

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**SNAPPER GROUPEE COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**March 5-7, 2024**

The Committee approved the minutes from the December 2023 meeting and the agenda for the March 2024 meeting.

**Updates**

The Committee received an update on the red snapper Notice of Funding Opportunity and Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP). Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) presented information on their applications for EFPs. The Committee received the EFP presentation favorably and provided comments to FWC for consideration, including reducing the maximum red snapper vessel limit from 60 fish, ensuring no commercial sale of fish harvested under the EFP, and reconsideration of trips lost due to poor weather. The Committee asked and received clarification from NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) that red snapper harvested in these EFPs for 2024 would be excluded from the 2024 annual catch limit (ACL).

NMFS also gave an update on recreational season announcements for gag and red snapper.

**Gag**

- Recreational season is projected to be open in 2024 from May 1 to June 15.
- Because there was a 65,000 pound overage of the commercial ACL in 2023, the commercial ACL for 2024 will need to be reduced by the amount of the overage. The adjusted ACL for the commercial sector will be approximately 62,000 lbs. The commercial season will open May 1 and end when the ACL is met or projected to be met.

**Red Snapper**

- NMFS has not conducted a 2024 recreational season projection for red snapper. The agency is evaluating whether to take interim measures to address overfishing of red snapper. The agency will make an announcement later this spring regarding how the red snapper catch levels will be adjusted (likely in the range of levels considered in Regulatory Amendment 35).
- NMFS did not state whether there will be a recreational or a commercial season in 2024.

**Wreckfish (SG Amendment 48)**

A review of the Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, including stakeholder concerns with offloading site and time requirements. At their June 2023 meeting the Council established a Wreckfish Sub-Committee to discuss continued development of Amendment 48. The Sub-Committee met to discuss Amendment 48 on February 8, 2024. The Sub-Committee selected preferred alternatives for most actions and requested additional information on wreckfish reporting requirements and pre-landing notifications. Staff presented the Wreckfish Sub-Committee report and the requested additional information for Committee discussion.

**MOTION 1: APPROVED THE REVISED LANGUAGE FOR ACTION 13, PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 2**

**Action 13.** Modify offloading site requirements and establish approved landing locations for wreckfish.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Remove the offloading site requirements for wreckfish. Individual transferable quota wreckfish must be landed at an approved landing location. Landing locations must be approved by NMFS Office for Law Enforcement prior to a vessel landing individual transferable wreckfish at these sites. Landing locations must be publicly accessible via freely traversable roads and navigable waters and no other condition may impede free and immediate access to the site by an authorized law enforcement officer.

\*\*Note: the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement may choose to revoke approval of a pre-landing location if it is determined that officers do not have free and immediate access to the site.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 2: APPROVE ALL MOTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE WRECKFISH SUB-COMMITTEE, AS PRESENTED IN THE [FEBRUARY 2024 SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT](#) [APPENDED].**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 3: APPROVE ALL ADDITIONAL WRECKFISH MOTIONS PASSED BY THE SNAPPER GROUPEER COMMITTEE AT THE MARCH 2024 COUNCIL MEETING. (MOTIONS 5, 8, 10, AND 11 OF THE APPENDED [SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT](#)).**

**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 (AM) for this new complex. The committee passed the following motions, and provided the following direction to staff:

**MOTION 4: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT.**

**Purpose:** The *purpose* of this amendment is to modify the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex by removing yellowmouth grouper from the complex and establishing a new Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex. For the new complex, establish conservation and management measures, stock status determination criteria, a rebuilding plan, catch levels, sector allocations, and accountability measures based on the results of the SEDAR 68 operational assessment (2022) stock assessment. For the South Atlantic Other Shallow Water Grouper complex, modify catch levels.

**Need:** The *need* for this amendment is to rebuild the scamp and yellowmouth grouper stock, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effect.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 5:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 5.

**Action 5. Establish sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex**

**Alternative 2.** Commercial and recreational allocations would change each year from 2025-2029, where they would remain in place until modified, based on the total average commercial and recreational landings of scamp and yellowmouth grouper from 2018 through 2022. (Split Reduction Method – 5 yrs.)

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OBJECTION AND 1 ABSTENTION)**

**MOTION 6:** MOVE ALTERNATIVES 4 AND 5 FROM ACTION 5 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED.

**Action 5. Establish sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex**

**Alternative 4.** Allocate 63.40% of the total annual catch limit of Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex to the commercial sector and 36.60% to the recreational sector.

**Alternative 5.** Allocate 64.90% of the total annual catch limit of Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex to the commercial sector and 35.10% to the recreational sector.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** REMOVE THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR FROM ACTION 6.

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

**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 July 31. The season will be closed January 1 through April 30 (spawning season closure) and August 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 August 31. The season will be closed January 1 through April 30 (spawning season closure) and September 1 through December 31.

**Alternative 4.** 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.

**MOTION 7:** MOVE ACTION 6 ALTERNATIVE 2 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED AFTER MODIFICATIONS TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE.

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

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

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 8: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 6.**

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

**Alternative 3.** 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.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**DIRECTION TO STAFF: MODIFY ACTION 8 ALTERNATIVES TO EVEN POUNDS GUTTED WEIGHT AND DISPLAY THE COMMERCIAL ANNUAL CATCH LIMIT IN POUNDS GUTTED WEIGHT UNDER ACTION 5.**

**Action 8. Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There is no commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.

**Alternative 2.** Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 200 pounds gutted weight.

**Alternative 3.** Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 300 pounds gutted weight.

**Alternative 4.** Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 400 pounds gutted weight.

**Alternative 5.** Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 500 pounds gutted weight.

**Action 5. Establish sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex**

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Commercial and recreational allocations would change each year from 2025-2029, where they would remain in place until modified, based on the total average commercial and recreational landings of scamp and yellowmouth grouper from 2018 through 2022.

ACL Alternatives	Committee Preferred Alternative 2 Split Reduction (2018-2022)	
Action 4, Preferred Alternative 2 (ACL = ABC)	Commercial POUNDS WHOLE WEIGHT	Commercial POUNDS GUTTED WEIGHT
67450 (2025)	43,775	37,097

72200 (2026)	46,150	39,110
75050 (2027)	47,574	40,317
77900 (2028)	48,999	41,525
79800 (2029)	49,947	42,328

**MOTION 9:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 (300 POUNDS GUTTED WEIGHT) AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 8 AFTER MODIFICATIONS TO THE ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE.

**Action 8. Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper**

**Alternative 3.** Establish an aggregate commercial trip limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 300 pounds gutted weight.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 10:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 9.

**Action 9. Establish commercial accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex**

**Alternative 3.** If commercial landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex reach or are projected to reach the complex commercial annual catch limit, commercial harvest of scamp and yellowmouth grouper is closed for the remainder of the fishing year.

If commercial landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex exceed the complex commercial annual catch limit, regardless of stock status or whether the total annual catch limit was exceeded the complex commercial annual catch limit for the following fishing year will be reduced by the amount of the complex commercial annual catch limit overage in the prior fishing year.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 11:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 5 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 10.

**Action 10. Establish recreational accountability measures for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex**

**Alternative 5.** If recreational landings for the Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper complex exceed the recreational annual catch limit for the complex the length of the following year's recreational fishing season for the complex will be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational annual catch limit for the complex from being exceeded in the following year, regardless of stock status.

**APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 12:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 11.

## **APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE**

### **Action 11. Revise the total annual catch limit and sector annual catch limits for the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex**

**Alternative 2.** The acceptable biological catch for the updated Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper complex is 104,190 pounds whole weight. The total annual catch limit is 100,151 and is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Coastal Household Telephone Survey. The commercial annual catch limit is 53,380 pounds whole weight and the recreational annual catch limit is 46,771 pounds whole weight.

## **APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

### **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 Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (AP) Chair presented the Law Enforcement AP's comments concerning enforcement of on-demand pots. Council staff presented a decision document summarizing scoping comments and describing the issues being addressed by this amendment, including some drafted actions and alternatives. The Committee reviewed the information, briefly discussed considering the opening of areas closed to pot fishing due to potential whale interactions, and recommended continued development of the amendment as scheduled.

### **Black Sea Bass Assessment and Response (SG Amendment 56)**

SEDAR 76 indicated that the Black Sea Bass stock in the South Atlantic is overfished, with persistently declining recruitment. The Committee received a presentation from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center showing the revised projections of future catch used for setting acceptable biological catch (ABC) and a rebuilding timeline. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Chair presented the SSC's ABC, overfishing limit, and rebuilding recommendations and comments. Council staff presented initial management issues to be considered while developing Amendment 56, based on the results of SEDAR 76. The Committee requested the following information be compiled to inform discussions and consideration of the amendment for scoping in June 2024:

- Additional information on MRIP estimates and SEFHIER data
  - Breakdowns by area/depth/wave, co-caught species
  - Trip level information on landings/discards
  - Discard rates
- Information on phasing in ABC changes
- Tradeoffs in projections from reducing dead discards to increasing landings
- Evaluation of size limit changes, bag/trip limits, seasonality
  - L50, Catch at Length stats
  - 11-13 inch size limits for both sectors (same size for both sectors)
  - Slot limit
    - Consider protogynous hermaphroditism effects

- Check for Mid-Atlantic work
- Discard mortality (rates and numbers of fish) by depth
  - Check with SEDAR 76 analysts
  - Any information on gear differences by depth/area that affect mortality
- Gather information on catches in inshore/state waters
- Consider angler metrics for success
- Spawning areas
- Information on use/impact of sub-aquatic vegetation for juvenile black sea bass
- Co-occurring species that can affect BSB discards (& vice versa)
  - Consider species not federally managed (e.g. sheepshead)
- Commercial data by gear and time of year
- Interactions with red snapper (any updates on Ecopath/Ecosim)

### **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 Law Enforcement AP at their January 2024 meeting. The Committee received the AP summary report from the AP Chair, provided the following direction to staff, and passed the following motion:

#### **DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

- Allow the IPT to incorporate the Committee’s guidance into the amendment’s actions and alternatives.
- Action 1: Approved revised wording of title and Alternative 1 (No Action)

#### **Action 1. Establish a private recreational permit requirement in the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish a private recreational permit requirement for vessels or anglers in the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

- Action 2: Approved revised wording of Alternative 1 (No Action)

#### **Action 2. Specify the species for which a private recreational snapper grouper permit would be required**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** A federal private recreational permit requirement does not apply to any snapper grouper species.

- Action 3: Approved revised wording of alternatives and sub-alternatives. Do not further consider Draft Sub-Alternative 3c.

#### **Action 3. Establish an education component in conjunction with a private recreational snapper grouper permit**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not require an education component for private recreational permit holders to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

**Alternative 2.** Establish and require an education component in conjunction with a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone. The education component would be **required before initial issuance** of a private recreational permit.

**Alternative 3.** Establish and require an education component in conjunction with a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone. The education component would be **implemented after** the private recreational permit requirement has been established.

Completion of the education requirement would be REQUIRED:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Before initial reissuance of the permit.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** When permit holders are required to complete the education requirement by the issuing authority.

- Clarified that under sub-alternative 3b, all applicable permit holders would be selected at the same time by NMFS or the appropriate state agency.
- Tasked the IPT to clarify whether the issuing authority of the education requirement can be federal, state, or both (depending on the outcome of Action 5).
  - Would it be possible to have one education course that could cover the whole region, regardless of whether administered by NMFS or a state agency?
    - Consider using the potential upcoming Florida exempted fishing permit education component as a template.
- **Action 4:** Avoid education materials that directly reference regulations that may be subject to regular change. The general contents of education materials may include:
  - Species ID
  - Species in the Snapper Grouper FMU
  - Best fishing practices
  - MPA and SMZs locations and regulations
  - Basic regulations
    - Descending device “rigged and ready” requirement
  - How to properly measure a fish
  - Resources to know regulations
  - How to get involved
  - Technical problem troubleshooting
  - If reporting is added in the future: how to use app or reporting mechanism. how to record information and report properly.
- **Action 5:** Direct the IPT to reword the action title to integrate an exemption from both a federal permit and education requirement. If wording for a state exemption also needs to be added to the actions covering the education requirement, also make changes accordingly.
  - Also make sure that this is integrated into Action 5 itself. If a state education course meets the federal requirements then it could be exempt from the federal requirement.
  - Add state-specific options for Sub-alternative 2b that would accommodate the existing Florida State Reef Fish Survey.

- Additional rationale for action: allowing states to be exempt from the federal permit and education requirement would take advantage of existing or upcoming state infrastructure, thereby reducing costs. Also such an exemption would alleviate duplicate permitting so permit holders would not need to obtain both a state and federal permit covering the same topic.

**Action 5. Establish an exemption to the federal private recreational snapper grouper permit requirement based on permitting by the states.**

**Alternative 2.** Establish an exemption to the federal private recreational snapper grouper permit requirement. The National Marine Fisheries Service would certify a state permit as equivalent to a federal private recreational snapper grouper permit provided the state implements equivalent measures that at a minimum include the following:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** The state permit is required for the same entity as the federal permit.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** The state permit is required for the same snapper grouper species as the federal permit.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** The state permit would remain valid for the same period of time as the federal permit.

**Sub-alternative 2d.** The state permit would have the same education requirement as the federal permit.

Advisory Panel Direction:

- Convene the Outreach and Communications AP, Technical AP, and Private Angler AP ahead of the Council's June meeting.
- Additional topics not included will be added by staff to the AP's discussion materials.

**Outreach and Communications AP:**

- Ask the AP to outline an education program: If you were building this program, how would you build it?
  - Who is responsible for:
    - Developing the education materials
    - Developing the education program framework
    - Maintaining the education program
  - Should there be a test for the requirement or is going through the education module enough for the certification process?
    - If there is a test, should it be pass/fail, achieve a certain % to pass, etc.?

**Technical AP:**

Action 1

- Discuss how potential data collection improvements from a vessel-based permit could be affected by rental vessels and boat clubs.
- Discuss the integration of a permit with an education requirement and whether it would affect the AP's existing recommendation for the vessel-based permit.

Action 2

- Are there ways to specifically improve estimates of catch for deepwater species within the current structure of this amendment?

**Private Angler AP:**

- How prevalent are rental vessels or boat clubs in your region?
- For education requirement, what is the optimal length of time for a course?
- What topics should be covered by education materials?

**MOTION 13: APPROVE AMENDMENT 46 AND ALL ACTIONS, AS REVISED, FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.**

**APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**Red Snapper (Regulatory Amendment 35)**

In December 2023, the Council rescinded its approval of Regulatory Amendment 35 and directed staff to compile information for consideration of other actions. NMFS informed the Council that an interim rule to reduce overfishing of red snapper is being considered. Council staff presented the requested information. The Committee discussed waiting until a few months of EFP project information is ready before considering additional management in a Council amendment. The Committee also discussed that further information on management options is necessary to determine the best path forward for managing red snapper and snapper grouper discards. The Committee requested the following information:

- Ask the SSC to review scientific merits of the Shertzer et al. management strategy paper and evaluate to what extent strategies discussed in that paper could be expected to meet Council goals for reducing discards and rebuilding.
- Request that staff review SSC's previous recommendation (from around 2001) on size limits as a management tool and provide any updated information or recommendations.
- Request Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Planning Team bring an initial prioritized list for Council review to the June meeting.
  - Consider Shertzer et al. paper & discussion by SSC in prioritization
  - Prioritize by ability of strategies to reduce discards while preventing overfishing and optimizing access
  - Note whether strategies are likely to be short-term/long-term for development timeframe
- June Council meeting – Compile & prioritize management procedures/options for Blue Matter to evaluate in MSE
- When available, schedule presentation of preliminary information from red snapper discard studies (FWC, SC, Mote) and MSE later in 2024.

**Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation**

Blue Matter Science presented a progress update on the development of the Snapper Grouper MSE, including a preliminary tool structure with some management strategy examples for red snapper and gag. The SSC reviewed and discussed the Snapper Grouper MSE at their February webinar meeting, and the SSC Chair presented the SSC comments.

The Council provided feedback on initial management strategies to evaluate. The Council requested a comprehensive table of management options that are being considered under each

broad topic (e.g., size limits, effort control, spatial closures, bag limits) be brought to the June Council meeting for the Council to review and prioritize. The Council will continue to provide input for the MSE in future meetings up to the expected completion of the project in December.

### **Snapper Grouper Commercial Permits**

At the Council's December 2023 meeting and the Council directed staff to update the commercial "2 for 1" discussion document as well as information on 225 commercial permits in response to the Snapper Grouper AP's discussion on the topic of commercial permits. The Committee was provided background information on creation of commercial snapper permits, summary AP discussion, and recent information on permit trends as well as vessels that are active in the fishery. The Committee provided the following direction to staff:

- When available provide additional information on:
  - Vessels active in the fishery
    - Include additional information on revenue including mean, median, range
      - Show number of vessels by revenue increments
  - Leasing of permitted vessels
    - Information on regulatory and legal mechanisms for leasing
    - Statistics on leasing
  - Trends in imports of snapper grouper species
  - Permit trends
- At a future meeting ask the Snapper Grouper AP about:
  - Innovative and new ideas to improve returns in the commercial fishery.
    - Are the split seasons still working?
    - Permit stacking
    - Multi-day trips
  - Focus on factors that the Council can control or modify
- Visioning: Summarize and identify aspects that are still applicable to the current fishery
- Consideration of potential commercially-focused port meetings – staff to come up potential timeline that would fit into the workplan and bring back feedback to the Council in June 2024.
  - Could ask for input on SG fishery during upcoming round of "town hall" meetings
  - Use info gathered thru town hall meetings to identify where focused effort is needed
  - Prepare short straw man document to outline short and long-term approaches, including use of a sub-committee approach, to discuss SG vision and other issues
  - Don't want to have top-down approach; important to maintain stakeholder engagement for planning

### **Agenda Topics for March 2024 Advisory Panel Meeting**

The Snapper Grouper AP is scheduled to convene on March 26-28, 2024. The Committee developed the following list of proposed topics for the AP's agenda:

- Hogfish Fishery Performance Report

- Management Strategy Evaluation Update and Discussion
- Vessel Limits for Head Boats
- Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag, Black Grouper, and Black Sea Bass On-Demand Pots)
- Amendment 55 (Scamp/Yellowmouth Grouper)
- Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass Assessment Response)
- Aligning recreational season start dates for deep water species
- Amendment Updates: Amendment 46 (Recreational Permitting), Amendment 48 (Wreckfish), Regulatory Amendment 35 (Red Snapper and Release Mortality)
- Council Discussion Updates: Commercial Permits, Limited Access to the Snapper Grouper For-Hire Fishery, Red Snapper Discard Research Projects
- Council Program Updates: Best Fishing Practices, Citizen Science, SEDAR

Make SG AP aware of SEFHIER improvement plan (e.g., new AP, etc).

### **Other Business**

In other business, the Council briefly discussed snapper grouper visioning, the challenges facing the snapper grouper fishery, and the need to consider non-traditional management approaches in the future.

Recommendation on EFP applications provided during the meeting.

### **Timing and Tasks:**

#### **MOTION 14: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- Continue to develop Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) as detailed in the timing and tasks motion from the Wreckfish Sub-Committee report (appended).
- Continue development of Amendment 46 for review at the June 2024 Council meeting. Prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings for September 2024.
  - Convene the Technical AP, Private Angler AP, and Outreach and Communications AP to review Amendment 46.
  - Convene the Outreach and Communications AP to request feedback on the education component
- Convene the Snapper Grouper AP.
- Update commercial permit information and present to the Committee in the latter half of 2024 or early 2025 (depending on availability of updated permit, logbook, and landings data).
- Continue development of Regulatory Amendment 36 for review in June 2024.
- Send letters to black sea bass pot endorsement holders to inform them of the upcoming management changes for black sea bass.
- Compile requested information for Amendment 56 and prepare for review in June 2024.
- Compile requested information on management strategies for red snapper and snapper grouper discard reduction and prepare for review in June 2024.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**SUMMARY REPORT  
WRECKFISH SUB-COMMITTEE  
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
Webinar  
February 8, 2024**

The Sub-Committee approved the February 2024 meeting agenda.

**Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish)**

A review of the Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, specifically modernization of the program. Due to the complexity and depth of discussion needed on these topics, the Council established an ad-hoc advisory group consisting of the current shareholders (Wreckfish Advisory Group) and a Wreckfish Sub-Committee to discuss continued development of Amendment 48.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 considers actions that address recommendations from the 2019 review, including moving from the current paper-based coupon systems to an electronic reporting system. Moving to electronic reporting will require the Council to review current participation and eligibility requirements in the fishery. Currently, there are some aspects of eligibility and participation in an electronic system that are not specified in the current wreckfish ITQ regulations. As such, simply retaining the status quo requirements is not sufficient to move forward with electronic reporting.

Additionally, Amendment 48 considers modifications to monitoring requirements for the fishery. Shareholders report that they never encounter law enforcement officials at the dock and the offloading time requirement negatively affects the efficiency of their fishing operations. Since fishermen report that they rarely encounter law enforcement when offloading, the intended outcome of approved offloading sites and times as a deterrent for landing unreported fish has not been realized.

In September 2023, the Sub-Committee added additional actions to Amendment 48 to address monitoring and participation and eligibility requirements for the Wreckfish ITQ program. The Council approved these decisions in December 2023. At the February 2024 meeting, Council staff presented updated amendment and decision documents for Sub-Committee discussion.

The following motions were approved:

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** ENSURE THAT DISCUSSION OF DEALER REPORTING REQUIREMENTS IS INCLUDED IN THE DISCUSSION OF ACTION 2 (ELECTRONIC REPORTING).

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** MODIFY THE LANGUAGE OF THE ACTION 3 (PERMIT REQUIREMENTS) TITLE TO CLARIFY THAT IT IS PERMIT REQUIREMENTS TO COMMERCIALY *HARVEST* WRECKFISH.

**Action 3. Modify the requirements to commercially harvest or sell wreckfish.**

**MOTION 1: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 4.**

**Action 4. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Online Shareholder Account Eligibility**

**Alternative 2.** To be eligible to open a wreckfish individual transferable quota shareholder account, individuals must be entities who are United States citizens, permanent resident aliens, or a corporation, partnership, or other entity eligible to own and control a United States fishing vessel and hold a valid commercial snapper grouper unlimited permit.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**MOTION 2: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 5.**

**Action 5. Requirements for Obtaining and Maintaining Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Shares in the Online System**

**Alternative 3.** To obtain (transfer into a shareholder account) all shareholder accounts must be associated with entities who are United States citizens, permanent resident aliens, or a corporation, partnership, or other entity eligible to own and control a United States fishing vessel and hold a valid commercial snapper grouper unlimited permit. To maintain shares (hold existing shares in a shareholder account) an account must hold a valid or renewable commercial snapper grouper unlimited permit, or the shares will be reclaimed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). A shareholder account is associated with a permit if the permit has the exact same entities listed on both the shareholder account and permit.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**MOTION 3: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B and SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 6.**

**Action 6. Share Divestment for Permit-Required Accounts**

**Alternative 2.** Shareholder accounts must be in compliance with the requirements to maintain shares, or NMFS will reclaim all shares in a shareholder account:

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 1 year following the effective date implementing this amendment.

**Alternative 3.** After implementation of this amendment, if a shareholder is no longer in compliance with the requirements to maintain shares, the shareholder(s) must divest of the account's shares, or the shares will be reclaimed by NMFS:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 1 year following the end date on a permit.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**DIRECTION TO STAFF: MODIFY THE LANGUAGE OF ALTERNATIVE 3 SUB-ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIFY THAT IT IS THE END DATE OF THE REQUIRED SNAPPER GROUPER UNLIMITED PERMIT.**

**Alternative 3.** After implementation of this amendment, if a shareholder is no longer in compliance with the requirements to maintain shares, the shareholder(s) must divest of the account's shares, or the shares will be reclaimed by NMFS:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 1 year following the end date on a shareholder's snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 3 years following the end date on a shareholder's snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** ADD TEXT BOX EXAMPLES INTO AMENDMENT, FOR TERMS USED IN THIS ACTION. SPECIFICALLY, DETAIL WHAT AN "END DATE" IS AND PROVIDE INFORMATION ON HOW IT CAN BE TRIGGERED AND HOW IT IS DIFFERENT FROM A TERMINATION DATE.

**Regulation Effective Date:** the date the regulations in Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 specific to obtaining and maintaining wreckfish individual transferable quota through an online system become effective, as listed in the amendment final rule published in the federal register.

**Permit End Date:** the date when a permit is no longer valid for harvest (permit remains in renewable state for one year from the end date). Permit end dates can be triggered by permit transfers, sale of a vessel, end of vessel lease agreement, or expiration of the permit.

**Permit Expiration Date:** a permit is valid for one year from the effective date. This is known as the expiration date. When a permit expires, the expiration date becomes the end date.

**Permit Termination Date:** if not renewed, a permit will be terminated one year after the permit expiration date.

**MOTION 4:** SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 4B AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 7.

**Action 7. Redistribution of reclaimed shares to remaining shareholders.**

**Alternative 4.** Redistribute reclaimed shares to remaining shareholders based on landings history.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Proportion of total wreckfish landings over the most recent three fishing years.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** HAVE THE IPT DISCUSS WHAT "WRECKFISH ITQ REPORTING REQUIREMENTS" COULD INCLUDE AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN OF MONITORING COMPLIANCE. BRING THIS INFORMATION TO THE

MARCH 2024 COUNCIL MEETING (ACTION 8. WRECKFISH INDIVIDUAL TRANSFERABLE QUOTA REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN ALLOCATION FROM SHARES).

Wreckfish individual transferable quota shareholder reporting requirements:

- Coastal fisheries logbook (upon implementation of this amendment and Snapper Grouper Amendment 54 (commercial e-logbook));
- Up to date personal information in their permit application (ex. affirming US citizenship, telephone number, mailing and physical addresses, and business ownership);
- Landings reported in the online system.

To monitor wreckfish reporting requirements and cost recovery fee submission the agency would need to develop database code that authorizes actions within the electronic system to meet the criteria for obtaining allocation from shares. Requiring the snapper grouper unlimited permit (**Alternative 2**) would require database connections to the permits system. Requiring good standing with reporting requirements and cost recovery submission (**Alternative 3**) would require additional database coding.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** CLARIFY THAT THE INTENT IS TO USE RELEASING ALLOCATION AS AN ENFORCEMENT TOOL.

**MOTION 5:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 8.

**Action 8. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Requirements to Obtain Annual Allocation from Shares.**

**Alternative 2.** To obtain annual allocation from shares, an account must hold a valid or renewable commercial snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**Alternative 3.** To obtain annual allocation from shares, an account must hold active wreckfish individual transferable quota shares and be in good standing with respect to:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Collection and submission of cost recovery fees.

MOTION APPROVED BY SNAPPER GROUPE COMMITTEE

**MOTION 6:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 9.

**Action 9. Wreckfish Individual Transferable Quota Requirements to Obtain Annual Allocation through Transfer.**

**Alternative 2.** Individual transferable quota annual allocation can be transferred only to individual transferable quota accounts holding shares. Eligible accounts must be held by individuals who are United States citizens or permanent resident aliens.

**Alternative 3.** Individual transferable quota annual allocation can be transferred only to accounts with an associated valid snapper grouper unlimited permit. Eligible accounts must be associated with individuals who are United States citizens or permanent resident aliens.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** HAVE THE IPT CREATE A GRAPHIC TO EXPLAIN HOW A GIVEN VESSEL MIGHT NAVIGATE THE ABILITY TO HOLD SHARES, RECEIVE ALLOCATION FROM SHARES, RECEIVE TRANSFERRED ALLOCATION, AND HARVEST UNDER THE CURRENT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES.

**Under the current preferred alternatives, what do I need to participate in the commercial wreckfish individual transferable quota fishery?**

**Step 1 (Action 4): To be eligible for an online account:**

- ✓ United States citizenship;
- ✓ Valid snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**Step 2 (Action 5): To obtain and maintain ITQ shares:**

- ✓ United States citizenship;
- ✓ Valid snapper grouper unlimited permit (obtain);
- ✓ Valid or renewable snapper grouper unlimited permit (maintain).

**Step 3a (Action 8): To obtain allocation from shares:**

*No preferred alternatives currently selected under this action, but the options are as follows:*

- ✓ Wreckfish individual transferable quota shares;
- Valid or renewable snapper grouper unlimited permit;
- In good standing with collection and submission of cost recovery fees;
- In good standing with wreckfish reporting requirements.

**Step 3b (Action 9): To obtain allocation via transfer:**

- ✓ United States citizenship;
- ✓ Wreckfish individual transferable quota shares;
- ✓ Valid snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**Step 4 (Action 3): To commercially harvest wreckfish:**

- ✓ Wreckfish individual transferable quota shares;
- ✓ Valid snapper grouper unlimited permit.

**MOTION 7: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2A AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 10.**

**Action 10. Retaining Annual Allocation before a Commercial Annual Catch Limit Reduction**

**Alternative 2.** Provide the Regional Administrator with the authority to withhold the amount of wreckfish annual allocation before distribution at the beginning of a year in which a commercial annual catch limit reduction is expected to occur. Withheld wreckfish annual allocation will be distributed to shareholders if the effective date of the final rule implementing the quota reduction has not occurred by:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** June 1.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** SPECIFY THAT THE AMOUNT WITHHELD WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO THE DECREASE IN ACL APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:** BRING MORE DETAILS ON THE NMFS APPROVED OPTIONS TO THE MARCH COUNCIL MEETING (ACTION 12. PRE-LANDING NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR COMMERCIAL VESSELS PARTICIPATING IN THE WRECKFISH COMPONENT OF THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY).

**NMFS would authorize two different methods to provide the pre-notification:**

- Fishermen may log into the electronic system and submit the pre-landing notification.
- NMFS would pay for a call service to staff a 24-hour line, where the call service will ask and enter all required fields within the pre-landing notification and submit on behalf of the fishermen.

*Note:* for the purpose of this action landing would mean to arrive at a dock, berth, beach, seawall, or ramp (matches Gulf IFQ definition).

**MOTION 8:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 12.

MOTION APPROVED

**Action 12. Pre-landing Notification Requirement for Commercial Vessels Participating in the Wreckfish Component of the Snapper Grouper Fishery.**

**Alternative 2.** The owner or operator of a commercial snapper grouper unlimited permitted vessel participating in the wreckfish component of the snapper grouper fishery is responsible for ensuring that the National Marine Fisheries Service is contacted at least three hours, but no more than 24 hours, in advance of landing using a National Marine Fisheries Service approved method. When providing advance notice of landing, they must include the expected date and time of landing, the pre-approved landing location, the estimated weight of wreckfish on-board the vessel, the dealer where the wreckfish are to be received, and the identity of the shareholder and vessel. LANDING MEANS TO ARRIVE AT A DOCK, BERTH, BEACH, SEAWALL, OR RAMP.

APPROVED BY SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**What do I need to do now that I have completed fishing for wreckfish (IF Alternative 2 is chosen as preferred under Action 12)?**

**Step 1: Provide a pre-landing notification to NMFS (Action 12):**

- ✓ Contact NMFS at least three hours, but no more than 24 hours, in advance of landing.
- ✓ Provide the expected date and time of landing, the pre-approved landing location, the estimated weight of wreckfish on-board the vessel, the dealer where the wreckfish are to be received, and the identity of the shareholder and vessel.

**Step 2: Land at a pre-approved landing location (Action 13):**

- ✓ Must be publicly accessible via public roads and navigable waters and no other condition may impede free and immediate access to the site by an authorized law enforcement officer.
- ✓ Must be approved by NMFS Office for Law Enforcement in advance of landing.

**Step 3: Offload wreckfish (Action 14):**

- ✓ Must occur between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., local time.
  - unless an authorized officer is present at the offloading at 6 p.m., is available to remain at the site while offloading continues and authorizes the owner or operator of the vessel to continue offloading after 6 p.m., local time.

**MOTION 9: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 13.**

**Action 13. Modify offloading site requirements and establish approved landing locations for wreckfish.**

**Alternative 2.** Remove the offloading site requirements for wreckfish. Individual transferable quota wreckfish must be landed at an approved landing location. Landing locations must be approved by NMFS Office for Law Enforcement prior to a vessel landing individual transferable wreckfish at these sites. Landing locations must be publicly accessible via public roads and navigable waters and no other condition may impede free and immediate access to the site by an authorized law enforcement officer.

APPROVED BY SUB-COMMITTEE

**MOTION 10: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 48 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS AT THE JUNE 2024 COUNCIL MEETING.**

APPROVED BY SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**Other Business**

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Note: Council staff drafts the timing and task motion based on Sub-Committee action. If points require clarification, they will be added to the draft motion. The Sub-Committee should review this wording carefully to be sure it accurately reflects their intent prior to making the motion.

**Timing and Task(s)**

**MOTION 11: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:**

1. Conduct public hearings for Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) during the June 2024 Council meeting.
2. Continue to develop Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) for final approval consideration at the June 2024 Council meeting.

**MOTION APPROVED BY SNAPPER GROUPE COMMITTEE**