

# **Snapper Grouper Committee Report**

Hutchinson Island Marriott  
Stuart, FL

The Snapper Grouper Committee met in Stuart, Florida, on June 11 & 12, 2013.

## **SERO and SEFSC Reports**

The Committee received reports from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) on the status of commercial and recreational landings for snapper grouper species, respectively. Committee members inquired as to whether the headboat data would be available on a timely basis since the SEFSC established a requirement for electronic reporting. Dr. Bonnie Ponwith replied that the majority of headboats are currently reporting electronically, so it is expected that headboat landings would be available on the same periodicity as the MRIP landings. Dr. Ponwith explained that, even though the Council's Generic Headboat Amendment will require weekly electronic reporting, data would still need to be validated and hence would not be available for two months. In the past, headboat landings had not been available until after the end of the year.

## **Red Snapper ACL**

SERO staff presented an overview of the SEFSC report "Total removals of red snapper in 2012 from the U.S. South Atlantic", which included estimates of the total red snapper removals (landings and dead discards) in 2012. SERO staff also presented how the 2013 ACL had been calculated using the methodology implemented through Amendment 28. In addition, the Committee received estimates of how long the commercial and recreational mini-seasons would last in 2013. The commercial season was estimated to last as much as 49 days under a 75-pound trip limit. The recreational season could last from 3 to 6.8 days depending on the catch rate. For-hire representatives on the Council and USCG representatives indicated that 4 to 6 weeks would be an adequate amount of time to notify the public of an upcoming opening. Dr. Ponwith reiterated how valuable the assistance from states was during the 2012 openings and requested that states again consider assisting with sampling and monitoring since MRIP does not have the ability to monitor a pulse fishery. The Committee requested guidance from NOAA GC as to whether a three-day recreational opening was still an option since the estimates of season length are more than three days. If not, then the Council would only have the option of opening recreational red snapper harvest for two three-day weekends.

## **Update on Amendments under Review**

The Committee received an update from SERO staff on the status of snapper grouper amendments under review:

Regulatory Amendment 13 – Final rule will publish in the next week

Regulatory Amendment 15 – Expected to be effective in late August or early September

Amendment 28 -- approved on June 11, 2013

Amendment 27 – Proposed Rule package is under review

Regulatory Amendment 18 – Expected to be effective in August

Regulatory Amendment 19 – Proposed Rule package is under review

## **Presentations**

The Committee received a presentation on fishery-independent survey efforts in the South Atlantic in 2012. Dr. Marcel Reichert gave the presentation, which included efforts by the Marine Resources Monitoring and Assessment Program (MARMAP), the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP), and the Southeast Fishery Independent Survey (SEFIS).

Captain Robert Johnson, chair of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, went over the summary report from the April 2013 meeting. Dr. Luiz Barbieri, chair of the SSC, presented SSC recommendations, in particular, the proposed process for the SSC to evaluate stock assessments that are conducted outside of the regular Council and agency channels (i.e., SEDAR). The Executive/Finance Committee will review the proposed framework.

## **Regulatory Amendment 14 (management measures for various SG species)**

Council staff guided the Committee through the actions proposed in Regulatory Amendment 14. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: APPROVE THE IPT SUGGESTION FOR MODIFICATIONS TO THE NEED STATEMENT AS FOLLOWS:

Ensure commercial harvest of greater amberjack occurs during March of each year; allow for consistent management of gray triggerfish off South Atlantic states; reduce harvest of hogfish; allow harvest of black sea bass and vermilion snapper to occur during times of the year when harvest of co-occurring species is occurring; allow recreational harvest of gag to increase to achieve optimum yield; and ensure overfishing of gag and vermilion snapper does not occur.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*DIRECTION TO STAFF TO MODIFY THE NEED STATEMENT TO REFLECT COUNCIL'S DECISIONS TO EXCLUDE SOME ACTIONS\*\*\*\*

### **Action 1. Modify the fishing year for greater amberjack**

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED:

Alternative 2. Modify the fishing year for greater amberjack to begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Action 2. Change the measurement method for gray triggerfish to have consistency between state and federal waters**

MOTION: REMOVE ACTION 2 FROM REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*INTENT WOULD BE TO BRING IT BACK UP AFTER THE ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED\*\*\*\*

**Action 3. Increase the minimum size limit for hogfish**

MOTION: REMOVE ACTION 3 FROM REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 4. Modify the fishing year for the black sea bass recreational sector**

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 3. Modify the recreational fishing year for black sea bass to begin on April 1 and end on March 31.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: ADD A NEW ACTION TO REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14 TO MODIFY THE RECREATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR BLACK SEA BASS. INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS AN ALTERNATIVE: For the black sea bass recreational sector, NMFS will annually announce the recreational fishing season start and end dates in the Federal Register and by other methods, as deemed appropriate. The fishing season will start on April 1 and end on the date NMFS projects the recreational ACL will be met.

If landings exceed the recreational ACL, NMFS will reduce the length of the following recreational fishing season to ensure recreational landings do not exceed the recreational ACL in the following fishing year. If landings are less than the recreational ACL, NMFS will adjust the length of the following recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to ensure the recreational ACL is landed.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

\* SEASON LENGTH WOULD BE ANNOUNCED IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER ON OR NEAR MARCH 1

\* INCLUDE ALTERNATIVE THAT CALCULATES THE SEASON LENGTH BASED ON THE ACT. MANGEMENT ACTION IS TRIGGERED ONLY IF THE ACL IS EXCEEDED.

\* INCLUDE ALTERNATIVE TO REMOVE THE PAYBACK PROVISION.

**Action 5. Modify the fishing year for the black sea bass commercial sector**

MOTION: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Alternative 5. Consider a closed season for the black sea bass pot fishery from November 15 through April 15.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: MOVE ALTERNATIVES 3 AND 4 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Alternative 3. Open the black sea bass commercial season only to the hook and line sector on January 1, with a trip limit of 50 pounds. The trip limit ends with the opening of the black sea bass pot season.

Alternative 4. Open the black sea bass commercial season only to the hook and line sector on May 1, with a trip limit of 50 pounds. The trip limit ends with the opening of the black sea bass pot season.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: ADD AN ALTERNATIVE THAT WOULD CHANGE THE COMMERCIAL FISHING YEAR TO START JANUARY 1. ESTABLISH A TRIP LIMIT FOR THE HOOK-AND-LINE SECTOR UNTIL HARVEST WITH POTS OPENS ON MAY 1. CONSIDER TRIP LIMITS OF 100 POUNDS, 200 POUNDS, AND 300 POUNDS. ON MAY 1 THE TRIP LIMIT WOULD BE 1,000 POUNDS FOR BOTH SECTORS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN DEVELOPMENT OF A REGULATORY AMENDMENT THAT WOULD REMOVE THE NOV 1 TO APR 30 BSB POT CLOSURE

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*INTENT IS TO DO THIS AFTER FR FOR REG 19 IS PUBLISHED\*\*\*

**Action 6. Modify the commercial fishing seasons for vermilion snapper**

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 7. Modify the aggregate grouper bag limit**

MOTION: REMOVE ACTION 7 FROM REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*INTENT IS TO WAIT FOR GAG ASSESSMENT BEFORE MAKING ANY CHANGES\*\*\*

**Action 8. Modify the trip limits for the commercial sector for gag**

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED LANGUAGE CHANGES TO THE ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES AND ACCEPT THE IPT'S SUGGESTED WORDING FOR ALTERNATIVE 2.

Alternative 2. Modify the commercial AM for gag. Reduce the trip limit when 75% of the gag commercial ACL is landed.

- Sub-alternative 2a. Reduce the trip limit to 50 lbs gw
- Sub-alternative 2b. Reduce the trip limit to 100 lbs gw
- Sub-alternative 2c. Reduce the trip limit to 200 lbs gw
- Sub-alternative 2d. Reduce the trip limit to 300 lbs gw
- Sub-alternative 2e. Reduce the trip limit to 400 lbs gw
- Sub-alternative 2f. Reduce the trip limit to 500 lbs gw

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: MOVE SUBALTERNATIVE 2A TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED  
APPENDIX

Sub-alternative 2a. Reduce the trip limit to 50 lbs gw  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, SUBALTERNATIVE 2D, AS THE PREFERRED

Sub-alternative 2d. Reduce the trip limit to 300 lbs gw  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Action 9. Modify the recreational accountability measure for vermilion snapper**

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 4. If recreational landings, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL, the AA will file a notification to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year. Payback of a recreational overage would only take place if vermilion snapper are overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Regulatory Amendment 16 (Golden Tilefish)**

Council staff went over the action and alternatives included in Regulatory Amendment 16. The amendment was prepared in response to golden tilefish longline fishermen looking for a way to minimize derby conditions and extend the season. Council vice chair, Ben Hartig, met with golden tilefish longline endorsement holders and other interested stakeholders prior to the beginning of the Council meeting with the intent of obtaining feedback on other actions the Council could consider for that fishery. Ben provided a brief recap of the meeting and the outcome of the discussions. The Committee made the following motion:

MOTION: RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL THAT DEVELOPMENT OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 16 NOT PROCEED ANY FURTHER.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Amendment 30 (VMS)**

Council staff reviewed public comments on Amendment 30. The Committee made the following motion:

MOTION: DO NOT APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 30 FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Amendment 29 (ORCS and Allocations)**

