

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Kitty Hawk, NC
December 4-5, 2018

The Committee approved minutes from the October 2018 meeting and the agenda. Agenda item #12 (update on red snapper catch per unit effort) was removed.

Status of Commercial and Recreational Catches for Species under ACLs

National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office (NMFS SERO) staff updated the Committee on the status of commercial and recreational landings of snapper grouper species and species complexes relative to their respective ACLs. A website (link below) is now available to compare the recreational landings estimates generated from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) phone survey against the recreational landings estimates generated from the new mail survey. In the drop down list under “Catch Data” click on “Calibration Comparisons”, select a time period, species, and region. In the output the ACAL is the phone survey landings and the FCAL are the mail survey landings.

<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/queries/>

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

NMFS SERO staff updated the Committee on the status of amendments under review or recently submitted:

- Abbreviated Framework 2 (Fishing levels for black sea bass and vermilion snapper) – the amendment was submitted to NMFS on November 19, 2018. SERO is preparing the proposed rule package.
- Regulatory Amendment 28 (Golden Tilefish) – the amendment will be effective on January 4, 2019.
- Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 – the amendment has not yet been submitted to NMFS.

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Report

The Snapper Grouper AP met in Charleston, SC on October 17-19, 2018. David Moss, AP Chair, delivered a summary of the AP’s discussions and recommendations via webinar and provided additional information/clarification as needed.

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Report

The SSC met in Charleston, SC on October 15-17, 2018. Included in their agenda were several items pertaining to the management of the snapper grouper fishery. Dr. George Sedberry, SSC Chair, delivered a summary of the SSC’s discussions and recommendations on the following topics:

- Review of FL FWCC’s gear selectivity study for Red Snapper and other reef fishes in the U.S. South Atlantic
- Review and discussion of MRIP revision assessments for Blueline Tilefish, Red Grouper, Black Seabass, and Vermilion Snapper
- Discussion of ABC Control rule proposed changes.

- Recommendation on new bag and size limit analysis methodology

The SSC is scheduled to meet via webinar in January 2019 to discuss further investigation on stock assessments that underwent recent updates to include new recreational landings estimates as a result of MRIP revisions.

Regulatory Amendment 30 (Red Grouper)

The amendment would revise the rebuilding plan for red grouper and consider management measure modifications (i.e. changes to the duration of the spawning season closure and establishment of a commercial trip limit). During the October meeting, the Council approved the purpose and need statements, selected or reconfirmed preferred alternatives, and added a sub-alternative to extend the spawning season closure for red grouper off of the Carolinas through June. Development of this amendment was delayed due to issues with the 2017 commercial data; hence, approval for formal review is scheduled for March 2019. The Committee provided the following guidance and made the following motions:

- The Committee discussed the Snapper Grouper AP’s recommendation to include Georgia and Florida in Actions 2 and 3 that consider modifications to the red grouper seasonal closure for the recreational and commercial sectors, respectively. The Committee opted to continue to consider modifications to the closure only off the Carolinas.
- Due to the timing of the SSC’s review of the updated stock assessment that incorporates revisions to the MRIP estimates, the Committee requested that staff bring this amendment back to them for discussion at the March 2019 meeting and potential final review.

MOTION #1: APPROVE THE IPT’S SUGGESTED EDITS UNDER ACTION 1.

Action 1: Revise the Rebuilding Schedule for Red Grouper

Alternative 2. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the shortest possible time period to rebuild in the absence of fishing mortality (T_{min}). This would equal 6.5 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2023. 2018 2019 would be Year 1.

Alternative 3. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal 8 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2025 2026. 2018 2019 would be Year 1.

Preferred Alternative 4. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the maximum time period allowed to rebuild (T_{Max}). This would equal 10 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2027 2028. 2018 2019 would be Year 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #2: ACCEPT THE IPT’S SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 2.

Action 2: Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney).

Preferred Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Revise the timing of these restrictions only for red grouper in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina and South Carolina as follows:

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

Sub-alternative 2b. February – May (four months)

Sub-alternative 2c. March – June (four months)

Sub-alternative 2d. January – June (six months)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #3: ACCEPT THE IPT’S SUGGESTED EDITS UNDER ACTION 3

Action 3: Modify the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest, possession, sale, and purchase of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Additionally, during January through April, no person may sell or purchase any shallow-water grouper harvested from or possessed in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Preferred Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Additionally, during January through April, no person may sell or purchase any shallow-water grouper harvested from or possessed in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone. Revise the timing of these restrictions only for red grouper in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina and South Carolina as follows:

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

Sub-alternative 2b. February – May (four months)

Sub-alternative 2c. March – June (four months)

Sub-alternative 2d. January – June (six months)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26

This amendment considers recreational management measures that address items in the 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery. In October 2018 the Council made modifications to some of the alternatives and selected preferred alternatives. The Committee approved the following motions:

MOTION #4: APPROVE ITP'S SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 1

Action 1. Establish a deep-water species aggregate

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish.

Other species would remain in their current aggregates.

