

SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE MEETING
Orlando, FL
June 11th & 12th, 2008

The Snapper Grouper Committee met on June 11th and 12th, 2008 in Orlando, FL.

1. Various Presentations

The Committee received the following presentations: *Oculina* Update (Kim Iverson and Myra Brouwer), Catch Characterization Study (Dr. Jepson), Amendment 14 MPA pre-implementation study (Stacey Harter), Mutton Snapper stock assessment (Joe O'Hop), and Gray's Reef (Dr. Sedberry).

The Committee supported Gray's Reef Marine Sanctuary's action to move forward with regulations that would prohibit all spearfishing within the sanctuary.

2. Amendment 15B, Rick DeVactor, Drs. Holiman and McGovern (NMFS SERO)

The Committee received a presentation from Dr. Holiman on the updated social and economic analysis in Amendment 15B. The Committee approved the proposed rule and the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Dr. Erik Williams gave a presentation on conversion of pounds to numbers for the snowy grouper recreational allocation. The Council requested staff to clarify language in Amendment 15B that prohibition of bag limit sales would pertain to all federally-permitted for-hire vessels.

3. Amendment 16, Gregg Waugh, SAFMC Staff

The Committee reviewed the actions in Amendment 16 to end overfishing of gag and vermilion snapper. The Committee also reviewed the Advisory Panel's (AP) recommendations from their meeting earlier in the week. Based upon the AP's recommendations, the Committee decided to add actions to the amendment that would implement trip limits and change the start date of the fishing year for both gag and vermilion snapper. The Committee decided to require the use of dehooking and venting tools and not circle hooks.

In order allow time for the team to analyze the additional alternatives, the Committee decided to approve the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce at their next meeting in September 2008.

4. Amendment 17, Rick DeVactor, SAFMC Staff

The Committee decided to move greater amberjack and mutton snapper from Amendment 17 as these two species are not undergoing overfishing and the amendment only addresses those species undergoing overfishing. The Committee also decided to move actions for red snapper from Amendment 18 into Amendment 17 as Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for red snapper would need to be implemented as the same time as those for the species in Amendment 17. In addition, management measures to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper would affect the actions in Amendment 17. The allocation committee will provide allocation alternatives for species in Amendment 17 that do not have specified allocations.

NMFS provided an overview of the proposed rule to the National Standard 1 guidelines. The Committee reviewed preliminary options that would implement ACLs, Annual Catch Targets (ACTs), and Accountability Measures (AMs) for species currently undergoing overfishing in the snapper grouper fishery.

5. Other Actions

The Committee directed staff to develop a letter to the Regional Administrator requesting the Regional Office develop an interim rule closing harvest of red snapper and implement reductions in fishing mortality as specified in the preferred alternatives in Amendment 16 for gag, vermilion snapper, black grouper, and red grouper. The regulations would be implemented for 180 days and could be extended once. The Committee wants to avoid an extended delay in the implementation of measures to end overfishing of these five species.

The committee approved the following motions:

MOTION 1: THE COUNCIL CONCUR WITH GRAY'S REEF MOVING FORWARD WITH REGULATIONS THAT PROHIBIT ALL SPEARFISHING WITHIN GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Amendment 15B

MOTION 2: REAFFIRM OUR PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 2 FOR SALE OF BAG LIMIT SALES

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION 3: SPECIFY THE RECREATIONAL SNOWY GROUPEL ALLOCATION AS 523 FISH (EQUIVALENT TO 4,400 POUNDS GUTTED WEIGHT)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION 4: THE COUNCIL SEND AMENDMENT 15B TO THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR FORMAL REVIEW

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION 5: APPROVE THE PROPOSED RULE FOR SNAPPER GROUPEL AMENDMENT 15B

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Amendment 16

MOTION 6: SPLIT ALTERNATIVE 2 INTO 2A. COMMERCIAL AND 2B. RECREATIONAL WITH BOTH AS PREFERRED

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

(Note: Alternative 2 specifies a gag spawning season closure for both the commercial and recreational sector. This would create two alternatives, one specified for each sector.)

MOTION 7: ESTABLISH A 1,000 POUND GAG GROUPEL COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT WITH A FISHING YEAR START DATE OF MAY 1 AND CONTINUE MARCH & APRIL SPAWNING SEASON CLOSURE. In addition, DURING MARCH AND APRIL no fishing for and/or possession of the following species would be allowed: black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, tiger grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION 8: IMPLEMENT A MAY 1 FISHING YEAR START DATE AND A 1,000 POUND TRIP LIMIT FOR THE COMMERCIAL VERMILION SNAPPER FISHERY
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

(NOTE: THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE A SEASONAL SPLIT)

**MOTION 9: ALTERNATIVE 3. REQUIRE USE OF VENTING AND DEHOOKING TOOLS
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**MOTION 10: MAKE ALTERNATIVE 3 OUR PREFERRED AND APPLY TO COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERIES
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

(Note: This refers to the action to require the use of venting and dehooking tools.)

Other Actions

**MOTION 11: MOVE GREATER AMBERJACK AND MUTTON SNAPPER FROM AMENDMENT 17 TO THE COMPREHENSIVE ACL AMENDMENT AND MOVE RED SNAPPER FROM AMENDMENT 18 INTO AMENDMENT 17
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**MOTION 12: STAFF DEVELOP A LETTER TO THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR REQUESTING THE REGIONAL OFFICE DEVELOP AN INTERIM RULE CLOSING HARVEST OF RED SNAPPER AND IMPLEMENT REDUCTIONS IN FISHING MORTALITY AS SPECIFIED IN THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES IN AMENDMENT 16 FOR: GAG GROUPER, VERMILION SNAPPER, BLACK GROUPER, AND RED GROUPER.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**MOTION 13: WRITE A LETTER TO NMFS REQUESTING THAT THE SENTENCE THAT SPECIFIES A SPEED IN EXCESS OF 4 KNOTS AND A VISIBLE WAKE BE REMOVED FROM THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS IN AMENDMENT 14.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**