

public comments due by October 29, 2015. The final rule was published on January 22, 2016 and became effective on February 22, 2016. It took 362 days from the date the document was sent to NMFS for the regulations to be implemented.

In the meantime, the commercial dolphin fishery experienced above average landings in 2015 and commercial harvest was closed in all Atlantic waters when the commercial ACL was projected to be met on June 30th, 2015. This commercial harvest closure remained in effect through the end of the year. Traditionally, the longline gear sector lands the majority of their catch between late April and early July. The hook-and-line gear sector typically continues to land dolphin throughout the year. In 2015, the hook-and-line gear sector was not able to fish as they had historically. If the regulatory changes in Amendment 8 had been in place, the commercial sector, particularly the hook-and-line gear sector, would have been able to harvest dolphin over a longer period of time and likely would not have experienced a harvest closure. Also, the commercial sector could have harvested up to an additional 377,484 lbs ww of dolphin that year with an estimated dockside value of approximately \$1.1 million³ (2015 dollars), although the increase in observed harvest may not have fully reached this level based on historic commercial landings.

Example 3)

- ***Black Sea Bass:** Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 adjusted the seasonal prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots annually from November 1 through April 30. The amendment retained the November 1 through April 30 prohibition on the use of pots but reduced the size of the prohibited area and added enhanced gear marking requirements, with the goal being to minimize adverse socio-economic impacts to black sea bass pot endorsement holders while maintaining protection to whales listed under the Endangered Species Act in the South Atlantic Region.*

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 was sent to NMFS on March 4, 2016, the NOA of the draft EIS was published on October 23, 2015, and the NOA of the final EIS was published on July 1, 2016. The proposed rule implementing the amendment was published on August 11, 2016 with public comments due by September 12, 2016. The final rule was published on December 29, 2016 and became effective on the same date. The 32 vessels in the South Atlantic region with black sea bass pot endorsements were not allowed to fish pots in November and December 2016 because Regulatory Amendment 16 was not yet implemented. Based on the economic analysis in the amendment, not allowing the fishing of black sea bass pots over these two months may have led to forgone economic benefits of approximately \$14,700 to \$15,700⁴ (2016 dollars) in dockside value due to decreased commercial landings. It took 300 days from the date the document was sent to NMFS for the regulations to be implemented.

³ Based on the average annual dockside price per pound (whole weight) for dolphin in 2015 of \$2.79 (2015 dollars) as provided by the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program dataset.

⁴ Based on the range of economic benefits provided in the EIS for Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 converted into a monthly rate over the time period (November through April) and adjusted for inflation (\$7,257 to \$7,759 per month in 2014 dollars).

