

# Final Summary Report

## Snapper Grouper Committee

Westin Jekyll Island  
110 Ocean Way  
Jekyll Island GA

March 8-9, 2016

### **Status of landings for snapper grouper species under ACLs**

The Committee received updates on the status of landings (commercial and recreational) for snapper grouper species under ACLs. Commercial landings were current through 3/4/16 whereas recreational landings were through Wave 5 of 2015 and still considered preliminary. Requests were made to add scamp to the recreational landings report in the future and to receive the 2016 recreational landings by March of 2017. Dr. Ponwith explained that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) has to generate two data sets for recreational landings, one based on the current Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the other based on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistic Survey (MRFSS) and this contributes to the lag time on recreational landings estimates. Also, the SEFSC has its own procedure for converting landings to pounds (original estimate is in numbers of fish). However, the SEFSC is currently in dialogue with the MRIP to unify the numbers/weight approach.

### **Status of amendments approved for secretarial review**

The Committee received a status report from SERO staff on the following amendments:

- Amendment 33 (transport of fillets from The Bahamas) – effective 1/27/16
- Amendment 34 (Comprehensive Accountability Measures) – effective 2/22/16
- Amendment 35 (removal of species and golden tilefish endorsements) – Proposed rule (PR) comments due by 4/4/16
- Regulatory Amendment 25 – PR package under development at SERO
- Regulatory Amendment 16 – PR package under development at SERO

### **Black Sea Bass Pot Selectivity Study**

Paul Rudershausen, North Carolina State University, presented results of a study to explore the selectivity of different mesh sizes in commercial black sea bass pot gear. The commercial black sea bass minimum size in the South Atlantic was increased to 11 inches without a concurrent increase in the minimum size of trap mesh to harvest the species. The purpose of the study was to determine whether larger mesh traps would optimize selectivity; that is, maximize escape of sub-legal fish while maintaining catch of legal fish. Traps with uniform mesh sizes of 2, 2.25, and 2.5 inches were tested. The study found that at the current minimum size limit of 11 inches, the 2.25-inch mesh trap would optimize selectivity. The research also showed that the current minimum trap mesh configuration retains a higher number of sub-legal fish than traps of larger mesh sizes. There is a large percentage of sub-legal individuals that are not escaping the current black sea bass trap. The study suggests that the Council could consider a single mesh size per trap to optimize selectivity.

### **SSC Input on setting ABC for the FLK/EFL stock of hogfish**

The Council has given staff guidance to specify the recreational ACL for hogfish in numbers of fish. Two methods were proposed to accomplish this while taking into consideration the increase in average weight that would result from a minimum size limit increase. The SSC reviewed the two approaches during a special webinar on March 4, 2016. Dr. Marcel Reichert, SSC Vice-Chair presented the SSC's recommendations to the Committee:

- Both scientific and management uncertainties are high.
- Major concern is poor sampling of weights of fish.
- Uncertainties affect both reviewed methods.
- "Method 2" proposed by Council staff considered to be Best Scientific Information Available.
- ABC values from "Method 2" are appropriate and adequate to prevent overfishing and also likely to prevent significant underfishing.
- Recommendation should be considered temporary until the revised projections are available (intent is for the SSC to review at October 2016 SSC meeting).
- SSC recommends update assessment once the 2018 data are available

### **Amendment 37 (Hogfish)**

The Committee received a summary of comments obtained during public hearings. In-person public hearings for Amendment 37 were held from January 25 through February 3, 2016. Public testimony was obtained at the meetings and written comments were accepted until February 10, 2016. The Committee received a summary of public comments and an overview of the actions and alternatives in the draft amendment. The Committee made the following motions:

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDIT TO PURPOSE AND NEED  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

#### ***Purpose for Actions***

The purpose of this amendment is to modify the management unit for hogfish, specify fishing levels based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee recommendations for the Georgia-North Carolina and Florida Keys/East Florida stocks of hogfish, and modify or establish management measures. For the Florida Keys/East Florida stock of hogfish, this amendment would establish a rebuilding plan to increase hogfish biomass to sustainable levels within a specified time period based on results of the recent stock assessment. ~~conducted with data through 2012.~~

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 1  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 1. Modify the Fishery Management Unit (FMU) for hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No action).** ~~Do not establish separate stocks of hogfish in the South Atlantic.~~

There is a Gulf of Mexico stock and South Atlantic stock of hogfish separated at the jurisdictional boundary between the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council:...

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 2  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 2. Specify Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** ~~Do not define MSY for the GA-NC or the FLK/EFL stocks of hogfish.~~ Currently, the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) equals the yield produced by  $F_{MSY}$ .  $F_{30\%SPR}$  is used as the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy for hogfish in the South Atlantic.

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 3  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 3. Specify Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** ~~Do not define minimum stock size threshold (MSST) for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish.~~ Minimum stock size threshold (MSST) for hogfish in the South Atlantic is equal to  $SSB_{MSY}((1-M)$  or 0.5, whichever is greater).

**Alternative 2.** Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) =  $SSB_{MSY}((1-M)$  or 0.5, whichever is greater).

**Sub-alternative 2a.** For the GA-NC stock of hogfish.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** For the FLK/EFL stock of hogfish.

**Alternative 3.** Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) = 50% of  $SSB_{MSY}$

**Sub-alternative 3a.** For the GA-NC stock of hogfish.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** For the FLK/EFL stock of hogfish.

**Preferred Alternative 4.** Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) = 75% of  $SSB_{MSY}$

**Preferred Sub-alternative 4a.** For the GA-NC stock of hogfish.

**Preferred Sub-alternative 4b.** For the FLK/EFL stock of hogfish.

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 4  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 4. Establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) stock of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No action).** ~~Do not establish ACLs for the GA-NC stock of hogfish.~~ The current acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the entire stock of hogfish is 134,824 lbs ww and ACL =

optimum yield (OY) = ABC. The commercial ACL = 49,469 lbs ww (36.69%) and the recreational ACL = 85,355 lbs ww (63.31%).

**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 5

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 5. Establish a rebuilding plan for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish a rebuilding plan the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish. The current Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for the entire stock of hogfish is 134,824 lbs ww. There is no rebuilding plan in place for hogfish in the South Atlantic.

\*\*\*Refer to Decision Document for remainder of suggested edits\*\*\*

MOTION: DE-SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED

**MOTION FAILS**

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 6

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 6. Establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No action).** Do not establish ACLs for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) hogfish stock. The current acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the entire stock of hogfish is 134,824 lbs ww and ACL = optimum yield (OY) = ABC. The commercial annual catch limit (ACL) = 49,469 lbs ww (36.69%) and the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) = 85,355 lbs ww (63.31%).

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish annual catch limits (ACLs) for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs for 2017-2025. ACLs will not increase automatically in a subsequent year if present year projected catch has exceeded the total ACL. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs using re-calculated sector allocations based on proposed modifications to the management unit (9.63% commercial and 90.37% recreational).

**Sub-alternative 2a.** ACL = OY = ABC

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2b.** ACL = OY = 95% ABC

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

**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 7

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 7. Establish a recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish recreational annual catch targets (ACTs) for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish. The current annual catch

target (ACT) is 59,390 lbs ww and applies to hogfish throughout the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction. The ACT = recreational ACL\*(1-PSE) or ACL\*0.5, whichever is greater, and where Percent Standard Error (PSE) = average PSE 2005-2009.

\*\*\*refer to Decision Document for remainder of suggested edits\*\*\*

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 8

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 8. Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for hogfish. The current minimum size limit for hogfish is 12 inches fork length (FL) for both the commercial and recreational sectors in federal waters of the South Atlantic Region, and state waters of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida. There is no minimum size limit for hogfish in state waters of Georgia.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the GA-NC stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** 16 inches FL

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2b.** 17 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 18 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 2d.** 19 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 2e.** 20 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 2f.** Increase the minimum size limit from 12 inches FL to 15 inches FL in year 1, to 18 inches FL in year 2, and to 20 inches FL in year 3.

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Increase the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 14 inches FL

**Preferred Sub-alternative 3b.** 15 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 3c.** 16 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 3d.** 17 inches FL

**Sub-alternative 3e.** Increase the minimum size limit from 12 inches FL to 14 inches FL in year 1 and to 16 inches FL in year 3.

**MOTION:** CHANGE CURRENT PREFERRED FOR FLK/EFL STOCK FROM SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3B (15 INCHES FL) TO SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3C (16 INCHES FL)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: CHANGE PREFERRED FOR GA-NC STOCK FROM SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B (17 INCHES FL) TO SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2E (20 INCHES FL)

**MOTION FAILS (TIE)**

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 9  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 9. Establish a commercial trip limit for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish a commercial trip limit for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region. Currently There is no commercial trip limit for hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a commercial trip limit for the GA-NC stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** 100 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 250 lbs ww per trip.

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2c.** 500 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 2d.** 750 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 2e.** No trip limit

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Establish a commercial trip limit for the Florida Keys/East Florida FLK/EFL stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

**Preferred Sub-alternative 3a.** 25 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 50 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** 100 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 3d.** 150 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 3e.** 200 lbs ww per trip.

**Sub-alternative 3f.** No trip limit

MOTION: CHANGE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR GA-NC STOCK FROM SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2C (500 LBS PER TRIP) TO SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D (750 LBS PER TRIP)

**MOTION FAILS**

MOTION: ADD ALTERNATIVE 4 TO ESTABLISH A COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT FOR THE GA-NC STOCK DURING MAY AND JUNE. INCLUDE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 4A-4C OF 200, 250, AND 300 LBS.

**MOTION FAILS**

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 10  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 10. Modify and/or establish recreational bag limits for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not modify and/or establish recreational bag limits for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish in the South Atlantic Region. Currently The recreational bag limit is 5 fish per person per day in federal waters off east Florida and there is no recreational bag limit in federal waters off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a recreational bag limit for the GA-NC stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2a.** 2 fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 1 fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 1 fish per vessel per day.

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Modify the recreational bag limit for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 3 fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 2 fish per person per day.

**Preferred Sub-alternative 3c.** 1 fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3d.** 1 fish per vessel per day.

**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 11

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 11.** Establish a recreational fishing season for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There is no recreational fishing season for hogfish in the South Atlantic. Currently, The recreational fishing year for hogfish is January 1 through December 31.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a recreational fishing season for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region.

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

**Sub-alternative 2b.** July-August

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2c.** July-September

MOTION: ADD AN ACTION TO CHANGE THE FISHING YEAR FOR THE GA-NC STOCK AND THE FLK/EFL STOCK FROM THE CALENDAR YEAR TO JULY 1

**MOTION FAILS**

MOTION: ADD AN ACTION TO CHANGE THE FISHING YEAR FOR THE GA-NC STOCK AND THE FLK/EFL STOCK FROM THE CALENDAR YEAR TO JULY 1

MOTION FAILS

**MOTION:** ADD SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D TO ACTION 11 FOR A RECREATIONAL SEASON JULY THROUGH OCTOBER AND SELECT AS PREFERRED.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*INTENT IS TO DE-SELECT PREVIOUS PREFERRED\*\*\*

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 12

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 12.** Establish commercial and recreational accountability measures (AMs) for the Georgia through North Carolina (GA-NC) and the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish



**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not establish AMs for the GA-NC and Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stocks of hogfish. Current commercial and recreational AMs apply to hogfish throughout the South Atlantic Council's area of jurisdiction.

