



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Jessica McCawley, Chair | Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair

John Carmichael, Executive Director

AGENDA

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston

2934 West Montague

North Charleston, SC 29418

October 6-8, 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, October 6, 2026, 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

1:00 pm – 1:20 pm

Welcome and Introductions

Approval of Agenda – Chris Kimrey

Approval of April 2026 AP minutes – Chris Kimrey

Public Comment

1:20 pm – 1:45 pm

1. Committee Chair Remarks and Council Discussion Update – Kerry Marhefka, Snapper Grouper Committee Vice Chair (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

1:45 pm – 2:15 pm

2. Updates (*Attachments 2a-2c*)
 - a. Ongoing and Recently-Initiated Amendments Not Scheduled for Discussion at This Meeting – Michael Schmidtke
 - b. Council Workplan – Michael Schmidtke
 - c. SEDAR – Emily Ott
 - d. **AP Action:** Individual members can volunteer to participate in SEDAR 106 Stock Assessment and technical team.

2:15 pm – 3:00 pm

3. Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report (FPR) and Stock Risk Rating (*Attachments 3a and 3b*)
 - a. Introductory Information – Chip Collier

--- Break ---

3:15 pm – 5:00 pm

- b. AP Discussion and Development of FPR – Michael Schmidtke
- c. Stock Risk Rating – Judd Curtis
- d. **AP Action:** Develop the fishery performance report and a recommendation for the stock risk rating for red grouper.

Wednesday, October 7, 2026, 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

9:00 am – 11:00 am

- 4. Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60) (*Attachments 4a and 4b*)
 - a. Vessel Monitoring System and Notifications Presentation – Jessica Stephen and Kelly Spalding, NOAA Fisheries
 - b. Overview – Michael Schmidtke
 - c. **AP Action:** Review the amendment and recommend preferred alternatives, as appropriate.

--- Break 10:15 am – 10:30 am ---

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

- 5. Headboat Vessel Limits and Golden Tilefish Catch Levels (Regulatory Amendment 38) (*Attachment 5*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

--- Lunch ---

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

- 6. Commercial Discard Monitoring (*Attachment 6*)
 - a. Presentation on Electronic Monitoring Systems – Carole Neidig and Max Lee, Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at Mote Marine Laboratory
 - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations on ways to improve commercial discard monitoring, as appropriate.

2:30 pm – 3:00 pm

- 7. Sunsetting of the Spawning Special Management Zones (Regulatory Amendment 39) (*Attachment 7*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

--- Break ---

3:15 – 4:15 pm

- 8. Yellowtail and Mutton Snapper (Amendment 44) (*Attachment 8*)
 - a. Overview – Allie Iberle
 - b. **AP Action:** Provide recommendations, as appropriate.

4:15 pm – 5:00 pm

- 9. Comprehensive Commercial Sale and Revision to Framework Procedures Amendment (*Attachment 9*)
 - a. Overview – Myra Brouwer

- b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations on how to ensure that commercial permits are being used for commercial fishing.

Thursday, October 8, 2026, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

9:00 am – 10:00 am

10. Citizen Science Program Update

- a. Overview of Citizen Science Program Activities – Julia Byrd and Meg Withers
- b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide feedback on development of the 2027 SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program and on a project idea aiming to partner with fishermen to collect bottom temperature data.

--- Break ---

10:15 am – 11:15 am

11. Black Sea Bass Commercial On-Demand Pots (Regulatory Amendment 40) (*Attachment II*)

- a. Overview – Myra Brouwer
- b. **AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

11:15 am – 11:30 am

12. Review/Update of Upcoming Meetings – Michael Schmidtke

11:30 am – 11:45 am

13. Other Business

11:45 am – 12:00 pm

Public Comment

Adjourn

Advisory Panel Members:

Chris Kimrey (Chair)
Haley Stephens (Vice Chair)
George Beyer
Vincent Bonura
Gettys Brannon
Scott Buff
Andrew Fish
Richard Gomez
Tim Griner
Stephen Gross
Jeffrey Hudson
Robert Johnson

Matt Mathews
Randy McKinley
Jeff Marinko
Chris Militello
David Moss
Paul Nelson
John Polston
Paul Rudershausen
K.P. Scott
Cameron Sebastian
Darrin Willingham
Todd Kellison, Non-Voting Member

Attachments:

Attachment 1a: June 2026 and September 2026 Snapper Grouper Committee Final Reports

Attachment 1b: Snapper Grouper Chair Presentation (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 2a: Update on recent regulation changes and status of amendments (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 2b: September 2026 Council Work Plan

Attachment 2c: SEDAR Update Presentation

Attachment 3a: Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report Questions (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 3b: Red Grouper Stock Risk Rating Matrix (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 4a: Amendment 60 (Commercial SG 1 Permit and Trip Efficiency) Discussion Document

Attachment 4b: NOAA Fisheries Vessel Monitoring System Presentation

Attachment 5: Regulatory Amendment 38 (Headboat Vessel Limits and Golden Tilefish) Discussion Document

Attachment 6: Mote Electronic Monitoring Presentation (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 7: Regulatory Amendment 39 (Spawning SMZs) Discussion Document

Attachment 8: Amendment 44/Reef Fish 55 (Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper) Discussion Document

Attachment 9: Comprehensive Commercial Sale and Revision to Framework Procedures Amendment Discussion Document

Attachment 10: Citizen Science Presentation (*available on 9/29*)

Attachment 11: Regulatory Amendment 40 (Black Sea Bass On-Demand Pots) Discussion Document

Attachment 12: Summary of Upcoming Meetings (*available on 9/29*)

Staff Lead: Michael Schmidtke (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 June 2026 and September 2026 Council Meetings.

2. Updates (*Attachments 2a-2c*)

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

SEDAR staff will provide an update on recently finished, ongoing, and upcoming SEDAR projects and request volunteers to participate in upcoming SEDAR 106 South Atlantic Gag Grouper Stock Assessment and SEDAR 1XX South Atlantic Red Grouper Stock Assessment.

3. Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report and Stock Risk Rating

With input from the APs, [Fishery Performance Reports \(FPR\)](#) 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 stock assessment for Red Grouper is scheduled for 2027-2028. Following the completion of the assessment, the Council may consider changes to catch levels, including the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Per the Council's ABC Control Rule, the AP will provide input and recommend a stock risk score for the Council's consideration in developing the stock risk rating.

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.

4. Commercial Management Measures (Amendment 60; *Attachments 4a and 4b*)

Amendment 60 considers revisions to the commercial snapper grouper transferrable (SG 1) permit and changes to management measures intended to increase commercial trip efficiency. Actions include consideration of removal of the snapper grouper commercial transferrable 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 several snapper grouper species. The Council has selected preliminary preferred alternatives for all actions. This amendment will be considered for final approval in December 2026.

Council staff will review the actions under consideration and a summary of potential effects. NOAA Fisheries staff will present information about vessel monitoring systems, which are being considered for commercial vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip. The AP will discuss and provide recommendations on the alternatives.

AP Action: Review the amendment and recommend preferred alternatives, as appropriate.

5. Headboat Vessel Limit and Golden Tilefish Catch Levels (Regulatory Amendment 38; Attachment 5)

The Council is considering establishing a headboat vessel limit for gag and black grouper. This vessel limit would allow vessels that meet a specific criteria to retain a “per six passenger” vessel limit of gag and black grouper. The Council is also considering establishing a “vessel cap” in conjunction with the vessel limit which would set a maximum number of fish regardless of passenger count. In addition, this amendment contains an action to revise the golden tilefish ABC, ACL, and OY based on the most recent stock assessment.

AP Action: Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

6. Commercial Discard Monitoring (Attachment 6)

In September 2026, the Council discussed the collection and use of information on commercial discards. Electronic monitoring of the commercial fishery has been piloted through a study fleet, led by the Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at Mote Marine Laboratory. Mote staff will present information on this program.

AP Action: Discuss and provide recommendations on ways to improve commercial discard monitoring, as appropriate.

7. Sunset of the Spawning Special Management Zones (Regulatory Amendment 39; Attachment 7)

In 2016, Amendment 36 established five spawning special management zones (SSMZs): South Cape Lookout, North Carolina; Georgetown/Devil’s Hole, Area 51 and Area 53, South Carolina; and Warsaw Hole, Florida. The goal of these areas was to protect spawning fish and their habitat. Three of the SSMZs, South Cape Lookout, Georgetown/Devil’s Hole, and Warsaw Hole had a sunset provision on the regulations put in place through this amendment. The sunset provision allowed 10 years to conduct research and monitoring in the SSMZs to determine if they provided protection for spawning fish. The Council is now considering extending the sunset provision for an additional 10 years to allow more time for additional research and monitoring.

AP Action: Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

8. Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper (Amendment 44; Attachment 8)

The Southeastern stocks of mutton and yellowtail snapper were recently assessed through SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96, respectively. The stocks for both species are considered a single unit in the Gulf and South Atlantic and therefore catch levels will be modified via a joint amendment, with the Gulf Council as administrative lead. This amendment will establish the stock OFL and ABC, update jurisdictional apportionment of each stock’s ABC between the Councils, update regional ACLs, and update the South Atlantic sector allocations for both species. At the September 2026 meeting, the Council approved this amendment for public hearings, which will be held jointly with the Gulf Council in the fall.

AP Action: Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

9. Comprehensive Commercial Sale and Revision to Framework Procedures Amendment (Attachment 9)

During scoping hearings for Snapper Grouper Amendment 60 the Council received comments related to the enforcement of daily trip limits sales, noting that for areas where fish houses are open for limited hours on weekends, fishermen cannot sell their harvest each day. Because they

can only sell one trip limit per day, they miss out on being able to fish and generate income on days when dealers are unable to buy their harvest.

In September 2025, the Council stated that the intent of limiting purchase or sale was to allow for more efficient enforcement, not to prohibit harvest on days when fish houses are closed. Council members also noted that the completion of a “sale” is unclear, given current practices in the commercial sector (fish may be transferred from the fishermen to the dealer, but payment for those fish may occur later). Both the Snapper Grouper and the Law Enforcement AP discussed this issue in 2026 and the Council instructed staff to begin working on a comprehensive amendment to the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP), and Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plans (FMP) to address this issue.

The amendment would also address revisions to the abbreviated framework process for amending a fishery management plan. The Council has been looking for possible avenues to expedite making changes to trip limits and other management measures. Currently, trip and bag limit modifications can be made via a framework amendment. Such an amendment, also referred to as a Regulatory Amendment, is limited to pre-specified actions in the FMP. The abbreviated version of the framework process can currently only be used to adjust catch levels, so the Council wants to expand the list of actions that can be done via an abbreviated framework for the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMPs.

AP Action: Staff will provide an overview and the AP will be asked to provide examples of when commercial sale transactions have been limited by the current interpretation of the regulations pertaining to commercial sale. Additionally, the Council requests feedback on how to ensure that commercial snapper grouper permits are being used as intended.

10. Citizen Science Program Update (*Attachment 10*)

Council staff will provide an update on recent Citizen Science Program activities, including updates on the FISHstory project and analysis efforts; the SAFMC Release project, including metrics from the 2026 Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo and performance of the 2026 SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program; and a project idea aiming to partner with fishermen to collect bottom temperature data.

AP Action: Discuss and provide feedback on development of the 2027 SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program and on a project idea aiming to partner with fishermen to collect bottom temperature data.

11. Black Sea Bass Commercial On-Demand Pots (Regulatory Amendment 40; *Attachment 11*)

Regulatory Amendment 40 proposes to allow black sea bass pots equipped with on-demand retrieval systems (on-demand gear) in nearshore areas that are closed seasonally to protect North Atlantic right whales (NARW). In June 2026, the Council removed consideration of a trip limit reduction for pots and added an alternative to consider a season for pots with on-demand gear. Also, because the fishing year starts January 1, alternatives have been re-worded to reflect this and to take into account the spawning season closure during February and March that is proposed in Regulatory Amendment 37 (under NMFS review).

AP Action: Discuss and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

12. Review/Update of Upcoming Meetings (*Attachment 12*)

Council staff will update the AP on several upcoming meetings that are relevant for the snapper grouper fishery, including public hearings for ongoing amendments, outreach events, and Council meetings.

13. Other Business