

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 8-10, 2022

The Committee approved the minutes from the December 2021 meeting and the agenda for the March 2022 meeting.

Status of Exempted Fishing Permit Requests

NMFS SERO presented current Exempted Fishing Permits and the timing of projects in the South Atlantic.

Release Mortality Reduction Framework

In September 2021, the Council directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to reduce dead releases of snapper grouper species in response to concerns over red snapper dead discards. The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LE AP) discussed this topic at their February meeting, and Chair Capt. Scott Pearce provided the LE AP's recommendations. Council staff presented data depicting the scale of releases in the recreational snapper grouper fishery, as well as a decision document summarizing current information, scoping commentary, and potential next steps in the development of the framework amendment. The Committee approved the following motions and gave the following direction:

MOTION 1: DEVELOP THE FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT BASED ON TIME, AREA, AND DEPTH RESTRICTIONS.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Guidance to staff:

Develop analyses of potential effects on snapper grouper (prioritizing red snapper) releases based on time, area, and depth restrictions. In conducting analyses, consider:

- Depth zone definition and delineation options (shallow, middle, offshore), considering effects of barotrauma by depth on species that have information available.
 - Use nautical charts and identify major nautical landmarks that may be useful in identifying depth zones (Note: delineation of areas will take time to develop and may not be feasible for June).
- Estimates of commercial and recreational discards and discard mortalities for assessed stocks.
 - Develop annual estimates; also, investigate regional or seasonal variability for red snapper and overfished stocks.
- Species that should be considered for exemption from seasonal regulations.
- Table of spawning seasons (focusing on red snapper and overfished stocks).
- Annual, seasonal, and regional trips targeting or catching red snapper or overfished stocks.
- Pros/cons of impacts to commercial and for-hire sectors of potential management approaches.
 - Impacts of changes to sectors/components.

- Fishery-independent surveys for spatial area analysis to identify hotspots.
- Qualitative scaling of benefits/challenges.
- Compile previous discussions of social and economic impacts from the recent Commercial 2 for 1 Permit white paper, Commercial Visioning Blueprint, Buck (2018), and Amendment 17A.
- Have SEP and SSC discuss information that could be considered in analyses for this amendment.

MOTION 2: INITIATE A REGULATORY AMENDMENT TO INCORPORATE CATCH LEVELS FOR RED SNAPPER BASED ON SEDAR 73.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

NOTE: THE “FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT” OF **MOTION 1** AND THE “REGULATORY AMENDMENT” OF **MOTION 2** ARE THE SAME AMENDMENT. REGULATORY AMENDMENT 35 WILL CONSIDER BOTH TIME, AREA, OR DEPTH RESTRICTIONS **AND** RED SNAPPER CATCH LEVELS BASED ON THE MOST RECENT SSC RECOMMENDATION.

Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting Amendment (SG Amendment 46)

Amendment 46 was previously developed in the first half of 2018 and was approved for scoping at the June 2018 Council meeting. Due to time constraints over the Council’s workplan and the need to obtain more information on potential approaches for private recreational data gathering, the amendment was never scoped. From 2018 through 2020 staff focused instead on piloting the MyFishCount mobile app and portal. Other related efforts have also been underway, most notably the development of the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup which has met five times in 2021 and 2022.

The Workgroup Chair, Spud Woodward, provided an update on the group’s progress and presented the group’s recommendations. The Committee reviewed an options paper on the amendment and provided the following guidance:

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

- Develop options that would establish a permit covering all snapper grouper species.
 - Examine options for a vessel and individual permit.
 - Add discussion on whether there would be a fee associated with the permit.

2. Implement Reporting Requirements for Private Recreational Fishermen or Vessels

- Develop options that would phase in reporting at a later date.
- Bring back information covering how a permit could be incorporated into a survey or supplementing existing sampling efforts vs census-level reporting.
 - What future survey or sampling efforts could be enhanced or implemented via existing regulations?
 - Maintain flexibility to develop the best survey possible as the opportunity arises.

3. Ad Hoc Advisory Panel

- Work with technical experts and state agencies to develop an ad hoc advisory panel for private recreational permitting and reporting. Initial membership will be reviewed during AP selection at the June 2022 meeting.

Wreckfish ITQ Modernization (SG Amendment 48)

A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, particularly with respect to confidentiality issues and related constraints; moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and economic data collection. Staff presented a decision document with updated actions and alternatives for consideration. The Committee provided the following input:

- Compare the value of the wreckfish fishery to the cost of moving to an electronic individual transferable quota system.
- Discuss the pros and cons of removing the wreckfish permit requirement with the wreckfish shareholders, specifically with respect to share ownership and transferability.
- Continue to consider a VMS requirement for the wreckfish fishery and discuss monitoring needs with the wreckfish shareholders.
- Consider matching the wreckfish individual transferable quota cost recovery system with the system utilized in the Gulf of Mexico individual fishing quota programs.

A meeting of the wreckfish shareholders will be organized this spring. The Committee approved the following agenda topics:

- Update on Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Modernization)
- Discussion of electronic reporting for the coastal logbook requirements and possible voluntary pilot program.
- Fishery Performance Report for wreckfish.

Additional direction to staff: move SG FMP goals and objectives out from SG Amendment 48 to SG Amendment 49.

Greater Amberjack (SG Amendment 49)

Staff presented a decision document summarizing the draft amendment and preliminary analyses of the current actions. The Committee reviewed proposed actions and corresponding analyses, made the following motions, and provided the following direction:

MOTION 3: CHANGE THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE UNDER ACTION 3 TO ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) OF 28 INCHES FORK LENGTH.

Action 3. Increase the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack

Alternative 1 (No Action). The recreational minimum size limit is 28 inches fork length.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 4: DE-SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 4 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

Action 4. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack

Alternative 3. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit to 30 inches fork length.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: CHANGE PREFERRED IN ACTION 2 (SECTOR ALLOCATIONS) FROM ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) TO ALTERNATIVE 3 (65% RECREATIONAL/35% COMMERCIAL)
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: ADD ALTERNATIVES TO ACTION 2 (SECTOR ALLOCATIONS) FOR A 50-50 ALLOCATION AND A 55% RECREATIONAL AND 45% COMMERCIAL ALLOCATION.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 7: APPROVE AMENDMENT 49 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Direction to conduct the public hearing during the public comment session at the June 2022 Council meeting.

Additional guidance to staff:

- Include review of the most recent Amendment 49 alternatives and associated analyses in the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel's agenda, requesting feedback on recreational and commercial minimum size limits, commercial trip limits, and the April spawning closure.
- Provide information on spawning, considering regional differences in timing or behavior.
- Add language to **Action 6-Alternative 2**, noting addition of the recreational sector to the April spawning closure.

Red Porgy (SG Amendment 50)

Staff reviewed minor changes to language of alternatives addressing sector allocations and the Committee discussed rationale for only considering two alternatives. The Committee received input from the Law Enforcement AP pertaining to proposed changes to the recreational bag limit. Additionally, staff briefly reviewed draft conclusions for each of the actions in the amendment. The Committee approved the following motion:

MOTION 8: APPROVE AMENDMENT 50 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPE FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Gag Grouper (SG Amendment 53)

The Committee was provided an overview of the Scientific and Statistical Committee's discussion during their February 2022 meeting along with summary of scoping comments. Staff then reviewed the discussion document. The Committee made the following motions and gave the following guidance:

The Committee had no further discussion on the $P_{REBUILD}$ percentage, accepting the SSC's continued recommendation of a 70% $P_{REBUILD}$ value.

MOTION 9: SELECT OPTION 3 AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR ACTION 1.

Action 1. Establish a rebuilding plan for gag.

Option 3. Establish a rebuilding plan with a rebuilding timeframe to equal T_{max} . This would equal 10 years with the rebuilding period ending in 2032. 2023 would be Year 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 10: SELECT OPTION 2 AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR ACTION 2.

Action 2. Revise the total acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for gag grouper.

Option 2. Revise the acceptable biological catch and set it **equal to** the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for gag grouper and set them equal to the **recommended** acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Additional direction to staff:

Action 2. Revise the total acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for gag grouper.

- Remove Option 5 from Action 2:

Option 5. Revise the acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for gag grouper and set them equal to 80% of the recommended acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey.

Action 3. Revise the sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for gag grouper.

- Remove Option 4a and modify Option 4b from 2018-2020 to 2017-2019 for Action 3:

Option 4a. To determine allocations throughout the rebuilding plan, use the following method: total the commercial and recreational landings from 2020 as a baseline for reductions; apply the percent reduction from the following total landings scenarios to the 2023 total ACL evenly between sectors; apply each subsequent annual increase in the total ACL evenly to each sector ACL for Year 2 and each year thereafter throughout the rebuilding plan.

Options 4b. To determine allocations throughout the rebuilding plan, use the following method: total the commercial and recreational landings from ~~2018-2020~~ 2017-2019 as a baseline for reductions; apply the percent reduction from the following total landings scenarios to the 2023 total ACL evenly between sectors; apply each subsequent annual increase in the total ACL evenly to each sector ACL for Year 2 and each year thereafter throughout the rebuilding plan.

Action 4. Modify gag grouper commercial management measures.

- Remove Option 3 from Action 4.

Option 3. Modify the gag grouper commercial minimum size limit.

Action 5. Modify gag grouper recreational management measures.

- Remove Options 2a, 2c, 2e, 3, and 4 from Action 5.
- Consider the effect of a vessel limit on recreational headboats for Action 5.

Option 2a. Establish a recreational gag grouper vessel limit of 1 fish per vessel per day.

Option 2c. Establish the recreational gag grouper vessel limit of 3 fish per vessel per day.

Option 2e. Establish the recreational gag grouper vessel limit of 5 fish per vessel per day.

Option 3. Establish a gag grouper recreational vessel limit, not to exceed the daily bag limit, whichever is more restrictive, for **private recreational vessels only**.

Option 4. Increase the size limit or implement a slot limit.

MOTION 11: REMOVE ACTION 6.

Action 6. Restrict spearfishing gear (including powerheads) during the gag grouper rebuilding plan.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Action 7. Modify gag grouper accountability measures.

- Modify Action 7 to include language for both the commercial and recreational sectors.

Snowy Grouper (SG Amendment 51)

The Committee reviewed the scoping comments summary then an updated decision document which included suggestions from the IPT and scoping comments. The Committee made the following motions, and gave the following guidance:

MOTION 12: SELECT OPTION 2 AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR ACTION 1.

Action 1. Revise the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for snowy grouper.

Option 2: Revise the acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for snowy grouper and set them equal to the **recommended** acceptable biological catch. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 13: SELECT OPTION 2 AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR ACTION 2.

Action 2. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for snowy grouper.

Option 2. Allocate 12.45% of the revised total annual catch limit for snowy grouper to the recreational sector and 87.55% of the revised total annual catch limit for snowy grouper to the commercial sector.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 14: SELECT OPTION 1 AS THE PREFERRED OPTION FOR ACTION 3.

Action 3. Reduce the snowy grouper commercial trip limit.

Option 1 (no change). The commercial trip limit for snowy grouper is 200 pounds gutted weight.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Additional guidance to staff:

- Work with the Council's CitSci Program to explore development of a project to gather supplemental snowy grouper data
 - Include outreach to dealers
 - Consider creating a workgroup (Design Team) to include science center, state TIP samplers, CitSci workgroup, dealers, and Sea Grant members
 - Consider state data collection when developing a project
- Provide an update to the Committee at the June 2022 meeting on the following items:
 - Workgroup members identified
 - Potential data needs
- Remove Action 4 (Establish a commercial spawning season closure) from the range of actions with the following rationale:
 - MPAs are currently protect spawning snowy grouper
 - The commercial sector has been experiencing closures in between seasons that have acted as a spawning season closure
 - Collection of gonadal data may be advantageous
- Gather additional input from the Snapper Grouper AP on what might be the best recreational season to account for regional differences since the season is already short
- Include two single wave season options, a wave 3 (May - June) and wave 4 (July-August) season option within Action 5
- Include analysis based on recent time periods with more stable data
- Have the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel discuss the following items for Action 3 (commercial trip limit):
 - The AP's response to the selected preferred alternative (Option 1 (No Action); 200 lbs gw).
 - Consider a high trip limit and possible seasonal closures.
 - Consider regional management of snowy grouper.
- Direct staff to consider a weekly trip limit option in the future for deepwater species (example: 200 lbs gw trip limit would become a 1,400 lbs gw 7-day trip limit) for other

snapper grouper species other than snowy due to the timeline and stock status of snowy grouper.

Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish (SG Amendment 52)

Golden Tilefish:

MOTION 15: SELECT ACTION 1 OPTION 2 AS PREFERRED.

Action 1: Revise the golden tilefish acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield (OY)

Option 2: Revise the acceptable biological catch and set it equal to the most recent recommendation from the of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish and set them equal to the recommended acceptable biological catch. The 2026 acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield would remain in place after 2026 until modified. The recommended acceptable biological catch is inclusive of recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program’s Fishing Effort Survey.

Year	ABC (lbs gw)	Annual OY (lbs gw)	Total ACL (lbs gw)
2022	418,000	418,000	418,000
2023	435,000	435,000	435,000
2024	448,000	448,000	448,000
2025	458,000	458,000	458,000
2026+	466,000	466,000	466,000

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 16: SELECT ACTION 2 OPTION 2 AS PREFERRED.

Action 2. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish

Option 2: Allocate 96.70% of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish to the commercial sector and 3.30% of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish to the recreational sector.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 17: ADD AN ACTION TO MODIFY THE COMMERCIAL FISHING YEAR FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Additional guidance to staff:

- Do not add an action to modify commercial gear allocations.
- For fishing year alternatives, include January 15 to the third week in January but no later than February 1 start, with options for longline and hook and line.
- Convene a meeting of longline endorsement holders to discuss management of that gear

sector.

- Add an option for a bycatch allowance for the longline sector once the longline quota is caught of up to 250 pounds.
- Obtain input from longline endorsement holders on potential trip limit step downs for the longline component.
- Remove Action 4 (Modify Golden Tilefish Commercial Accountability Measures).
- Consider the same post-season AMs for golden tilefish as are being considered for blueline tilefish.

Blueline Tilefish:

- Analyze recreational bag limits for blueline tilefish of 3, 2 and 1 fish per person per day.
- Analyze disallowing retention of recreational bag limit of blueline tilefish by captain and crew.
- Analyze modifying the blueline tilefish recreational season:
 - Consider closures by month (May, June, July, August) so the Council can explore combinations of months
 - Consider feasibility of regional seasons.
- Analyze options for post season recreational accountability measures and add table for blueline tilefish similar to how accountability measures were presented for golden tilefish.

Update on 2022 Red Snapper Season

SERO staff presented preliminary 2021 recreational landings for Red Snapper and other information that will be used to determine the duration of the 2022 recreational season.

Update on Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation

Council staff updated the Committee on the status of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation. A request for proposals has been published. Submitted proposals will be reviewed prior to the June Council meeting.

Updates on South Atlantic Red Snapper Count and Greater Amberjack Count

Council staff updated the Committee on the status of research projects to obtain abundance estimates for red snapper and greater amberjack.

Law Enforcement AP input not covered in previous agenda items

The Law Enforcement AP met on February 10, 2022, and discussed a list of topics other than those addressed in this and other Committee meetings. The AP Chair presented the AP's comments and recommendations on items not scheduled for discussion at this Council meeting, including compliance with electronic for-hire reporting and snapper grouper descending device requirements.

Approve Topics for Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

The Snapper Grouper AP is scheduled to convene in person on April 18-20, 2022. The Committee reviewed the list of topics below and approved it for staff to develop the AP's agenda.

- Black Sea Bass Fishery Performance Report

- Snapper Grouper Release Mortality Reduction Framework (Reg Am 35)
- Amendment 46 (Recreational Permitting/Reporting)
- Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack)
- Amendment 51 (Snowy Grouper)
- Amendment 52 (Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish)
- Update: Amendment 53 (Gag Grouper)
- Elect Chair/Vice Chair

The Committee also directed consideration of a separate webinar meeting between June and September for the AP to discuss the following topics.

- Amendment Updates: Amendment 48 (Wreckfish), Amendment 50 (Red Porgy),
- Other Updates: Citizen Science, SEDAR, Climate Change Scenario Planning, Reef Fish Fellowship
- SERFS Update
- Commercial electronic logbook discussion

Other Business

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 18: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Develop analyses that could inform future actions for Regulatory Amendment 35 (Snapper Grouper Release Mortality Reduction).
- Work with technical experts and state agencies to develop an ad hoc advisory panel for private recreational permitting and reporting. Initial membership will be reviewed during AP selection at the June 2022 Council meeting.
- Convene a meeting of the wreckfish shareholders this spring.
- Prepare a public hearing draft of Amendment 48 (Wreckfish) for approval at the September 2022 Council meeting.
- Conduct public comment for Amendment 49 (Greater Amberjack), including a public hearing during the public comment session at the June 2022 Council meeting.
- Convene a meeting of the golden tilefish longline endorsement holders to discuss alternative ways to manage that fishery.
- Convene a meeting of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel in April and consider convening another meeting of the AP prior to the September Council meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL