

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Jekyll Island, GA
March 5-9, 2018

The Committee approved minutes from the December 2017 meeting and the agenda.

Status of Commercial & Recreational Catches versus Quotas for Species under ACLs

NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff delivered briefings to the Committee on the status of commercial landings relative to ACLs.

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

SERO staff updated the Committee on the status amendments currently under review:

- Amendment 41 (mutton snapper): became effective on February 10, 2018.
- Golden tilefish interim rule: Became effective on January 2, 2018 but will expire in June with the possibility of renewal for an additional 186 days.
- Amendment 43 (red snapper): Proposed rule and Notice of Availability due soon.
- Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 (Red Grouper): Proposed rule

Amendment 46 (recreational reporting and best fishing practices)

The Committee made no changes to the Purpose and Need of the amendment but discussed the focus of the proposed permit for private recreational fishermen. Staff clarified that staff from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) have been invited to participate in the IPT for this amendment. The Committee provided guidance and made the following motions:

MOTION #1: APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 1 IN AMENDMENT 46 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 1 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

Action 1. Establish a Private Recreational Snapper Grouper Permit Recreational Fishermen to Fish For, Harvest or Possess Snapper Grouper Species in the South Atlantic Region.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Recreational snapper grouper fishing from private recreational vessels in federal waters is an open access fishery with no federal requirement for a recreational permit.

Alternative 2. Require a federal recreational permit in the South Atlantic Region (federal waters only) for recreational fishermen to fish for, harvest, or possess:

Sub-alternative 2a. red snapper.

Sub-alternative 2b. all species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit.

Sub-alternative 2c. species in the deep-water snapper grouper complex.

Alternative 3. Require a federal recreational permit in the South Atlantic Region be issued to:

Sub-alternative 3a. vessel.

Sub-alternative 3b. individual.

Alternative 4. Establish conditions to renew or maintain a valid permit.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Action: 1

- Include pros and cons of federal permit vs. permit issued through the states
- Remove questions #7 & 8 regarding limited access
- Include pros and cons of making the proposed permit compatible with MRIP
- Consider modeling the proposed permit after the existing HMS permit
- Include discussion of how no fishing reports would be handled

MOTION #2: APPROVE INCLUSION OF ACTION 2 IN AMENDMENT 46 AND APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 2 FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS.

Action 2. Modify Reporting Requirements for Private Recreational Fishermen or Vessels.

Alternative 1 (No Action). There is no reporting requirement for recreational anglers although the Council approved an action which would require owner or operator to complete fishing records if selected by the Science and Research Director (SAFMC 2008).

Alternative 2. Require private recreational anglers to complete electronic logbooks. This would require selected (Council to specify %selected based on SSC and other technical input) fishermen with a recreational snapper grouper permit to report electronically each week when fishing for or catching species listed in the Action 1

Alternative 3. Promote voluntary electronic reporting by private recreational fishermen.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Action 2:

- Restructure alternative 2 to reflect how Action 1 is structured, with options for vessel and individual fishermen
- Provide alternatives for frequency of reporting (weekly & monthly)
- Include pros and cons of individual vs. vessel reporting under Action 2

MOTION #3: REMOVE ACTIONS 3 AND 4 FROM AMENDMENT 46 AND CREATE A SEPARATE AMENDMENT (FRAMEWORK).

Action 3. Require Use of Best Fishing Practices When Fishing for Snapper Grouper Species With Hook-and-Line Gear to Reduce Mortality and Bycatch of Snapper Grouper Species

Action 4. Adjust Powerhead Prohibitions in the South Atlantic Region

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Actions 3 & 4:

- Concern over enforceability of circle hook alternatives and level of controversy of proposed measures under this action.

- Guidance to include language on “approved” descending devices and define what that means.
- Best fishing practices could be encouraged through education/outreach rather than regulation
- Consider removing Actions 3 & 4 and create another amendment that could move more quickly. Actions 1 & 2 could potentially cause delay/controversy of actions for best fishing practices and powerhead regulations.
- Consider requiring “as needed” to facilitate enforcement similar to current regulations on dehooking devices.
- For Alternative 4 under Action 3, look at language used/proposed in Gulf measures to promote consistency.
- Include alternative to have circle hooks on board. This would address the fact that circle hooks are not appropriate for certain species.
- Remove Sub-alternative 4c as it is not enforceable.
- Add an alternative that addresses “no more than one leader”

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 (Recreational)

Staff delivered a presentation to recap recent actions the Council took on the amendment in December 2017 and point out recommendation from staff/IPT, etc. The Committee provided guidance and made the following motions:

MOTION #4: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 2. Modify existing Snapper Grouper aggregates to establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate, Shallow-water Grouper Aggregate, and Other Shallow-water Species Aggregate.**

Deep-water Species Aggregate: queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, wreckfish

Shallow-water Grouper Aggregate: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney.

Other Shallow-water Species Aggregate: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor’s choice, tomtate, Atlantic spadefish, gray triggerfish, bar jack, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, and sand tilefish.

Sub-alternative 2a. Include black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, and red porgy in the Other Shallow-Water Species Aggregate

Sub-alternative 2b. Exclude black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, and red porgy from the Other Shallow-Water Species Aggregate

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #5: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B (MAY 1-AUG 31) UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.1 AS PREFERRED

Sub-Action 2.1. Specify ~~recreational season~~ seasonal prohibition for the proposed deep-water species aggregate

Alternative 2. Allow recreational fishing? possession? Specify seasonal prohibitions on recreational possession of proposed deep-water species aggregate annually (blueline

tilefish, snowy grouper, wreckfish, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and golden tilefish):

Sub-alternative 2b. May 1 through August 31 January 1 to April 30 and September 1 to December 31 (8 months)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Sub-Action 2.1:

- Retain specification of “recreational season” in title of sub-action 2.1. Modify language of alternatives accordingly.
- Present expected changes in landings levels in numbers of fish instead of percentages and include clarification that in-season closures have influenced landings/intercepts.
- Clarify why there are predicted reductions for snowy and blueline tilefish under Sub-alternative 2b, which reflects current recreational season for those species.
- Include discussion of goal/intent of this action in discussion.
- Include additional explanation under Alternative 1 that that was the estimated harvest for those years.
- Include additional language regarding the paucity of information and high level of uncertainty in analyses.
- Adopt suggested edits as modified.

MOTION #6: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.2 AS PREFERRED
Sub-Action 2.2. *Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species*

Alternative 2. Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #7: SELECT SUB-ALTERANTIVE 2F UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.3 AS PREFERRED

Sub-Action 2.3. *Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed deep-water species aggregate*

Sub-alternative 2f. Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

MOTION FAILS FOR LACK OF A SECOND

MOTION #8: SELECT SUB-ALTERANTIVE 2F UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.3 AS PREFERRED

Sub-Action 2.3. *Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed deep-water species aggregate*

Sub-alternative 2f. Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #9: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.3 AS PREFERRED

Sub-Action 2.3. *Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed deep-water species aggregate*

Sub-alternative 2c. Two fish per person per day.

MOTION FAILS FOR LACK OF A SECOND

Guidance on Sub-Action 2.3:

- Present estimated reduction in harvest using numbers of fish instead of percentages
- Clarify “existing restrictions” on bag limits for certain species (can do in discussion instead of language of alternatives).
- Accept suggested edits to language of sub-action/alternatives. Modify language of Alternative 2 to be consistent with wording of similar actions (e.g., replace “specify bag limits” with “specify aggregate limits”).

MOTION #10: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER SUB-ACTION 2.4 AS PREFERRED
Sub-Action 2.4. Specify gear requirements for the proposed deep-water species aggregate

Alternative 2. Require single-hook rigs when targeting deep-water species (snowy grouper, golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and wreckfish).

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Sub-Action 2.4:

- Include current regulations on circle hooks and longlines in no action alternative
- Define “single-hook rig” in discussion and clarify the intent is one hook per line.

MOTION #11: MOVE SUB-ACTION 3.1 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED
APPENDIX

Sub-action 3.1. Specify the recreational season for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate. Modify the seasonal prohibition for red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #11: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER SUB-ACTION
3.1 AS PREFERRED

Sub-alternative 2a. January – May (five months).

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Sub-Action 3.1:

- Accept the IPT’s suggested edits

MOTION #12: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER ACTION 3.2 AS PREFERRED

Sub-action 3.2. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate

Alternative 2. Specify bag limits for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate

Sub-alternative 2a. Two fish per person per day.

MOTION FAILS FOR LACK OF A SECOND

MOTION #13: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D UNDER ACTION 3.2 AS PREFERRED

Sub-action 3.2. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate

Sub-alternative 2d. Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #13: ADD A SUB-ALTERNATIVE TO SPECIFY A 3-FISH AGGREGATE BAG LIMIT WHERE NO MORE THAN 1 FISH CAN BE OF ANY ONE SPECIES IN THE AGGREGATE
SUBSTITUTE BECOMES MAIN MOTION
MAIN MOTION APPROVED
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #14: SELECT NEW SUB-ALTERNATIVE AS PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance on Sub-action 4.2:

- Add footnotes to clarify that existing bag limits for mutton, cubera snapper, and hogfish would be retained.
- Adopt re-structuring of Alternative 2 as suggested by the IPT

Guidance on Action 5:

- Adopt the IPT's suggested edits

Improving Recreational Estimates

Staff delivered a presentation summarizing the issues with recreational estimates in the South Atlantic region and the Council's options to work towards improving those estimates or adopting management approaches that minimize the effects of uncertain estimates on stakeholders (i.e., in-season closures).

Dr. Crabtree, NMFS Southeast Region Administrator, updated the Committee on the status of the For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment:

- Proposed Rule and Notice of Availability for the amendment are at headquarters.
- The SEFSC feels that the effort information expected to result from implementation of electronic reporting for charter vessels in the South Atlantic could be used to improve effort estimates (similar to the VTR system in the Mid-Atlantic). However, the data would not be immediately used to improve catch estimates since this would first require certification through the MRIP program and a system to validate those data.
- Data validation will be costly and SERO is looking for funding to accomplish this in the future.
- Proposed system for charter boats is similar to headboat survey, where there are six employees running the program for less than 200 vessels. NMFS would need to increase staff significantly for the proposed charter vessel reporting program to be as efficient as the headboat survey.
- NMFS may propose the Council consider a hail-out provision, some type of vessel positioning system, and adoption of a limited entry program for federally permitted charter vessels to assist with penalties for lack of reporting. Also, timing of trip report (submitting prior to offloading) would facilitate process and aid in validation of catch reporting.
- Once it is more definite what validation will take, NMFS would come back to the Council with ways that the system would need to be modified to obtain MRIP certification, etc.

Socio-economic Profile of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Commercial Fishery

Dr. Kari MacLauchlin, former Council staff, delivered a presentation on the draft profile and answered questions from Committee members. The Committee made a few suggestions of items to include/clarify. The report will be presented to the Snapper Grouper AP during their upcoming meeting (April 11-13, 2018) and will be revised based on the AP's input.

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 (Commercial)

Council staff delivered a presentation to recap guidance provided during the December 2017 meeting, review timing, and objectives for this meeting. The Committee provided guidance and made the following motions:

MOTION #15: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3C UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED

Action 1. Establish a commercial split season and modify the commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish

Alternative 3. Retain the January 1 through December 31 commercial fishing year for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone. Modify the commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish:

Sub-alternative 3c. 100 pounds gutted weight from January 1 through June 30 and 300 pounds gutted weight from July 1 through December 31.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #15: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A AS PREFERRED

Sub-alternative 3a. 100 pounds gutted weight from January 1 through April 30 and 300 pounds gutted weight from May 1 through December 31.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #16: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action 2. Establish a commercial split season for snowy grouper

Alternative 2. Specify two commercial fishing seasons for snowy grouper. Allocate the snowy grouper commercial annual catch limit into two quotas: 60% to the period January 1 through June 30 and 40% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #16: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED

SUBSTITUTE MOTION FAILS

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #16: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 3. Specify two commercial fishing seasons for snowy grouper. Allocate the snowy grouper commercial annual catch limit into two quotas: 70% to the period January 1 through June 30 and 30% to the period July 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #17: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 4A UNDER ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED
Action 3. Establish a commercial split season and modify the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack

Alternative 4. Reduce the greater amberjack commercial trip limit. During April each year, no person may sell or purchase a greater amberjack harvested from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Sub-alternative 4a. 1,000 pounds whole weight.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #17: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 4B AS PREFERRED

Alternative 4. Reduce the greater amberjack commercial trip limit. During April each year, no person may sell or purchase a greater amberjack harvested from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Sub-alternative 4b. 800 pounds whole weight.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #17: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C AS PREFERRED

Alternative 2. Specify two commercial fishing seasons for greater amberjack. Allocate the commercial annual catch limit for greater amberjack into two quotas: 50% to the period March 1 through August 31 and 50% to the period September 1 through the end of February. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward. During April each year, no person may sell or purchase a greater amberjack harvested from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Sub-alternative 2c. Trip limit equals 1,000 pounds whole weight in both seasons.

SUBSTITUTE BECOMES MAIN MOTION
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #18: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER ACTION 4 AS PREFERRED

Action 4. Establish a commercial split season and modify the commercial trip limit for red porgy

Alternative 2. Specify two commercial fishing seasons for red porgy. Allocate the commercial red porgy annual catch limit into two quotas: 30% to the period January 1 through April 30 and 70% to the period May 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward. Remove the sale and purchase prohibition during January 1 to April 30 each year. Retain the commercial trip limit of 120 fish from May 1 through December 31 and specify a commercial trip limit from January 1 through April 30 of:

Sub-alternative 2c. 60 fish

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #19: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B UNDER ACTION 6 AS PREFERRED

Action 6. Implement a minimum size limit for almaco jack for the commercial sector

Alternative 2. Specify a minimum size limit for almaco jack for the commercial sector:

Sub-alternative 2b. 22 inches fork length

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #19: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A (20 INCHES) AS PREFERRED

Alternative 2. Specify a minimum size limit for almaco jack for the commercial sector:

Sub-alternative 2a. 20 inches fork length

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #20: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A UNDER ACTION 7 AS PREFERRED

Action 7. Implement a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex

Alternative 3. Establish a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex.

Sub-alternative 3a. 500 pounds gutted weight.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #21: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 7 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Action 7. Implement a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex

Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for the Other Jacks Complex.

Sub-alternative 2a. 500 pounds gutted weight with a trip limit reduction to 250 pounds gutted weight once 75% of the annual catch limit is met or projected to be met.

Sub-alternative 2b. 400 pounds gutted weight with a trip limit reduction to 200 pounds gutted weight once 75% of the annual catch limit is met or projected to be met.

Sub-alternative 2c. 300 pounds gutted weight with a trip limit reduction to 150 pounds gutted weight once 75% of the annual catch limit is met or projected to be met.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #22: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER ACTION 8 AS PREFERRED

Action 8. Modify the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

Alternative 2. Maintain seasonal prohibition on sale and purchase of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone off Georgia and east Florida. Prohibit sale and purchase of red grouper in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina and South Carolina from:

Sub-alternative 2a. January – May (five months)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

- Guidance to approve IPT's suggested edits

MOTION #23: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 9 AS PREFERRED

Action 9. Remove the commercial minimum size limit for certain deep-water species

Alternative 2. Remove the 12-inch total length commercial minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #24: APPROVE VISION BLUEPRINT REGULATORY AMENDMENT 27 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #25: APPROVE VISION BLUEPRINT REGULATORY AMENDMENT 26 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper For-Hire Permit Moratorium

Council staff presented an options paper and requested guidance from the Committee.

Committee members offered the following comments:

- Moratorium, by definition, is a temporary halting of some action, so there is no need to include a sunset provision. Limited entry is more permanent. Consider removing the word “moratorium” if the Council does not want to consider this option.
- Reporting compliance is not necessarily tied to a limited entry program; there are other ways to ensure compliance. Also, there is no reporting requirement currently in place, so it is premature to claim that there is a problem with logbook reporting compliance.
- Limiting entry is important in achieving compliance for logbook reporting.
- An important issue is the regulation that prevents charter vessels with a federal permit from possessing species that are open to harvest in state waters but closed to harvest in federal waters. The Council could re-visit this regulation during scoping.
- The Council needs to address issue of vessels operating without proper federal permits; this is a law enforcement issue that may not be solved with a permit moratorium.
- Consider tying permits to the vessel owner/operator, not to the vessel for enforcement purposes.
- Concern that a permit moratorium may complicate outreach for and implementation of the reporting requirement for charter vessels.
- Clarify why the Council is considering a for-hire permit moratorium.
- The Committee recommends that the entire range of options be taken out for scoping to get comments.
- Discussion questions need to be included in the scoping document.
- Guidance to produce a scoping document that includes the issues raised during the discussion.

Items that will be added to the scoping document:

- Expand and improve need for amendment:
 - Add more background information

- Further develop bullet points under “Why is the Council Considering Action?”, paying extra attention to “logbook reporting compliance”, “professionalizing the for-hire fleet”, “situations of vessel overcapacity”, “reducing fishing pressure on some fish stocks”, and “stabilizing participation in the for-hire fishery, during which time the Council could evaluate the need for establishing limited entry”.
- Include statement in scoping document that clarifies that the Council is considering a moratorium in order to evaluate whether a limited entry system or other modifications to how the for-hire fleet is managed or operates are desirable.
- Ways to address the regulation that prevents charter vessels with a federal permit from possessing species that are open to harvest in state waters but closed to harvest in federal waters.
- An option to tie a for-hire permit to a person or entity rather than a vessel.
- Under “New Entrants Permit” change “would” to “could” in description and add question to get input on how many “New Entrants Permits” should be made available each year.
- Clarify that the USCG inspection is referring to the voluntary program.
- Include requirements of MSA and National Standard Guidelines in scoping document.
- Include question asking for a desirable length of a moratorium (how many years).
- Research and add information on other moratoriums that have been implemented.

NOTE: It is the understanding of staff that no sections or subjects included in the options paper presented during Committee will be removed before scoping occurs.

MOTION #26: SEND SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 47 (FOR-HIRE PERMIT MORATORIUM), AS MODIFIED, OUT FOR SCOPING IN APRIL 2018.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #26: MODIFY SCOPING DOCUMENT ACCORDING TO COUNCIL GUIDANCE AND PREPARE FOR JUNE MEETING FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER FOR SCOPING AT THAT TIME
SUBSTITUTE BECOMES MAIN MOTION
MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Red grouper Rebuilding

Staff reviewed a possible timing to revise the rebuilding plan for red grouper. A rebuilding plan needs to be in place by September 2019, so it will not include data resulting from the MRIP revisions.

MOTION #27: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN AN AMENDMENT TO REVISE THE REBUILDING PLAN FOR RED GROUPER
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Regulatory Amendment 28 (Golden Tilefish)

Council staff provided some background on the need and timing of this amendment. The golden tilefish stock is undergoing overfishing and a temporary rule set the ACL for 2018 to reduce overfishing. The rule will expire at the end of 2018 (once it is extended) so the Council must have an amendment in place by the beginning of 2019. To accomplish this, an amendment must

be prepared and submitted for formal review by summer of 2018. The amendment would establish ACLs based on results of the SEDAR 25 update (2016) and the SSC’s recommended ABC. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION #28: APPROVE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES UNER ACTION 1 AS MODIFIED.

Action 1: Revise the Annual Catch Limits for Golden Tilefish

Alternative 1 (No Action). The total annual catch limit for golden tilefish is equal to the yield at 75% of F_{MSY} when the population is at equilibrium. The current total annual catch limit for golden tilefish is 323,000 pounds gutted weight, as established temporarily through an interim rule for golden tilefish implemented on January 2, 2017 (83 FR 65). The interim rule value is based on projected yield of 75% of F_{MSY} . This interim rule is valid through July 1, 2018 and may be extended for an additional 186 days. Once the interim rule expires, the ACL will revert back to the previous ACL of 558,036 pounds gutted weight.

Alternative 2. Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit would equal the acceptable biological catch. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is $P^*=30\%$.)

Alternative 3. Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit =90% of ABC. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is $P^*=30\%$.)

Alternative 4. Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit = 80% of ABC. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is $P^*=30\%$.)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #29: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 (ACL=ABC) UNDER ACTION 1 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Action 1: Revise the Annual Catch Limits for Golden Tilefish

Alternative 2. Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit would equal the acceptable biological catch. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is $P^*=30\%$.)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

The total annual catch limit alternatives for golden tilefish for years 2019-2024. All values in pounds gutted weight (lbs gw).

	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 (ACL=ABC)	Alternative 3 (ACL=90% of ABC)	Alternative 4 (ACL=80% of ABC)
2019	Interim rule: 323,000	251,000	225,900	200,800
2020		285,000	256,500	228,000
2021		314,000	282,600	251,200

2022	When interim rule expires: 558,036	338,000	304,200	270,400
2023		356,000	320,400	284,400
2024		368,000	331,200	294,400

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #29: DESELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED AND REFER THE SELECTION OF AN ABC BACK TO THE SSC BASED ON RATIONALE PROVIDED

SUBSTITUTE MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MAIN MOTION APPROVED

****REFER TO RATIONALE ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT****

MOTION #30: REMOVE ACTIONS 2 AND 3, BUT LEAVE ACTION 4 IN REGULATORY AMENDMENT 28.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

GUIDANCE: IN JUNE, COUNCIL CAN REQUEST THE EXTENSION TO THE INTERIM RULE FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH*

Wreckfish ITQ Review

Council staff updated the Committee on the status of the review. The Committee offered the following guidance:

- Have the SSC, Law Enforcement AP and Snapper Grouper AP review the draft document at their Spring 2018 meetings.
- The Council does not want to see the document at the June 2018 meeting.
- Staff should begin planning to meet with the shareholders in late June, early July.
- Bring a complete document back to the Council in September 2018 for approval or further direction.

Yellowtail Snapper

Council staff re-capped discussions to-date on this topic. Committee members offered the following comments:

- In fall 2017, FWC staff conducted interviews with dealers (and some fishermen) to obtain input on yellowtail management.
- Stakeholders (mainly dealers) had various suggestions for various management measures although there was no consensus on one particular approach or measure.
- The Council could look at short-term option to provide immediate relief for fishermen (in light of hurricanes in summer 2017) via a framework amendment. Consider changing AMs to remove in-season closures for either sector until the total ACL is met or projected to be met.
- Long term management measures could include combining the ACLs for the Gulf and South Atlantic, specification of a trip limit after certain percentage of the ACL is met, re-allocation between recreational and commercial sectors (after MRIP recalibration data are available).
- A coding error when the initial jurisdictional allocation of the ABC between the South Atlantic and the Gulf potentially resulted in less allocation of the yellowtail ABC to the South Atlantic and to the commercial sector. FWC can provide corrected numbers to SEFSC to consider correcting the jurisdictional and sector allocation.

- Guidance to allow staff to include Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 from Action 4 in Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 and to explore accountability measures as applied in other regions to include in the range of alternatives considered for short-term measures.

MOTION #31: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN WORK ON AN AMENDMENT TO REVISE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER TO REMOVE IN-SEASON CLOSURES FOR EITHER SECTOR UNTIL THE TOTAL ACL IS MET.
 APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
 APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Vision Blueprint Review Guidance

Staff re-capped the guidance for a biennial evaluation of the Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper fishery and requested guidance from the Committee on the timing and approach. The Committee offered possibly holding webinars/listening stations in late summer 2018 (August) and in conjunction with the fall 2018 Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting.

System Management Plan Review Guidance

Staff requested guidance for the development of the Spawning Special Management Zone System Management Plan Review to ensure the document best meets the Council’s expectations. The Committee suggested that the review resemble the Channel Island 5 Year Review (option 3) with site descriptions. They also requested that the workgroup begin development of a report card that would be used by all groups.

Modifications to Sea Turtle Release Gear and Snapper Grouper Framework

- Suggestion to revise language to specify the permits that would be affected
- SERO clarified that the careful release protocol document is available electronically. NOAA GC further clarified that the protocol is indeed required to be on board.
- The Council requested staff begin developing the amendment and take it to scoping.

MOTION #32: RECOMMEND TAKING SEA TURTLE RELEASE GEAR DOCUMENT TO SCOPING.
 APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
 APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Other Business

Dr. Michelle Duval, Snapper Grouper Committee Chair, briefed the Committee on an issue that was brought to her attention by fishermen in North Carolina. It appears that conflicts among fishermen using spearfishing gear and those using hook-and-line gear to target snapper grouper species in certain areas off North Carolina is increasing. Dr. Duval stated some fishermen have suggested a possible endorsement program for spearfishing gear. The topic will be brought up before the Snapper Grouper AP for feedback during their upcoming meeting.

The topic of regional quotas was briefly discussed as a result of the motion below offered in response to concern over accessibility issues and the perception that current management approaches are not addressing the problem effectively. Council members who opposed the motion cited concerns over already small commercial quotas that would be split even further under a regional quota scenario and add complication to monitoring of ACLs, etc. In addition,

there was concern that such an allocation of commercial ACLs would be perceived as a precursor to a limited access privilege program.

MOTION #33: BEGIN DEVELOPMENT OF WHITE PAPER TO EXPLORE REGIONAL COMMERCIAL QUOTAS FOR CERTAIN SG SPECIES (GAG, SCAMP, RED GROUPE, VS, GRAY TRIGGER, GAJ AND OTHER JACKS, SNOWY AND BLT)

MOTION FAILS

Timing and Task:

MOTION #34: Direct staff to do the following:

- Continue development of Amendment 46 including Actions 1 & 2 and begin work on a separate framework amendment to address Actions 3 & 4.
- Prepare scoping document for Amendment 47 (For-Hire Permit Moratorium) according to the Committee's guidance.
- Prepare Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendments 26 & 27 for public hearings in Spring 2018
- Obtain input for the Vision Blueprint biennial evaluation via webinars and listening stations, as appropriate, in August 2018 and during the fall 2018 Snapper Grouper AP meeting.
- Request input from the SSC, Law Enforcement AP and Snapper Grouper AP on the draft Wreckfish ITQ Review at their respective meetings in Spring 2018.
- Complete the evaluation of the Spawning SMZs System Management Plan by December 2018.
- Conduct meeting with wreckfish shareholders in late June/early July 2018.
- Prepare the Wreckfish ITQ Review document for the September 2018 meeting for approval or further direction.
- Begin work on an amendment to address management of yellowtail snapper according to the Committee's guidance.
- Begin work on an amendment to address sea turtle release gear and revisions to the Snapper Grouper Framework and conduct scoping via webinar.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Rationale for Revisiting ABC Recommendation for Golden Tilefish:

The Council is willing to accept the risk of overfishing associated with an ABC of 362,000 pounds (whole weight) for 2019 and 2020. This is the ABC level currently implemented through an emergency rule for 2018. The Council accepts the risk associated with this ABC level for the following reasons:

- The Council can accept a higher risk level. Based on prior discussions regarding ABC control rule modifications, both the Council and SSC agree that it is the Council's responsibility to set the accepted risk of overfishing. Revisions to the ABC control rule are currently under consideration by the Council that would allow the Council to specify the risk level, but such provision are not yet in effect.
- The SSC has the ability to deviate from the existing ABC control rule.
- This ABC level will only be in effect until the next assessment is completed. A standard assessment is planned for 2019 to address issues noted by the SSC with the previous update.
- The level of harvest proposed by the Council is in effect for 2018, and projections indicate it will result in a fishing mortality rate of 0.173, below the overfishing limit of $F_{msy}=0.24$.
- This level of harvest represents a 42% reduction from the annual catch limit that was in effect prior to 2018, and was in effect during the 2012-2014 period that led to the stock assessment finding that overfishing was occurring (terminal $F / F_{msy} = 1.22$)
- Current management actions successfully control the fishery to the ACL. From 2012 to 2017, cumulative commercial landings totaled 102% of the commercial ACL, and annual landings exceeded the ACL in only one of those 6 years.
- The P* approach applied to golden Tilefish has resulted in an unusually large difference between OFL and ABC, creating the largest buffer of any SAFMC stock. This unusual buffer has been acknowledged by the SEFSC and discussed by the SSC on previous occasions, and no clear explanation for it is available.
- The Council is concerned by the considerable social and economic impacts resulting from current ABC recommendation.
- The golden Tilefish fishery is primarily (97%) allocated to the commercial sector. The primary harvest occurs in a longline fishery which takes place over about 3 months from an opening on January 1 to a closure around mid-March when the its ACL is met.