\*\*\*See Decision Document for remainder of suggested edits\*\*\*

**MOTION:** MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Alternative 5.** If recreational landings exceed the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) for two consecutive fishing years, then during the following (*i.e.*, third) fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings. If necessary, NMFS would reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL after two consecutive years of exceeding the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the average annual recreational overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) of the respective stock is exceeded. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if NMFS determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

**Sub-alternative 5a.** For the GA-NC stock of hogfish.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** For the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock of hogfish.

#### **Amendment 41 (Mutton snapper)**

Scoping meetings for Amendment 41 were held in-person from January 25 to February 3, 2016. Meetings in Florida were held in conjunction with workshops conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), which is also considering changes to management of mutton snapper in Florida state waters. Scoping comments were accepted until February 10, 2016. The Committee received a summary of scoping comments and an overview of current actions in the draft amendment. The Committee made the following motions:

**MOTION:** MODIFY THE PURPOSE STATEMENT TO REMOVE “utilizing data through 2013” AND ACCEPT THE NEED STATEMENT AS PRESENTED  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

#### ***Purpose for Action***

The purpose of this amendment is to update the acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, maximum sustainable yield, minimum stock size threshold, optimum yield, and revise management measures for the mutton snapper component of the snapper grouper fishery based on the results of the most recent stock assessment utilizing data through 2013.

#### ***Need for Action***

The need for the amendment is to base mutton snapper management measures on the best scientific information available in order to achieve and maintain OY and to prevent overfishing while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.



**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 1 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 1. Specify Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for mutton snapper**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic equals the yield produced by  $F_{MSY}$ .  $F_{30\%SPR}$  is used as the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy. **The value is not specified.**

**Alternative 2.** Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) equals the yield produced by  $F_{MSY}$  or the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy. MSY and  $F_{MSY}$  are recommended by the most recent SEDAR/SSC.

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 2 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 2. Specify Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) for mutton snapper**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The minimum stock size threshold (MSST) for mutton snapper is  $MSST = SSB_{MSY} ((1-M) \text{ or } 0.5, \text{ whichever is greater})$ . **The value is not specified.**

**Alternative 2.** Minimum stock size threshold (MSST) = 50% of  $SSB_{MSY}$

**Alternative 3.** Minimum stock size threshold (MSST) = 75% of  $SSB_{MSY}$

**MOTION:** ACCEPT THE SUGGESTED EDIT TO ACTION 3 AND ADOPT STRUCTURE “B” FOR ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 3.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

**Action 3. Revise Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Optimum Yield (OY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region**

**Alternative 1 (No action).** The current ABC and OY for mutton snapper is 926,600 lbs ww. The current commercial ACL is 157,743 lbs ww and the recreational ACL is 768,857 lbs ww. (NOTE: The commercial allocation in the Comp ACL was 17.02% and the recreational allocation was 82.98%. However the ACLs that were implemented were calculated using this allocation to 6 decimal places instead of 2).

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

**Alternative 3.** The jurisdictional allocation for the South Atlantic is 82% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Specify  $ACL = OY = 95\% \text{ ABC}$ . Specify annual catch limits (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for the South Atlantic using the existing sector allocations (17.02% commercial and 82.98% recreational) and specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish. The ACLs specified for 2020 would remain in place until modified.

**Alternative 4.** The jurisdictional allocation for the South Atlantic is 82% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Specify  $ACL = OY = 90\% \text{ ABC}$ . Specify annual catch limits (ACLs) and optimum yield (OY) for the South Atlantic using the existing sector allocations (17.02%

commercial and 82.98% recreational) and specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish. The ACLs specified for 2020 would remain in place until modified.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 3 AND ADOPT STRUCTURE “A” FOR ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 3

SUBSTITUTE BECOMES MAIN MOTION  
MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 3. *Revise Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Optimum Yield (OY) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region***

**Alternative 1 (No action).** The current ABC and OY for mutton snapper is 926,600 lbs ww. The current commercial ACL is 157,743 lbs ww and the recreational ACL is 768,857 lbs ww. (NOTE: The commercial allocation in the Comp ACL was 17.02% and the recreational allocation was 82.98%. However the ACLs that were implemented were calculated using this allocation to 6 decimal places instead of 2).

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

**Sub-alternative 2a.** ACL = OY = ABC.

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

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

**NOTE: SINCE ABOVE MOTION PASSED, THE PREFERRED UNDER THE MOTION BELOW BECOMES SUBALTERNATIVE 2A**

**MOTION:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

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

**MOTION:** APPROVE SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 4  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 4. *Revise Recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region***

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The current ACT is 668,906 lbs ww and applies to mutton snapper throughout the South Atlantic Council’s jurisdiction. The ACT = recreational ACL\*(1-PSE) or ACL\*0.5, whichever is greater, and where Percent Standard Error (PSE) = 13% = average PSE 2005-2009 (for South Atlantic only).

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

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

**Sub-alternative 2b.** ACT =85% recreational ACL.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** ACT = 75% recreational ACL.

**NOTE: BASED ON SELECTED STRUCTURE UNDER ACTION 3, THE PREFERRED UNDER THE MOTION BELOW BECOMES SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2B**

**MOTION:** SELECT NEW ALTERNATIVE 3 (ACT =85% recreational ACL) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 4  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** MOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2C AND 2E UNDER ACTION 5 (Sub-alternative 2c: June-July; Sub-alternative 2e: May-August) TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 5. Designate spawning season during which commercial and recreational management measures for mutton snapper should apply**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The spawning season for mutton snapper is designated as May-June.

**Alternative 2.** For regulatory purposes, designate the following as “spawning months”. The remainder of the year would be the “regular season.”

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

**Sub-alternative 2b.** April-July

**Sub-alternative 2c.** June-July

**Sub-alternative 2d.** May-July

**Sub-alternative 2e.** May-August

**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ACTION 6

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 6. Modify Mutton Snapper Recreational Bag Limit in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Mutton snapper is part of the aggregate 10 snapper bag limit in the South Atlantic. In the South Atlantic, the 10 snapper-per-person aggregate includes all snapper species in the snapper grouper management unit except red snapper and vermilion snapper. Cubera snapper less than 30 inches total length (TL) are included in the 10 fish bag limit. The aggregate 10 snapper bag limit includes a maximum of 2 cubera snapper per person (not to exceed 2 per/vessel) for fish 30 inches TL or larger off Florida. Note: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the State of Florida regulations include mutton snapper in the 10 snapper bag limit.

**Alternative 2.** Retain mutton snapper within the recreational 10 snapper aggregate bag limit in the South Atlantic, but specify a bag limit for mutton snapper during the “regular season” (i.e., non-spawning months)

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

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 5 fish/person/day

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 10 fish/person/day

**Alternative 3.** Retain mutton snapper within the recreational 10 snapper aggregate bag limit in the South Atlantic, but specify bag/vessel limits for mutton snapper during the “spawning months”

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

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 2 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3c.** 5 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3d.** 10 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3e.** 12 fish/vessel/day

**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.

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

**MOTION:** MOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 3B AND 3C (Sub-alternative 3b: 2 fish/vessel/day; Sub-alternative 3c: 5 fish/vessel/day) TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX APPROVED BY COMMITTEE APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** ADD NEW SUB-ALTERNATIVES UNDER ALTERNATIVE 3 FOR NO RETENTION AND 3 FISH/PERSON/DAY APPROVED BY COMMITTEE APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** ACCEPT SUGGESTED EDITS TO ALTERNATIVES UNDER ACTION 7 APPROVED BY COMMITTEE APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 7. Modify Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit in the South Atlantic**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** During the spawning season May-June the commercial sector in the South Atlantic is restricted to 10 mutton snapper per day or 10 mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and sale is allowed. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf or South Atlantic from July through April.

