



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Snapper Grouper Commercial Visioning Overview

November 2024

Snapper Grouper
Commercial
Subcommittee Meeting

Michael Schmidtke,
SAFMC Staff





SUB-COMMITTEE TASKING

June 2024, Commercial Sub-Committee was formed and tasked to:

- Review the Vision Blueprint
- Develop topics that require further consideration
- Recommend next steps

Sub-Committee Members: Jessica McCawley, Kerry Marhefka, Tim Griner, Trish Murphey, Amy Dukes, Andy Strelcheck, James Hull, Jr., Charlie Phillips

VISION BLUEPRINT



- Long-term planning effort published in Dec 2015
 - Developed collaboratively with stakeholders through workshops held between 2012 and 2015
 - Goal of the effort was to define priorities, goals, and strategies for managing the snapper grouper fishery for 2016-2020
- 4 Goals for the Fishery:
 - Science – Data collection, monitoring, and assessment efforts
 - **Management** – Management strategies to rebuild and maintain the fishery
 - Communication – Encourage stakeholder participation and engagement
 - Governance – Improve the Council’s decision-making processes

VISION BLUEPRINT



- The full [Vision Blueprint](#) is published on the Council's website
 - NOTE: The Vision Blueprint also includes 4 appendices with information on:
 - A – Prioritized actions for 2016-2020
 - B – A complete list of objectives, strategies, and actions for each goal area
 - C – Actions that were proposed but not prioritized for the 2016-2020 timeframe
 - D – Description of the review and evaluation plan for the Vision Blueprint



TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- **GOAL:** Review management goals for the commercial SG fishery from the Vision Blueprint and discuss Council progress toward those goals
 - Use the Vision Blueprint as the jump point for addressing current issues facing the commercial sector of the SG fishery
 - Presentation will highlight commercial management actions in the Vision Blueprint (not all Blueprint actions are included)
 - Some bullets are applicable to both sectors but may/may not be primarily commercial priorities



SUB-REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Objective 1 – Develop management measures that consider sub-regional differences and issues within the fishery
- Strategy 1.1 – Consider different quota-based management systems
 - Species-specific quota-based management, such as state-specific quotas (e.g. BSB) or sub-regional management of deepwater species (e.g. tilefishes)
 - Strategy 1.2 – ID design elements for these different management systems
 - E.g. Quota transfers by subregion, sub-regional ACLs and openings/closures, management boundaries based on the biogeography of the fishery



SUB-REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Strategy 1.3 – Non-quota-based management strategies
 - Staggered spawning season closures that consider latitudinal differences in spawning activity
 - Regulations based on sub-regional areas rather than quota allocations
 - State-by-state regulations for either sector
 - Apply sub-regional management strategies seasonally, based on fish availability
 - Effort control strategies such as alternating 2-week windows for fishing (by sub-region)



MANAGING ACCESS

Objective 2 – Develop innovative management measures that allow consistent access to the fishery for all sectors

- Strategy 2.1 – Support development of management approaches that address retention of snapper grouper species
 - *Trip limit adjustments such as step-downs (e.g. mutton during spawning, vermilion prior to Reg Am 27 [implemented 2020]) and establish trip limits for species that do not have them (e.g. Other Jacks Complex [Reg Am 27], scamp [Am 55])*
 - Consider aggregate trip limits for the commercial sector (e.g. # of boxes with no size limit)
 - Consider alternative approaches to managing traditional multi-day SG bandit boats/fishery, such as permit stacking, multi-day trip endorsement, sector/community shares, etc. (also noted as an effort control action in Strat 2.2)
 - Evaluate commercial retention of the recreational bag limit when the commercial season is closed

MANAGING ACCESS



- Strategy 2.2 – Support development of management approaches that address the amount of effort in the SG fishery
 - Evaluate commercial 2-for-1 permit requirement
 - Evaluate the use of days-at-sea
 - Evaluate the carrying capacity/level of overcapitalization
 - Explore options for a privately-funded buy-out program



MANAGING ACCESS

- Strategy 2.3 – Support development of management approaches that account for the seasonality of the SG fishery
 - *Expand the use of split seasons for the commercial fishery (e.g. greater amberjack, vermilion snapper, blueline tilefish, snowy grouper, and red porgy in Reg Am 27)*
 - Consider seasons for co-occurring species and stagger the seasons (use depth as criteria – mid-shelf and deepwater)
 - *Adjust the seasonal spawning closure for shallow water grouper (for NC/SC red grouper in Reg Am 30 [2020])*
 - Consider shortening by 1 month, allowing fishing with a reduced limit, or a rolling closure throughout the region



MANAGING ACCESS

- Strategy 2.4 – Support development of management approaches that consider flexibility in ACLs
 - Shift sector allocations in-season
 - Use adaptive management for almaco jack and rudderfish to slowly increase the ACL
 - Use multi-year ACLs (multi-year catch specifications)
- Strategy 2.5 – Consider development of alternative approaches to expand access
 - Investigate expansion of fisheries for under-utilized species
 - Consider measures to simplify regulations



MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES

Objective 3 – Ensure that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors

- Strategy 3.1 – Consider development of approaches that assist fishery-dependent businesses to operate efficiently and profitably
 - Consider market availability in management decisions
 - Consider non-traditional stakeholders/businesses in decisions (e.g. chefs, marinas)
 - Consider new entrants to endorsement programs
 - Consider diversity of harvest operations in decisions (owner-operator, multiple vessels, etc.)
 - Consider establishing a permit bank to address new entrants



DISCARD MITIGATION

Objective 4 – Develop management measures that reduce and mitigate discards

- Strategy 4.1 – Consider catch limits, seasons, and the biology of the fishery to minimize bycatch of SG species
 - *Use spawning SMZs (speckled hind and warsaw grouper SpSMZs in Am 36 [2017])*
 - Use time-area closures (by region or a specific area)
 - Consider a spawning closure for all SG species with a low ACL
 - Set a fishing season at the beginning of the fishing year with known open and close dates
 - Set a season for deepwater and shallow water species by area
 - Consider time/area closure for all SG species (whole region or area-specific)



DISCARD MITIGATION

- Strategy 4.2 – Consider approaches that address the impact of depth on SG bycatch
 - Consider full retention of deepwater species
 - Establish a season for deepwater species
 - *Consider removal of size limits for deepwater species (e.g. queen, silk, and blackfin snapper in Reg Am 27)*
 - Consider alternative electronic monitoring methods for all sectors to obtain data on depth to monitor catch composition and location
 - Use zone-based management set by depth
- Strategy 4.3 – Reconsider management strategies that use size limits to reduce bycatch
 - Re-evaluate and change size limits on a species-by-species basis
 - Consider no size limits for SG species
 - Use differential size limits by area



DISCARD MITIGATION

- Strategy 4.4 – *Develop management approaches that support BFPs (expansion of BFP outreach program; descending devices and circle hooks [most recently adjusted] in Reg Am 29 [2020])*
 - Promote opportunities for research, development, and evaluation of gear and tech to reduce bycatch
 - Consider gear requirement using “weak gear” or degrading hooks
 - Consider development of a Bycatch Avoidance Network for the commercial sector to communicate “bycatch hot spots”
- Strategy 4.5 – Support development of approaches that consider use of bycatch quotas and allowances
 - Allow a bycatch set-aside limit per commercial trip
 - Consider a bycatch allowance of up to 5% for species with a low ACL
 - Consider multi-year catch specifications (averaged for AMs)
 - Consider use of ACTs to minimize commercial discards



OBJECTIVES 5 & 6

Objective 5 – Support management measures that incorporate ecosystem and habitat considerations

Objective 6 – Develop management measures that support optimal sector allocations

- These objectives seem beyond the scope of this Sub-Committee's initial task, so won't dive into these unless requested

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BLUEPRINT?





SUB-COMMITTEE TASKING

- ✓ Review the Vision Blueprint
- Develop topics that require further consideration
 - Potential deliverables for December 2024:
 - List of topics
 - Prioritization of topics (address immediately, as possible with other projects, long-term)
 - Necessary information for immediate priority considerations
 - NOTE: Several analyses are available from previous Council reports (e.g. 2-for-1 evaluation) and may just need to be updated with recent years
- Recommend next steps



LIST OF TOPICS

Develop using the initial list below

- 2 for 1 SG1 policy
- Permit leasing
- 225 Permit policies
- Regional management
- Examination of items from FL Commercial Fishing Summit
- Different permit usage (e.g. “permit stacking”, others)
- Ways to increase trip efficiency (e.g. day-based trip limits)
- Infrastructure
- Environmental Equity and Justice concerns
- Climate change concerns

PRIORITIZATION



Import final list from previous slide and prioritize

Immediate

As Possible

Long-Term



NECESSARY INFORMATION

Import final list of immediate priority topics and note necessary information

Immediate



NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Review the Vision Blueprint
- ✓ Develop topics that require further consideration
- Recommended next steps
 - Develop report for December 2024 Council Meeting
 - Draft out for review: November 7?
 - Edits/comments: November 12? (Tentative dates to include in initial BB posting)
 - Next meeting timeframe and discussion topics?