



## SAFMC Amendments Summary

August 28, 2019

### Snapper Grouper

#### *Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 (blueline tilefish)*

SEDAR 50 was conducted in 2017 as a joint assessment between the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SEDAR Lead) with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council addressing the stock assessment(s) for Atlantic blueline tilefish. The SSC reviewed results of SEDAR 50 at their October 2017 meeting and provided catch level recommendations for blueline tilefish for the area south of Cape Hatteras, NC. SEFSC staff presented the Committee on the assessment results at the December 2017 meeting. As ABC recommendations that match the jurisdictional boundaries of the Mid- and South Atlantic Councils (boundary at the NC/VA state line) were needed to develop fishing levels and management measures, the SSC formed a workgroup whose task was to determine a suitable approach to obtaining an ABC that would be useable under the existing management structure. The MAFMC SSC reviewed results of the workgroup at their March 2018 meeting and the SAFMC SSC reviewed the results during their May 2018 meeting and provide guidance to the Council. In June 2018, the Committee reviewed SSC recommendations on setting an ABC for blueline tilefish and development of this amendment was delayed by other priorities.

#### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 (allocations for yellowtail)*

In March 2016, the Council directed staff to begin development of a joint dolphin wahoo and snapper grouper amendment to examine different ways to allocate or share quota between the commercial and recreational sectors for dolphin and yellowtail snapper. Under consideration for yellowtail snapper are in-season allocations shifts as well as permanent re-allocation. Scoping meetings were held in August 2016. In December 2016, the Council separated the two amendments, and approved Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 (yellowtail only) for public hearings in late January/early February 2017 with an additional action that would consider merging the ACLs of yellowtail snapper for the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic regions. In March 2017, the Council decided to postpone the amendment until revised MRIP data are available. In June 2017 the Council sent a letter to the Gulf Council to obtain input on a possible joint amendment to combine ACLs for yellowtail snapper. The Gulf Council sent a reply indicating their willingness to work with the South Atlantic Council on management solutions for yellowtail snapper. During the March 2018 meeting, the Council agreed to wait until revised MRIP data are available before revisiting long-term management options for yellowtail snapper.

### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (recreational permit and reporting)*

In June 2017, the Council instructed staff to move actions formerly in Amendment 43, except a red snapper ACL action, to Amendment 46. The amendment addresses recreational permitting and reporting for private recreational fishermen, best fishing practices (also include an option to remove circle hook requirements for snapper grouper fishing), and removing powerhead restrictions in special management zones off South Carolina (an action formerly included in the Visioning amendments). The Council approved the amendment for scoping but did not include it as an agenda item for the September/December 2018, nor the March 2019 meetings.

### *Recreational AMs (SG Reg 31)*

Over the past five years, the Council has requested information on possible approaches to improve recreational landings estimates, particularly for species that are infrequently intercepted in the recreational survey. However, the accuracy of such estimates has not improved enough to allow efficient tracking of recreational annual catch limits (ACLs) and has led to mounting frustration among fishery managers, stock assessment analysts, and recreational anglers. The Council is already working on methods to obtain additional data (e.g., Amendment 46, MyFishCount App) that could eventually be used to improve management of recreational fisheries in the region. A possible avenue to lessen the impact of uncertain recreational data on stakeholders is revision of accountability measures. At their March 2018 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin development of an amendment that would revise recreational accountability measures to allow more flexibility in managing recreational fisheries. The Council reviewed some preliminary actions/alternatives and decided that this Recreational AM would apply only to the snapper grouper and dolphin wahoo FMPs. The Council continued work on this amendment at the December 2018 meeting. Scoping occurred in January 2019. In June of 2019 the Council moved the dolphin and wahoo actions into Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 making this just a snapper grouper amendment.

### *Regulatory Amendment 33 (Red Snapper Seasons Modifications) Council Lead: Myra*

During the March 2019 meeting, the Council discussed modifying the days of the week that are open to red snapper recreational harvest starting in 2020, should harvest be allowed, to maximize fishing opportunity in the event of bad weather. The Committee was concerned that limiting the recreational season to consecutive “weekends” during the summer months could increase the chances of losing an entire weekend to fishing opportunities for red snapper because of poor weather conditions. The Committee also expressed interest in having periodic review of how limited openings are working and providing the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the seasons. Additionally, the Council intends to explore changing the start dates for the commercial and recreational seasons to minimize fishing mortality when red snapper are spawning, and removing the minimum number of days requirement to allow harvest. The Council reviewed an option paper at the June 2019 meeting and approved the amendment for public hearings to be held in August 2019. The Council will review public comment in September 2019 with the intent to approve the amendment for formal review at the December 2019 meeting.

