

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
DECEMBER 2020

(MEETING HELD VIA WEBINAR)

The Committee met via webinar on December 7 and 8, 2020. The Committee approved the minutes from the September 2020 meeting and the agenda for the December 2020 Committee meeting.

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

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

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 34 – Proposed rule published 11/16/20 with a comment period through 12/16/2020.

Yellowtail Snapper Stock Assessment

Chris Swanson, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) delivered a presentation to the Committee on the Yellowtail Snapper stock assessment (SEDAR 64). The Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs met jointly on October 30, 2020 to provide an ABC recommendation. Genny Nessler, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Chair, delivered the SSCs' recommendations to the Committee. The following direction to staff is recommended:

1. Start a joint Amendment to set a new ACL for Yellowtail Snapper.
2. Ask the leadership of the two SSCs (Gulf and South Atlantic) to develop a game plan, that the Councils will review, for how to deal with developing ABCs for jointly managed stocks with two different Council ABC control rules.
 - a. This problem was surfaced during the Yellowtail Snapper assessment, but it will come up again with future assessments, such as with the Mutton Snapper assessment.
 - b. This group should also address how to deal with the differences in the Stock Synthesis (SS3) and Beaufort Assessment Model (BAM) when applying the ABC control rules.

Additional rationale and direction below were provided at Full Council:

- Engage staff from SEFSC and FRWI modeling staff who were conducting comparison between the two models (BAM and SS3).
- Issues between models are based on modeling styles.
- SSCs to discuss jointly (sub-set of SSCs initially and eventually whole SSCs) and then bring input back to Councils.
- A workgroup would:
 - Develop procedures to address stocks crossing jurisdictional boundaries. Guidance is needed for SSCs to move forward with addressing species that overlap jurisdictions but are managed under separate FMPs and control rules.
 - Develop best practices for resolving use of different control rules.

Evaluating the Need for Conservation and Management for 9 Snapper Grouper Species

Council staff facilitated discussion of whether Blackfin Snapper, Coney, Cubera Snapper, Margate, Misty Grouper, Silk Snapper, Saucereye Porgy, Yellowedge Grouper, and Yellowfin Grouper need continue to need conservation and management or merit designation as ecosystem component species. Jimmy Hull, Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, presented the AP's recommendations on this topic. Committee members stated that Misty Grouper, Saucereye Porgy, and Blackfin Snapper are important in some species areas of the South Atlantic and provided the following direction to staff:

- Do not consider Margate, Yellowedge Grouper, Yellowfin Grouper, Silk Snapper and Cubera Snapper for removal from the Snapper Grouper FMP.
- Include possible action to evaluate species for need of conservation and management under the Snapper Grouper FMP in a future unassessed species amendment. Work with SEFSC on possible approach for setting a single ACL with an (assessed) indicator species for data-poor species.

Wreckfish ITQ Modernization (Amendment 48)

The Committee discussed an options paper and reviewed input from Wreckfish ITQ shareholders. In addition, the Committee received a presentation from SERO staff on how other ITQ Programs are administered in the Gulf of Mexico and on the usefulness of the current Wreckfish Permit. The Committee provided the following direction to staff:

- Retain the current goals and objectives for the Wreckfish ITQ Program without modification. The Committee recommended no substantial changes to the program other than modernizing existing systems.
- Include an action that would consider the following recreational allocations: *de minimis*, 1%, and a percentage between 1% and 5%. Corresponding commercial allocations would be 100%, 99%, and between 99% and 95%. The no action alternative would retain the 95% commercial and 5% recreational allocation.
- Develop actions and alternatives to transition from the current paper-based system to an electronic reporting system.
- Develop actions and alternatives to modify the commercial fishing year (currently from April 15-April 14 with a January 16 to April 14 closure) and include an alternative for a calendar fishing year to alleviate potential administrative issues associated with resetting the IFQ computing systems.
- Obtain input on offloading requirements from the Law Enforcement AP, perhaps with additional input from a shareholder representative, and develop an action and alternatives to modify the current offloading time and site protocols.
- Develop an action with alternatives to address issues with wreckfish permit.
- Develop an action to address economic data collection (if the SEFSC is able to stratify the current snapper grouper economic data collection to ensure that all wreckfish shareholders are included, this action may not be needed).
- Develop actions to implement a cost recovery program to include where all participants would follow the same timing for payment.

Included in this amendment are the Snapper Grouper FMP Goals and Objectives that were approved in the Vision Blueprint but have yet to be adopted for the FMP.

The Committee made the following motion:

MOTION 1: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 48 FOR SCOPING DURING THE MARCH 2021 COUNCIL MEETING.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Red Porgy (Amendment 50)

Council staff presented an overview of a decision document including preliminary analyses and recommendations from the Snapper Grouper AP. The Committee discussed that decades of management measures have not helped improve the status of Red Porgy in the region and recruitment has continued to be poor. It was acknowledged that the stock's condition may be due to factors unrelated to fishing. It was also stated that it is possible there have been changes in the environment that have caused low recruitment, but scientists do not know the timescale of that change and for how long it will persist into the future. Also, projections tend to be optimistic because they assume that discards are decreasing at the same rate as landings, so part of the reason recovery has been elusive could be because the projections have been too optimistic.

The Committee provided the following guidance and made the motions below:

**MOTION 2: DO NOT SELECT A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE PRIOR TO SCOPING
SUBSTITUTE MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED
Action 2. Revise the Red Porgy total annual catch limit and optimum yield**

Alternative 2. Revise the annual catch limit and optimum yield for Red Porgy to equal the updated acceptable biological catch based on the results of the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 60 2020). The 2026 annual catch limit would remain in place until modified.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Direct staff/IPT to:

- Examine the following range of trip limits for the commercial sector:
 - 15, 20, 30, and 45 fish in season 1 (Jan-Apr)
 - 15, 20, 30, 45, and 60 fish in season 2 (May-Dec)
 - Do not consider a spawning season closure for the commercial sector
- Prepare analyses to examine the effects of closing the recreational fishery for red porgy in synchrony with the shallow water grouper spawning season closure (January-April)
- Prepare analyses to examine the effects of closing the recreational fishery for red porgy in waves 3 and 4.
- Prepare analyses to examine the effects of reducing the red porgy bag limit to:
 - 1 fish per angler per trip;
 - 2 fish per angler per trip;
 - 3 fish per angler per trip; (no action) and

- examine the combined effects of bag limit reductions with closures above.
- Prepare analyses to examine a recreational fishing season occurring in wave 3 or wave 4.
- Prepare analyses with a range of recreational vessel limits (if there are adequate data for such analyses).
- Include options for modifications to accountability measures.

Greater Amberjack (Amendment 49)

At the June 2020 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on an amendment to adjust catch limits and allocations based on information from SEDAR 59 (2020) and SSC recommendations. At this meeting, staff presented an overview of the drafted options paper and requested guidance from the Committee on possible actions and a range of alternatives to develop for consideration at the March 2021 meeting. A draft timeline was presented that would complete development of this amendment in 2022. The Committee requested information on how the fishing year has evolved throughout the recent management history. The Committee also requested that the IPT explore a range of optimum yield values separate from the total ACL and additional allocation options. Finally, the Committee requested the AP discuss and provide input on potential changes to management measures that could be incorporated into Amendment 49. The AP is currently scheduled to meet next in April 2021.

Snapper Grouper AP Recommendations not covered in previous items

The Committee did not discuss additional input or recommendations from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel due to time constraints.

Other Business

There was no Committee discussion under Other Business.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 3: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Include action to evaluate species for need of conservation and management under the Snapper Grouper FMP in a future unassessed species amendment. Work with SEFSC on possible approach for setting a single ACL with an (assessed) indicator species for data-poor species.
- Prepare the Wreckfish ITQ Modernization Amendment (Amendment 48) for scoping during the March 2021 Council meeting.
- Start an amendment (in cooperation with the Gulf Council) to set a new ACL for Yellowtail Snapper. Direction to continue this work in SG Am 44 (which had been suspended).
- Refer to guidance under item above addressing Yellowtail Snapper to create workgroup.
- Conduct scoping hearings for the Red Porgy Amendment (Amendment 50) in winter 2021 and bring back comments to the Committee at the March 2021 meeting.
- Schedule online public seminar: Red Snapper diet composition using DNA barcoding of fish prey (MARMAP).
- Prepare Greater Amberjack Amendment (Amendment 49) draft scoping document for the Committee to consider during the March 2021 meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL