

# OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

April 23-25, 2013

Charleston, SC

## **A. Update on Only Reliable Catch Stocks (ORCS) Workshop & SSC Meeting (April 8-11, 2013)**

At their April 2012 meeting, the SSC requested that a workshop be held to address the ORCS method and how best to apply it to SAFMC stocks. The ORCS-based approach would replace the decision-tree method currently specified for Tier 4 of the ABC Control rule (*Attachment 2*). The SSC is being asked to apply the ORCS approach to develop a method for supporting ABC recommendations for unassessed SAFMC stocks. The SSC will then be asked to review workshop findings and provide ABC recommendations to the Council at the October 2013 meeting. Existing ABC recommendations are summarized in *Attachment 2*. Much of the effort so far to apply the ORCS approach addresses stock scoring through the various ORCS metrics. However, another critical component needed to derive OFL and ABC is a measure of catch. The ORCS report recommends using a period of stability. Selection of a reference period is to be made by the SSC.

An updated stock assessment of black sea bass was requested in fall 2012 to evaluate the impacts on the fishery in recent years and an increase in fishery-independent survey abundance. The SSC will review the update assessment and provide revised fishing level recommendations as necessary. The Council is holding a special meeting on May 13, 2013, to consider black sea bass fishing level recommendations. Adjustments to the black sea bass ACL based on those recommendations would be made through Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 19.

## **B. Update on Completed and Future Amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP**

Regulatory Amendment 13 – The amendment would revise the acceptable biological catch estimates, annual catch limits (including sector annual catch limits), and recreational annual catch targets for 37 un-assessed species in the snapper grouper management unit. The revisions incorporate updates to the recreational data for these species, as per the new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), as well as revisions to commercial and for-hire landings. Regulatory Amendment 13 is necessary to avoid triggering accountability measures for these snapper grouper species based on annual catch limits that were established by the Comprehensive ACL Amendment in April 2012, using recreational data under the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) system. NMFS no longer uses the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey and now estimates recreational landings using the Marine Recreational

Information Program. NMFS will receive public comment on the proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 13 from March 21, 2013, through April 22, 2013.

Regulatory Amendment 15 – This amendment would adjust the optimum yield and increase the annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and remove the accountability measure that requires a closure of all shallow water groupers (red grouper, black grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, coney, and graysby) when the gag commercial annual catch limit is met or projected to be met. It would also adjust the gag commercial ACL to account for post-quota-bycatch mortality. The amendment was submitted to NMFS for formal review on March 1, 2013.

Regulatory Amendment 16 – The amendment is being developed in response to a request from golden tilefish longline fishermen to extend the fishing season and diminish derby conditions in the fishery. The Council reviewed an Options Paper for this amendment at their March 2013 meeting. Analyses for the action contained in this amendment will be presented to the Council at their June 2013 meeting. However, the Council requested that a meeting of all longline endorsement holders be convened prior to the June Council meeting to provide input to the Council on possible actions. However, NMFS is not releasing the names of individuals who qualified for a longline endorsement until the final rule for Amendment 18B is published.

Regulatory Amendment 17 – The Council received a presentation and report from the February 2013 meeting of the MPA Expert Workgroup. The report contained recommendations for designation of new MPAs and re-orientation of existing Deepwater MPAs to protect populations of speckled hind and warsaw grouper. The Council intends to address designation of MPAs at their September 2013 meeting. The Council will develop a Purpose and Need statement and focus on re-orientation of existing Deepwater MPAs and areas important to spawning fish. If the Council chooses to move forward with designating MPAs, then actions to do so would be contained in Regulatory Amendment 17.

Regulatory Amendment 18 -- This amendment would revise annual catch limits for vermilion snapper and red porgy, and revise the annual catch target for red porgy based on results of the latest SEDAR updates for these two species. Also, if approved, the amendment would reduce the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper to 1,000 lbs gw. When 75% of the commercial ACL has been met or projected to be met, the commercial trip limit would be lowered to 500 lbs gw. The amendment also proposes to remove the recreational closed season for vermilion snapper. The amendment will be submitted to NMFS for formal review on April 5, 2013.

Regulatory Amendment 19 – In anticipation of an ACL adjustment for black sea bass in response to the stock assessment update conducted in Spring 2013, the Council is developing Regulatory Amendment 19 to take the necessary action(s). To expedite implementation of an adjusted ACL, the Council will hold a webinar on May 13, 2013 to review the analyses contained in Regulatory Amendment 19 and vote to submit it to

NMFS for formal review. If at all possible, the Council has requested that any increases to the black sea bass ACL be effective prior to the beginning of the upcoming fishing year.

Amendment 27 -- This amendment, if approved, would transfer management of Nassau grouper in the Gulf of Mexico to the SAFMC; increase the crew size limit to four for dual-permitted vessels (those with a Snapper Grouper Unlimited or 225-Pound Permit and a Charter/Headboat Permit for Snapper Grouper); eliminate the restriction on retention of bag limit quantities of certain snapper grouper species for captain and crew of for-hire vessels; modify the existing snapper grouper framework procedure to allow for more timely adjustments to ACLs; and remove blue runner from the Snapper Grouper FMP. The Amendment will be submitted to NMFS for formal review in May 2013.

Amendment 28 – The actions in Amendment 28, if implemented, would establish (1) an annual process to determine if a fishing season for red snapper will occur in the South Atlantic, including specification of the allowable harvest and season lengths for the commercial and recreational sectors; (2) an equation to determine the annual catch limit amount for each sector; and (3) management measures if fishing is allowed. It is important to note that the proposed actions, if they are implemented, only specify a process to determine if a season would occur: If estimated red snapper landings and dead discards that occurred in the previous year are equal to or greater than the acceptable biological catch for the current year, no harvest would be allowed and the annual catch limit would remain zero. However, if the previous year's estimated landings and dead discards are less than the acceptable biological catch, then the annual catch limit would be set to the amount of harvest that may be allowed for the current year. NMFS is receiving comments on Amendment 28 until May 13, 2013.

Generic Dealer Amendment -- The proposed action would modify the current permitting and reporting requirements for seafood dealers who first receive federally managed species. Currently, there are five federal dealer permits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, and the permits and reporting requirements are different depending on the species purchased. The proposed action would require a federal dealer permit to first receive the following additional species: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic resources and spiny lobster, and Gulf of Mexico red drum. The proposed rule would also create a single dealer permit that would allow the holder to first receive any of the species managed under the eight fishery management plans. The SAFMC approved the amendment for formal review at their March 2013 meeting.

Generic Headboat Reporting Amendment -- An action to address charter/headboat reporting was originally included in CE-BA 3. At the December 2012 meeting, the Council voted to develop that action in a separate generic amendment jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Council and so amend the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMPs to modify data reporting for charter/headboat vessels. The Councils' currently preferred alternative would require that headboats submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director (SRD) weekly or at intervals shorter than a

week if notified. Weekly is defined as 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). The SAFMC approved the amendment for formal review at their March 2013 meeting.

Generic Logbook Amendment -- During the December 2012 meeting, the South Atlantic Council approved a motion moving the commercial logbook reporting action out of CE-BA 3 and indicated their wish to work with the Gulf Council on a joint amendment to address commercial logbook issues in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The amendment includes an action to consider modifying the timing of reporting requirements for commercial logbooks in fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic resources, dolphin/wahoo, and golden crab fisheries, and providing an option for logbooks to be submitted electronically. The amendment also considers requiring that the components of the commercial logbooks (landings, economic, and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip. This would increase the timeline for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin/wahoo fishermen to complete logbooks, and decrease the timeline for golden crab fishermen. Commercial electronic logbooks, as proposed in this amendment, would not be used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they could serve as a means to verify dealer reports and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program standards that require two sources for verification of quota-monitored species. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the commercial logbook landings, with the new timing and compliance requirements specified in this amendment, to compare with commercial trip ticket landings to help ensure the commercial ACLs are not exceeded. The Council provided the following guidance at their March 2013 meeting:

- Continue working with the Gulf Council to develop this amendment
- Coordinate with the SEFSC on removal of several reporting items on the commercial logbook form and provide a status report at the June 2013 meeting
- Work with the SEFSC to develop a schedule of meetings/workgroup with commercial fishermen in the Gulf and South Atlantic to work on developing the electronic logbook and bring to the Council in June 2013.

#### **C. Presentations on VMS and Electronic Monitoring (Attachments 3 & 4)**

After the December 2012 meeting, the Council requested that NOAA provide a presentation on Vessel Monitoring Systems to the Snapper Grouper Committee in March 2013. It was also requested that a similar presentation be given to the AP. Mr. Pat O'Shaugnessy, VMS Program Manager, will give the presentation to the AP and answer questions. Mr. Scott Baker of North Carolina Sea Grant will present to the AP the results of a pilot study to evaluate use of video monitoring on snapper grouper bandit vessels. This information is being provided since the Council is considering requiring the use of VMS on commercial snapper grouper vessels in Amendment 30.

#### **D. Snapper Grouper Amendment 30 (VMS; Attachment 5 & 6)**

The Council reviewed a draft of Amendment 30 at their March 2013 meeting and made a number of modifications to the amendment. The Council is proposing changes to regulations that would require all commercial snapper grouper fishing vessels with a

South Atlantic Federal Unlimited or Trip-limited (225 pounds) Permit to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems (VMS). The SAFMC is not considering a requirement for VMS on recreational or for-hire vessels unless those vessels also have a Federal South Atlantic Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit. The purpose of this amendment is to monitor snapper grouper commercial fishing vessel activity and location in the region in order to improve the enforcement, science, and management of snapper grouper stocks. The amendment was approved for public hearings, which are being held in April 2013. **Attachment 6** is provided as additional background information on VMS and Electronic Monitoring.

**E. Presentation on Fishery Independent Reef Fish Surveys**

Staff of the Marine Research, Monitoring, and Assessment Program (MARMAP) will give the AP an overview of the various fishery independent surveys that are used in the South Atlantic to obtain data on snapper grouper species. In addition to explaining the methodology of the surveys, the presentation will include trends in CPUE and other information that is used in stock assessments.

**F. Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 14 (Attachment 7)**

This regulatory amendment contains 9 actions dealing with various aspects of snapper grouper species management. The actions currently included in the amendment would modify the commercial fishing year for greater amberjack; change the measurement method for gray triggerfish; increase the minimum size limit for hogfish; modify the commercial and recreational fishing years for black sea bass; change the commercial fishing season for vermilion snapper; modify the aggregate grouper bag limit; and revise the accountability measures for gag and vermilion snapper. Analyses for this amendment are ongoing, and a draft will be presented to the Council in June 2013. The Council is expected to approve the amendment for public hearings at that meeting. Hearings will be held in August 2013.

**G. Regional Recreational Fishing Year Start Dates for Black Sea Bass (Attachment 8)**

Regulatory Amendment 14 contains actions to modify the commercial and recreational fishing years for black sea bass. During discussions regarding these actions at the March 2013 meeting, the possibility of regional allocations or rolling fishing year start dates resurfaced. Hence the Council requests that the AP discuss alternatives for modifying the black sea bass recreational fishing year in a manner that would address regional needs. Specifically, the Council approved a motion to ask that the AP provide input on possible regional recreational fishing year start dates for South Atlantic black sea bass.

## **H. Finding a Way Forward: Shared Vision and Strategic Planning for the Snapper Grouper Fishery (Attachment 9)**

The Council held a workshop on Monday, March 4, 2013 to continue discussion of a vision and strategic planning for the snapper grouper fishery. The discussion centered on the process that the Council would use to move forward. Part of that process involves receiving input from the Snapper Grouper AP and other stakeholders. Therefore, the AP is asked to comment on the decisions the Council made in March and provide their recommendations.

### **I. Other Business**

AP members should bring up issues that they wish to discuss with the group. Some of the items that AP members have indicated an interest to discuss are:

- Electronic logbook reporting – recreational, headboat, & charter (ACCSP?)
- ELB's (black boxes @ \$300.00/ea) proposed by Scott Baker in lieu of VMS
- Making SG permits transferable, as 1 for 1 like the corporate permits
- Snapper grouper (could also have lobster, cobia, AP's, etc.) stamp/endorsement for recreational anglers in the SA
- Monitoring buoys in MPA's to help with enforcement