

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SNAPPER GROUPEL COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Wilmington, NC
December 2-6, 2019

The Committee approved minutes from the September 2019 meeting and the agenda for the December 2019 Committee meeting.

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.

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

NMFS SERO staff updated the Committee on the status of amendments under review or recently submitted. Final rule packages are being prepared for Regulatory Amendments 26, 27, and 30.

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Report

The SSC met in Charleston, SC, on October 15-17, 2019 to discuss items of interest to the Committee. Dr. George Sedberry, SSC Chair, briefed the Committee on SSC discussions and recommendations on the following items:

- ABCs for Unassessed Snapper Grouper Stocks
- Draft NS1 Guidelines on Carryover of Unused ACLs and Phase-ins of Revised ABCs
- Draft Report To Congress on “Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Act”
- Coral Habitat Distribution Model
- Clarification on Blueline Tilefish OFL and ABC
- South Atlantic Ecosystem Model Update

The Committee approved the following motions:

MOTION #1: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN AN INFORMATION PAPER TO BEGIN EVALUATING THE CONTINUED NEED FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SPECIES RECOMMENDED BY THE SSC FOR EC DESIGNATION. ALSO EVALUATE ADDING ADDITIONAL SPECIES FOR MANAGEMENT UNDER THE FMP (BARRELFISH, AFRICAN POMPAÑO).

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

GUIDANCE TO PREPARE FOR MARCH 2020 MEETING*

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #2: RECOMMEND THAT THE SEDAR COMMITTEE REQUEST THE FOLLOWING SPECIES BE CONSIDERED FOR ASSESSMENT THROUGH SEDAR PROCESS:

GRAY SNAPPER
ALMACO JACK

KNOBBED PORGY
JOLTHEAD PORGY
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Advisory Panel (AP) Report

The Snapper Grouper AP met in Charleston, SC, on October 9-11, 2019 to discuss items pertaining to the snapper grouper fishery. Robert Lorenz, AP Vice-Chair delivered the report to the Committee. The AP received updates on developing amendments, other pertinent projects and upcoming Council actions. In addition, the AP provided input for a Fishery Performance Report on scamp and provided their recommendation on proposed regulations in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Regulatory Amendment 33 (Red Snapper Seasons Modifications)

The amendment includes actions to remove the minimum number of days required to allow recreational or commercial harvest of red snapper and change the start date of the commercial season. Council staff presented an overview of analyses and the Council's rationale provided at the September 2019 meeting. The Committee approved the following motions:

MOTION #3: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED AS MODIFIED

The purpose and need of this framework amendment is to remove the **CURRENT CONSTRAINT ON THE** minimum number of days **REQUIRED** to allow commercial or recreational harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic ~~and modify the red snapper commercial season to increase~~ **MAINTAIN** the socio-economic benefits to fishermen and fishing communities. ~~while minimizing discard mortality.~~

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #4: CHANGE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE UNDER ACTION 2 TO ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION).

Action 2. Modify the red snapper commercial season

Alternative 1 (No Action). The commercial red snapper season begins on the second Monday in July, unless otherwise specified.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (9/3/1)

APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OBJECTION)

MOTION #5: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPEER REGULATORY AMENDMENT 33 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 (3 OBJECTIONS)

Update of SERFS Chevron trap CPUE for Red Snapper including 2019 data

Dr. Marcel Reichert presented an update of the Southeast Reef Fish Survey catch per unit effort data collected in 2019 for red snapper. In 2019, red snapper ranked 6th in the chevron trap index.

Catch per unit effort of red snapper in 2019 was lower than that in 2018 but still well above the long-term average. There is evidence of strong year classes moving through the fishery.

Abbreviated Framework 3 (Blueline Tilefish)

The amendment would adjust the ABC and ACL for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic Council’s jurisdiction, including the area north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. At their October 2019 meeting, the SSC clarified their intent of adding the OFLs and ABCs from the areas north and south of Cape Hatteras to produce a single OFL and ABC for the blueline tilefish stock in the South Atlantic. Council staff provided an overview of modifications to the amendment based on guidance at the September 2019 meeting.

The Committee approved the following motion:

MOTION #6: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPER ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK 3 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

Regulatory Amendment 31 (Modifications to Recreational Accountability Measures)

The Committee discussed Regulatory Amendment 31 for the first time since March 2019 when they made substantial revisions to the document. The Committee revised the purpose to reflect the removal in June 2019 of actions related to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP. The Committee then discussed the need to continue work on developing an amendment to address just AMs when recent MRIP revisions will be affect ACLs and allocations. The Committee discussed the need to consider revisions to ACLs and allocations prior to or in conjunction with AM revisions, as well as the possible need to wait to see what the impact of ACL and allocation revisions may have on current AMs. The Committee recommended pausing future work on Regulatory Amendment 31 until December 2020 when more will be known about how MRIP revisions will affect ACL and allocation revisions.

MOTION #7: ACCEPT THE IPT’S RECOMMENDED EDITS TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED.

Purpose

Revise accountability measures for the recreational sector for species in the Snapper Grouper and Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plans to address uncertainty in the estimates of recreational catch and increase standardization of accountability measures across species, as well as improve predictability and stability of fishing seasons.

Need

Maintain optimum yield in recreational fisheries while limiting discard losses and promoting social and economic benefits to recreational anglers.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Summary of Best Practices Outreach

At the September 2019 meeting, the Committee requested a summary of current and past outreach efforts on best fishing practices in the South Atlantic and their results. Council staff presented the summary of current and past outreach efforts in the region and updated the Council on plans for future outreach efforts. The Committee had the following comments:

- It is appropriate for Council staff to direct fishermen to the Florida Sea Grant's online resources regarding venting as opposed to creating new content.
 - Outreach materials should note that while descending devices are required to be onboard, venting is not expressly prohibited.
- Request analytics from websites that offer resources on best fishing practices, such as catchandrelease.org, to evaluate the extent of outreach
- Outreach and education efforts regarding upcoming regulatory changes on best fishing practices should focus on existing online resources until the changes become effective
- Suggestion to prepare a one-pager to have ready once regulations become effective that can be sent via pdf and be handed out at tackle shops, by law enforcement officers etc.
- When considering the timing of outreach efforts, it is important to remember that NMFS has a 30-day "cooling off" period that normally precedes a regulatory change. 30 days may not be enough time for fishermen to purchase the required descending devices.

System Management Plan Workgroup Update

The System Management Plan Workgroup met in October 8-9, 2019 to go over the Spawning Special Management webpage and begin an outline for evaluation of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area. Council staff briefed the Committee on the meeting and the evaluation plan.

Snapper Grouper AP input on Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Draft Environmental Impact Statement

This agenda item was covered under the Snapper Grouper AP Report

Other Business

The Committee discussed the regulation that requires that all snapper grouper species be landed with heads and fins intact. Staff provided background on the rationale for this regulation and recent inquiries from fishermen regarding whether certain species can be cut up to be used as bait. The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel discussed the issue at their May 2019 meeting and stated there were no enforcement concerns. This was reiterated at the Committee meeting by the USCG representative who stated there had been very few cases where fishermen were found to be in violation of this regulation. The Committee did not express intent to modify the current regulation.

Council staff explained that the Commercial Fishermen's Forum has been taken offline since there was not enough engagement.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION #8: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- PREPARE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 33 FOR SUBMISSION
- PREPARE ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK 3 FOR SUBMISSION
- BEGIN WORK ON INFORMATION DOCUMENT (EC SPECIES, ETC) TO INCLUDE IN MEETING MATERIALS FOR MARCH 2020

APPROVED BY COUNCIL