Alternative 3. Establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, wreckfish, silk snapper, queen snapper, and blackfin snapper. **Other species would remain in their current aggregates.**

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: DE-SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action 2. Specify the recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a recreational season for species in the Deep-water Species Aggregate (snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish):

Preferred Sub-alternative 2c. January 1 through the end of February

MOTION FAILS AT COMMITTEE

MOTION: DE-SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action 2. Specify the recreational season for the deep-water species aggregate

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a recreational season for species in the Deep-water Species Aggregate (snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish):

Preferred Sub-alternative 2c. January 1 through the end of February

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

RULED OUT OF ORDER

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2B AND 2C UNDER ACTION 2 (RECREATIONAL SEASON) AS PREFERRED AND SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B FOR SEASON 1 (JAN-FEB) AND 2F FOR SEASON 2 (MAY-AUG) UNDER ACTION 3 (AGGREGATE BAG LIMIT).

SUBSTITUTE MOTION #5: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTIONS 1, 2 AND 3.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #6: CLARIFY THAT ACTION 2 WOULD RETAIN EXISTING RECREATIONAL SEASON FOR WRECKFISH (JULY AND AUGUST)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #7: DE-SELECT PREFERRED SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2F AS PREFERRED AND SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 3

Action 3. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the deep-water species aggregate

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

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B AS PREFERRED

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

SUBSTITUTE MOTION FAILS

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B TO APPLY TO THE FIRST RECREATIONAL SEASON AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D FOR THE SECOND SEASON

SUBSTITUTE MOTION FAILS

MAIN MOTION APPROVED (8 IN FAVOR, 3 OPPOSED, 2 ABSTENTIONS)

MOTION #8: MODIFY THE TITLE OF ACTION 4 TO SPECIFY THE SPECIES IT APPLIES TO (QUEEN SNAPPER, SILK SNAPPER, AND BLACKFIN SNAPPER)

Action 4. Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #9: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF SNAPPER GROUPEE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 26 AS MODIFIED FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Regulatory Amendment 42 (Sea Turtle Release Gear & Framework Modification)

This amendment would make modifications to regulations for vessels with South Atlantic snapper grouper commercial or charter/headboat permits to allow the use of three additional sea turtle release gear types and would clarify dimension requirements for current sea turtle release gears. The amendment also proposes changes to the snapper grouper framework procedure to facilitate modifying sea turtle and other protected resources release gear and handling requirements in the future. At the June 2018 meeting, the Council reviewed scoping comments and approved actions and alternatives to be analyzed. The amendment document was reformatted to expedite review once approved. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION #10: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPEE AMENDMENT 42 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Allocation Review Trigger Plan

The Committee discussed the policy and guideline documents agreed to by NMFS and the CCC for each Council to establish a policy that determines which triggers would automatically initiate a review of allocations by FMP/species. The Committee received a presentation on the process. There is a deadline of August 2019 for the Council to send in their policy to NMFS. The

Committee gave the direction to staff to develop an initial draft policy statement that includes a discussion of the following:

- The policy will include species from the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin/wahoo FMPs as they are the only FMPs that have sector allocations.
- The Committee is interested in developing triggers based on fishery indicators and time periods, not those based solely on public input.
- The Committee wants the draft document to have discussion regarding triggers that:
 - Consider ALCs underages and overages,
 - Consider not revising allocations for stocks currently in a rebuilding plan,
 - Consider separate triggers for unassessed stocks as opposed to assessed stocks, and
 - Give a specific timeframe for reviewing allocations.

The Committee passed no motions related to the Allocation Review Policy and Triggers.

Regulatory Amendment 32 (Yellowtail Snapper AMs)

In March 2018, the Council directed staff to begin work on an amendment that would revise in-season accountability measures for yellowtail snapper. The intent is to alleviate socio-economic impacts due to in-season closures. Scoping was held via webinar in August 2018 and the Council reviewed input at their October 2018 meeting, selected a preferred alternative, and voted to progress the amendment for final approval at the December meeting. Public comment for this amendment was received during this meeting. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION #11: POSTPONE CONSIDERATION OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 32 UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER STOCK ASSESSMENT.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Recreational Accountability Measures Amendment

The Committee discussed the development of an amendment to modify accountability measures for the recreational sector. The Committee decided that consideration of *de minimis* status for wreckfish should be removed from consideration in this amendment and moved to a later amendment that will follow the completion of the Wreckfish ITQ review. The Committee discussed that the amendment will apply only to the snapper grouper and dolphin wahoo FMPs and not the CMP FMP because AMs for those species are very different from those used for SG and DW species. Additionally, the CMP stocks managed by the Council do not reach their recreational ACLs. The Committee wants further consideration of the pros and cons of tracking ACLs for recreational species in numbers of fish. The Committee discussed the types of actions/alternatives they would like included in the document. The Committee passed the following motion:

MOTION #12: RECOMMEND THE COUNCIL SEND SNAPPER GROUPEY REGULATORY AMENDMENT 31 AND DOLPHIN WAHOO REGULATORY AMENDMENT 2 OUT FOR SCOPING VIA WEBINAR PRIOR TO THE MARCH 2019 COUNCIL MEETING.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Vision Blueprint Biennial Evaluation

The 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery was approved in December 2015 and includes prioritized short-term objectives around broad goals addressing science, management, communication, and governance. The Vision Blueprint outlined an evaluation plan to review the implementation of items in the Blueprint. Staff provided an overview of the objectives/activities accomplished to date, items that remain to be addressed, and feedback from the Snapper Grouper AP. The Committee provided the following guidance:

- Create a webpage/story map to update stakeholders on actions accomplished to-date and those left to be addressed and solicit their input.
- Provide list of actions in the Vision Blueprint appendix that were not prioritized for development in 2016-2020 and provide to the Committee in 2019.
- Also during 2019, conduct a stakeholder survey once projects that are still under development are completed (e.g., best fishing practices amendment, recreational permit/stamp, etc).
- Provide evaluation of FMP objectives that was conducted in 2014 as part of the Visioning Project. Bring this material to the Committee at the March 2019 meeting.

The Committee made no motions pertaining to this agenda item.

Update on red snapper CPUE index

This item was removed from the agenda.

Characterization of the Commercial Snapper Grouper Fishery

The Socio-economic Profile of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Commercial Fishery is a broad project characterizing the commercial sector of the snapper grouper fishery. The project includes detailed information about permits and permit holders, snapper grouper vessels, participation, catch portfolios, and landings and revenue over the last 20 years. Dr. Kari MacLauchlin-Buck was contracted to conduct the analysis and produce a report. She presented preliminary findings to the Council at their March 2018 meeting. At the October 2018 meeting the Committee expressed interest in reviewing certain aspects of the characterization to inform discussions on management approaches for the commercial sector, and particularly the “2 for 1” program for unlimited permits. Staff provided a brief overview presentation of the pertinent items in the characterization. The Committee had the following questions/requests for staff:

- What was the original intent/rationale of the 2 for 1 program at its inception and was there a target number of permits specified?
- Include a permit application in the March 2019 briefing book
- Bring back information to March 2019 meeting on total commercial ACL available to the commercial sector.
- Consolidate a list of topics/questions to provide to the SERO Permits Office to include in presentation being requested for March 2019 (attached).

The Committee made no motions pertaining to this agenda item.

Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

MOTION #13 (TIMING AND TASK):

DIRECT STAFF TO:

1. FINALIZE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 26 AND SUBMIT TO THE NMFS
2. DIRECT STAFF TO BRING WHITE PAPER ON DW SPECIES REGIONAL ALLOCATIONS TO JUNE 2019 MEETING
3. CONDUCT PUBLIC HEARINGS ON AMENDMENT 42 (SEA TURTLE RELEASE GEAR REQUIREMENTS AND FRAMEWORK MODIFICATIONS) DURING THE MARCH 2019 MEETING.
4. INCLUDE SG FMP OBJECTIVES EVALUATION MATERIAL (FROM 2014 VISIONING PROJECT) IN MARCH 2019 BB
5. INCLUDE A SG COMMERCIAL PERMIT APPLICATION IN THE MARCH 2019 BB
6. DEVELOP A WEBPAGE/STORY MAP TO UPDATE STAKEHOLDERS ON PROGRESS TO DATE ON VISION BLUEPRINT ACTIVITIES DURING 2016-2018 AND BRING TO THE COMMITTEE IN MARCH OR JUNE 2019 FOR APPROVAL
7. REQUEST PRESENTATION FROM SERO PERMITS TO BE DELIVERED TO THE SG COMMITTEE DURING MARCH 2019 (SEE ATTACHED LIST OF QUESTIONS/TOPICS)
8. HOLD SCOPING FOR RECREATIONAL AMS AMENDMENT VIA WEBINAR PRIOR TO THE MARCH 2019 COUNCIL MEETING.
9. PREPARE A DRAFT ALLOCATION TRIGGER REVIEW POLICY BASED ON COUNCIL DISCUSSION FOR MARCH 2019.
10. PREPARE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 30 (RED GROUPER) FOR APPROVAL FOR FORMAL REVIEW IN MARCH 2019

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

List of topics/questions for SERO Permits presentation:

- Provide overview of the permit program. When was the program established, how many permits, are being managed, etc.
- What is done to track individuals who attempt to obtain/renew a permit when there's been a violation on a previous permit?
- If the permit were to be tied to an individual rather than the vessel, would this help in tracking violations?
- Could a permit be issued on a multi-year basis?
- What would happen if a permit were revoked in a limited access or an open access fisheries?
- How do renewal schedules affect the number of active permits?
- Clarify how is the renewal process different for for-hire and commercial permits
- Clarify process for incorporating and, particularly, the time it takes to do it.
- Explain the process for permit application/renewal to identify areas that need improvement.
- Explain how changes could be made in terms of governance. How is the agency structured and where does the permits office fit in?
- Explain how permit leasing works. How many permits are currently being leased?
- Clarify the need for a Unique Invitation Code for online permit renewal