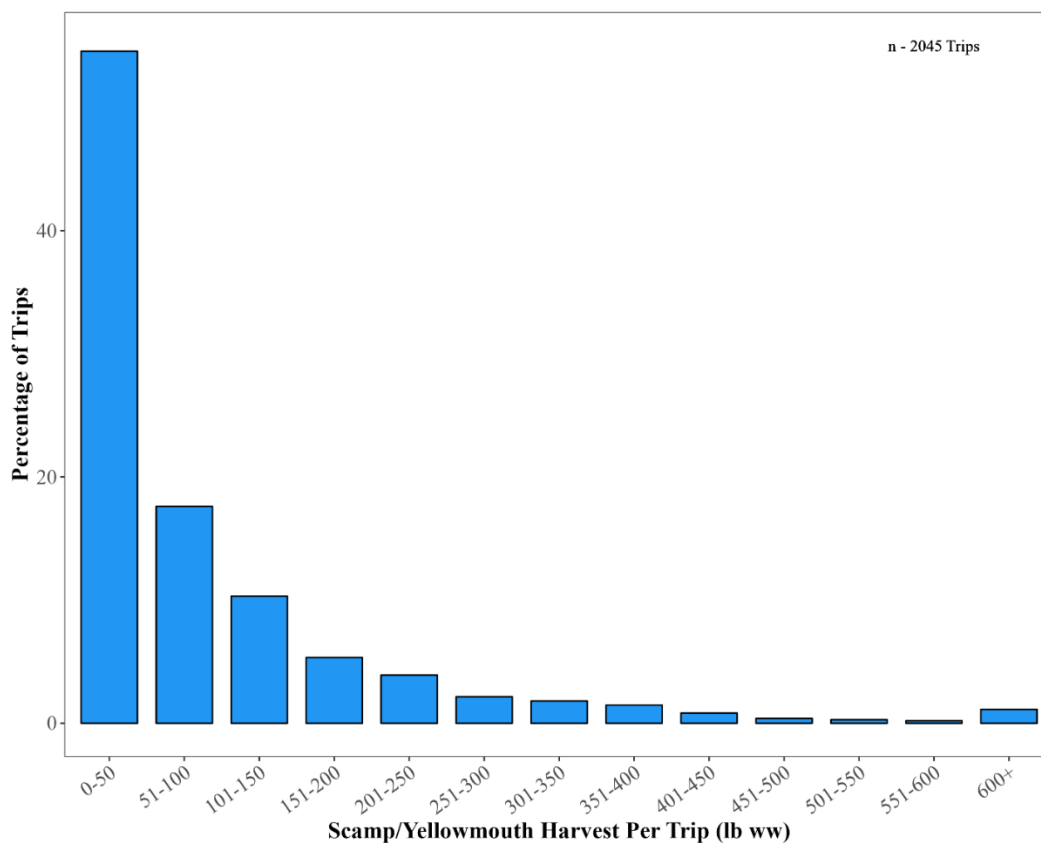


Figure 5. Distribution of scamp and yellowmouth grouper trip harvest between 2020 and 2022, all years combined, in 50 lbs ww bins.

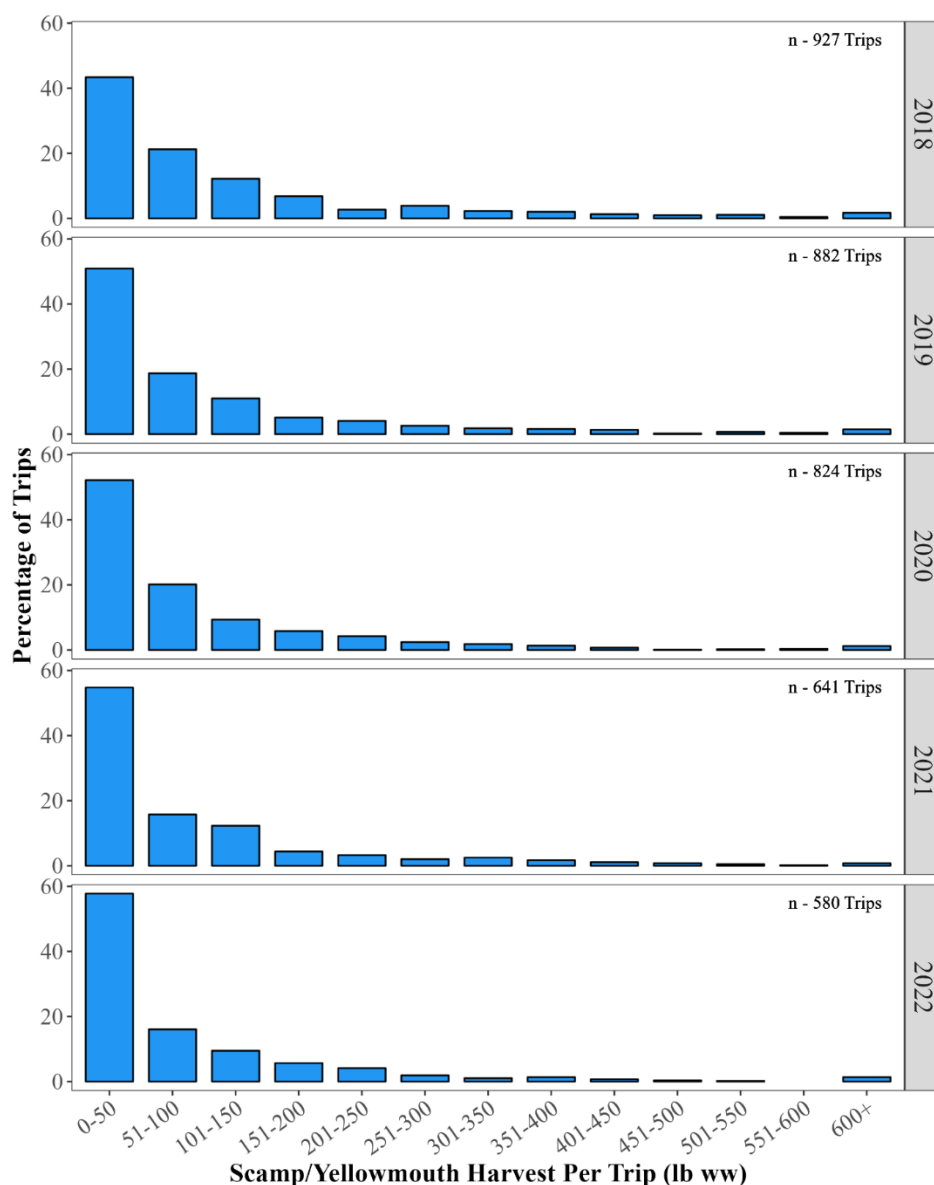


Figure 6. Distribution of scamp and yellowmouth grouper trip harvest between 2018 and 2022, in 50 lbs ww bins.

Table 4. Percent reduction associated with each trip limit alternative associated with the commercial sector.

Alternative	% Reduction
Alternative 1: (No Action) No Trip Limit	0.00%
Alternative 2: Establish a 200 lbs ww (169 lbs gw) trip limit	-20.80%
Alternative 3: Establish a 300 lbs ww (254 lbs gw) trip limit	-11.09%
Alternative 4: Establish a 400 lbs ww (340 lbs gw) trip limit	-6.16%
Alternative 5: Establish a 500 lbs ww (424 lbs gw) trip limit	-3.82%

Discussion

- The suite of alternatives matches the trip limits presented in Amendment 53 (gag and black grouper). In that amendment the Council selected **Alternative 3** as their preferred (300 lbs trip limit).
- In October 2023, an AP member recommended a trip limit of 300 lbs.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: Accountability measures need to be established for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex to contribute to the rebuilding plan by ensuring that commercial ACLs are not exceeded and to correct for overages if they occur.

Alternative	In-Season AM		Post-Season AM	
	Triggers	AM	Triggers	AM
Alternative 1 (No Action)	No commercial AM for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex, retain current AMs for scamp (individually) and yellowmouth grouper (within the OSASWG Complex)			
Alternative 2 STATUS QUO FOR SCAMP/YM	Commercial landings reach or are expected to reach the sector ACL	Current commercial season closes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial landings exceed the commercial ACL • Total ACL exceeded • Stock is overfished <p>*All triggers must be present for AM to occur</p>	Commercial ACL is reduced for the following year by the amount of the overage
Preferred Alternative 3 "UN-COUPLED" POST-SEASON	Commercial landings reach or are expected to reach the sector ACL	Current commercial season closes	<p>Commercial landings exceed the commercial ACL</p> <p>*Not tied to stock status and total ACL</p>	Commercial ACL is reduced for the following year by the amount of the overage

Discussion

- **Alternative 2** represents the current commercial AM for scamp and the OSASWG complex.
- **Alternative 3** represents the recent current *recreational* AM modifications the Council has made for other stocks (such as for gag in Amendment 53).
 - Since the stock is overfished, there is increased potential for a payback to be triggered with this alternative.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: Accountability measures need to be established for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex to contribute to the rebuilding plan by ensuring that recreational ACLs are not exceeded and to correct for overages if they occur.

Alternative	In-Season AM		Post-Season AM	
	Triggers	AM	Triggers	AM
Alternative 1 (No Action)	No recreational AM for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex, retain current AMs for scamp (individually) and yellowmouth grouper (within the OSASWG Complex)			
Alternative 2 STATUS QUO FOR SCAMP/YM	Recreational landings reach or are expected to reach the sector ACL	Current recreational season closes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL Total ACL is exceeded Stock is overfished *All triggers must be present for AM to occur	Recreational season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded
Alternative 3 “UNCOUPLED”, SEASON REDUCTION PAYBACK	Recreational landings reach or are expected to reach the sector ACL	Current recreational season closes	Recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL *Not tied to stock status and total ACL	Recreational season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded
Alternative 4 “UNCOUPLED”, ACL PAYBACK	Recreational landings reach or are expected to reach the sector ACL	Current recreational season closes	Recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL *Not tied to stock status and total ACL	Recreational ACL is reduced for the following year by the amount of the overage
Preferred Alternative 5 NO IN-SEASON, “UNCOUPLED”, SEASON REDUCTION	NONE		Recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL *Not tied to stock status and total ACL	Recreational season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

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

Purpose of Action: Under Action 1, the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex (OSASWG) would be modified to remove yellowmouth grouper. Therefore, the OSASWG ACL must be updated to remove the portion that was previously allocated for yellowmouth grouper. The ABC and ACL for this complex is currently inclusive of MRIP-CHTS recreational estimates. The ABC would remain the same and the ACL would remain inclusive of MRIP-CHTS recreational estimates. The sector allocation percentages would remain the same.

Alternative	ABC (lbs ww)*	Total ACL (lbs ww)	Commercial ACL (lbs ww)	Recreational ACL (lbs ww)
Alternative 1 (No Action)	104,190	104,190	55,542	48,648
Preferred Alternative 2	104,190	100,151	53,380	46,771

Note: The current commercial allocation is 53.30% and the current recreational allocation is 46.70%.

Discussion

- The current commercial (53.30%) and recreational (46.70%) allocation percentages were developed during the Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Snapper Grouper Amendment 25, 2011) using the following formula:

$$(50\% \times \text{average landings from 1986-2008}) + (50\% \times \text{average landings from 2006-2008})$$

- The updated ABC in MRIP-FES units for the OSASWG complex that was previously developed by the Unassessed Stocks Workgroup (2020) was developed using either the 3rd highest or ORCS method. The “3rd highest” method is no longer considered BSIA, and therefore, the catch levels under this action and alternatives remain in MRIP-CHTS units.
- The SSC previously recommended the OSASWG ABC be revised in the Unassessed Species Amendment; however, the SSC will need to develop a new method for updating ABCs or all the unassessed species and incorporate MRIP-FES recreational estimates.
 - This will likely be presented to the Council in September or December 2024.
- The current allocations will not be modified in this amendment.

Advisory Panel Action

- REVIEW OR PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION.

Literature Cited

Klaer, N. L., O’Boyle, R. N., Deroba, J. J., Wayte, S. E., Little, L. R., Alade, L. A., & Rago, P. J.(2015). How much evidence is required for acceptance of productivity regime shifts in fish stock assessments: Are we letting managers off the hook? *Fisheries Research*, 168, 49–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2015.03.021>.

Appendix

Appendix I. Current Catch Levels and Regulations

Table A-1. Current regulations for scamp and the shallow water grouper complex.

Regulation	Scamp	Current Shallow Water Grouper Complex					
		Coney	Graysby	Red Hind	Rock Hind	Yellowfin grouper	Yellowmouth grouper
aggregate bag limit	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
bag limit	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
trip limit	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
size limit	20 in TL	NA	NA	NA	NA	20 in TL	20 in TL
Spawning Season Closure	Jan 1 – Apr 30	January 1 – April 30					

Table A-2. The species-specific portions of the shallow water grouper complex ACL.

Shallow Water Grouper Complex	ABC lbs ww	ACL lbs ww	Commercial ACL lbs ww (53.30%)	Recreational ACL lbs ww (46.70%)
Red Hind	33,084	33,084	24,350	8,734
Rock Hind	37,493	37,493	22,833	14,660
Yellowmouth Grouper	4,039	4,039	44	3,995
Yellowfin Grouper	9,258	9,258	4,879	4,379
Coney	2,718	2,718	665	2,053
Graysby	17,598	17,598	2,771	14,827
COMPLEX TOTAL	104,190	104,190	55,542	48,648

Appendix II. Current Accountability Measures

Commercial

Scamp:

- (i) If commercial landings for scamp, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL of 219,375 lb (99,507 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of scamp is prohibited and harvest or possession of scamp in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters.
- (ii) If commercial landings for scamp, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the commercial ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 335,744 lb (152,291 kg), round weight, is exceeded, and scamp are overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL for that following fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper:

- (i) If commercial landings for other SASWG combined, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL of 55,542 lb (25,193 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial sector for this complex for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase of red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, coney, and graysby is prohibited, and harvest or possession of any of these species in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters.
- (ii) If commercial landings for other SASWG combined, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the commercial ACL, and the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 104,190 lb (47,260 kg), round weight, is exceeded, and at least one of the species in other SASWG combined is overfished based on the most recent status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the commercial ACL for that following

fishing year by the amount of the commercial ACL overage in the prior fishing year

Recreational

Scamp:

- (i) If recreational landings for scamp, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 116,369 lb (52,784 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for scamp in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.
- (ii) If recreational landings for scamp, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if scamp are overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 335,744 lb (152,291 kg), round weight, is exceeded during the same fishing year. NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for scamp in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Groupers:

- (i) If recreational landings for other SASWG combined, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 48,648 lb (22,066 kg), round weight, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if any stock in other SASWG combined is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for any species in the other SASWG combined in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.
- (ii) If recreational landings for other SASWG combined, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings, and if necessary, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage, if at least one of the species in other SASWG combined is overfished based on the most recent Status of U.S. Fisheries Report to

Congress, and if the combined commercial and recreational ACL of 104,190 lb (47,260 kg) is exceeded during the same fishing year. NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and recreational ACL is necessary. When the recreational sector is closed as a result of NMFS reducing the length of the recreational fishing season and ACL, the bag and possession limits for any species in the other SASWG combined in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Appendix III. Confidentiality and How it is Addressed

Confidentiality Concerns

- Recreational landings of Yellowmouth grouper are confidential from 2014-2022
- Commercial landings of Yellowmouth grouper are confidential from 1986-2022
- When removing yellowmouth grouper from the OSASWG complex and combining yellowmouth grouper landings with scamp landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex (**Action 1**), yellowmouth grouper landings can easily be calculated.

How Confidentiality Concerns Were Addressed (Full details in Appendix D.1.2 in Draft Amendment)

- To ensure confidentiality, yellowmouth grouper landings were averaged over 3-year bins. The difference between the original confidential landings and the 3-year average was minimized for both sectors.
- The annual estimates of scamp landings and the updated non-confidential yellowmouth grouper landings were then summed by sector to create annual estimates for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex.

Appendix IV. Data Smoothing

- In SEDAR 68 (2022), analysts replaced landings estimates with associated uncertainty values greater than 50% with the average of the nearest two years. Several years had PSE values higher than 50% when the data were pulled for analysis (**Figure A-1**).
- Because the allocation alternatives only used more recent years of landings, data was smoothed using the SEDAR 68 (2022) method and masked for confidentiality during this time period. Commercial landings were assumed to represent a census and therefore were only masked for confidentiality. (**Figure A-2**).

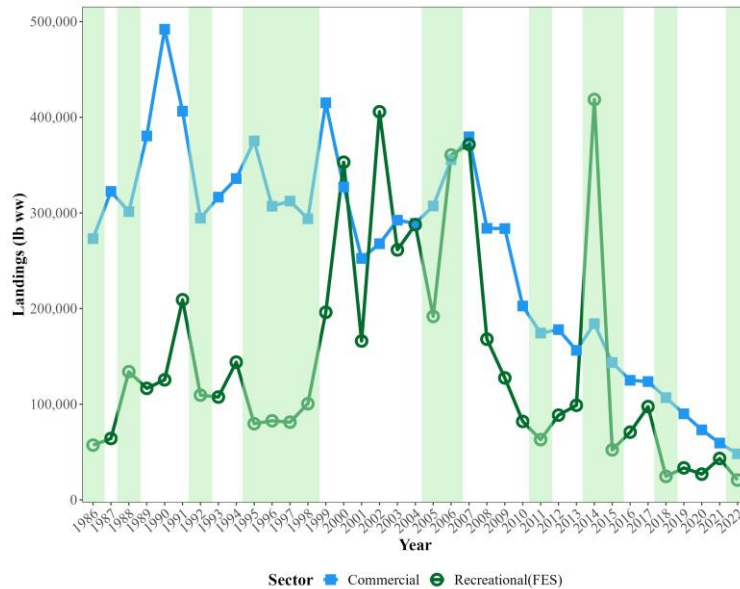


Figure A-1. Aggregated annual estimates of scamp and yellowmouth grouper landings from 1986 to 2022, by fishing sector. Light green shading indicates years with PSE values > 50% for recreational landings estimates.

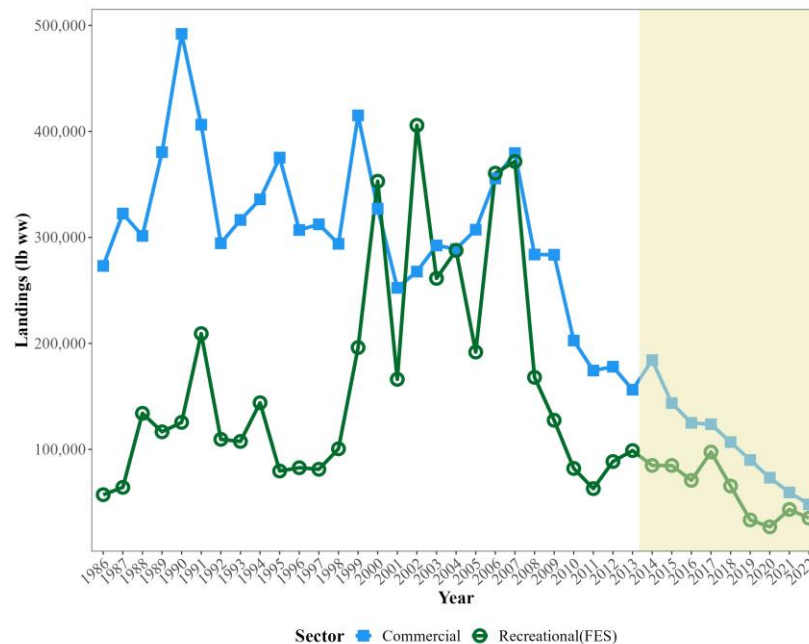


Figure A-2. Aggregated annual estimates of scamp and yellowmouth grouper landings from 1986-2022, by sector. Yellow shading indicates years where smoothed landings values were used to replace recreational estimates with PSE values >50%.