

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting

June 10 & 11, 2009
Hutchinson Island Marriott
555 NE Ocean Boulevard
Stuart, FL

The Snapper Grouper Committee needs to: (A) receive an update on outreach and research/monitoring efforts associated with the *Oculina* Bank Experimental Closed Area; (B) receive a report on the red snapper interim rule and rebuilding projections; (C) receive presentations on Amendment 17 economic analysis, closed area evaluations, effects of past regulations on required reduction in red snapper fishing mortality, and red snapper monitoring plan; (D) review alternatives in Amendment 17, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings (if possible); (E) review the MAFMC's motion and consider adding an alternative to Amendment 18 per MAFMC's request; (F) review alternatives in Amendment 18 and provide guidance to staff as necessary; and (G) review the proposed actions in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment and the landings information.

A. *Oculina* Monitoring Report (Attachments 1 & 2)

Kim Iverson and Myra Brouwer will provide an update on outreach efforts and research/monitoring activities, respectively, associated with the *Oculina* Bank Experimental Closed Area (**Attachments 1 & 2**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

B. Red Snapper Interim Rule (Attachments 3-8)

A SEDAR assessment was completed in February 2008 and indicated that red snapper are overfished and undergoing overfishing (**Attachment 3**). The Council received notification, in a letter dated July 8th, 2008, that the South Atlantic red snapper stock is undergoing overfishing and is overfished and that the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to prepare a plan amendment or proposed regulations to end overfishing within one year (**Attachment 4**). Pursuant to Section 305(c)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as reauthorized, the Council discussed, at their June 2008 meeting, a prohibition on harvest and possession of red snapper to be implemented through interim measures. The Council approved the following motion at their June 2008 meeting in Orlando, Florida after reviewing the SSC's approval of the SEDAR stock assessment, extensive public input received during the scoping process and input from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel:

“The Council directed staff to develop a letter to the Regional Administrator requesting the regional office develop an interim rule closing harvest of red snapper and implementing the reductions in fishing mortality as specified in the preferred alternatives in Amendment 16 for gag grouper, vermilion snapper, black grouper, and red grouper.” The Council’s intent is that the Interim Rule would be brought before the Council for consideration at the September 2008 meeting.

A letter, dated July 16th, 2008, was sent to the Regional Administrator requesting the Regional Office to develop an interim rule (**Attachment 5**). NOAA Fisheries (SERO) presented actions in the interim rule to the Committee at the September Council meeting. The Council decided not to proceed with a red snapper interim rule at the time and decided to postpone discussions until the December Council meeting. The Council discussed a red snapper interim rule at the meeting, decided to not to take action, and decided to discuss at the March 2009 meeting.

At the March 2009 meeting, the Council made the following two motions:

MOTION #19: Request an interim rule to implement no harvest of red snapper in the EEZ off NC, SC, GA & FL. [Intent to request an extension for a total of a one year closure and to request the states to adopt compatible regulations].

MOTION #20: Request the Regional Administrator not to publish the final rule (for the interim rule) prior to June 2009 Council meeting.

Based upon the Council’s request for an interim rule (**Attachment 6**), NMFS completed an EA for the interim rule (**Attachment 7**). The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) letters, along with the EA, were sent to the states on 3/27/09 (**Attachment 8**). The CZMA allows the states a maximum of 90 days to reply; however, NMFS is requesting the states to review and reply within 30 days of receipt. Measures to end overfishing and establish a rebuilding program are being developed in Amendment 17.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

C. Red Snapper Rebuilding Projections (Attachments 9-11)

A request was made to SEFSC to develop rebuilding projections for red snapper (**Attachment 9**). These were completed and sent to SERO on 4/2/09 along with an addendum shortly thereafter (**Attachments 10 and 11**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

D. Amendment 17 (Attachments 12-16)

The SSC has provided ABC recommendations for warsaw grouper, speckled hind, snowy grouper, black sea bass, red snapper, vermilion snapper, and gag. Black and red grouper will be assessed beginning this year; the Review Workshop will be held January 25-29, 2010. The SSC will most likely review the results when they meet in June of 2010. The SSC approved the TAC in Amendment 13C for golden tilefish and an assessment update is scheduled to begin mid-2010.

Actions proposed in Amendment 17 (**Attachment 12**) would:

- Specify ACLs, ACTs, and AMs, where necessary, for 10 species undergoing overfishing;
- Modify management measures as needed to limit harvest to the ACL or ACT;
- Specify status determination criteria for red snapper;
- Specify a rebuilding plan for red snapper;
- Specify a monitoring program for red snapper; and
- Update the framework procedure for specification of TAC.

Team members will present various Team recommendations, the economic analysis, evaluations of the closed areas, and the likely effects of previous regulations on red snapper removals (**Attachments 14 and 15**).

At the March 2009 meeting, the Council approved the following motion concerning a red snapper interim rule:

MOTION #21: Request the NMFS to draft a red snapper monitoring program for review at the June 2009 meeting.

The Council will receive a presentation from SEFSC staff on the program (**Attachment 16**).

The timeline is for the Council to review the analyses at the June Council meeting and to approve for public hearings (if possible).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the alternatives in the amendment and analyses, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings (if possible).

E. Extension of the FMU (Attachment 17)

Council staff briefed the MAFMC at their April Council meeting on proposed actions in Amendments 17 and 18, including the action to extend the FMU north. In response, the MAFMC passed the following motion as indicated in their letter, dated April 27th, to Duane Harris (**Attachment 17**):

“Move to request the SAFMC include an alternative in proposed Amendment 18 to its Snapper Grouper FMP for a northern Snapper Grouper Management Unit for deepwater species to be managed by the MAFMC in consultation with the SAFMC.”

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the MAFMC’s motion and consider adding an alternative to Amendment 18 per MAFMC’s request.

F. Amendment 18 (Attachment 18)

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

- Extend the range of the Snapper Grouper FMP north
- Limit participation and effort in the golden tilefish fishery
- Limit participation and effort in the black sea bass pot fishery
- Separate the snowy grouper quota into regions/states
- Separate the gag recreational allocation into regions/states
- Change the golden tilefish fishing year
- Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of fisheries statistics
- Update the wreckfish ITQ program
- Designate EFH in the new northern areas

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 18 and provide guidance to staff as necessary

G. Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Attachments 19 & 20)

The Comprehensive ACL amendment will specify ACLs, ACTs, AMs, and allocations for all species managed by the Council not subject to overfishing (**Attachment 19**). This includes species in the Snapper Grouper, Golden Crab, Coral, Sargassum, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs. The Committee should review landings tables from headboat, MRFSS, and ALS databases in order to develop criteria for consideration of Ecosystem Component species (**Attachment 20**). The SSC is scheduled to provide OFL and ABC recommendations by April 2010. The following timeline is outlined in Version #3 of the SAFMC/NMFS SERO Regional Operations Schedules/Deliverables:

1. Staff/Team prepare analyses of ecosystem species designation by May 12, 2009.
2. Committee/Council review and provide guidance – June 2009 meeting
3. Staff/Team continue to work on draft amendment document during 2009.
4. Committee/Council review and provide guidance during 2009.
5. SSC provides OFL/ABC recommendations by April 2010.
6. Committee/Council review and provide guidance – June 2010 meeting.
7. Approve document for public hearings – September 2010.
8. Public hearings & DEIS review – October/November 2010.
9. Committee/Council review and approve final document – December 2010.
10. SAFMC submits Amendment 17 for formal Secretarial review – December 2010.
11. NMFS implements during 2011 fishing year.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the proposed actions in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment and the landings information.