

**Gulf Reef Fish Committee Report
June 9th, 2015
Joint GMFMC/SAFMC June 11th, 2015
Johnny Greene-Chair**

Draft Options Paper- Joint South Florida Management Issues-

Ms. Bademan provided a short presentation on South Florida management issues including a summary of the scoping workshops held by Florida FWC.

Next, the committee discussed the purpose and need of the Joint South Florida document. They directed staff to make the following modifications: modify the purpose to read **“The purpose of this amendment is to provide consistent fisheries management measures to reef fish species unique to the south Florida region”...**

“The need for this amendment is to increase the public’s awareness and compliance with differing regulations based on separate regulatory agencies across adjacent bodies of water (i.e., Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and State of Florida waters). This....”

MOTION: APPROVE THE MODIFIED PURPOSE AND NEED AS SUGGESTED BY THE IPT APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

The purpose for this amendment is to simplify fisheries management issues unique to reef fish species in the south Florida region, which are currently managed by different regulatory agencies in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and State of Florida waters.

The need for this amendment is to decrease the public’s burden of compliance with differing regulations based on separate regulatory agencies across adjacent bodies of water (i.e., Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and State of Florida waters). This action would decrease administrative burdens with respect to geographical and temporal law enforcement concerns, and would improve the efficacy with which fishery resources in the south Florida region are managed.

The committee reviewed the actions and alternatives in the document.

Action 1-Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Yellowtail Snapper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

The Gulf Committee recommends, and I so move: to make Alternatives 2a, 2b and 2c in Action 1 the preferred alternatives.

Alternative 2: Determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the State of Florida for yellowtail snapper:

Option 2a: Size limits

Option 2b: Seasons

Option 2c: Bag limits

Motion carried.

MOTION: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 2 AND OPTIONS 2A-2C FOR ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Alternative 2: Determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the State of Florida for yellowtail snapper:

Option 2a: Size limits

Option 2b: Seasons

Option 2c: Bag limits

MOTION: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 3 AND OPTIONS 3A-3C FOR ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Alternative 3: Determine specific commercial management items for delegation to the State of Florida for yellowtail snapper:

Option 3a: Size limits

Option 3b: Seasons

Option 3c: Trip limits

The Gulf Reef Fish committee did not see a need to specify any additional minor modifications to the existing allowable gear for delegation to the State of Florida for recreational or commercial management. Therefore, **the Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: that options 2d and 3d be moved to considered but rejected.**

Motion carried.

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

Option 3d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

MOTION: REMOVE OPTIONS 2D AND 3D FROM ACTION 1 APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

Option 3d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: that these actions (Action 1) apply to the waters adjacent to the state of Florida.

Motion carried.

Staff discussed the Magnuson-Stevens Act delegation provision. NOAA General Counsel advised that the State of Florida would not need to submit a management plan if delegation of management to the state is implemented. As direction to staff the committee passed the following motion and requested it be reflected throughout the document.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: to remove the discussion of the State of Florida submitting management plans from the document that pertain to delegation.

Motion carried.

Action 2: Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Yellowtail Snapper

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: In Action 2, clarify that this action pertains to the entire Gulf & South Atlantic jurisdictions.

Motion carried.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee discussed selecting preferred alternatives in Action 2. NOAA General Counsel suggested waiting until a more complete analysis was available. Specifically, analysis of the no action alternative should better describe methodology and years of historical landings that were used for the commercial and recreational ACLs established by the South Atlantic Council and the stock ACL for the Gulf Council.

**MOTION: ADD THE FOLLOWING NEW ALTERNATIVE 4
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

NEW ALTERNATIVE 4: MANAGE YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER AS A SINGLE UNIT WITH AN OVERALL COMBINED MULTIJURISDICTIONAL ACCEPTABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH (ABC) AND ANNUAL CATCH LIMIT (ACL). ALLOCATE THE ACL ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING FORMULA:

OPTION 4A: USE THE FOLLOWING SECTOR ALLOCATION FORMULA: DIVIDE THE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS BASED ON THE RATIO OF LANDINGS WITH 50% OF THE WEIGHTING GIVEN TO THE MEAN OF THE LANDINGS FROM 1993-2008, AND 50% ON THE MEAN OF THE LANDINGS FROM 2009-2013.

OPTION 4B: BASE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS ON AVERAGE LANDINGS FROM 2009-2013

OPTION 4C: BASE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS ON AVERAGE LANDINGS FROM 2004-2013

**MOTION: SELECT NEW ALTERNATIVE 4 FOR ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

**MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4, OPTION 4A AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Action 3-Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Mutton Snapper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee did not see a need to specify any additional minor modifications to the existing allowable gear for delegation to the State of Florida for recreational or commercial management. **The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: In Action 3, to move Alternatives 2d and 3d to considered but rejected.**

Motion carried.

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

Option 3d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear.

**MOTION: DELETE OPTIONS 2D AND 3D FROM ACTION 3
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

Option 3d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

**MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND 3 AND ALL OF THE OPTIONS (2A-2C AND 3A-3C) UNDER ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Alternative 2: Determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the State of Florida for Mutton Snapper:

Option 2a: Size limits

Option 2b: Seasons

Option 2c: Bag limits

Alternative 3: Determine specific commercial management items for delegation to the State of Florida for Mutton Snapper:

Option 3a: Size limits

Option 3b: Seasons

Option 3c: Trip limits

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: That Action 3 be applied to waters adjacent to the State of Florida.

Motion carried.

Action 4-Partial Delegation of Commercial and/or Recreational Management of Mutton Snapper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: To have Action 4 apply to the entire Gulf and South Atlantic jurisdictions.

Motion carried.

**MOTION: ADD NEW ALTERNATIVE 4 FOR ACTION 4
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Alternative 4: Manage mutton snapper as a single unit with an overall combined multijurisdictional acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit (ACL).

Option 4a: Use the following sector allocation formula: divide the sector allocations based on the ratio of landings with 50% of the weighting given to the mean of the landings from 1993-2008, and 50% on the mean of the landings from 2009-2013.

Option 4b: Base sector allocations for waters off Florida on average landings from 2009-2013

Option 4c: Base sector allocations for waters off Florida on average landings from 2004-2013

**MOTION: SELECT NEW ALTERNATIVE 4, OPTION 4A AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 4
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Action 5 – Modify Mutton Snapper Recreational Limits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

No Gulf Reef Fish Committee motions were made regarding Action 5.

The South Atlantic Council deferred motions on Actions 5 & 6 until the Joint Council Session.

Action 6 – Modify Mutton Snapper Commercial Trip Limit in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: In Action 6 have Alternative 4 be moved to considered but rejected.

Motion carried.

Alternative 4: Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper that is identical to the recreational bag limit during the spawning season (May and June) in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: To apply Action 6 to the entire Gulf and South Atlantic jurisdictions.

Motion carried.

Action 7 – Partial Delegation of Recreational Management of Black Grouper to the State of Florida in Federal Waters Adjacent to the State of Florida

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: Motion: To have Action 7 apply to the waters adjacent to the State of Florida.

Motion carried.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee did not see a need to specify any additional minor modifications to the existing allowable gear for delegation to the State of Florida for recreational management. **The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: In Action 7, Alternative 2d be moved to considered but rejected.**

Motion carried.

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

**MOTION: ELIMINATE ALTERNATIVE 2, OPTION 2D IN ACTION 7
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Option 2d: Minor modifications to existing allowable gear

**MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, OPTIONS 2A-2C IN ACTION 7 AS PREFERRED
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Alternative 2: Determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the State of Florida for black grouper:

Option 2a: Size limits

Option 2b: Seasons

Option 2c: Bag limits

Action 8 – Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Black Grouper

No Gulf Reef Fish Committee motions were made regarding Action 8.

MOTION: ADD A NEW ALTERNATIVE 4:

APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Alternative 4: Manage black grouper as a single unit with an overall combined multijurisdictional acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit (ACL) and allocate the recreational ACLs for the Gulf and South Atlantic:

Option 4a: Combine the current recreational allocations (i.e., 63.12% of the ACL for the South Atlantic and 27% of the ACL for the Gulf) for black grouper into a single recreational allocation.

Option 4b: Use the following sector allocation formula: divide the sector allocations based on the ratio of landings with 50% of the weighting given to the mean of the landings from 1993-2008, and 50% on the mean of the landings from 2009-2013.

Option 4c: Base sector allocations on average landings from 2009-2013.

Option 4d: Base sector allocations on average landings from 2004-2013.

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4, OPTION 4A AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 8

APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Action 9 – Modify Shallow-water Grouper Species Compositions and Seasonal Closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic

No Gulf Reef Fish Committee motions were made regarding Action 9.

Action 10 – Modify Black Grouper Fishery Closures and Bag Limits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic

Action 11 – Harmonize bag and size limits for species in shallow-water grouper complex seasonal closures in Federal Waters Adjacent to Monroe County, Florida

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee discussed Actions 10 and 11 in the current draft options paper as well as the proposed restructured actions (Tab B, No 4c). Based on staff's explanation of the overlapping nature of the current alternatives, without the needed specific information required for further analysis of how to harmonize bag and size limits management measures, the committee made the following motion. NOAA General Counsel requested that the "South Florida Management Area" in the proposed restructured actions be defined. Staff suggested this be defined during the Joint Council session on Thursday.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee recommends, and I so move: To remove Actions 10 and 11 in the Options Paper and replace them with Actions 6, 7 and 8 in the Restructured Document.
Motion carried.

From proposed restructured document action titles:

Action 6: Standardize Recreational Seasonal Closures for Grouper in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions

Action 7: Recreational Grouper Bag Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions

Action 8: Modify Recreational Grouper Size Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions

Actions 9, 10 & 11

MOTION: REPLACE ACTIONS 10 & 11 WITH ACTIONS 6, 7, AND 8 FROM THE RESTRUCTURED DOCUMENT (ATTACHMENT 4B) AND RETAIN ACTION 9

- **SOME SPECIES MAY NEED TO BE ADDED**
- **APPLY TO ENTIRE STATE OF FL**

APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE

Action 9. Modify Shallow-water Grouper Species Compositions and Seasonal Closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the existing respective shallow-water grouper species compositions and seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils.

Alternative 2: Remove the shallow-water grouper closure for all affected grouper species in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic:

Option 2a: from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida.

~~**Option 2b:** Throughout each Council's jurisdiction.~~

Alternative 3: Establish identical regulations for shallow-water grouper species compositions for the Gulf and South Atlantic from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida:

Option 3a: Adopt the Gulf shallow-water grouper species composition for the Gulf and South Atlantic.

Option 3b: Adopt the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper species composition for the Gulf and South Atlantic.

Option 3c: Specify a new and identical shallow-water species complex for the Gulf and South Atlantic.

Alternative 4: Establish identical regulations for the shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida:

Option 4a: Adopt the Gulf shallow-water grouper seasonal closures for the Gulf and South Atlantic.

Option 4b: Adopt the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper seasonal closures for the Gulf and South Atlantic.

Option 4c: Establish new and identical regulations for shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

~~**Alternative 5:** Establish identical regulations for the shallow-water grouper seasonal closures throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic:~~

~~**Option 5a:** Adopt the Gulf shallow-water grouper seasonal closures for the Gulf and South Atlantic.~~

~~**Option 5b:** Adopt the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper seasonal closures for the Gulf and South Atlantic.~~

~~**Option 5c:** Establish new and identical regulations for shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.~~

Alternative 6: Modify the shallow-water grouper seasonal closure off Monroe County, Florida to allow harvest of other shallow-water grouper species and only close harvest of gag.

Note: Items in ~~strike through~~ were recommended to be moved to the Considered but Rejected Appendix by the Gulf Council in April 2015.

[Action 6. Standardize Recreational Seasonal Closures for Grouper in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.](#)

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the existing respective shallow-water grouper recreational seasonal closures in the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' areas of jurisdiction.

Alternative 2: Remove the shallow-water grouper recreational closures for all affected grouper species.

Alternative 3: Adopt the Gulf Council's recreational shallow-water grouper seasonal closure (excluding

gag) of February 1 - March 31 outside the 20 fathom depth contour.

Alternative 4: Adopt the South Atlantic Council's recreational shallow-water grouper seasonal closure of January 1 - April 30.

Alternative 5: Establish a gag recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

- Option 5a: January
- Option 5b: February
- Option 5c: March

Alternative 6: Establish a black grouper recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

- Option 6a: January
- Option 6b: February
- Option 6c: March

Alternative 7: Establish a red grouper recreational season closure for any of the following months in the South Florida management area:

- Option 7a: January
- Option 7b: February
- Option 7c: March

Action 7. Recreational Grouper Bag Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.

Alternative 1: No Action. Maintain currently established bag limits in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, with black grouper included as a component of the shallow-water grouper and reef fish aggregate bag limits.

Alternative 2: Standardize black grouper recreational bag limits.

- Option 2a: 1 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic bag limit (black or gag)
- Option 2b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit (part of shallow-water grouper aggregate bag limit)

Alternative 3: Standardize gag recreational bag limits.

- Option 3a: 1 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic bag limit (black or gag)
- Option 3b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit

Alternative 4: Standardize red grouper recreational bag limits.

- Option 4a: 3 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic aggregate bag limit
- Option 4b: 2 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico bag limit

Alternative 5: Standardize scamp, yellowmouth, and yellowfin grouper recreational bag limits.

- Option 5a: 3 fish per person per day – current South Atlantic aggregate bag limit
- Option 5b: 4 fish per person per day – current Gulf of Mexico aggregate bag limit

Action 8: Modify Recreational Grouper Size Limits in the South Florida Management Area within the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils' Jurisdictions.

Alternative 1: No action – Retain the current respective jurisdictional size limits for species in shallow-water grouper complexes.

Alternative 2: Adopt one of the following recreational minimum size limits for black grouper.

Option 2a: 24 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit

Option 2b: 22 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Alternative 3: Adopt one of the following recreational minimum size limits for gag.

Option 3a: 24 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit

Option 3b: 22 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Alternative 4: Maintain red grouper recreational minimum size limits or consider another size limit.

Option 4a: 20 inches TL – current South Atlantic limit

Option 4b: 20 inches TL – current Gulf of Mexico limit

Alternative 5: Standardize scamp, yellowmouth, and yellowfin grouper recreational size limits.

Option 5a: 20 inches TL – current South Atlantic size limit for all three species

Option 5b: 16 inches TL for scamp – current Gulf of Mexico size limit;

20 inches TL for yellowfin – current Gulf of Mexico size limit;

No size limit for yellowmouth – current Gulf of Mexico size limit

Action 12 – Changes to Circle Hook Requirements in the Gulf and South Atlantic Jurisdictional Waters

No Gulf Reef Fish Committee motions were made regarding Action 12.

**MOTION: MOVE ALTERNATIVES 4 AND 5 FROM ACTION 12 TO THE SAFMC VISIONING AMENDMENT
APPROVED BY SAFMC COMMITTEE**

Alternative 4: Require the use of circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for all snapper-grouper species south of 28° North latitude in the exclusive economic zone of the South Atlantic.

Option 4a: For the recreational fishing sector

Option 4b: For the commercial fishing sector

Alternative 5. Remove the requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for all species in the snapper grouper complex north of 28° North latitude in the exclusive economic zone of the South Atlantic.

Option 5a: For the recreational fishing sector

Option 5b: For the commercial fishing sector

The South Atlantic Executive Committee had some discussion about using the new Action 9 from the restructured document for the circle hook action:

Action 9. Changes to the Circle Hook Requirement for Yellowtail Snapper Commercial Fishing in Gulf of Mexico Council Jurisdictional Waters.

Alternative 1: No action. Retain the current hook requirements in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico. Circle hooks are required when fishing with natural bait for all reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico.

Alternative 2: Remove the requirement to use circle hooks when commercial fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper south of 28° North latitude in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Mexico.

Alternative 3: Remove the requirement to use circle hooks when commercial fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper from the Dade/Monroe County line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point (25 degrees 23 minutes North latitude) on the west coast of Monroe County, Florida.

Action 13 – Specify Accountability Measures for South Florida Species.

The Gulf Reef Fish Committee deferred discussion of the accountability measures action until the Joint Session on Thursday based on decisions made in the earlier actions and alternatives.

The South Atlantic Executive Committee had some discussion about using the new Action 10 from the restructured document for the accountability action:

Action 10: Specify Accountability Measures for South Florida Species

Note: Only one alternative may be selected as preferred for each species listed in the accompanying options.

Alternative 1: No action. Maintain the current recreational and commercial accountability measures (AMs) for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and black grouper based on the Reef Fish Resources and Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, respectively.

South Atlantic: Commercial AM – In-season closure when the commercial ACL is expected to be met and ACL reduced in following fishing season if species is overfished and ACL is exceeded. Recreational AM – if the recreational ACL is exceeded, monitor landings in following season for persistence in landings and reduce the length of the following fishing season, if necessary.

Gulf: Recreational and Commercial AMs – If the combined commercial and recreational landings exceed the stock ACL for yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, in-season AMs are in effect for the following year. If the combined landings reach or are projected to reach the stock ACL, both sectors will be closed for the remainder of that fishing year.

The IFQ program for groupers and tilefishes in the Gulf of Mexico serves as the AM for black grouper. The commercial ACL for other shallow-water grouper is equal to the applicable quota. Recreational AM – If the sum of the commercial and recreational landings reaches or is expected to reach the ACL the Assistant Administrator will close the fishery for the remainder of the year. This AM applies to the ACL for the other shallow-water grouper aggregate (i.e., black grouper, scamp, yellowmouth grouper, and yellowfin grouper).

Alternative 2: (GMFMC Approach) If the combined commercial and recreational landings exceed the overall ACL, then during the following fishing year if the combined landings reach or is projected to reach the overall ACL, then both sectors will be closed for the remainder of that fishing year.

Option 2a: yellowtail snapper

Option 2b: mutton snapper

Option 2c: black grouper

Alternative 3: (SAFMC Approach) If commercial landings reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL, NMFS would close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year and NMFS would reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and

recreational ACL) is exceeded.

Option 3a: yellowtail snapper

Option 3b: mutton snapper

Option 3c: black grouper

Alternative 4: (SAFMC Approach) If recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored the following year and if necessary, NMFS would reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

Option 4a: yellowtail snapper

Option 4b: mutton snapper

Option 4c: black grouper

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.