

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEr COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 13-15, 2023

The Committee approved the minutes from the March 2023 meeting and the agenda for the June 2023 meeting. Staff presented a table summarizing progress of Council-approved amendments, which will be included in the Agenda Overview for future Council meetings. The Committee found the table useful and recommended future inclusion of this table on the Council website.

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 2023 meeting the Council requested staff bring back options for maintaining monitoring without the offloading site and time requirements, including a possible hail-in/hail-out requirement. NMFS provided a presentation on monitoring options for the fishery and staff presented a decision document for the Committee to discuss. The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Chair provided a summary of comments and motions on the wreckfish fishery.

Modernizing the wreckfish ITQ program continues to be a complex process. To help facilitate continued development of SG Amendment 48, the Committee proposed establishing a Wreckfish Sub-Committee and an Ad-Hoc Wreckfish Advisory Group.

MOTION 1: CREATE AN AD HOC WRECKFISH ADVISORY GROUP CONSISTING OF THE CURRENT SHAREHOLDERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING SNAPPER GROUPEr AMENDMENT 48. A WRECKFISH ADVISORY PANEL WILL BE CREATED AS DIRECTED BY THE COUNCIL IN JUNE 2023 THROUGH THE EXISTING AP PROCESS. APPOINTMENTS FOR THIS AP WILL BE MADE IN DECEMBER 2023.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 2: ESTABLISH AN AD HOC COUNCIL WRECKFISH SUB-COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF AMENDMENT 48. THE WRECKFISH SUB-COMMITTEE WILL REPORT TO THE SNAPPER GROUPEr COMMITTEE DURING REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

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Direction to Staff: Convene a meeting of the WAG and the Wreckfish Sub-Committee prior to September 2023.

SAFE Report

Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports are required through National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These reports can serve as regular updates to the SSC and Council to aid in discussing the condition of the stock and potential need for adjusting current management measures. Staff presented information included in the [SAFE Report](#) and highlighted some findings.

Yellowtail Snapper (SG Amendment 44/RF Amendment 55)

Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/ Reef Fish Amendment 55 considers modifying the jurisdictional allocation between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions, modifying the South Atlantic annual catch limit and annual optimum yield, and the Gulf of Mexico annual catch limit in response to the most recent stock assessment (2022 SEDAR 64 Interim Analysis) The Committee reviewed AP and SSC feedback and a decision document. The Committee discussed the following:

Action 1. Modify the yellowtail snapper stock overfishing limit and stock acceptable biological catch and jurisdictional allocation of the stock acceptable biological catch between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils'

Jurisdictions

- The current jurisdictional allocations (75%/ 25%) were calculated with landings that included a coding issue with Tortugas landings. However, this issue does not affect the assessment results or landings used in SG Amendment 44 calculations.
- **Direction to Staff:** The committee directed the IPT to recalculate the jurisdictional allocation with revised landings and adjust the suite of alternatives to include the corrected allocation percentages as well as the 80% and 20% split as suggested by the SG AP.
- Staff noted that the jurisdictional allocation percentages for **Alternative 3** needed to be recalculated, using the most recent landings data set for each region. This results in percentage values that are the same as **Alternative 4**. Staff provided an 80% South Atlantic and 20% Gulf of Mexico alternative to consider with the rationale that this option is not likely to result in the ACLs being met for either region. An updated decision document with these values was provided.

Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper (SG Amendment 55)

Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 considers, in response to SEDAR 68, establishing a new scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex, modifying the Other Shallow Water Grouper Complex, and establishing the following for the new scamp and yellow mouth complex: stock determination criteria, a rebuilding schedule, catch limit, and accountability measures. The Council reviewed SSC and AP feedback and a decision document.

Action 2. Define equilibrium optimum yield, maximum sustainable yield, minimum stock size threshold, and maximum fishing mortality threshold for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Complex

Direction to Staff: add alternatives for Action 2a for the equilibrium OY.

Action 3. Establish a rebuilding plan for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex

Next Steps: The SSC will review the additional OFL projections at $F_{40\%SPR}$ during their July SSC meeting and provide additional guidance to the Council at their September meeting.

- SEFSC not confident they will be able to provide t_{max} that is scientifically defensible. They will need more time to figure out what can be provided.
- Need to revisit the t_{min} calculation.

Action 4. Establish the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex and revise the total annual catch limit, annual optimum yield, and sector annual catch limits for the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper Complex

Sub-Action 4b. Revise the total annual catch limit, annual optimum yield, and sector annual catch limits for the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper Complex

Direction to Staff:

- Examine the remaining Other Shallow Water Grouper species (red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin) and consider the process of designating them as ecosystem component species within Amendment 55.
- If the species in the OSWG complex are not designated as ecosystem component species, then the ABC/ACL/OY, allocations, and sector ACLs will be updated to include FES recreational estimates within Amendment. 55

Action 5. Establish the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex sector allocations and sector annual catch limits

Direction to Staff:

- Add an option that allocates the reduction in catch levels proportional to each sector's recent landings, similar to the method used in Amendment 53.
- Add optionS that base allocations based on the recent years of landings.
 - GO BACK TO 2013 ONWARD AND 2018 ONWARD

Action 6. Establish commercial accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex

Direction to Staff: Add options to mirror the suite of options for the recreational accountability measures.

Table 1. Draft options for Action 6, establishing commercial accountability measures for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex.

	In-Season AM		Post-Season AM	
	Triggers	AM	Triggers	AM
Option 1 (No Action)	No commercial AM for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex, retain current AMs for scamp (individually) and yellowmouth grouper (within the OSASWG Complex)			
Option 2	Commercial landings meet/expected to meet sector ACL	Current commercial season closes	Commercial landings exceed/expected to exceed the commercial ACL Total ACL exceeded Stock is overfished *All triggers must be present for AM to occur	Commercial ACL is reduced for the following year by the amount of the overage
Option 3	NONE		Commercial landings exceed commercial ACL *Not tied to stock status or total ACL	Commercial season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the commercial ACL from being exceeded
Option 4	COMMERCIAL Landings meet/expected to meet sector ACL	Current commercial season closes	COMMERCIAL landings exceed commercial ACL *Not tied to stock status or total ACL	COMMERCIAL season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the commercial ACL from being exceeded

Action 7. Establish recreational accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex

Direction to Staff: Add a status quo option to Action 7:

Table 2. Draft options for Action 7, establishing recreational accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex.

	In-Season AM		Post-Season AM	
	Triggers	AM	Triggers	AM
Option 1 (No Action)	No recreational AM for the South Atlantic Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper Complex, retain current AMs for scamp (individually) and yellowmouth grouper (within the OSASWG Complex)			
Option 2	Recreational landings meet/expected to meet sector ACL	Current recreational season closes	Recreational landings exceed/expected to exceed the recreational ACL Total ACL exceeded Stock is overfished *All triggers must be present for AM to occur	Recreational ACL is reduced for the following year by the amount of the overage
Option 2 3	The season will open annually May 1, NMFS will annually announce the season end date			
Option 3 4	NONE		Recreational landings exceed recreational ACL *Not tied to stock status or total ACL	Recreational season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded
Option 4-5	Recreational landings meet/expected to meet sector ACL	Current recreational season closes	Recreational landings exceed recreational ACL *Not tied to stock status or total ACL	Recreational season for the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded

**MOTION 3: APPROVE AMENDMENT 55 FOR SCOPING
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

Direction to Staff: Conduct scoping hearings via webinar.

Black Sea Bass Stock Assessment (SEDAR 76)

SEFSC Staff presented the results of SEDAR 76, which indicated that South Atlantic black sea bass are overfished and experiencing overfishing. The SSC Chair presented the SSC's comments on the assessment. However, additional projections were requested by the SSC to develop recommended overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch levels. SEFSC is developing these additional projections and will present them for SSC Review in July 2023. Council Staff presented the [Fishery Overview](#) for black sea bass. The Committee made the following motion and provided the following guidance:

MOTION 4: INITIATE AN AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR THE BLACK SEA BASS FISHERY TO RESPOND TO THE SEDAR 76 STOCK ASSESSMENT.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Additional changes to black sea bass management could include consideration of:
 - Changes to allocation.
 - Reducing the recreational bag limit.
 - Designating on-demand gear as an allowable gear in the FMP.
- There is some desire to change catch levels for 2024; additional discussion is necessary to determine whether and how this could be accomplished.

AP Recommendations (for topics not covered under agenda items)

The Snapper Grouper AP met on April 25-27, 2023, and discussed additional topics pertaining to the snapper grouper fishery. The AP Chair presented the Snapper Grouper AP's comments on other topics, including effects of Space Center operations on Florida fishing activities and commercial permitting.

Private Recreational Permitting Amendment (SG Amendment 46)

Amendment 46 considers establishing a private recreational permit and education component for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery. The amendment was reviewed by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) in April 2023 and the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical (AP) in May 2023. The respective AP Chairs provided summary AP feedback and then Council staff reviewed a decision document for Amendment 46. The Committee provided the following direction to staff and made the following motions:

Direction to Staff:

Action 1. Establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region

- Remove Alternative 4 from further consideration in Action 1.
- Remove Alternative 5 from further consideration in Action 1.
- Replace "any" with "all" in the alternatives.

~~**Alternative 4. At least one angler on board a vessel** participating in the private angler component of the snapper grouper fishery.~~

~~**Alternative 5. Any private angler** participating in the snapper grouper fishery, regardless of where fishing occurs.~~

Action 2. Specify the Council-managed species that would be covered by a private recreational snapper grouper permit

- Remove Alternative 6 from further consideration in Action 2.
- Add yellowmouth grouper and scamp to the list of assessed species.
- Add an alternative that would apply to all snapper grouper species with a size or bag limit.
- Examine the top species that are harvested.
- Examine species with low PSEs.

~~Alternative 6. Any species in the shallow water grouper complex.~~

~~**Action 3. Specify the area where a private recreational snapper grouper permit would be required to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic Region**~~

- Remove Action 3 and incorporate discussion into Action 1.

Action 4. Specify how long a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region would remain valid

- Add alternatives where a permit would remain valid from:
 - One year of issuance.
 - From date of birth for permit holder.
- Remove Alternative 3 from further consideration in Action 4.

~~Alternative 3. Two calendar years.~~

Action 5. Establish mechanism that would allow a state to opt out of a federal private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region

- Make sure that alternatives maintain that states may issue their own permit or license if it meets the requirements of proposed national marine fisheries service specifications.
- Request that the IPT provide additional information.

Action 7. Specify whether an education component in the private recreational portion of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region would be mandatory or voluntary

- Replace “angler” with “permit holder”.

Action 9. Specify the timing of education component requirements for the private recreational portion of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region

- Add an alternative for each issuance of a permit.
- Add an alternative for every other year from issuance of a permit.
- Remove Alternative 3 from further consideration of Action 9.

~~Alternative 3. Every other calendar year.~~

MOTION 5: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS, AS MODIFIED, FOR INCLUSION IN AMENDMENT 46.

The *purpose* is to develop a recreational permitting system that ~~would~~ **WILL** better identify the universe of private anglers or vessels targeting South Atlantic snapper grouper species and ~~would~~ **WILL** enhance the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data. Also work to promote best recreational fishing practices through education.

The *need* for the amendment is to improve ~~education on best fishing practices and~~ the quality of effort and catch data for the private component of the recreational sector that targets South Atlantic snapper grouper species, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects. **ALSO IMPROVE EDUCATION ON BEST FISHING PRACTICES.**

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: APPROVE THE ACTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES, AS MODIFIED, FOR INCLUSION IN AMENDMENT 46.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Updates

Staff gave updates on the 2027 sunset of South Atlantic Special Management Zones established through Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 and Best Fishing Practices outreach.

Other Business

- The Committee reiterated and clarified its previous direction to include consideration of changing the 2-for-1 requirement for commercial permits **IN THE AMENDMENT THAT WOULD FOLLOW COMPLETION OF THE SG MSE.**

MOTION 7: EVALUATE CHANGING THE WAY THE COUNCIL APPLIES ALLOCATION PERCENTAGES TO THE ABC IN CALCULATING SECTOR ACLS.

- ALLOCATE TOTAL REMOVALS AND SUBTRACT SECTOR-SPECIFIC DEAD DISCARDS TO PROVIDE SECTOR ACLS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Changing how allocation is applied would require consideration of changing allocation percentages based on removals rather than landings.
- In this evaluation, use landings and discard estimates that are considered best scientific information available.
- Consult the Southeast Fisheries Science Center for papers and available information describing pros and cons of this allocation and management method.
- For evaluating the alternative allocation method, obtain feedback from SSC, explore how other councils do it, consult with AP.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 8: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Begin development of an amendment responding to SEDAR 76 (black sea bass).
- Create an Ad-Hoc Wreckfish Advisory Group comprised of current wreckfish ITQ shareholders and create an Ad-Hoc Wreckfish Committee to discuss SG Amendment 48. Convene a meeting of both groups prior to the September 2023 Council meeting.
- Conduct scoping hearings for Amendment 55 (Scamp/Yellowmouth).
- Continue developing Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting) for review at the September 2023 meeting.
- Convene the next meeting of the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel.
- Prepare a SG Amendment 44/RF Amendment 55 (Yellowtail Snapper) document in preparation for the Council to select preferred alternatives and approve for public hearings in September 2023.
- Ask staff to send letter to USCG to obtain cumulative information on the launch security zones related to space activities

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Direction to Staff: Add a discussion of limited entry into the snapper grouper for-hire fishery to the list of topics for the fall 2023 Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting.