

**FINAL SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEE COMMITTEE**

Myrtle Beach, SC

September 13-14, 2016

The Snapper Grouper Committee met on September 13-14, 2016 in Myrtle Beach, SC. The Committee first received updates from Southeast Regional Office staff on the status of commercial landings for snapper grouper species. The Committee then received an update on the status of snapper grouper amendments under review and recently implemented.

Amendment 37 (Hogfish)

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Amendment 37 was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on June 10 and the comment period ended on August 1, 2016. The Snapper Grouper Committee received a summary from SERO staff of the public comments received during the DEIS comment period. Council staff reviewed the actions in the amendment and answered questions. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION #1: SPECIFY THE TOTAL ACL FOR THE GA-NC STOCK OF HOGFISH IN POUNDS WHOLE WEIGHT. SPECIFY THE ABC AND TOTAL ACL FOR THE FLK/EFL STOCK OF HOGFISH IN NUMBERS OF FISH.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #2: REVISE TITLES OF ACTIONS 4 AND 6 IN AMENDMENT 37 TO INCLUDE SPECIFICATION OF OPTIMUM YIELD

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #3: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPEE AMENDMENT 37 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

Amendment 41 (Mutton Snapper)

The Committee received a summary of public comments received during the August public hearings made editorial modifications to actions and alternatives. The Committee reviewed analyses and modified selection of preferred alternatives for some actions. The Committee approved the following motions:

**MOTION #4: APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 3
ACTION 3. Revise annual catch limits (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic Region**

Preferred Alternative 2. The jurisdictional allocation for the South Atlantic is 82% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Specify TOTAL annual catch limit (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for the South Atlantic AND SECTOR ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS using the existing sector allocations (17.02% commercial and 82.98% recreational) and specify the recreational ACL annual catch limit in numbers of fish. The ACLs annual catch limits specified for 2020 would remain in place until modified.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. $ACL = OY = ABC$.

Sub-alternative 2b. $ACL = OY = 95\% ABC$.

Sub-alternative 2c. $ACL = OY = 90\% ABC$.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #5: SPECIFY THE ABC AND TOTAL ACL FOR MUTTON SNAPPER IN NUMBERS OF FISH.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION #6: APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 4.
ACTION 4. Revise recreational annual catch target (ACT) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic Region**

Preferred Alternative 2. Revise the annual catch target (ACT) for mutton snapper for the recreational sector and specify it the recreational ACT in numbers of fish. The ACT annual catch target for 2020 would remain in place until modified.

Sub-alternative 2a. $ACT = \text{recreational ACL} * (1 - \text{PSE})$ or $ACL * 0.5$, whichever is greater.

Year	PSE
2010	10.2
2011	15.2
2012	21.2
2013	15.1
2014	17.9
Average	15.9

Note: PSE = Percent Standard Error. The PSE is a measure of precision presented for recreational estimates. The higher the PSE, the less precise the estimate. The average PSE value for the most recent 5 complete years of recreational data would be used in the equation.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. $ACT = 85\% \text{ recreational ACL}$.

Sub-alternative 2c. $ACT = 75\% \text{ recreational ACL}$

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #7: APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ALTERNATIVES 1-5 UNDER ACTION 5

ACTION 5. Modify mutton snapper minimum size limit in the South Atlantic Region

Alternative 1 (No Action). The minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region is 16 inches **total length (TL)**.

Alternative 2. Increase the minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region to 17 inches **total length (TL)**.

Preferred Alternative 3. Increase the minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region to 18 inches **total length (TL)**.

Alternative 4. Increase the minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region to 19 inches **total length (TL)**.

Alternative 5. Increase the minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region to 20 inches **total length (TL)**.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #8: APPROVE SUGGESTED EDIT TO THE TITLE OF ACTION 6.

ACTION 6. Designate spawning **season MONTHS during which **CERTAIN** commercial and recreational management measures for mutton snapper should apply in the South Atlantic Region**

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #9: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 4C AS PREFERRED AND DE-SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 4B UNDER ACTION 7

ACTION 7. Modify mutton snapper recreational bag limit in the South Atlantic Region

Preferred Alternative 4. Retain mutton snapper within the recreational 10 snapper aggregate bag limit in the South Atlantic, but specify bag limits for mutton snapper within the aggregate bag limit year round.

Sub-alternative 4a. 2 fish/person/day.

Sub-alternative 4b. 3 fish/person/day.

Preferred Sub-alternative 4c. 5 fish/person/day.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #10: APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 2 SUB-ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 8

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #11: SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C AS PREFERRED AND DE-SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2A UNDER ACTION 8

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

ACTION 8. Modify mutton snapper commercial trip limit in the South Atlantic Region

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the “regular season” (i.e., non-spawning months) in the South Atlantic.