**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

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

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 500 pounds

**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.** 5 fish/person/day

**Sub-alternative 3c.** 2 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3d.** 5 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3e.** 10 fish/vessel/day

**Sub-alternative 3f.** 12 fish/vessel/day

**MOTION:** MOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 3B, 3C, AND 3D UNDER ACTION 7 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** ADD SUB-ALTERNATIVES FOR NO RETENTION AND 3 FISH/PERSON/DAY TO ALTERNATIVE 3  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** ADD ACTION TO AMENDMENT 41 TO MODIFY THE MUTTON SNAPPER MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION:** ADD ALTERNATIVES FOR 17” TL, 18” TL, 19” TL AND 20” TL TO THE NEW ACTION.  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Oculina Experimental Closed Area Evaluation Report**

Council staff briefly reviewed the *Oculina* Evaluation Team’s recommendations and requested guidance from the Committee on timing for the next evaluation. The Committee made the following motions:

**MOTION:** NEXT REVIEW OF THE OECA IN 2019 WITH THE SCOPE INCLUDING SCIENCE, SIZE, CONFIGURATION, AND REGULATIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REPORT.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **System Management Plan for Deepwater MPAs**

Eight Deepwater MPAs were established through Snapper Grouper Amendment 14 in January 2009. The Council has developed a System Management Plan (SMP) that serves as the framework for resource protection, research and monitoring, outreach, administration, and evaluation of the MPAs. The SMP includes action items to assist in achieving the goals and objectives of the SMP and potential metrics for evaluating the management effectiveness of the

MPAs. Eventually, the SMP will be expanded to encompass all the Council's managed areas, with sections for MPAs, Spawning SMZs, SMZs, and Coral HAPCs. The Committee made the following motion:

**MOTION:** APPROVE THE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR AMENDMENT 14 DEEPWATER MPAS AND TIMING FOR THE REVIEW IN 2021 WITH EDITORIAL CHANGES APPROVED BY CHAIR.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Amendment 36 (Spawning Special Management Zones)**

Amendment 36 would specify a process for identifying spawning sites/aggregations for snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, based on the characteristics of sites important for spawning. Proposed regulations only prohibit fishing for and/or possessing snapper grouper species in areas designated as Spawning SMZs. The amendment would also revise the boundary of the Charleston Deep Reef MPA, and address transit and anchoring provisions within newly designated Spawning SMZs. A 10-year sunset provision, whereby the Spawning SMZ designation would be discontinued unless spawning were documented, and a framework action to reauthorize the Spawning SMZs are also included. The Council also developed a System Management Plan (SMP) to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the Spawning SMZs. The Committee made the following motion:

**MOTION:** APPROVE THE CORRECTIONS TO THE SIZE OF SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A, 3A, AND 3B, ALTERNATIVE 4, AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 5 FOR ACTION 3.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

#### ***Action 3. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZ) off North Carolina***

**Alternative 1. No Action.** There are no Spawning SMZs off North Carolina.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Malchase Wreck area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Malchase Wreck (2.42 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Malchase Wreck (1.00 square mile)

**Alternative 3.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the 780 Bottom area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** 780 Bottom (5.14 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** 780 Bottom (3.11 square miles)

**Alternative 4.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the NC Deep Wreck (3.20 square miles) that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Preferred Alternative 5.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the South Cape Lookout (5.10 square miles) that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.



**MOTION:** APPROVE THE CORRECTIONS TO THE SIZE OF SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A, 2B, 2C, 2E, AND 2F FOR ACTION 4.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 4. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZ) off South Carolina**

**Alternative 1. No Action.** There are no Spawning SMZs off South Carolina.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a Spawning SMZs in the Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (12.57 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (4.62 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2c.** Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (1.75 square mile)

**Sub-alternative 2d.** Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (15.20 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2e.** SC South (7.90 square miles) (Alternative to Devil's Hole)

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2f.** Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole (3.03 square miles)

**Preferred Alternative 3.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Area 51 site that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.99 square miles).

**Preferred Alternative 4.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Area 53 site that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.99 square miles).

**MOTION:** APPROVE THE CORRECTIONS TO THE SIZE OF SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A, 2B, AND 2C FOR ACTION 5.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 5. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Georgia**

**Preferred Alternative 1. No Action.** There are no Spawning SMZs off Georgia.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the St. Simons area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** St. Simons Area (14.32 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** St. Simons Area (8.89 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 2c.** St. Simons Area (3.80 square miles)

**MOTION:** APPROVE THE CORRECTIONS TO THE SIZE OF SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, AND 3C FOR ACTION 6.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 6. Establish New Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Florida**

**Alternative 1. No Action.** There are no Spawning SMZs off Florida.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Warsaw Hole area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Warsaw Hole (1.80 square miles)



**Sub-alternative 2b.** Warsaw Hole (0.90 square miles)

**Preferred Sub-alternative 2c.** Warsaw Hole (3.60 square miles)

**Alternative 3.** Establish a Spawning SMZ in the Daytona Steeples area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Daytona Steeples (6.53 square miles) area of apparent high relief in the 27 square mile footprint.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Daytona Steeples (13.30 square miles)

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Daytona Steeples (6.68 square miles)

Note: The Warsaw Hole is also known as the 50 Fathom Hole.

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

1. Correct spelling of graysby in Table S-19 (Spawning SMZ target species) and ensure it is included in Table 2.9.1.1.
2. Work with Monica to ensure all the necessary gear stowage requirements are included in the codified text.

**MOTION:** APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 36 FOR 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 43 (red snapper)**

A synopsis of red snapper data is being provided to inform Council discussions on potential red snapper management measures for inclusion in Amendment 43. The data include commercial and recreational landings, seasonality of harvest, size distribution of red snapper catch, and distribution of bag/trip sizes. Council staff gave an overview of the information compiled and presented possible management approaches. The Committee/Council will review the results of the red snapper stock assessment (SEDAR 41) at their June meeting in Cocoa Beach, FL.

**Results of Ranking Actions for Fisheries Seasonality/Retention Regulatory Amendment**

In December 2015, Council members completed a survey to rank different amendment approaches/topics for a Visioning Amendment in 2016. The highest ranked approach/topic was Fishery Seasonality/Retention. Additionally, Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 23/24 was put on hold in 2015 until the Vision Blueprint was complete. This draft regulatory amendment included items that address several of the short-term management strategies identified in the Vision Blueprint. To prioritize items for inclusion in a Visioning Amendment, Council members were asked to complete another survey in February 2016 to rank specific management strategies on Fishery Seasonality/Retention and Sub-regional Approaches to Management. Council staff reviewed the survey results and the Committee discussed which

items to recommend for inclusion in the 2016 Visioning Amendment. The following options for a possible Visioning Amendment were suggested but the Committee made no motions. The Council may choose to develop one or two amendments (dependent on the activity schedule that the Council approves).

OPTION 1: Seasonality Amendment – shallow water grouper closure (all sectors)

OPTION 2:

- Recreational Amendment – aggregate bag limits; deepwater species (bag/size limits); start dates of fishing year; fishing season
- Commercial Amendment – aggregate trip limits; start dates of fishing year

OPTION 3: Retention Amendment – aggregate bag limits/trip limits (all sectors)

**TIMING AND TASKS MOTION:**

- Prepare Amendment 36 for formal review (including guidance to staff above)
- Prepare Amendment 37 for approval at the ~~June~~ SEPTEMBER 2016 Council meeting
- Conduct as much of the analysis as possible on Amendment 41 and provide to FWC in late March/early April to refine their preferred alternatives.
- Request that Paul Rudershausen give the presentation on black sea bass pot selectivity study to the SG AP at their April 2016 meeting.
- Distribute the approved Oculina Review Report
- Distribute the approved System Management Plan for Amendment 14 MPAs
- Distribute the approved System Management Plan for Spawning SMZs
- Prepare draft options with analyses for red snapper management for the June Council meeting

APPROVED BY COUNCIL