### *Regulatory Amendment 34 (SMZs in North and South Carolina) Council Lead: Myra*

The process to designate SMZs around artificial reefs was established in the Snapper Grouper FMP in 1983 with the main intent being to *create incentive to create artificial reefs and fish attraction devices that will increase biological production and/or create fishing opportunities that would not otherwise exist.*

In March 2019, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries and the South Carolina Marine Resources Division submitted requests to the Council to designate artificial reefs located in the EEZ off those states as Special Management Zones. The NCDMF requested designation of 30 artificial reef sites in the EEZ off North Carolina. Fishing gear other than handline, rod and reel, and spear would be prohibited within the proposed SMZs. Further, harvest of snapper grouper species with spearfishing gear would be limited to the recreational bag limit for those species.

In South Carolina, 28 artificial reef sites in the EEZ have already been designated as SMZs. Four additional artificial reef sites have been established in recent years and the SCMRD has requested the sites be designated as SMZs with the same restrictions on fishing gear as other SMZs, namely limiting angling activities to handheld hook and line gear and spearfishing gear (excluding powerheads). In addition, the use of fish traps, longlines, gill nets, and trawls would be prohibited, and harvest of snapper grouper species would be limited to the applicable recreational bag limits.

In June 2019 the Council directed staff to begin development of an amendment, with the intent to hold public hearings in the fall and consider the amendment for final approval in December 2019.

## **Coral/Golden Crab/Shrimp**

### *Coral 10/ Golden Crab 10/ Shrimp 11 (Access Areas, Transit Provision, Golden Crab VMS)*

In March 2018, the Council directed staff to begin development of a joint amendment for coral, golden crab, and shrimp to look at access areas in the golden crab northern zone, eastern edge of the Oculina Bank Extension established in Coral Amendment 8, shrimp trawl gear stowage requirements when transiting closed areas, and VMS for golden crab vessels. The Council approved the amendment for scoping. At the December 2018 meeting, the Council requested this be an agenda item for the June 2019 meeting.

## **Dolphin Wahoo**

### *Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 (allocations for dolphin)*

In March 2016, the Council directed staff to begin development of a joint dolphin wahoo and snapper grouper amendment to examine different ways to allocate or share quota between the commercial and recreational sectors for dolphin and yellowtail snapper. In June 2016, the Council approved the amendment for scoping hearings, which were held in August 2016. Options included a common pool allocation, a reserve category, temporary or permanent shifts in allocation, combined annual catch limits, and creating gear allocations in the commercial dolphin fishery. In December 2016, the Council considered approving the amendment, which was being developed jointly with Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 (see Snapper Grouper section above), for public hearings in early 2017. Instead, the Council directed staff to continue to develop Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 but separately from SG Am 44 and include an action to revise the ABC Control Rule to include a carry-over provision from one fishing year to the next. The Council also directed staff to develop an action that would eliminate the operator card requirement in the Dolphin Wahoo FMP. Consequently, the DW FMP actions were not approved for public hearings. In March 2017, the Council decided to stop work on the

amendment until the revised MRIP data are available. The Council began work on DW 10 again in December 2018.

### *Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 12 (establish bullet & frigate mackerel as ecosystem species)*

In March 2018, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Mid-Atlantic Council; MAFMC) requested that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council; SAFMC) consider managing frigate mackerel (*Auxis thazard*) and bullet mackerel (*Auxis rochet*) as ecosystem component (EC) species in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic (Dolphin Wahoo FMP). At the December 2018 meeting, the Dolphin Wahoo Committee of the South Atlantic Council received a presentation on the presence of the two mackerel species in the diets of dolphin and wahoo and discussed the request from the Mid-Atlantic Council to manage bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel as EC species in the Dolphin Wahoo FMP. At the March 2019 meeting, the South Atlantic Council discussed a white paper on mechanisms and regulatory parameters for adding EC species to a FMP, ways that other Councils have addressed EC species in their FMPs, as well as background information on fisheries for bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel. The South Atlantic Council voted to send the topic of adding bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP as EC species out for scoping in the spring of 2019.

At the June 2019 meeting, the South Atlantic Council reviewed scoping comments and directed staff to start work on Amendment 12 to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP (Amendment 12) that would add bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel to the FMP as EC species and provide an options paper for the amendment at the September 2019 South Atlantic Council meeting.