Council staff provided a brief overview of previous discussions regarding items to be included in Amendment 29. Staff reminded the Committee that the amendment could be the vehicle to update ABCs and ACLs for some of the unassessed snapper grouper species based on the SSC's recommended changes to the ABC Control Rule to accommodate species for which there is only catch information available (ORCS, Only Reliable Catch Stocks). In addition, staff indicated that actions to modify how the Council specifies sector allocations could also be undertaken in this amendment. Staff reminded the Committee that sector allocations are a tool to achieve a goal. The Council should first define their goal before discussing how to allocate the resource. Staff also stated that NOAA was likely to issue guidance for the Councils to evaluate allocations. Ultimately, the Committee stated their preference to address ABCs and ACLs for ORCS separately from allocations. Hence, the Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP AMENDMENT 29 TO MODIFY THE COUNCIL'S ABC CONTROL RULE AND ADOPT NEW ABCs AND ACLs BASED ON THOSE MODIFICATIONS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*COUNCIL INTENDS TO INCLUDE IN AM 29 A PROCESS WHEREBY THE ADVISORY PANELS WOULD PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON ABCs AND ACLs FOR ORCS\*\*\*\*\*

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN DEVELOPMENT OF A GENERIC AMENDMENT TO RE-EXAMINE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Amendment 22 (tag program for red snapper and deepwater species)**

Council staff reviewed the Options Paper for Amendment 22, which was revised from its previous version to include recommendations from the SSC's Socio-Economic Panel (SEP). Committee members expressed concern over the long-term cost of a data collection component and stated that the original intent of implementing a recreational tag program was mainly to monitor harvest of species with very low ACLs. The Committee suggested including the option for a voluntary data collection component and revising the Options Paper to include actions and alternatives to implement a recreational tag program that would not be tailored to a particular species. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: ADD AN ACTION TO AM 22 TO SPECIFY DATA COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION: DIRECT IPT TO REVISE THE EXISTING ACTIONS IN AM 22 TO CREATE A GENERIC HARVEST TAG PROGRAM AND TAG-ISSUANCE PROCESS FOR SPECIES WITH VERY LOW ACLs  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

\*\*\*INTENT IS FOR TAG PROGRAM TO APPLY TO SPECIES FOR WHICH RECREATIONAL ACLs ARE DIFFUCULT TO MONITOR BECAUSE THEY ARE SO LOW. DIRECTION TO STAFF TO MODIFY THE TITLE OF AMENDMENT 22 TO REFLECT THAT THE TAG PREOGRAM IS NOT SPECIFIC TO ANY SPECIES\*\*\*

## **Other Business**

One Committee member expressed concern over the limited research that exists on techniques to minimize barotrauma for snapper grouper species. He indicated that approaches have been adopted that have proven successful among Highly Migratory Species and there should be innovative work done to address barotrauma mortality among snapper grouper species.

One Committee member stated that the Council should consider the use of seasons to manage recreational harvest. NMFS could predict how long a season should be in order for landings to get as close to the ACL as possible and inform the Council of the predicted length of a season. The predictability that would result from specifying a start date and end date of a season would be very beneficial to fishermen and other stakeholders that utilize the snapper grouper resource. It was also stated that fishing seasons are already being used in the Mid-Atlantic region and hence there is a precedent for using this management approach.

The Committee was reminded that possible designation of MPAs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper may be considered in Regulatory Amendment 17. At the March 2013 meeting, the Council stated their intent to re-consider the Purpose and Need of Regulatory Amendment 17 at the September 2013 meeting. In addition, the Snapper Grouper Committee Chair, Michelle Duval, expressed her desire for the Council to include a management plan along with any new MPA designation. Adoption of a management and evaluation plan is a critical component of successful MPA implementation.

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO WORK WITH THE SEFSC AND SCOTT BAKER TO LOOK AT ELECTRONIC MONITORING FOR DATA COLLECTION AND BRING BACK TO THE COUNCIL AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME.  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL  
\*\*\*INTENT IS TO LOOK AT NEW TECHNOLOGIES USEFUL FOR DATA COLLECTION\*\*\*

MOTION: DIRECT COUNCIL STAFF WORKING IN CONJUNCTION WITH NOAA GC TO PURSUE USE OF THE SSC THIRD PARTY APPROACH FOR THE WRECKFISH ASSESSMENT PREPARED BY DR. BUTTERWORTH.  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

### **Timing and Tasks**

MOTION: ADOPT THE TIMING AND TASKS PRESENTED BELOW:

- PREPARE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 14 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS IN AUGUST 2013
- PREPARE A REVISED OPTIONS PAPER FOR AMENDMENT 22 TO BRING BACK TO THE COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER 2013
- PREPARE A DRAFT REGULATORY AMENDMENT TO REMOVE THE BSB POT CLOSURE (IF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 19 IS APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED). BRING THE DRAFT DOCUMENT TO THE COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER 2013.
- THE COUNCIL INTENDS TO BEGIN WORK ON A GENERIC AMENDMENT TO REVISE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS FOR MANAGED FISHERIES, AS APPROPRIATE. WORK ON THIS AMENDMENT WILL BEGIN IN 2014.
- THE COUNCIL INTENDS TO DEVELOP AMENDMENT 29 TO ADOPT THE SSC'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE ABC CONTROL RULE AND ADJUST ABCs AND ACLs BASED ON THOSE MODIFICATIONS. DEVELOPMENT OF THIS AMENDMENT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2014.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL