

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee

September 14 & 15, 2010
The Charleston Marriott Hotel
170 Lockwood Boulevard
Charleston, SC

The Snapper Grouper Committee needs to: (A) receive presentations on the SSC Meeting and the analysis of red snapper closure alternatives; (B) review alternatives in Amendment 18, modify document as necessary, provide guidance to staff, and approve for a second round of public hearings; and (C) review alternatives in Amendments 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, Regulatory Amendment 9, and the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and modify documents as necessary;

A. Oculina Outreach Report

Council staff participated in the National Marine Educator's Association's annual meeting July 19-23, 2010 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. During the conference, staff partnered with outreach staff from the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council to host a display at the conference featuring the work of the regional fishery management councils regarding marine protected areas in federal waters. Copies of the South Atlantic Council's publications on Deepwater MPAs that include information on the Oculina Bank Experimental Closed Area were made available to the more than 250 educators attending the conference, along with the Oculina Bank Regulations rack cards. In addition, Council staff also presented a paper "*Regional Fisheries Management Councils: Providing Sound Stewardship of Our Nation's Fisheries*" at the conference in conjunction with the Western Pacific Council's Education Specialist, highlighting current issues being addressed by the regional fishery management councils. The paper was presented in conjunction with the sponsorship of an issue the NMEA's Journal "Current" as part of the 2009 national outreach campaign coordinated by all eight regional fishery management councils, and included information on management the Oculina Bank.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

B. SSC Report (Attachment 1)

Dr. Carolyn Belcher, SSC Chair, will provide an overview of the August SSC meeting, including the SSC control rule for species that have not been assessed (**Attachment 1**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

C. Analysis of Closure Alternatives as a Result of Potential Changes from Benchmark (Attachment 2)

The Council is scheduled to receive the results of a SEDAR benchmark stock assessment for red snapper at the December 2010 Council meeting. The Council needs to discuss the necessary actions if the latest assessment requires a change in management. Dr. Nick Farmer, NMFS SERO staff, will present an analysis of closure alternatives as a result of potential changes that could come from the benchmark assessment. **Attachment 2** outlines the procedural vehicles available to the Council.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide staff/Team guidance on what approaches (e.g., NMFS Area Closure Model, others) and what mechanism (Emergency/Interim Rule/Framework) to analyze for consideration at the December Council meeting.

D. Amendment 18 (Attachments 3 & 4)

Actions proposed in Amendment 18 (**Attachment 3**) would:

- Extend the range of the Snapper Grouper FMP north;
- Designate EFH in the new northern areas.
- Limit participation and effort in the golden tilefish fishery through an endorsement system;
- Change the golden tilefish fishing year;
- Change the golden tilefish trip limits;
- Limit participation and effort in the black sea bass pot fishery;
- Reduce bycatch in the black sea bass pot fishery;
- Implement a black sea bass spawning season closure;
- Change the black sea bass fishing year; and
- Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of fisheries statistics.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 18, modify document as necessary, select preferred alternatives where possible, provide guidance to staff, and approve for 2nd round of public hearings.

E. Amendment 20 (Attachment 5)

Actions proposed in Amendment 20 (**Attachment 5**) would:

- Modify and update the wreckfish ITQ program

The Council will receive an update on contact attempted with all shareholders, how many are deceased, and how many have not been able to be contacted.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 20, modify the document as necessary, select preferred alternatives where possible, and provide guidance to staff.

F. ABC Control Rule and Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Attachments 1; 6-8)

The Council will receive a presentation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the ABC Control Rule for species that have not been assessed through SEDAR (**Attachment 1**). The Comprehensive ACL amendment will specify the ABC Control Rule, ABCs, ACLs, ACTs, AMs, and allocations for all species managed by the Council not subject to overfishing (**Attachment 6**). This includes species in the Snapper Grouper, Coral, Golden Crab, Sargassum, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs. NMFS-SERO staff will provide a presentation on species groupings (**Attachment 8**). The State of Florida has provided comments on state management of certain species (**Attachment 7**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Modify document as necessary and provide guidance to Team.

G. Amendment 21 – Comprehensive Catch Shares (Attachments 9-12)

The Amendment 21 IPT has developed an options paper for the Council to review.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff on the actions/alternatives to be included in the options paper developed by the Amendment 21 IPT.

H. Amendment 22 – Long-term Red Snapper Management (Attachment 13)

The Council passed the following motion at the March 2010 meeting:

MOTION #25: DIRECTED STAFF TO DEVELOP A PLAN FOR PREPARING AMENDMENT 22 TO ADDRESS LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT FOR RED SNAPPER AND IDENTIFY THE LEVEL OF RESOURCES THAT WOULD BE NECESSARY.

Attachment 13 outlines possible options for the Council’s consideration, including Catch Share and Tag Programs.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide guidance to staff on actions/alternatives to be included in the amendment.

I. Amendment 24 (Attachment 14)

Amendment 24 specifies the following: for red grouper, specify the following: MSY, rebuilding plan (including ACLs, AMs, and OY), and allocations. For black grouper, specify OY, ABC Control Rule, ACLs, AMs, and allocations (both jurisdictional and sector) (**Attachment 14**). Jurisdictional allocations alternatives have been added for black grouper for the Council’s consideration.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 24, modify document as necessary, and provide guidance to staff.

J. Regulatory Amendment 9 - Black Sea Bass, Vermilion Snapper, Gag & Greater Amberjack Trip Limits and Sea Turtle Release Gear Changes (Attachment 15)

Regulatory Amendment 9 specifies trip limits for certain species and changes to the sea turtle release gear (**Attachment 15**). NMFS-SERO staff has performed a trip limit analysis for black sea bass, vermilion snapper, and gag.

Amendment 15B implemented measures to minimize the impacts of incidental take on sea turtles and smalltooth sawfish. More specifically, the Council/NOAA Fisheries required sea turtle bycatch release equipment, and sea turtle and smalltooth sawfish handling protocols and guidelines in the permitted commercial and for-hire snapper grouper fisheries. These gear requirements went into effect on February 15, 2010.

Concerns have been raised that the gear requirements are unnecessary for for-hire fishermen. Some believe that the required specifications for bolt cutters, dehookers, and disentanglement tools is appropriate for “heavy duty” equipment and should not be required for non-longline vessels. For example, dehooking and disentanglement tools

that are included are the line cutter which must be capable of cutting 2.0–2.1 mm (0.078 in - 0.083 in) monofilament line (400–lb test) or polypropylene multistrand material known as braided or tarred mainline; bolt cutters, which must be able to cut hard metals, such as stainless or carbon steel hooks, up to 1/4–inch (6.35 mm) diameter; and dehookers built out of 5/16” stainless steel. Evidently, these items were intended for use with pelagic longline tackle, and are therefore relatively “heavy duty.” The effectiveness and necessity of these dehooking and disentanglement tools when used with lighter rod and reel tackle has been called into question. NMFS-SERO staff has drafted options for the Council’s consideration and presented those options to the Council at the June meeting.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Regulatory Amendment 9, modify document as necessary, and provide guidance to staff.