



# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston SC 29405  
Call: (843) 571-4366 | Toll-Free: (866) SAFMC-10 | Fax: (843) 769-4520 | Connect: [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair  
John Carmichael, Executive Director

## AGENDA

### **Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**

Crowne Plaza Hotel Charleston  
4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd  
North Charleston, SC 29418

April 21-23, 2026

Public comment will be solicited at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will recognize individuals to provide comment in-person or on the webinar.

#### **Tuesday, April 21, 2026, 1:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.**

Welcome and Introductions

Approval of Agenda – Chris Kimrey

Approval of October 2025 AP minutes – Chris Kimrey

Public Comment

#### **1:30 pm – 1:45 pm**

1. Committee Chair Remarks and Council Discussion Update – Jessica McCawley  
(*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

#### **1:45 pm – 2:30 pm**

2. Updates (*Attachments 2a-2d*)
  - a. Exempted Fishing Permits – Jessica McCawley
  - b. Ongoing and Recently-Initiated Amendments Not Scheduled for Discussion at This Meeting – Michael Schmidtke
  - c. Council Workplan – Michael Schmidtke
  - d. SEDAR – Michael Schmidtke
  - e. Citizen Science – Julia Byrd and Meg Withers

#### **2:30 pm – 3:00 pm**

3. Southeast Reef Fish Survey Presentation (*Attachment 3*) – SC Department of Natural Resources Staff

--- Break ---

**3:15 pm – 4:00 pm**

4. Black Sea Bass Management (*Attachment 4*)
  - a. Progress/Upcoming Actions for Overall Management – Michael Schmidtke
  - b. On-Demand Black Sea Bass Pot Nearshore Area Re-Opening (Regulatory Amendment 40) – Myra Brouwer
  - c. Observations and Feedback on the 2025 Season
  - d. **AP Action:** Discuss whether changes to the commercial trip limit for pots should be considered in Regulatory Amendment 40. Also, provide input on observations from the 2025 fishing year.

**4:00 pm – 4:30 pm**

5. Recreational Golden Tilefish Fishing Year (*Attachment 5*)
  - a. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
  - b. **AP Action:** Discuss whether the timing of the recreational golden tilefish fishing year should be changed.

**Wednesday, April 22, 2026, 8:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.**

**8:30 am – 10:00 am**

6. Black Grouper Fishery Performance Report and Stock Risk Rating (*Attachments 6a and 6b*)
  - a. Fishery Performance Report – Allie Iberle
  - b. Stock Risk Rating Matrix – Judd Curtis
  - c. **AP Action:** Develop the fishery performance report and a recommendation for the stock risk rating for black grouper.

--- Break ---

**10:15 am – 10:45 am**

7. Florida Hogfish Stock Risk Rating (*Attachment 7a and 7b*)
  - a. Fishery Performance Report Summary – Michael Schmidtke
  - b. Stock Risk Rating Matrix – Judd Curtis
  - c. **AP Action:** Develop a recommendation for the stock risk rating for Florida hogfish.

**10:45 am – 12:00 pm**

8. Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (*Attachment 8*)
  - a. Presentation on Recreational Angler Attitudes and Preferences in the Snapper Grouper Fishery – Kai Lorenzen
  - b. Update on Management Strategy Evaluation – Chip Collier

--- Lunch ---

**1:30 pm – 3:15 pm**

9. Commercial SG 1 Permit and Trip Efficiency (Amendment 60) (*Attachment 9*)
  - a. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
  - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

--- Break ---

**3:30 pm – 4:30 pm**

10. Snapper Grouper Commercial SG 2 (225-Pound) Permit Discussion (*Attachment 10*)
  - a. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
  - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

**Thursday, April 23, 2026, 8:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**8:30 am – 10:15 am**

11. Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision (Amendment 61) (*Attachment 11*)
  - a. Overview – John Hadley
  - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

--- Break ---

**10:30 am – 11:45 am**

12. Spawning Special Management Zones Evaluation (*Attachment 12*)
  - a. Update on available information
  - b. Discussion of [Evaluation Tool](#)
  - c. **AP Action:** Complete the online survey (Evaluation Tool) ahead of the AP meeting. Discuss and provide input, as appropriate.

**11:45 am – 12:00 pm**

13. Other Business

Public Comment

Adjourn

**Advisory Panel Members:**

Chris Kimrey (Chair)	Randy McKinley
Haley Stephens (Vice Chair)	Jeff Marinko
Vincent Bonura	Chris Militello
Jon Braun	David Moss
Gettys Brannon III	Paul Nelson
Scott Buff	John Polston
Chris Conklin	Paul Rudershausen
Tony Constant	K.P. Scott
Jack Cox, Jr.	Cameron Sebastian
Andrew Fish	Darrin Willingham
Richard Gomez	Todd Kellison, Non-Voting Member
Matt Mathews	

**Attachments:**

**Attachment 1a:** December 2025 and March 2026 Snapper Grouper Committee Final Reports

**Attachment 1b:** Snapper Grouper Chair Presentation (*available on 4/14*)

**Attachment 2a:** Exempted Fishing Permits Presentation (*available on 4/14*)

**Attachment 2b:** Update on recent regulation changes and status of amendments

- Attachment 2c:** March 2026 Council Work Plan
- Attachment 2d:** Citizen Science Presentation (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 3a:** MARMAP/SEAMAP-SA Reef Fish Survey Technical Report
- Attachment 3b:** MARMAP/SEAMAP-SA Reef Fish Survey Presentation (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 4:** Black Sea Bass Management Presentation
- Attachment 5:** Recreational Golden Tilefish Presentation (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 6a:** Black Grouper Fishery Performance Report Questions
- Attachment 6b:** Black Grouper Stock Risk Rating Matrix (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 7a:** Florida Hogfish 2024 Fishery Performance Report
- Attachment 7b:** Florida Hogfish Stock Risk Rating Matrix (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 8:** Recreational Angler Attitudes and Preferences in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Presentation (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 9:** Amendment 60 (Commercial SG 1 Permit and Trip Efficiency) Discussion Document
- Attachment 10:** Snapper Grouper Commercial SG 2 (225 lb) Permit Presentation (*available on 4/14*)
- Attachment 11:** Amendment 61 (Fishery Management Unit Revision) Discussion Document
- Attachment 12:** Presentation on SSMZ Evaluation (*available on 4/14*)

**Staff Lead:** Michael Schmidtke ([mike.schmidtke@safmc.net](mailto:mike.schmidtke@safmc.net))

# **OVERVIEW**

## **Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**

The AP will approve minutes from the October 2025 meeting and the agenda for the April 2026 meeting.

### **1. Committee Chair Remarks and Council Discussion Update (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)**

The Snapper Grouper Committee Chair will present a summary of discussions from the December 2025 and March 2026 Council Meetings.

### **2. Updates (*Attachments 2a-2d*)**

Jessica McCawley (Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; Snapper Grouper Committee Chair) will update the AP on results from Florida's red snapper exempted fishing permit (EFP) studies and pending applications from the South Atlantic states for 2026 red snapper EFPs.

Council staff will provide updates on developing and recently submitted amendments, the Council workplan, and the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Research (SEDAR) program.

Council staff will provide an update on recent Citizen Science Program activities. This will include an introduction to new Citizen Science team members; FISHstory Validation Team and analysis updates; as well as highlights from the SAFMC Release 2025 Data Summary, the 2026 Participant Recognition Program, and the 2026 Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo.

### **3. Southeast Reef Fish Survey (SERFS) Presentation (*Attachments 3a and 3b*)**

Staff from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources will present summarized trends in abundance and distribution for select species collected in the SERFS through 2025.

### **4. Black Sea Bass Management (*Attachment 4*)**

In June 2025, the Council paused work on Amendment 56 until updates to the SEDAR 76 stock assessment, including incorporation of updated recreational catch estimates, have been made. At that meeting, the Council also received an acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendation from the SSC, with the first year of new management occurring in 2027.

Since then, the Council has approved Regulatory Amendment 37, which will implement short-term management changes until longer-term changes can be developed through Amendment 56, based on the updated stock assessment. In March 2026, the Council initiated a framework amendment (Regulatory Amendment 40) to consider re-opening nearshore areas that are seasonally closed to commercial fishing using black sea bass pots.

Staff will review the past timeline, upcoming management changes, and potential considered actions for Amendment 56 and Regulatory Amendment 40. Related to Regulatory Amendment 40, the AP will provide input on whether changes to commercial trip limits for black sea bass pots should be considered with the potential re-opening of the seasonally-closed nearshore areas. **AP Action:** Discuss whether changes to black sea bass pot commercial trip limits should be considered in Regulatory Amendment 40.

## **5. Recreational Golden Tilefish Fishing Year (*Attachment 5*)**

In several recent years, the recreational sector for golden tilefish has experienced early closures, resulting in potentially different access to the fishery throughout the region. The Council has requested that the AP provide input on how these closures are affecting the fishery and whether a change to the fishing year could potentially help spread access more evenly throughout parts of the region where golden tilefish are an important component of the recreational sector.

Staff will present recent recreational catch trends, and the AP will discuss the issue and potential management responses.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

## **6. Black Grouper Fishery Performance Report and Stock Risk Rating (*Attachments 6a and 6b*)**

With input from the APs, [Fishery Performance Reports](#) (FPRs) have been developed for several South Atlantic species. The intent of the FPRs is to assemble information from AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. The FPRs will be provided to the SSC, the Socio-Economic Panel (SEP), and the Council to assist in their discussions. A management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the South Atlantic black grouper stock is being completed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. Following the assessment, the Council may consider changes to catch levels, including acceptable biological catch (ABC). Per the Council's ABC Control Rule, the AP will provide input and a recommended stock risk score for the Council's consideration in developing the stock risk rating.

Using an online application, Council staff will provide an overview of landings trends and other background information. Council staff will present questions to prompt discussion that can inform Council decisions responding to the MSE and provide preliminary risk scores and related information for black grouper.

The AP will develop the FPR using the provided questions. The AP will also provide recommendations and rationale for any adjustments to the preliminary risk scores.

**AP Action:** Provide information to develop the FPR and stock risk score recommendations.

## **7. Florida Hogfish Stock Risk Rating (*Attachments 7a and 7b*)**

In 2024, the AP developed an [FPR](#) for the East Florida and Florida Keys stock of hogfish (Florida hogfish), in preparation for the SEDAR 94 stock assessment. Following the assessment, the Council will consider changes to catch levels, including acceptable biological catch (ABC). Per the Council's ABC Control Rule, the AP will provide input and a recommended stock risk score for the Council's consideration in developing the stock risk rating.

Council staff will summarize the input provided to develop the FPR. Council staff will also provide preliminary risk scores and related information for Florida hogfish. The AP will review this information and provide recommendations and rationale for, and adjustments to, the preliminary risk scores.

**AP Action:** Provide stock risk score recommendations.

## **8. Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (*Attachment 8*)**

As part of the ongoing South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), research has recently been conducted assessing angler preferences to better understand attitudes and fishing behavior in the recreational fishery. This research is intended to be used to enhance the Snapper Grouper MSE and aid the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in future decision making.

Results of the angler preferences and fishing behavior study will be presented to the AP, and Council staff will discuss initial plans for incorporating this information into the ongoing Snapper Grouper MSE.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

## **9. Commercial SG 1 Permit and Trip Efficiency (*Amendment 60; Attachment 9*)**

Amendment 60 considers revisions to the commercial snapper grouper unlimited (SG 1) permit and changes to management measures intended to increase commercial trip efficiency. Actions include consideration of removal of the snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit 2-for-1 policy, revision of bottom longline gear requirements to allow switching to or from this gear within a trip, trip limit changes for 5 species, establishment of a process to temporarily adjust trip limits based on the previous year's harvest for 8 species, and revision of trip limit requirements related to the possession and sale of harvested fish.

Council staff will introduce the actions under consideration. The AP will discuss and provide recommendations.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

## **10. Snapper Grouper Commercial SG 2 (225-Pound) Permit (*Attachment 10*)**

With potential changes to the 2-for-1 policy being considered through Amendment 60, the Council has requested that the AP discuss what role the SG 2 (225-pound) snapper grouper commercial permit should have in the long-term future of the fishery. Staff will present information related to the number of SG 2 permits over time. The AP will discuss and provide recommendations for future use of the SG 2 permit, notably with the context of potential removal of the SG 1 permit 2-for-1 policy.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

## **11. Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision (*Amendment 61*) (*Attachment 11*)**

The Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) currently consists of 55 species, many of which are unassessed or have very low landings. The Council is considering changes to the species composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU through Amendment 61 to streamline ongoing management of the FMU. In doing so, the Council has selected 14 species to further evaluate if there is a continued need for conservation and management. The Council has indicated that these species may be up for removal from the FMU altogether or designated as ecosystem component (EC) species.

Amendment 61 was last reviewed by the AP at the October 2025 meeting. Since then, the amendment has continued to be developed and further refined. The AP will be provided an update on what has changed in the amendment and asked if there are any updates to previous AP recommendations or additional feedback for the Council to consider.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide input, as appropriate.

### **12. South Atlantic Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZ) Research (*Attachment 12*)**

The Council established five Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZs) in 2017, where fishing for, harvest of, and/or possession of snapper-grouper species is prohibited. Three of these SSMZs are natural sites with a sunset on regulations after 10 years, while two artificial-reef SSMZs did not have the sunset provision. The Council intended to use the 10-year period to gather additional information to determine whether the natural sites are functioning as effective spawning areas for the focal species listed in the System Management Plan for the SSMZs.

To support the evaluation of the SSMZs and other protected areas, the Council established the System Management Plan (SMP) Workgroup. Based on guidance from the SMP Workgroup, Council staff developed a questionnaire for the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel to inform this evaluation. This questionnaire is a condensed version of the full assessment that will be completed by the workgroup. Responses will be summarized and incorporated into the workgroup's report to the Council. Information and links can be found in the presentation. Members of the panel are asked to complete [this survey](#) in advance of the meeting. Survey results will be used to facilitate discussion during the meeting and will be provided to the SMP Workgroup.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide input, as appropriate.

### **13. Other Business**