## **Mackerel Cobia**

### *Framework Amendment 8 (King mackerel trip limits, Season 2) Council Lead: Christina.*

At the March 2019 meeting the Council reviewed Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel concerns regarding low commercial trip limits in the Atlantic southern zone during season two (October to the end of February). During the winter months, fishermen are only able to fish a small number of days due to the weather. Additionally, due to changes in the fishery, more fish are on the market during this time of the year, resulting in lower prices. When the weather is decent, AP members felt it would be helpful if fishermen had access to a higher trip limit to make trips worthwhile. The Council directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to address season two trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel. At the June 2019 meeting the Council approved actions and alternatives to be included in Framework Amendment 8. The Council also requested emergency action to raise the season two trip limit south of the Flagler/Volusia County line from 50-fish to 75-fish for the 2019/2020 season. This amendment is intended to make a permanent change to the season two trip limit.

## **Spiny Lobster**

### *Spiny Lobster Regulatory Amendment 5(?) (commercial trip limit for vessels with an SGI and LT permit off NC, SC, and GA) Council lead: Christina.*

At the March 2019 meeting the Council passed a motion requesting options for vessels with a snapper grouper unlimited permit (SG1) and a spiny lobster tailing permit (LT) to be able to retain commercial quantities of spiny lobster (excluding federal waters off Florida). At the June 2019 meeting Council staff presented an options paper with information on current spiny lobster trip limits, permitting, and gear restrictions relevant to both spiny lobster and snapper grouper. The Council clarified that the intent of the amendment is to allow for an increased vessel limit for the diving component of the spiny lobster fishery only. Additionally, the vessel limit would only apply to federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Currently, the daily possession limit is two spiny lobster per person. An increased vessel limit would allow dive fishermen with an SG1 and LT permit on their vessel to supplement their snapper grouper trips with a commercial amount of spiny lobster. The Council will review draft a draft action and alternatives at the December 2019 meeting.

## Generic Amendments

### *Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment (SG 45/GC 11/Sargassum 4/Coral 11)*

In December 2016, the Council directed staff to start work on a plan amendment that would modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the MSA and revise how uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs. This amendment includes actions to revise the ABC Control Rule to modify how the Council sets the risk tolerance for overfishing, how the SSC addresses uncertainty, and to incorporate flexibility in the ABC specifications to address carry-over of unused catch and phasing-in of major changes in catch levels. The IPT met twice during the July – December 2018 period to continue amendment development. The SSC reviewed the document, including the evaluation of actions and alternatives, in October 2018. Scoping occurred in January 2019.

### *Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment*

Currently, logbook reports from commercial fishermen targeting snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin/wahoo must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each fishing trip. Logbook reporting forms for golden crab must be submitted to the Science and Research Director postmarked no later than 30 days after sale of the golden crab offloaded from a trip. The amendment also considers requiring that the components of the commercial logbooks (landings, economic, and bycatch) be submitted within 21 days after the end of each trip. This would increase the timeline for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fishermen to complete logbooks, and decrease the timeline for golden crab fishermen. Commercial electronic logbooks, as proposed in this amendment, would not be used to monitor annual catch limits; however, they could serve as a means to verify dealer reports and comply with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program standards that require two sources for verification of quota-monitored species. It is the Council's intent that NMFS use the commercial logbook landings, with the new timing and compliance requirements specified in this amendment, to compare with commercial trip ticket landings to help ensure the commercial ACLs are not exceeded.

At their June 2013 meeting, the Council approved scheduling a NMFS SEFSC presentation on the details of the commercial electronic logbook pilot study at the September 2013 meeting. The Council receives updates at each Council meeting. SA Council staff will work with Gulf staff and NMFS staff to allow fishermen to voluntarily provide their data electronically and to plan for completion of the

amendment incorporating results from year 1 of the pilot study. As of April 2016, voluntary reports may be provided through the ACCSP SAFIS system and available to the SEFSC.

*Bycatch Reporting Amendment (formerly CE-BA 3)*

The action in the Bycatch Reporting Amendment considers improvements in bycatch/discard data collection methods to better quantify all sources of fishing mortality in South Atlantic fisheries. Alternatives consider expanding aspects of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's Release, Discard and Protected Species Module to coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only) and dolphin and wahoo fisheries; and also implementing a commercial observer program at 2-5% coverage levels for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic (SA Council area only), dolphin and wahoo, and golden crab vessels.

Based on discussions at the September 2014 Council meeting, the SEFSC/SERO agreed to draft a comprehensive bycatch reporting system for the southeast. The SEFSC and SERO will provide an update on their efforts at each Council meeting. The Council's intent is that the bycatch reporting system would be specified and implemented through this amendment.

The Council reviewed the measures in CE-BA 3 in September 2015. The Council received a briefing from NMFS at the March 2016 meeting. The Council has postponed development until after NMFS publishes the rule for the Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology.