

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 11-13, 2024

The Committee approved the minutes from the March 2024 meeting and the agenda for the June 2024 meeting.

The Committee received an update on the exempted fishing permits (EFP) that have been issued for red snapper discard research projects in Florida.

Red Snapper Management

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff presented the recreational catch estimates for the 2022 and 2023 red snapper seasons. NOAA Fisheries also announced an interim rule that is being finalized to specify 2024 annual catch limits and seasons for red snapper. The interim rule will implement catch levels based on the latest stock assessment for red snapper.

SERO estimates recreational catch rates for red snapper annually to determine the season length for the recreational sector. For 2024, NOAA Fisheries determined the red snapper season will be one day, July 12. NOAA Fisheries has authority to change the recreational season opening in the event of small craft advisory to address safety at sea. The commercial season will open July 8 and last until the commercial ACL has been met.

A recently published study that evaluated potential management strategies for reducing discards of red snapper (Shertzer et al. 2024) was presented by Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) staff. This study was reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in April 2024, and the SSC Chair presented the SSC's comments and recommendations for the ongoing Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), using information from their review of Shertzer et al. (2024).

The Committee then reviewed the MSE workplan and provided guidance on strategies that should be more highly prioritized in development of the MSE.

Wreckfish (SG Amendment 48)

A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, including stakeholder concerns with offloading site and time requirements. At their March 2024 meeting the Council selected preferred alternatives for all actions and approved the amendment for public hearings. Public hearings were held during the June 2024 Council meeting. Staff presented an updated decision document with draft Council rationale for review and a draft amendment document to consider for formal review. The committee passed the following motions, and provided the following direction to staff:

- Direction to staff to modify the Council Conclusions for Action 12 (Pre-Landing Notification) to read: "The Council WAS ADVISED BY THE AGENCY that

implementing a pre-landing notification would allow for bettering monitoring, enforcement, and compliance in the wreckfish portion of the snapper grouper fishery because it would provide law enforcement officers the information they need to intercept vessels as they land. Additionally, the information reported by fishermen as part of the pre-landing notification will help ensure proper monitoring and accounting of wreckfish landings.”

MOTION 1: APPROVE ALL ACTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES IN SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 48 (WRECKFISH), AS MODIFIED.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 2: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 48 (WRECKFISH) FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL (UNANIMOUS)

Gag and Black Grouper Recreational Vessel Limits and On-Demand Gear for Black Sea Bass (Regulatory Amendment 36)

Regulatory Amendment 36 considers revising the gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits and revising commercial black sea bass pot requirements to accommodate the use of on-demand black sea bass pots. The Advisory Panel (AP) Chair presented recommendations developed by the AP at their meeting in April 2024. Council staff presented the draft amendment using a decision document that outlined actions, alternatives, and preliminary effects analyses. The committee passed the following motions, and provided the following direction to staff:

DIRECTION TO STAFF: REVISE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE INTERDISCIPLINARY PLANNING TEAM.

MOTION 3: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (AGGREGATE VESSEL LIMIT FOR PRIVATE COMPONENT) AND ALTERNATIVE 3 (AGGREGATE VESSEL LIMIT FOR FOR-HIRE COMPONENT) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 1.

Action 1. Revise Recreational Vessel Limits for Gag and Black Grouper

Alternative 2. Remove the single species recreational private vessel limits for gag and black grouper. Establish an aggregate **private recreational vessel limit** of two gag or black grouper per vessel per day, not to exceed the daily bag limit of one gag or black grouper per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

Alternative 3. Remove the single species recreational for-hire vessel limits for gag and black grouper. Establish an aggregate **for-hire (charter and headboat) recreational vessel limit** of two gag or black grouper per vessel per trip, not to exceed the daily bag limit of one gag or black grouper per person per day, whichever is more restrictive.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (2ABS)

APPROVED BY COUNCIL (10 IN FAVOR, 2 OPPOSED)

DIRECTION TO STAFF: DEVELOP ONE REPORT EXAMINING HEADBOAT VESSEL LIMITS FOR SOUTH ATLANTIC SNAPPER GROUPE SPECIES (DECEMBER 2024) AND ANOTHER REPORT EXAMINING POTENTIAL DIFFERENT REGULATIONS FOR BLACK GROUPE IN SOUTH FLORIDA (MARCH 2025).

- Include in the headboat report:
 - Discussion of the role headboats play in EEJ objectives.
 - Species currently with recreational vessel limits.
 - Note, the legal definition of a headboat (check with Monica for regional definition).
 - Exploration of general principles for applying recreational vessel limits and angler bag limits in the context of a broad variety of boat capacities.
 - Information on the nature and cost of headboat trips throughout the region (multi-day, species targeted, etc.).
 - Develop discussions assuming any limits would have no retention by captain and crew.
 - Consideration of vessel limits in terms of number of anglers on board, not boat capacity.

