"Finding a Way Forward: Shared Vision and Strategic Planning for the Snapper Grouper Fishery"

DECISION DOCUMENT FOR REVISION OF OBJECTIVES

JUNE 2013

Management Objectives for the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery

The current management objectives in the snapper grouper FMP as amended are:

1. Prevent overfishing.
2. Collect necessary data.
3. Promote orderly utilization of the resource.
4. Provide for a flexible management system.
5. Minimize habitat damage.
6. Promote public compliance and enforcement.
7. Mechanism to vest participants.
8. Promote stability and facilitate long-run planning.
9. Create market-driven harvest pace and increase product continuity.
10. Minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen.
11. Decrease incentives for overcapitalization.
12. Prevent continual dissipation of returns from fishing through open access.
13. Evaluate and minimize localized depletion.
14. End overfishing of snapper grouper stocks undergoing overfishing.
15. Rebuild stocks declared overfished**.**

A history of management objectives for the Snapper Grouper FMP

In the original FMP and earlier amendments, objectives and revised objectives were linked to identified problems in the fishery.

The Fishery Management Plan listed 3 problems and 3 associated objectives.
Amendment 4 added to these and had 5 problems and 6 objectives.
Amendment 5 included 11 problems and 12 objectives.
Amendment 8 revised to have 12 problems and 14 objectives.
Amendment 9 listed the 12 problems and 14 objectives in the abbreviated versions.
Amendment 15 listed 13 objectives.
Amendment 17A included 15 objectives.

FMP (1983):

Problems listed in the FMP included:

1) Thirteen species in the complex are in a documented state of growth overfishing.
2) Many of the species south of Cape Canaveral will likely experience growth overfishing in the near future.
3) Data necessary to quantitatively document growth overfishing in other species or recruitment are very limited.

Management objectives to address the problems included:

1) Prevent recruitment overfishing in all species and prevent growth overfishing of each species except where growth overfishing is justified by social and economic considerations. Method to

achieve objective: Minimum sizes will control growth overfishing and prevent recruitment overfishing. The Secretary is authorized to take whatever emergency action is necessary in the unlikely event of recruitment overfishing.

2) Collect the necessary data to monitor the fisheries. Method of achieving objective: Authorize data collection and analysis to monitor the status of the fishery.
3) Promote orderly utilization of the resource. Method of achieving objective: Restrictions on fish traps and prohibitions on poisons, explosives, and spearing jewfish.

Amendment 4 (1991)

The Council identified several new problems and added new FMP objectives.
Problems in the fishery were revised to include:

1) NEW: 1) Excessing fishing mortality is jeopardizing the biological integrity of the snapper grouper resource of the South Atlantic.
2) NEW: 2) Adequate management has been hindered by lack of current and accurate biological, statistical, social and economic information. Data necessary to document growth and/or recruitment overfishing and to calculate SSRs is very limited. Since the universe of participants is unknown, scientists are unable to estimate catch, effort, and other important information with desired accuracy. The present system of fishery depended and fishery independent data collection provides limited information for assessment purposes and practically no economic or social data.
3) NEW: 3) Intense competition exists among recreational, part-time and full-time commercial users of the snapper grouper resources; and between commercial users employing different gears.
4) NEW: 4) Habitat degradation by some types of fishing gear and poor water quality have adversely affected fish stocks and associated habitat.
5) NEW: 5) The existence of inconsistent state and federal regulations makes it difficult to coordinate, implement and enforce management measures and may lead to overfishing. Inconsistent management measures create public confusion and hinder voluntary compliance.

FMP objectives were revised as:

1) Prevent overfishing in all species by maintaining the spawning stock ratio (SSR) at or above target levels.
2) Collect necessary data to develop, monitor, and assess biological, economic, and social impacts of management measures designed to prevent overfishing, obtain desired SSR levels, and address the other stated problems.
3) Promote orderly utilization of the resource. Method of achieving objective: Restrictions on fish traps and prohibitions on poisons, explosives, and spearing jewfish.
1) NEW: 4) Provide for a flexible management system that minimizes regulatory delays while retaining substantial Council and public involvement in management decisions, and rapidly adapts to changes in resource abundance, new scientific information, and changes in fishing patterns among user groups.
2) NEW: 5) Minimize habitat damage due to direct and indirect effects of recreational and commercial fishing activities.
3) NEW: 6) Promote public comprehension of, voluntary compliance with, and enforcement of the management measures.

Amendment 5 (1991)

Amendment 5 established the ITQ program for the wreckfish commercial fishery. The Council identified new problems and added associated management objectives that were specifically related to the wreckfish

fishery. In later amendments these objectives would be revised to be broader and applicable to other components of the snapper grouper fishery.

Problems in the fishery were revised in Amendment 5 as:

1) Excessive fishing mortality is jeopardizing the biological integrity of the snapper grouper resource of the South Atlantic.
2) Adequate management has been hindered by lack of current and accurate biological, statistical, social and economic information. Data necessary to document growth and/or recruitment overfishing and to calculate SSRs is very limited. Since the universe of participants is unknown, scientists are unable to estimate catch, effort, and other important information with desired accuracy. The present system of fishery depended and fishery independent data collection provides limited information for assessment purposes and practically no economic or social data.
3) Intense competition exists among recreational, part-time and full-time commercial users of the snapper grouper resources; and between commercial users employing different gears.
4) Habitat degradation by some types of fishing gear and poor water quality have adversely affected fish stocks and associated habitat.
5) The existence of inconsistent state and federal regulations makes it difficult to coordinate, implement and enforce management measures and may lead to overfishing. Inconsistent management measures create public confusion and hinder voluntary compliance.
6) Excess capacity [in the wreckfish fishery]. The size and capacity of the wreckfish fleet exceeds that needed for present TACs as well as the range of TACs the Council is likely to approve in the foreseeable future. Additional vessels in the future would exacerbate the situation since the derby nature of an open access fishery encourages fishermen to add harvest capacity even when gains in production are marginal or when economies of scale are not necessarily realized.
7) Inefficiency [in the wreckfish fishery]. Past and present measures to control harvest (TAC, gear restrictions, trip limits) and future measures that would likely be needed under continued open access, increase fishing costs and decrease potential consumer and producer benefits from the fishery.
8) Low conservation and compliance incentives [in the wreckfish fishery]. Under open access, incentives to promote conservation and voluntary compliance with regulations are low because the benefits of doing so may be appropriated by other fishermen or new entrants.
9) Potential conflicts [in the wreckfish fishery]. Competitive fishing conditions may eventually lead to gear and area conflicts as a large number of vessels compete for available TAC.
10) High regulatory costs [in the wreckfish fishery]. Management and enforcement costs are unnecessarily high and are expected to increase under open access as the number of vessels increases and stricter management measures are needed to control excess fishing effort.
11) Low marketing incentives [in the wreckfish fishery]. Efforts by fish dealers to augment consumer acceptance of wreckfish have been thwarted by short-run oversupply and lack of product continuity. The likelihood of additional harvest restrictions under open access increases uncertainty and instability and discourages long-run planning and investment by dealers.

The FMP objectives were revised as follows:

1) Prevent overfishing in all species by maintaining the spawning stock ratio (SSR) at or above target levels.
2) Collect necessary data to develop, monitor, and assess biological, economic, and social impacts of management measures designed to prevent overfishing, obtain desired SSR levels, and address the other stated problems.

3) Promote orderly utilization of the resource. Method of achieving objective: Restrictions on fish traps and prohibitions on poisons, explosives, and spearing jewfish.
4) Provide for a flexible management system that minimizes regulatory delays while retaining substantial Council and public involvement in management decisions, and rapidly adapts to changes in resource abundance, new scientific information, and changes in fishing patterns among user groups.
5) Minimize habitat damage due to direct and indirect effects of recreational and commercial fishing activities.
6) Promote public comprehension of, voluntary compliance with, and enforcement of the management measures.
1) NEW: 7) Develop a mechanism to vest fishermen in the wreckfish fishery and create incentives for conservation and regulatory compliance whereby fishermen can realize potential long-run benefits from efforts to conserve and manage the wreckfish resource.
2) NEW: 8) Provide a management regime which promotes sustainability and facilitates long-range planning and investor by harvesters and fish dealers while avoiding, where possible, the necessity for more stringent management measures and increasing management over time.
3) NEW: 9) Develop a mechanism that allows the marketplace to drive harvest strategies and product forms in order to maintain product continuity and increase total producer and consumer benefits from the fishery.
4) NEW: 10) Promote management regimes that minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen.
5) NEW: 11) Minimize the tendency for over-capitalization in the harvesting and processing/distribution sectors.
6) NEW: 12) Provide a reasonable opportunity for fishermen to make adequate returns from commercial fishing by controlling entry so that returns are not regularly dissipated by open access, while also providing avenues for fishermen not initially included in the limited entry program to enter the program.

Amendment 8 (1996)

Amendment 8 established the limited entry system for the snapper grouper commercial fishery.

The Council revised some of the identified problems and added a few additional ones:

1) Excessive fishing mortality is jeopardizing the biological integrity of the snapper grouper resource of the South Atlantic.
2) Adequate management has been hindered by lack of current and accurate biological, statistical, social and economic information.
3) Intense competition exists among recreational, part-time and full-time commercial users of the snapper grouper resources; and between commercial users employing different gears.
4) Habitat degradation caused by some types of fishing gear and poor water quality have adversely affected fish stocks and associated habitat.
5) The existence of inconsistent state and federal regulations makes it difficult to coordinate, implement and enforce management measures and may lead to overfishing. Inconsistent management measures create public confusion and hinder voluntary compliance.
1) [problems 6-10 were revised to include all snapper grouper species, not just wreckfish]
6) Excess capacity. The size and capacity of the fleet have increased significantly in recent years. Despite bag and trip limits, and other regulatory measures, some of the stocks are still overfished or near the overfished stage. Any gains from current regulatory measures under open access are likely to attract new entrants to the fishery and provide incentive for those already in the fishery to increase harvest capacity even when gains in production are marginal or when economic of scale are not necessarily realized.

7) Inefficiency. Past and present measures to control harvest (TAC, gear restrictions, trip limits) and future measures that would likely be needed under continued open access, increase fishing costs and decrease potential consumer and producer benefits from the fishery.
8) Low conservation and compliance incentives. Under open access, there is little incentive on the part of the fishermen to promote conservation and to voluntarily comply with regulations. This is because the benefits from doing so may accrue to other fishermen or new entrants. A controlled access management system would provide a mechanism for those who participate in conservation measures to share in the resulting benefits.
9) Potential conflicts among participants. As the number of vessels continues to increase, competitive fishing conditions may eventually lead to gear and area conflicts as a large number of vessels compete for the available resources on the same fishing grounds. (At the other extreme, stocks may decline to the point where marginal fishermen may not find it economically viable to fish. This situation could lead to a decline in fishing effort.)
10) High regulatory costs. The progression of regulatory measures already implemented in the snapper grouper fishery has resulted in increasing management and enforcement costs. However, the full benefit from these measures has not been realized due to the open access nature of the fishery. More management measures under open access would further increase these costs to the point where management costs could outweigh the benefits.
11) Low marketing incentives. Short-run oversupply and lack of product continuity continues to create price fluctuation and uncertainty in the marketplace for these species. The likelihood of additional harvest restrictions under open access increases uncertainty and instability and discourages long-run planning and investment by dealers.
12) Localized depletion. Localized depletion where a species' abundance in an area is reduced by high fishing effort can cause conflict among fishermen.

FMP objectives were revised as follows:

1) Prevent overfishing in all species by maintaining the spawning potential ratio (SPR) at or above target levels.
2) Collect necessary data to develop, monitor, and assess biological, economic, and social impacts of management measures designed to prevent overfishing, obtain desired SPR levels, and address the other stated problems.
3) Promote orderly utilization of the resource.
4) Provide for a flexible management system that minimizes regulatory delays while retaining substantial Council and public involvement in management decisions, and rapidly adapts to changes in resource abundance, new scientific information, and changes in fishing patterns among user groups.
5) Minimize habitat damage due to direct and indirect effects of recreational and commercial fishing activities as well as other non-fishery impacts.
6) Promote public comprehension of, voluntary compliance with, and enforcement of the management measures.
7) Mechanism to vest participants. A controlled access system provides a means whereby participants have a stake in conserving the resource. This ensures that participants consider the long-run benefits of conserving the resource because they know it is in their best interest. Unlike open access, controlled access would ensure that those who conserve the resource share in the long-run benefits. This gives fishermen incentive to protect the resource and expose those who are violating regulations. As a result, voluntary compliance would increase and enforcement costs would likely decrease.
8) Promote sustainability and facilitate long-run planning. Participants in the fishery will have access to the resource based on certain criteria to be determined by the Council after reviewing public

comments. This would give participants the flexibility to employ the most profitable way to fish and also fish when it is most profitable in terms of market conditions. Such a system will promote stability in the fishery by providing a regular supply of fish throughout the fishing year, and maintain stable prices. Both fishermen and fish dealers will have the incentive to engage in long-run planning and investment activities.

9) Create Market-Driven Harvest Pace and Increase Product Continuity. A system that ensures participants can harvest their allocations (whether in terms of individual quotas, effort units, trip limits, etc.) anytime during the fishing year would ensure that fishermen conduct their fishing activities to supply the market according to its structure and demand situation. There would be no incentive on the part of fishermen to flood the market with fish. This could result in product continuity, improved product quality, and better prices.
10) Minimize Gear and Area Conflicts among Fishermen. Presently, allowable gear provision (implemented under snapper Grouper Amendment 6) controls the types of gear in the fishery. Controlled access and effort unit controls would limit the number of allowable gear in the fishery.
11) Decrease Incentives For Overcapitalization. If some form of vested interest is provided to fishermen, their objective would be to maximize profits subject to certain conditions. In order to maximize profits they would explore the least cost method for harvesting in the fishery. This means they would employ fishing effort only to the point where the difference between the anticipated total revenue and total cost is greatest. This practice would reduce incentives for overcapitalization.
12) Prevent Continual Dissipation of Returns from Fishing through Open Access. It is a well known fact that under open access any measure(s) that generate "pure profits" will provide an opportunity for those already in the fishery to dissipate those profits and also attract new entrants into the fishery. This can only be prevented if measures are taken to prevent those already in the fishery from increasing their effort without any restriction and also to create a barrier against unlimited entry into the fishery. A controlled access system will reduce the incentive for present participants to violate the regulations, and also prevent unlimited entry into the fishery.
13) Evaluate and minimize localized depletion. High fishing mortality rates have resulted in localized depletion of some species in certain areas. Certain species are overfished throughout their range; however, there are particular areas where the overfishing rate is more severe than in the rest of the range. There may also be some cases where the stock as a whole is not overfished, but the numbers in a localized area have been significantly reduced.
14) Minimize bycatch. Reflects greater responsibility under recent Magnuson-Stevens Act amendment which added the following national standard: "(9) Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, (A) minimize bycatch and (B) to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch."

Amendment 9 (1997)

The first time the identified problems and FMP objectives are listed using the abbreviated versions. Problems included:

1) Excessive fishing mortality
2) Lack of current and accurate biological, statistical, social and economic information.
3) Intense competition
4) Habitat degradation
5) Inconsistent state and federal regulations
6) Excess capacity.
7) Inefficiency.
8) Low conservation and compliance incentives.
9) Potential conflicts among participants.

10) High regulatory costs.
11) Low marketing incentives.
12) Localized depletion.

FMP objectives were listed as:

1) Prevent overfishing.
2) Collect necessary data.
3) Promote orderly utilization of the resource.
4) Provide for a flexible management system.
5) Minimize habitat damage.
6) Promote public compliance and enforcement.
7) Mechanism to vest participants.
8) Promote stability and facilitate long-run planning.
9) Create market-driven harvest pace and increase product continuity.
10) Minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen.
11) Decrease incentives for overcapitalization.
12) Prevent continual dissipation of returns from fishing through open access.
13) Evaluate and minimize localized depletion.
14) Minimize bycatch.

Amendment 15A (2008)

Objective #14 was omitted from this list in Amendment 15A.

Amendment 17A (2010)

This amendment the Council listed the abbreviated 13 objectives and added two additional objectives:

1) 14. End overfishing of snapper grouper stocks undergoing overfishing.
16. Rebuild stocks declared overfished.

Advisory Panel Input on Snapper Grouper FMP Objectives

At their meeting in April 2013, the Snapper Grouper AP reviewed the summary report from the March 2013 Visioning Workshop and provided the following feedback regarding the objectives in the FMP:

Objective 1. Prevent overfishing – THE AP REASONED THAT THE OBJECTIVE IS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S MANDATE UNDER THE MAGNUSON ACT AND SHOULD NOT BE INLCUDED IN THE LIST OF OBJECTIVES.

Objective 2. Collect necessary data – CONSIDER RE-WORDING TO: "IMPROVE AND EXPAND DATA COLLECTION." CONSIDER THINGS LIKE RECREATIONAL REEF FISH STAMP, ELECTRONIC REPORTING FOR ALL PERMITTED VESSELS OPERATING IN THE EEZ? GIVE AUTHORITY TO RA TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES?

Objective 3. Promote orderly utilization of the resource – ADDED WHEN WRECKFISH ITQ PROGRAM WAS PUT IN PLACE. IT IS NO LONGER APPLICABLE.

Objective 4. Provide for a flexible management system – INSERT THE WORD "MORE" BEFORE "FLEXIBLE". DOES FLEXIBLE INCLUDE MANAGEMENT SUCH AS STATE-

BY-STATE QUOTAS OR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT? THIS IS DEPENDENT ON IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION.

Objective 5. Minimize habitat damage. – IS THERE ANY DAMAGE CURRENTLY HAPPENING??

Objective 6. Promote public compliance and enforcement – THIS OBJECTIVE SHOULD ADDRESS CONSISTENCY BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS (STATES SHOULD BE AT LEAST AS RESTRICTIVE AS FEDS), LACK OF FAIRNESS OF PENALTIES FOR DIFFERENT SECTORS, CONSIDER RE-WORDING: "PROMOTE COMPLIANCE THROUGH PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION"

Objective 7. Mechanism to vest participants – NOT APPLICABLE TO RECREATIONAL SECTOR, CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO ITQs OR CATCH SHARES THAT ARE NOT BASED ON MONETARY VALUE, CONSIDER WAYS TO VEST RECREATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Objective 8. Promote stability and facilitate long-run planning – AIM TO END OVERLAPPING SEASONS FOR THE FOR-HIRE SECTOR, CONSIDER REGULATIONS THAT WILL ALLOW BUSINESS OWNERS TO HAVE BUSINESS PLAN

Objective 9. Create market-driven harvest pace and increase product continuity – IS THIS WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Objective 10. Minimize gear and area conflicts among fishermen – NOT MUCH OF GEAR CONFLICT ANYMORE.

Objective 11. Decrease incentives for overcapitalization – DOES NOT APPLY TO RECREATIONAL SECTOR…

Objective 12. Prevent continual dissipation of returns from fishing through open access.

Objective 13. Evaluate and minimize localized depletion – PERHAPS STATES SHOULD BE THE ONES TO DO? STATE-BY-STATE QUOTAS, REGIONAL STOCK EVALUATION?

Objective 14. End overfishing of snapper grouper stocks undergoing overfishing – COUNCIL HAS ALREADY ADDRESSED OVERFISHING…

Objective 15. Rebuild stocks declared overfished – ALREADY MANDATED BY MSA

- CONSIDER EXCLUDING OBJECTIVES/GOALS THAT ARE ALREADY PART OF THE COUNCIL'S MANDATE.

- SPECIFY THE ITEMS THAT THE COUNCIL IS ALREADY DOING AND THOSE THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD FOCUS ON ACHIEVING.

- SHORTEN THE LIST OF OBJECTIVES.