Sub-alternative 2a. 300 pounds **whole weight**

Sub-alternative 2b. 400 pounds **whole weight**

Preferred Sub-alternative 2c. 500 pounds whole weight
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #12: ADD SUB-ALTERNATIVE UNDER ALTERNATIVE 3 OF 5 FISH/PERSON/DAY AND SELECT AS PREFERRED AND DE-SELECT SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3B UNDER ACTION 8

Preferred Alternative 3. Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the “spawning months” in the South Atlantic.

Sub-alternative 3a. 2 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 3b. 3 fish/person/day

Sub-alternative 3c. 10 fish/vessel/day

Sub-alternative 3d. 12 fish/vessel/day

Sub-alternative 3e. No retention

Preferred Sub-alternative 3f. 5 fish/person/day

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Amendment 43 (Red Snapper)

SEFSC staff (Dr. K. Sigfried) delivered a presentation addressing reasons why SEDAR 24 and SEDAR 41 estimated such different productivity levels for red snapper. Selectivity changes and shifts in age composition (MRIP and headboat datasets) were cited as contributing factors. Council staff then presented an overview of options for possibly allowing harvest of red snapper while continuing to rebuild the stock. The Committee discussed options and provided guidance as follows:

- Action 2 (MSST) - Develop different Static SPR values to get over 50% SSBmsy. Add 85% of SSBmsy?
- Action 3 (ACLs) - Specify ABC/ACL in numbers of fish; include a table of red snapper landings by county
- Action 5 (optimum yield) - Remove MSA definition (Alternative 4); include an alternative for defining optimum yield: “OY is the long-term average catch, which is not designed to exceed the ACL, and will fall between the ACL and ACT.”
- Action 6 (closed area(s) to reduce bycatch) - add alternative(s) to investigate depth and discard mortality. Look at 10-foot intervals from 60 ft. to 150 ft.; look at area closure alternatives from Amendment 17A with seasonal (after May 1) and depth (98 ft. to 240 ft) components; examine area closure inshore of 98 ft. with a seasonal component; examine spatial data for red snapper abundance and overlay discards and apply seasonal (temporal) component.
- Action 7 (commercial measures) - add options for no harvest and for keeping the dive fishery closed; no commercial ACT; consider limiting harvest to non-spawning months? Trip limits both in pounds and numbers of fish; measures would specify harvest as *incidental*.
- Action 8 (recreational measures) - add alternative for season and bag limit for private recreational and for-hire combined; add alternative for headboat vessel limits; have similar options those considered for the recreational sector, add option for 75 ft to Alternative 5 and other depths listed in option 6.

- Action 9 (recreational stamp) - consider referring to “permit” instead of “stamp”; include consideration of red snapper bycatch notification system system to report incidental catch of red snapper or hail in/out system; bring back information on cost of possible harvest tag program (provided during discussions on Amendment 22); need to be clear about purpose of a stamp/recreational permit program (i.e., data collection or effort control?)
- Action 10 (reporting requirements for recreational sector) – consider referring to Gulf States Commission for e-logbook enforcement. Revise Alternative 5.
- Action 11 (AMs and adaptive management) – remove Alternative 7 (develop adaptive management based fishery independent monitoring using a rumble strip approach).
- Action 12 (Best Fishing Practices) – modify Alternative 2 to require venting tool and/or descending device to be on board vessel when snapper grouper species are onboard; consider descending device requirement for certain depth(s); add options for commercial and recreational sectors.

Vision Blueprint Recreational Amendment - Fisheries Seasonality and Retention

The Committee reviewed an options paper containing possible actions to modify recreational bag limits and the annual 4-month closure for shallow water groupers. The Committee provided the guidance below and requested that a revised options paper be prepared for the December 2016 meeting to approve for scoping in early 2017.

- Include an alternative for an aggregate bag limit that would include the species in the existing 10-snapper aggregate and the 20-fish aggregate. The alternative would maintain current restrictions for individual species within that aggregate but would address the Council’s intent to simplify regulations.
- Include an alternative that would eliminate the 10-snapper aggregate and allow specification of individual bag limits for those species.
- Include an alternative for a deepwater species’ aggregate that would impose the seasonal restrictions that are currently in place for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish (recreational harvest is restricted to May-August).
- Bring in alternatives originally explored in the draft South Florida Amendment.
- Remove from consideration the alternative to eliminate the 4-month shallow water grouper closure.
- Obtain input from Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel on how to address equitable access to shallow water grouper resource. For instance, gag are not available to recreational fishermen in south Florida because they migrate northward during the closure months.
- Include explanation of actions being considered in Amendment 43 (red snapper) to explain the overlap with items from the Vision Blueprint.
- Include options for red grouper.

Golden Tilefish Items

In June 2016, during discussion of the recent update to the stock assessment for golden tilefish, the Committee requested that staff obtain information on the methodology used in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast (NE) Region to assess golden tilefish. John Carmichael, Council staff, presented a general summary of that approach and provided a comparison to how golden tilefish are assessed in the South Atlantic. It was noted that similar issues exist in the Mid-Atlantic and NE with recruitment uncertainty. Golden tilefish appear about 4x more abundant in the NE than in the South Atlantic Region based on productivity and recruitment estimates, which could be directly related to extent of suitable habitat and/or ecological adaptation at higher latitudes. Also noted was the use of market grades in the NE dataset. The Mid-Atlantic Council representative noted that golden tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic Region are managed under an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program and this may affect fishermen behavior.

In June 2016 the Committee made specific requests to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) regarding the golden tilefish update assessment. The SSC is scheduled to address the Committee's request at their October 2016 meeting. In addition to that request, the Committee would like the SSC to discuss possible use of market grades categories to detect year-class strength in the SA fishery.

During public hearings for Amendment 35, stakeholders requested that the Council consider making a vessel's catch history of golden tilefish transferable with the longline endorsement. To inform that discussion, Council staff gave a brief overview of the Council's rationale (from their December 2011 meeting) for *not* making a vessel's catch history transferable with the black sea bass pot endorsement but retain it with the vessel's federal unlimited commercial permit. Staff noted that the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel supported retaining catch history with the permit. The Committee did not entertain making any changes to the current approach but requested that the Snapper Grouper AP hold discussion on this issue at their fall 2016 meeting to ensure their recommendation is still appropriate.

The Committee gave staff direction to include an action to explore different fishing year start dates for the golden tilefish commercial hook-and-line sector. The action would be included in the options paper for the Vision Blueprint Commercial Amendment, which the Committee asked to discuss at the December 2016 meeting.

Modifications to Black Sea Bass Pots

A presentation was delivered to the Committee (March 2016) and to the Snapper Grouper AP (April 2016) on a study to optimize selectivity of black sea bass pots. The Snapper Grouper AP approved a motion at their April 2016 meeting to recommend that the Council consider modifying the mesh size of pots to 2.25 inches based on results of the study. The SSC is scheduled to review results of the study at their October 2016 meeting and provide a recommendation to the Council. Therefore, the Committee opted to hold off discussion on this issue until the December 2016 meeting.

Red Grouper SAFE Report

Dr. Mike Errigo presented an overview of the information in the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report. The Committee provided guidance to include options to explore

spawning season closure modifications in both Visioning Amendments (commercial and recreational) for discussion at December 2016 meeting.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION #13: APPROVE THE FOLLOWING TASKS AND TIMING:

- PREPARE AMENDMENT 37 FOR FORMAL REVIEW
- PREPARE AMENDMENT 41, AS MODIFIED, FOR FINAL APPROVAL AT DECEMBER 2016 MEETING
- PREPARE AMENDMENT 43 (RED SNAPPER), AS MODIFIED, FOR REVIEW AT DECEMBER 2016 MEETING (INTENT TO APPROVE FOR SCOPING HEARINGS)
- REQUEST PRESENTATION FROM FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ON STAMP PROGRAM(S) FOR DECEMBER 2016 MEETING
- PREPARE SCOPING DOCUMENT, AS MODIFIED, FOR THE VISION BLUEPRINT RECREATIONAL AMENDMENT
- PREPARE SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR THE VISION BLUEPRINT COMMERCIAL AMENDMENT (INCLUDE ACTION TO CHANGE FISHING YEAR START DATE FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH HOOK-AND-LINE SECTOR AND ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING JUNE 2016 COMMITTEE MEETING)
- REQUEST THAT THE SSC DISCUSS USE OF MARKET GRADE CATEGORIES TO DETECT YEAR-CLASS STRENGTH FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH
- REQUEST THAT THE SNAPPER GROUPE AP DISCUSS ISSUE OF CATCH HISTORY BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THE VESSEL'S PERMIT VS. ENDORSEMENT
- REQUEST THAT THE SEFSC PROVIDE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON RED GROUPE DISCARDS FROM THE COMMERCIAL DISCARD LOGBOOK
- REQUEST THAT STAFF PROVIDE A HIERARCHICAL LIST OF SPECIES BASED ON REC LANDINGS BY PRIVATE, CHARTER, AND HEADBOAT FROM 2011 TO 2015 TO INFORM OPTIONS TO EVALUATE RECREATIONAL AGGREGATE BAG LIMITS

APPROVED BY COUNCIL