

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting

September 15 & 16, 2009
The Charleston Marriott Hotel
170 Lockwood Boulevard
Charleston, SC

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 reports on the red snapper interim rule and data analyses from the Science Center (including new rebuilding projections for red snapper); (C) receive presentations on Amendment 17A economic analyses and closed area evaluations, review alternatives in Amendment 17A, review the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement AP recommendations and motions, review alternatives developed by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and the public since the June 2009 meeting, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings; (D) receive presentations on Amendment 17B economic analyses, review alternatives in Amendment 17B, review the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement AP recommendations and motions, review the draft proposed rule, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings; (E) review alternatives in Amendment 18, review the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement AP recommendations and motions, and provide guidance to staff as necessary; (F) review alternatives in Amendment 20, review the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement AP recommendations and motions, and provide guidance to staff as necessary; (G) review the proposed actions in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment and the landings information; and (H) make AP or other constituent appointments to the fishery independent monitoring program workshop.

A. *Oculina* Monitoring Report (Attachment 1)

Kim Iverson will provide an update on outreach efforts associated with the *Oculina* Bank Experimental Closed Area (**Attachment 1**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

B. Red Snapper Interim Rule (Attachments 2-8)

A SEDAR assessment was completed in February 2008 and indicated that red snapper are overfished and undergoing overfishing (**Attachment 2**). 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 3**). 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 4**). 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 December 2008 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 5**), NMFS completed an EA for the interim rule (**Attachment 6**). The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) letters (**Attachment 7**), along with the EA, were sent to the states on 3/27/09. The CZMA allows the states a maximum of 90 days to reply; however, NMFS requested the states to review and reply within 30 days of receipt. A proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on July 6th and the comment period ended August 5th (**Attachment 8**). NMFS will summarize the comments received and give a status report on the remaining steps and schedule. Measures to end overfishing and establish a rebuilding program are being developed in Amendment 17A.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

C. Presentation of Red Snapper Rebuilding Projections and Other Data Analyses (Attachments 9-14)

Data requests were made to SEFSC for Amendments 17A and 17B (**Attachments 9 & 10**). The analyses were sent to SERO (**Attachments 11-14**). The following items are included in the analyses:

- (1) Red snapper sensitivity analyses using dome-shaped selectivity for recreational sectors (**Attachment 11**);
- (2) Red snapper projections *revised* VI (**Attachment 12**);
- (3) Red snapper projections VII (**Attachment 13**);
- (4) Average weight of tilefish recreational landings (**Attachment 14**); and
- (5) P* tables for gag (**Attachment 14**).

Dr. Hester, a consultant hired by the fishing industry, conducted a review of the red snapper stock assessment as outlined in his report dated May 8th, 2009. **Attachment 11** contains three sensitivity runs using various combinations of estimated dome-selectivity curves and a curve proposed by Dr. Hester.

Red Snapper Projection Report VI was originally submitted on May 19th, 2009. **Attachment 12** is a revised report; it contains the original analyses but tables of output have been added to accommodate the July 10th data request. Additional sensitivity runs at $F=F_{CURRENT}$ and $F=0.75F_{40\%}$ were completed incorporating “high, very high, and extremely high” levels of recruitment in 2006.

Attachment 13 contains:

1. An additional constant fishing mortality projection that would rebuild the stock in 35 years, which is the maximum allowable rebuilding time
2. A suite of projections using F30%
3. Provide the value of the yield at F45%

The preferred alternative for golden tilefish in Amendment 17B would institute a recreational ACL in numbers of fish (as has been done with snowy grouper). **Attachment 14** contains a conversion factor for tilefish to convert recreational landings in weight to landings in numbers. **Attachment 14** also contains a preliminary report on a probability-based approach to setting catch limits for gag.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

D. Amendment 17A (Attachments 15-20 & 30)

At the June Meeting, the Council split Amendment 17 into Amendments 17A and 17B. Actions proposed in Amendment 17A (**Attachment 15**) would:

- Specify ACLs for red snapper;
- Modify management measures to end overfishing of red snapper immediately upon implementation of the regulations;
- Specify status determination criteria for red snapper;
- Specify a rebuilding plan for red snapper; and
- Specify a monitoring program for red snapper.

The Committee will receive presentations from members of the Team on the economic effects (**Attachments 16 and 17**) and the effects of the closed area to the stock (**Attachment 18**). Staff will review the alternatives in addition to the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels' recommendations and motions (**Attachments 19 and 20**). The Committee should review alternatives developed by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and the public since the June 2009 meeting (**Attachment 30**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the alternatives and analyses, review Advisory Panel recommendations, review alternatives developed by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and the public since the June 2009 meeting, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings.

E. Amendment 17B (Attachments 21 & 31)

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 17B (**Attachment 21**) would:

- Specify ACLs, ACTs, and AMs, where necessary, for nine species undergoing overfishing;
- Modify management measures as needed to limit harvest to the ACL or ACT;
- Update the framework procedure for specification of TAC.

Staff will review the alternatives in addition to the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels' recommendations and motions (**Attachments 19 and 20**). The Committee should review the draft proposed rule (**Attachment 31**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the alternatives and analyses, review Advisory Panel recommendations, review the draft proposed rule, provide guidance to staff as necessary, and approve for public hearings.

F. Amendment 18 (Attachment 22)

Actions proposed in Amendment 18 (**Attachment 22**) 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; and
- Designate EFH in the new northern areas

Staff will review the alternatives in addition to the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels' recommendations and motions (**Attachments 19 and 20**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 18, review Advisory Panel recommendations, and provide guidance to staff as necessary.

G. Amendment 20 (Attachment 23 & 24)

Actions proposed in Amendment 18 (**Attachment 23**) would:

- Specify ACLs & AMs for wreckfish
- Update the wreckfish ITQ program

A program review of the wreckfish ITQ program is outlined in **Attachment 24**. Staff will review the alternatives in addition to the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels' recommendations and motions (**Attachments 19 and 20**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 20, review Advisory Panel recommendations, and provide guidance to staff as necessary.

H. Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Attachments 25-28)

The Comprehensive ACL amendment will specify ACLs, ACTs, AMs, and allocations for all species managed by the Council not subject to overfishing (**Attachment 25**). This includes species in the Snapper Grouper, Coral, Sargassum, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs. The SSC is scheduled to provide OFL and ABC recommendations by April 2010. The Committee should review the following information:

- (1) The Committee should review the criteria in National Standard 3 Guidelines that discusses the reasons for Federal management of a stock (**Attachment 26**);
- (2) Ecosystem Component Discussion in National Standard 1 Guidelines (**Attachment 27**); and
- (3) Landings from headboat, MRFSS, and ALS databases in order to develop criteria for consideration of Ecosystem Component species (**Attachment 28**).

In addition, a fisherman has requested that the Committee review the current greater amberjack commercial trip limit of 1,000 lbs. The quota of 1,169,931 lbs. has rarely been met (see landings in **Attachment 28** and table below); discuss whether the trip limit should be greater.

	Pounds Guttred Weight	
	Greater Amberjack *	
	2009-2010	2008-2009
May	126,169	107,867
June	63,923	35,253
July	32,276	40,048
August		33,620
September		32,086
October		46,043
November		41,880
December		46,329
January		62,573
February		64,139
March		87,477
April		2,541
Total	222,368	599,863
Expanded Total***	226,371	610,661
Quota	1,169,931	1,169,931
Percent	19.34	52.19

Accessed from <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/quotas/southatlantic/saq.htm> on August 8th, 2009.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the proposed actions in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment and the information provided. Provide guidance to staff in terms of the designation of Ecosystem Component Species and the removal of species from the management unit. Discuss the current greater amberjack commercial trip limit of 1,000 lbs.

I. Fishery Independent Monitoring Program Development Workshop

SAFMC and SEFSC are convening a workshop to develop a fishery independent monitoring program for South Atlantic Snapper grouper species. Previous assessments and Fishery Management Plans document the need for increased independent monitoring programs in the South Atlantic, and this need is becoming even more critical as the Council considers large scale time and area closures to end overfishing for red snapper.

The goals of the workshop are to determine what new monitoring programs may be required and how existing programs may be expanded to provide adequate coverage of the snapper-grouper resource over the range managed by the South Atlantic Council. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for November 16-20, 2009 in Beaufort, NC.

The workshop organizers are interested in including those with broad knowledge of where and when various species are encountered and what types of gears and gear configurations are effective for capturing various species.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Make AP or other constituent appointments to the workshop.