

# Overview

## Snapper Grouper Committee

Charleston Marriott  
170 Lockwood Boulevard  
Charleston, SC  
September 2014

The Committee will: (A) receive reports from SERO on the status of commercial and recreational catches versus the respective ACLs for snapper grouper species; (B) receive a status report from SERO staff on snapper grouper amendments under Secretarial review; (C) receive a report from Council staff on comments pertaining to the Visioning Project by sector and discuss the October Council Visioning workshop; (D) receive an update from Council staff on development of Regulatory Amendment 16 (blacks sea bass pot closure); (E) receive a presentation from SERO staff on a recreational harvest tag program that could be implemented through Amendment 22; (F) receive an overview of changes to Amendment 29 and approve the amendment for formal review; (G) receive an overview of public comments on Amendment 32, review and modify the amendment as needed, and approve for formal review; (H) receive an overview of public comments on Regulatory Amendment 20, review and modify the amendment as needed, and approve for formal review; (I) receive an overview of Regulatory Amendment 22, provide guidance to staff, and approve for public hearings; (J) receive an overview of scoping comments on Amendment 36, review the amendment, and provide guidance to staff; (K) receive an overview of scoping comments on Amendment 35, review the amendment, and provide guidance to staff; (L) receive updates golden tilefish endorsement and overage issues and provide guidance to staff; and (M) address other business as appropriate.

### **A. Status of landings for quota-managed snapper grouper species (*Attachments 1a & 1b*)**

The Committee will receive an update on the status of landings (commercial and recreational) for snapper grouper species under ACLs.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

### **B. Status of Amendments Approved for Secretarial Review**

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

- A. Regulatory Amendment 14/EA (Multiple Species) – sent to NMFS 1/15/14; proposed rule published 4/25/14 with comments due by 5/27/14.
- B. Emergency Rule (Blueline Tilefish) – sent to NMFS 12/17/13; temporary rule/emergency action published 4/17/14 and is effective through 10/14/14; The Council may take action to request an extension of the temporary rule.
- C. Regulatory Amendment 21 (MSST) – sent to NMFS 4/1/14. Proposed rule published on 8/1/14 with comment period ending 9/2/14.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss, consider requesting an extension of the temporary rule, and take action as necessary.

- Option 1. Do not request extension of the temporary rule for blueline tilefish.
- Option 2. Request an extension of the temporary rule for blueline tilefish.
- Option 3. Others??

**C. Visioning (Attachment 2a & 2b)**

The committee will receive a summary of issues/themes by sector from the 2014 port meetings. Staff will also provide an update on the planning and format for the October Council Visioning workshop. The committee will have the opportunity to provide feedback and direction to staff to prepare for the workshop.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**D. Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure)**

At their June 2014 meeting, the Council made revisions to the Purpose and Need statement and alternatives and approved the following motion:

MOTION: DIRECT THE IPT TO USE DATA FROM 2004 THROUGH 2013 FOR THE ANALYSES  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

On July 21, the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) for this amendment met via conference call. Below is a summary of the discussion pertaining to the analyses for this amendment:

- Dr. Nick Farmer summarized the approach for the model to predict fishing effort using pot gear. He concluded that the most recent season is the best indicator of a trend in the fishery and it could be misleading to go further back in time as the fishery has changed so much (e.g., trap limit, pot gear endorsement, changes in BSB population size, seasonal and spatial shifts in fishing pressure).
- Dr. Farmer looked at the most recent season and also the 2008-2009 season because this was the last season that was open during the right whale time frame.
- Analyses have focused thus far on both landings and effort.
- The SEFSC indicated that effort data (other than number of traps) are unreliable for trap gear. Following a special request, the SEFSC provided 2013/2014 reconciled effort data to Dr. Farmer, but indicated that effort data prior to the 2013/2014 season would take much longer to reconcile. SEFSC also indicated there have been significant changes in fishing practices due to the 35-trap limit and the requirement to bring traps back to shore, and older effort data might not be representative of future trends. The analysis will focus on the reconciled 2013/2014 data, and will apply the mean soak times from the 2013/2014 season to the winter trap distribution from 2008/2009 as a sensitivity run to capture any seasonal-spatial dynamics.
- Dr. Farmer agreed to provide historic landings data that can be matched with value information to prepare economic impacts analyses.
- Outputs from a peer-reviewed, published model of right whale sightings predictability data are available; this model needs to be overlaid with the fishery effort analysis. They are in different spatial formats, so this will be a complicated process and may require several weeks.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

Option 1. Accept the IPT's recommendation to not use data prior to the 2008-2009 season.

Option 2. Direct staff to compile landings data and data on number of traps per permit holder from the SEFSC for the years 2004 through 2013. Examine the monthly catches as provided by the SEFSC and compare this with the number of whale interactions.

Option 3. Others??

**E. Amendment 22 (recreational harvest tag program; Attachment 3)**

SERO staff will give a presentation describing how a recreational tag program might be designed based on Council discussions to date, how it could be administered, and how much it might cost. NOAA GC will update the Committee on pending guidance to determine whether such a program would be considered a Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP).

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**F. Amendment 29 (ORCS and gray triggerfish; Attachments 4a-4c)**

While the Council reviewed this amendment at their June 2014 meeting with the intent to approve it for formal review, a concern arose regarding the risk tolerance level for scamp grouper. The Council's preferred alternatives under this action would have applied a risk tolerance scalar of 0.90 for stocks with low risk of overexploitation, 0.80 for stocks with moderate risk of overexploitation, and 0.70 for stocks with moderately high risk of overexploitation. However, a concern arose regarding the appropriateness of applying a 0.70 risk tolerance scalar to scamp, which the SSC considered to be under a moderately high risk of overexploitation. The Council has previously voiced concern over the status of scamp based on trends in the fishery-independent survey CPUE, etc. Additionally, the Council had been requesting that scamp be placed on the stock assessment schedule for a number of years and, while scamp is now on the SEDAR schedule, it may be moved down the list or removed altogether due to changing priorities and staffing issues with assessment scientists.

Based on this rationale, the Council directed staff to add a sub-alternative to this action that would keep the risk tolerance level at 0.70 for the rest of the species under a moderately high risk of overexploitation (tomtate, white grunt, gray triggerfish, and rock hind) but place it at 0.50 for scamp. The Council then approved selecting this newly created alternative as their preferred (along with the previous preferreds for species under low and moderate risk of overexploitation). In addition, the Council also selected to specify the ACL for scamp at 80% of the ABC.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Review changes to the amendment since the June meeting, deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, and approve Amendment 29 for formal review by the Secretary of Commerce.

**G. Amendment 32 (blueline tilefish; Attachments 5a-5d)**

Amendment 32 addresses fishing level recommendations for blueline tilefish based on SEDAR 32 (2013), revises commercial and recreational accountability measures, and proposes commercial and recreational management measures. Public hearings on Amendment 32 were held in August 2014. Council staff will present an overview of public comments, and update the committee on modifications to the amendment.

Assuming the Council requests an extension of the temporary rule for blueline tilefish, Amendment 32 would need to be effective in April 2015 to prevent an increase in the ACL.

Therefore, the Council must approve Amendment 32 for formal review at the September 2014 meeting to prevent an increase in the ACL.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Consider public comment, modify the amendment, select preferred alternatives as appropriate, deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, and approve Amendment 32 for formal review by the Secretary of Commerce.

**H. Regulatory Amendment 20 (snowy grouper; Attachments 6a-6d)**

Regulatory Amendment 20 revises stock status criteria for snowy grouper based on SEDAR 36 (2013) and proposes adjustments to the ABC, OY, and ACL. The amendment also proposes changes to commercial and recreational management measures for snowy grouper. Public hearings on Regulatory Amendment 20 were held in August 2014. Council staff will present an overview of public comments, and update the committee on modifications to the amendment.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Consider public comment, modify the amendment, select preferred alternatives as appropriate, deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, and approve Regulatory Amendment 20 for formal review by the Secretary of Commerce.

**I. Regulatory Amendment 22 (gag and wreckfish; Attachments 7a & 7b)**

Regulatory Amendment 22 includes actions to address the recent updates to the stock assessments for gag (SEDAR 10 Update 2014) and wreckfish (Butterworth and Rademeyer 2012). The amendment would revise ABC, OY, and ACL for both species and propose modifications to recreational management measures for gag. Council staff will present an overview of analyses to date. At the June 2014 meeting, the Council approved using the existing framework procedure with a public hearing via webinar prior to the December 2014 meeting and a final public hearing at the December 2014 meeting. The Council is scheduled to approve for formal review at the December 2014 meeting.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** review and modify the amendment as necessary, select preferred alternatives as needed, and approve for public hearings (to be held in fall 2014 via webinar and at the December 2014 Council meeting).

**J. Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs; Attachments 8a-8c)**

Amendment 36 considers using Spawning SMZs to provide additional protection to species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper. Scoping meetings were held in August 2014. Council staff will present an overview of scoping comments, and the Committee will provide guidance to staff on areas to be analyzed as Spawning SMZs. The Council will review a draft Amendment 36 at the December meeting and approve for public hearings.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** review scoping comments and provide guidance to staff on areas to be analyzed.

**K. Amendment 35 (removal of species; Attachments 9a-9c)**

Amendment 35 considers removing 4 species (black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper & schoolmaster) from the snapper grouper fishery management unit. The Gulf Council has already removed these species, and representatives of the State of Florida have indicated they are willing to manage these species. Scoping meetings were held in August 2014. Council staff will present an overview of scoping comments, and the Committee will provide guidance to staff

on alternatives to be analyzed. The Council will review a draft Amendment 35 at the December meeting and approve for public hearings.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** review scoping comments and provide guidance to staff on alternatives to be analyzed.

**L. Golden tilefish commercial overage and endorsement issues (*Attachments 10a-10d*)**

At the June 2014 Council meeting, the Committee received an update from the SEFSC on monitoring of commercial golden tilefish landings. The Committee requested such an update due to persistent overages of the longline ACL. During the August 2014 round of public hearings, extensive public comments were received about the overage in addition to questions regarding the number of vessels in Florida with a longline endorsement. The Committee will receive an update from the FWC pertaining to the number of vessels currently reporting commercial landings of golden tilefish caught with longline. In addition, the Committee will receive another update from the SEFSC regarding commercial landings of golden tilefish since the new dealer reporting requirements became effective on August 7, 2014. The Committee will also review options to address a possible loophole in the regulations that enables vessels with golden tilefish longline endorsements to fish under the 500-pound hook-and-line trip limit after the ACL for the longline sector has been met. The Committee had requested that Council staff work with SERO staff and NOAA GC to look at possible ways to address the issue.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** review options paper and provide guidance to staff.

**M. Other Business**

The Committee will address other items as appropriate.