MOTION 4: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (BUOY MAY REMAIN CONNECTED) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 2.

Action 2. Revise Transit Stowage Requirements for Black Sea Bass Pots With On-Demand Gear

Alternative 2. On-demand black sea bass pots must be not baited, but may have buoys connected to the gear during transit through a marine protected area, special management zone, or spawning special management zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Revise language of Action 2 - **Alternatives 2 and 3** to note that the definition of “appropriately stowed” is what is being considered for change.

MOTION 5: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 36 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS TO BE HELD VIA WEBINAR PRIOR TO THE SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- 2 webinar hearings

Black Sea Bass (SG Amendment 56)

Amendment 56 responds to the SEDAR 76 stock assessment of black sea bass, which indicates the stock is depleted. In March 2024, the Council requested several pieces of information to help develop initial actions for consideration in this amendment. NMFS sent a letter on May 30 indicating that black sea bass will continue to be listed as not overfished and not overfishing, pending the adoption of new status determination criteria (SDC) that have been recommended by the assessment panel and endorsed by the SSC. Council staff presented the requested information and updated the Committee on additional assessment model projections being developed by the SEFSC, which will be reviewed by the SSC at their August 2024 webinar meeting. These projections could affect the SSC’s acceptable biological catch recommendations for black sea bass, affecting catch level options that could be considered in the amendment. The AP Chair presented recommendations developed at the AP’s March 2024 meeting. The committee passed the following motions, and provided the following direction to staff:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Request additional projections from the SEFSC, with review from the SSC, when possible:
 - Projections that incorporate a phase-in approach, and SSC consideration of whether phase-in should be applied to black sea bass.
 - Allocating total yield, subtracting sector discards from the allocated yields
- Request additional SSC discussion about SDC based on % spawning potential ratio (SPR) and rationale for their recommended MSY proxy for black sea bass.
- Develop and present discussion generally explaining % SPR, rationale for different levels, and MSY proxy options that could be considered for black sea bass (i.e. are there proxies other than 40% SPR-based that are legally viable alternatives?)
- Initially consider actions to revise:
 - Catch levels (ABC, ACL, OY)
 - SDCs
 - Sector allocation procedures (noting allocation of yield rather than landings)
 - Minimum size limits
 - Nearshore black sea bass pot closed areas
 - Bag limits (analyzing tradeoffs with season length)
 - Allowability of multi-hook rigs (i.e. requiring single-hook rigs)
 - Allocations of the commercial ACL by gear (pots and hook-and-line)

- Seasons, including exploration of different fishing year/season timing (start dates), different season structure (e.g. discontinuous), and incorporation into multispecies seasonal management (possibly with or similar to the shallow water grouper closure)

MOTION 6: APPROVE AMENDMENT 56 FOR SCOPING AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 2024 COUNCIL MEETING.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper (SG Amendment 55)

Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 is being developed to reorganize the Other Shallow Water Grouper Complex, establish the new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex and then establish a rebuilding plan, catch levels, allocations, and accountability measures for this new complex. The committee passed the following motions, and provided the following direction to staff:

MOTION 7: FOR ACTION 6 (RECREATIONAL SEASON) DESELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AND FOR ACTION 7A (RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT) SELECT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 3 AND FOR ACTION 7B (RECREATIONAL VESSEL LIMIT) SELECT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION).

Action 6. Reduce the recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.

Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action). The recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper in the exclusive economic zone is open May 1 – December 31. A spawning season closure is in place annually from January 1 through April 30.

Alternative 2. Reduce the recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper in the exclusive economic zone to be open May 1 through August 31. The season will be closed January 1 through April 30 (spawning season closure) and September 1 through December 31.

Alternative 3. Reduce the recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper in the exclusive economic zone to be open May 1 through September 30. The season will be closed January 1 through April 30 (spawning season closure) and October 1 through December 31.

Action 7. Modify the recreational retention limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper

Action 7a. Modify the recreational bag limit

Alternative 1 (No Action). The recreational bag limit is 3 scamp or 3 yellowmouth grouper per person per day within the 3 fish grouper and tilefish combined aggregate.

Alternative 2. Establish an aggregate complex bag limit of 2 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per person per day within the 3 fish grouper and tilefish combined aggregate.

Preferred Alternative 3. Establish an aggregate complex bag limit of 1 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per person per day within the 3 fish grouper and tilefish combined aggregate.

Action 7b. Establish a recreational vessel limit

Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action). There is no vessel limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.

Alternative 2. Establish a private recreational aggregate vessel limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of:

Sub-alternative 2a. 2 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per vessel per day, not to exceed the daily bag limit, whichever is more restrictive.

Sub-alternative 2b. 4 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per vessel per day, not to exceed the daily bag limit, whichever is more restrictive.

Alternative 3. Establish a for-hire (charter vessel/headboat) recreational aggregate vessel limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of:

Sub-alternative 3a. 2 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per vessel per trip, not to exceed the daily bag limit, whichever is more restrictive.

Sub-alternative 3b. 4 fish (either scamp or yellowmouth grouper combined) per vessel per trip, not to exceed the daily bag limit, whichever is more restrictive.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 8: APPROVE AMENDMENT 55, AS MODIFIED, FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Private Recreational Permitting (SG Amendment 46)

Amendment 46 considers establishing a private recreational permit and education requirement for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. The Council has developed Amendment 46 over several meetings, with the amendment being most recently reviewed by the Snapper Grouper Permitting and Reporting Technical AP, Private Angler AP, and Outreach and Communications AP at their April and May 2024 meetings. The Committee received the AP summary report from the AP Chairs and provided the following direction to staff:

- Table discussion of Amendment 46. The next Council review of the amendment will take place at the December 2024 meeting.

- Include preliminary information on red snapper-focused exempted fishing permits (EFPs).
- Request feedback from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) on how the State Reef Fish Survey may change if Amendment 46 were to move forward.
 - Input and feedback on the actions and alternatives.
 - Would FWC be able or willing to accommodate the federal permit requirement?
- Convene the Private Angler AP to complete review of the actions in Amendment 46 AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 2024 COUNCIL MEETING.
- For September, hold a discussion on MRIP revisioning and improvements.
 - Ask the Agency to provide information on potential measures that can be taken to improve recreational data.
 - What tools are available to improve recreational data?
 - What resources are needed?
 - What is the potential return on investment for those tools?
 - What are some sources for dedicated funds to support education and outreach?
 - Preliminary feedback on red snapper focused EFPs (if available).

Snapper Grouper Commercial Fishery Management

The Committee discussed use of a sub-committee approach to allow progress on revisions to management of the commercial snapper grouper fishery. The Committee passed the following motion and provided the following direction to staff:

MOTION 9: FORM A COMMERCIAL SNAPPER GROUPEER MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE THAT WILL MEET AT LEAST TWICE PER YEAR THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT, INITIATED BY THE SNAPPER GROUPEER COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Initial membership: Kerry Marhefka, Tim Griner, Andy Strelcheck, Jessica McCawley, Amy Dukes, Trish Murphey, Sonny Gwinn
 - Council Members appointed after the June 2024 Council Meeting will have an opportunity to volunteer to participate at the September 2024 meeting.
- Initial tasking/topics:
 - Review Vision Blueprint and develop topics that require further consideration (the following list are examples of potential topics)
 - 2 for 1 SG1 policy
 - Permit leasing
 - 225 Permit policies
 - Regional management
 - Examination of items from FL Commercial Fishing Summit
 - Different permit usage (e.g. “permit stacking”, others)
 - Ways to increase trip efficiency (e.g. day-based trip limits)
 - Infrastructure

- Environmental Equity and Justice concerns
 - Climate change concerns
- First meeting will occur between September and December, with first report out to the Council at the December 2024 meeting.

Update on Research in Spawning Special Management Zones

The Committee received an update from Council staff on work related to the Spawning Special Management Zones established through Snapper Grouper Amendment 36.

AP Recommendations on Topics Not on Agenda

The AP Chair presented additional Snapper Grouper AP recommendations on items not covered on the Committee’s agenda. The AP recommended consideration of aligning season start dates for deep water snapper grouper species. Within discussion of this recommendation, Committee members noted comments from stakeholders requesting changes to management of deep water species, including golden and blueline tilefish.

The Committee expressed interest in considering reallocation, changes to seasonal start dates, and regional management approaches for deep water species. Staff noted that the next golden tilefish stock assessment will be concluding in December 2024. The Committee intends to consider these changes through the amendment that will follow this assessment.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 10: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Prepare Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) for transmittal to the Secretary of Commerce.
- Conduct Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag and Black Grouper Recreational Vessel Limits and Black Sea Bass On-Demand Pots) and Amendment 55 (Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex) public hearings via webinar before the September 2024 Meeting.
- Prepare Regulatory Amendment 36 and Amendment 55 for final Council approval at the September 2024 Meeting.
- Develop a report examining headboat vessel limits for South Atlantic snapper grouper species (DECEMBER 2024).
- Develop a report examining potential different regulations for black grouper in South Florida (MARCH 2025).
- Conduct scoping webinars for Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass Assessment Response) AFTER the September 2024 Meeting.
- Convene the Private Angler AP to complete review of the actions in Amendment 46 AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 2024 COUNCIL MEETING.
- Hold a discussion on MRIP revisioning and improvements at the September 2024 Council meeting.
- Prepare Amendment 46 for next review at the December 2024 meeting.
- Convene the Commercial Snapper Grouper Management Subcommittee between the September and December 2024 Council meetings.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL