

# Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26

## Decision Document

December 2017

## Background

The Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region would address specific action items in the 2016-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Vision Blueprint). The Vision Blueprint identifies the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that support the vision for the snapper grouper fishery and centers around four goal areas - Science, Management, Communication, and Governance. During 2015, the Council prioritized action items that would be addressed through amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan over the next five years. The Council chose to focus on actions that would address “seasonality” and “retention” in the fishery and began development of two amendments to address the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively. Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 includes recreational management measures.

## Actions in this amendment

*NOTE: Actions reflect Council guidance from September 2017*

- **Action 1:** Remove sand tilefish from the Deep-Water Complex and revise the annual catch limits, optimum yield, and recreational annual catch target
- **Action 2:** Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates
- **Action 3:** Specify recreational management measures for the deep-water species aggregate
  - **Sub-action 3.1:** Specify the recreational season for the proposed deep-water species aggregate

- **Sub-action 3.2:** Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed deep-water species aggregate
- **Sub-action 3.3:** Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species
- **Sub-Action 3.4:** Specify gear requirements for the proposed deep-water species aggregate
- **Action 4:** Specify management measures for the shallow-water grouper aggregate
  - **Sub-action 4.1:** Specify the recreational season for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate
  - **Sub-action 4.2:** Specify the bag limit for the shallow-water grouper aggregate
- **Action 5:** Specify management measures for the other shallow-water species aggregate
  - **Sub-action 5.1:** Specify the bag limit for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate
  - **Sub-action 5.2:** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off east Florida
- **Action 6:** Specify the bag limit for the proposed Snapper Grouper Species Aggregate

## Objectives for this meeting

- Consider suggested changes to Purpose and Need and approve
- Consider suggested changes to actions and alternatives, make modifications as appropriate, and approve

## Expected amendment timing

December 2017	Council finalizes Purpose and Need and actions/alternatives
March 2018	Council reviews analyses, selects preferred alternatives as appropriate, and approves for public hearings in April/May 2018
June 2018	Council reviews public comment, modifies the amendment as appropriate, and approves all actions
September 2018	Council reviews and approves for formal review

## Purpose and need statement

At the September 2017 meeting, the Council approved the following motion:

MOTION: APPROVE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT:

- STABILIZE RECREATIONAL ACCESS
- STABILITY IN THE FISHERY
- ENSURE THAT “ACCESS” IS PROPERLY CHARACTERIZED (I.E. “INCREASE” VS. “FACILITATE”, “MAINTAIN”, “IMPROVE”?)

- REGULATORY DISCARDS
- INCLUDE PHRASE THAT INDICATES PURPOSE IS TO RESPOND TO STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS
- SIMPLIFICATION OF REGULATIONS
- PREDICTABILITY
- LOOK AT DRAFT P&N FROM DECEMBER 2016
- CLARIFY/REWORD “COMPATIBLE REGULATIONS” IN NEED STATEMENT (PROMOTE ANGLER UNDERSTANDING AND ADHERENCE TO THE REGULATIONS)

Note: A draft P&N was not included in the December 2016 Decision Document

### **IPT Recommendation:**

#### **Purpose for Actions**

Address recreational stakeholder input to increase access and predictability for the recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery, minimize regulatory discards, and improve regulatory compliance and consistency.

#### **Need for Actions**

Achieve efficient management of the recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery to achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects for recreational fishermen in the South Atlantic region.

### **Committee Action:**

- ACCEPT IPT’S SUGGESTED EDITS AND APPROVE
- DO NOT APPROVE THE IPT’S SUGGESTED EDITS
- COMMITTEE MAKES MODIFICATIONS TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED
- OTHERS?

## Proposed Actions and Alternatives

### Action 1. Remove sand tilefish from the Deep-Water Complex and revise the annual catch limits, optimum yield, and recreational annual catch target

#### Discussion:

- Guidance to staff in September 2017 was to include an action in the amendment to modify the composition of the Deep-water Complex to remove sand tilefish and place it in an appropriate shallow-water complex.
- Sand tilefish is a shallow-water species.
- The Committee was advised that making changes to the species composition of a complex cannot be accomplished under the existing regulatory amendment framework.

#### Action Alternatives:

As discussed in September 2017:

#### Action 1. Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregates are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the recreational aggregate groupings that are in place in the South Atlantic Region.

**Alternative 3.** Modify existing aggregates to establish a **deep-water species aggregate** including:

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Snappers only: queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Groupers and tilefishes only: snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Snappers, groupers, and tilefishes, combined: queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

**Alternative 4.** Modify existing aggregates to establish a **shallow-water species aggregate** including:

**Sub-alternative 4a.** Snappers only: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, and cubera snapper.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Groupers and tilefish only: gag, black grouper, red grouper, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, scamp, and sand tilefish.

**Sub-alternative 4c.** Snappers, groupers, and tilefish combined: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, gag, black grouper, red grouper, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, scamp, and sand tilefish.

**Alternative 5.** Modify existing aggregates to establish an aggregate (**other shallow-water species aggregate**) including:

**Sub-alternative 5a.** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, Atlantic spadefish, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, and cubera snapper.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

**Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:**

**Action 1. Remove sand tilefish from the Deep-Water Complex and revise the annual catch limits, optimum yield, and recreational annual catch target**

**Alternative 1. (No Action).** The current Deep-water Complex includes yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper. The total annual catch limit for the Deep-water Complex is 169,896 pounds whole weight, which is set equal to the acceptable biological catch and the optimum yield. The recreational annual catch limit is 38,628 pounds whole weight, and the recreational annual catch target is XX.

**Alternative 2.** Remove sand tilefish from the Deepwater Complex. Revise the Deepwater Complex annual catch limit, optimum yield, and recreational annual catch target to reflect the removal of sand tilefish. Specify an annual catch limit, optimum yield, and recreational annual catch target for sand tilefish.

Deep-water Complex annual catch limit and optimum yield = 129,498 pounds whole weight

Deep-water Complex recreational annual catch limit = 32,415 pounds whole weight

Deep-water Complex recreational annual catch target =

Sand tilefish annual catch limit and optimum yield = 7,983 pounds whole weight

Sand tilefish recreational annual catch limit = 6,213 pounds whole weight

Sand tilefish recreational annual catch target =

### **IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- This action does not meet the Purpose and Need of the amendment or meet stated objectives in the Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery. Furthermore, it may entail revising ACLs for two complexes and may consequently result in changes to sector allocations.
- If retained, this action will make this a plan amendment, not a framework action. Therefore, the document may need to be renamed if action to revise composition of complexes is included.
- IPT strongly recommends removing this action from this amendment and considering in the future along with other revisions the Council may wish to make to the various complexes, ACLs, and allocations.
- If this action is retained, an action would be needed in Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 to adjust the commercial ACL for the Deep-water Complex and the commercial ACL for sand tilefish, also making that amendment a plan amendment that will need to be renamed.
- If the action is retained, the IPT recommends not including sand tilefish in another complex for the time being.

### **Committee Action:**

- REMOVE ACTION 1 FROM CONSIDERATION IN THIS AMENDMENT
- RETAIN ACTION 1 IN THIS AMENDMENT
- APPROVE THE ACTION/ALTERANTIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY THE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?

## Action 2. Modify the species composition of the recreational aggregates

### Discussion:

- In September 2017, Council staff presented an alternative approach to structure the amendment that would better reflect the Council's Vision and the way in which the fishery currently operates. The Council approved adopting the alternative approach with some modifications and instructed staff to structure actions and alternatives appropriately.
- The Council directed staff to develop alternatives to establish an "other shallow-water species" aggregate that would:
  - include species outside the existing aggregates (i.e., black sea bass, vermilion, etc.) and include alternatives to retain existing bag limits for those species within the aggregate and include sub-alternatives from Action 2/Alternative 5 in decision document (see below).
  - Exclude species outside existing aggregates (i.e., black sea bass, vermilion snapper, red porgy, etc.) and include sub-alternatives from Action 2/Alternative 5 in decision document (see below).
- The Council also directed staff to add an action to establish a 20-fish maximum daily recreational bag limit that would maintain all existing individual and aggregate bag limits with sub-alternatives to 1) include deep-water species and 2) exclude deep-water species.

### Action Alternatives:

As discussed in September 2017.

#### Action 2. Modify or establish recreational aggregates and single-species bag limits

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day including: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per vessel per day

<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: 20 fish per person per day including: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

Individual species' bag limits are as follows:

Back sea bass – seven per person per day

Vermilion snapper – five per person per day

Greater amberjack – one per person per day

Red porgy – three per person per day or three per trip, whichever is more restrictive

Hogfish – *pending*: one per person per day off East Florida, two per person per day off GA, SC and NC

Wreckfish – one per vessel per day

Mutton snapper – *pending*: five per person per day

**Alternative 2.** Establish a 20-fish per person maximum recreational daily bag limit including all snapper grouper species (species will be listed) (excluding tomtate). Existing bag limits would continue to apply (species and limits listed in a table in discussion).

**Alternative 3.** Specify bag limits for proposed **deep-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Two per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Two per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Three per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3d.** Three per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Sub-alternative 3e.** Four per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 3f.** Four per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish and snowy grouper.

**Alternative 4.** Specify bag limits for proposed **shallow-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 4a.** Two per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** Two per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 4c.** Three per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4d.** Three per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 4e.** Four per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 4f.** Four per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Alternative 5.** Specify bag limits for the proposed **other shallow-water species aggregate** (Action 1)

**Sub-alternative 5a.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where ten fish can be snappers and ten fish can be other species within the aggregate, with existing restrictions on mutton snapper.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be gray triggerfish.

**Sub-alternative 5c.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be Atlantic spadefish.



**Sub-alternative 5d.** Specify a 20-fish aggregate where no more than ten fish can be of any one species.

**Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational Snapper Grouper aggregates are in place in the South Atlantic Region.

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper<sup>1</sup>, cubera snapper, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper.

Grouper Aggregate: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish.

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, Atlantic spadefish, tomtate.

Species outside aggregates: black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, hogfish, wreckfish, red snapper.

Alternative 1 (No Action): Current Aggregates			
Snapper	Grouper	Species without bag limit	Not included in aggregate
Lane snapper	Gag	Whitebone porgy	Black sea bass
Yellowtail snapper	Black grouper	Jolthead porgy	Vermilion snapper
Gray snapper	Red grouper	Knobbed porgy	Greater amberjack
Mutton snapper	Scamp	Saucereye porgy	Hogfish
Cubera snapper	Yellowfin grouper	Scup	Red porgy
Queen snapper	Yellowmouth grouper	Almaco jack	Red snapper
Blackfin snapper	Red hind	Banded rudderfish	Wreckfish
Silk snapper	Rock hind	Lesser amberjack	
	Grasby	White grunt	
	Coney	Margate	
	Sand tilefish	Sailor's choice	
	Snowy grouper	Atlantic spadefish	
	Misty grouper	Gray triggerfish	
	Yellowedge grouper	Bar jack	
	Blueline tilefish	Tomtate	
	Golden tilefish		

**Alternative 2.** Remove the recreational Snapper Grouper aggregate groupings that are in place in the South Atlantic Region.

**Alternative 3.** Modify existing Snapper Grouper aggregates to establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate**, **Shallow-water Grouper Aggregate**, and **Other Shallow-water Species Aggregate**.

**Deep-water Species Aggregate:** queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, wreckfish

**Shallow-water Grouper Aggregate:** gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, and coney.

**Other Shallow-water Species Aggregate:** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, tomtate, Atlantic spadefish, gray triggerfish, bar jack, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, red porgy, **red snapper**, and sand tilefish.

Alt 3: Modify Aggregates		
Deep-Water Species	Shallow-Water Grouper	Other Shallow-Water Species
Queen snapper	Gag	Lane snapper
Blackfin snapper	Black grouper	Yellowtail snapper
Silk snapper	Red grouper	Gray snapper
Snowy grouper	Scamp	Mutton snapper
Misty grouper	Yellowfin grouper	Cubera snapper
Yellowedge grouper	Yellowmouth grouper	Sand tilefish
Blueline tilefish	Red hind	Whitebone porgy
Golden tilefish	Rock hind	Jolthead porgy
Wreckfish	Grasby	Knobbed porgy
	Coney	Saucereye porgy
		Scup
		Almaco jack
		Banded rudderfish
		Lesser amberjack
		White grunt,
		Margate
		Sailor's choice
		Atlantic spadefish
		Gray triggerfish
		Bar jack
		Tomtate
		Black sea bass
		Vermilion snapper
		Greater amberjack
		Hogfish
		Red porgy
		<b>Red snapper</b>

**Alternative 4.** Modify existing Snapper Grouper aggregates to establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate**, **Shallow-water Species Aggregate**, and an **Other Snapper Grouper Species Aggregate**:

**Deep-water Species Aggregate:** snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, wreckfish

**Shallow-water Species Aggregate:** lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, and sand tilefish.

**Other Snapper Grouper Species:** Whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, tomtate, Atlantic spadefish, gray triggerfish, bar jack, black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, red porgy, **red snapper**, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper

Alt 4: Modify Aggregates		
Deep-Water Species	Shallow-Water Species	Other Snapper Grouper species
Snowy grouper	Lane snapper	Queen snapper
Misty grouper	yellowtail snapper	Blackfin snapper
Yellowedge grouper	gray snapper	Silk snapper
Blueline tilefish	Mutton snapper	Whitebone porgy
Golden tilefish	Cubera snapper	Jolthead porgy
Wreckfish	Gag	Knobbed porgy
	Black grouper	Saucereye porgy
	Red grouper	Scup
	Scamp	Almaco jack
	Yellowfin grouper	Banded rudderfish
	Yellowmouth grouper	Lesser amberjack
	Red hind	White grunt
	Rock hind	Margate
	Grasby	Sailor's choice
	Coney	Atlantic spadefish
	Sand tilefish	Gray triggerfish
		Bar jack
		Tomtate
		Black sea bass
		Vermilion snapper
		Greater amberjack
		Hogfish
		Red porgy
		<b>Red snapper</b>

**Alternative 5:** Modify existing Snapper Grouper aggregates to establish a **Deep-water Species Aggregate** and an **Other Snapper Grouper Species Aggregate**:

**Deep-water Species Aggregate:** queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish.

**Other Snapper Grouper Aggregate:** all other species

Alt 5: Modify Aggregates		
Deep-Water Species	Other Snapper Grouper Species	
Queen snapper	Lane snapper	Whitebone porgy
Blackfin snapper	Yellowtail snapper	Jolthead porgy
Silk snapper	Gray snapper	Knobbed porgy
Snowy grouper	Mutton snapper	Saucereye porgy
Misty grouper	Cubera snapper	Scup
Yellowedge grouper	Sand tilefish	Almaco jack
Blueline tilefish	Gag	Banded rudderfish
Golden tilefish	Black grouper	Lesser amberjack
Wreckfish	Red grouper	White grunt,
	Scamp	Margate
	Yellowfin grouper	Sailor's choice
	Yellowmouth grouper	Atlantic spadefish
	Red hind	Gray triggerfish
	Rock hind	Bar jack
	Grasby	Tomtate
	Coney	black sea bass
	Red porgy	Vermilion snapper
	Red snapper	Greater amberjack
		Hogfish

**Alternative 6.** Modify existing snapper grouper aggregates to establish a single **snapper grouper aggregate** including all species in the snapper grouper Fishery Management Unit with individual or aggregate bag limits **including/excluding tomtate and red snapper?**

Alt 6: Modify Aggregates	
Snapper Grouper Species	
Lane snapper	Whitebone porgy
Yellowtail snapper	Jolthead porgy
Gray snapper	Knobbed porgy
Mutton snapper	Saucereye porgy
Cubera snapper	Scup
Queen	Almaco jack
Blackfin	Banded rudderfish
Silk	Lesser amberjack
Gag	White grunt
Black grouper	Margate
Red grouper	Sailor's choice
Scamp	Atlantic spadefish

Yellowfin grouper	Gray triggerfish
Yellowmouth grouper	Bar jack
Red hind	Tomtate
Rock hind	Black sea bass
Graysby	Vermilion snapper
Coney	Greater amberjack
Sand tilefish	Hogfish
Snowy grouper	Red porgy
Misty grouper	Red snapper
Yellowedge grouper	Wreckfish
Blueline tilefish	
Golden tilefish	

### **IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- Please clarify how to proceed regarding red snapper
- Actions 3-5 are based on the Council selecting Alternative 3 under this action as preferred to adhere to the re-structuring of the amendment approved by the Council in September.
- Action 6 would only be applicable if the Council selected Alternative 6.

### **Committee Action:**

- APPROVE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?

### **Action 3. Specify recreational management measures for the proposed deep-water species aggregate**

#### **Discussion:**

- In September 2017, Council staff presented an alternative approach to structure the amendment that would better reflect the Council's Vision and the way in which the fishery currently operates. The Council approved adopting the alternative approach with some modifications and instructed staff to structure actions and alternatives appropriately.
- Action 3 is based on the Council selecting Alternative 3 under Action 2 as preferred.
- The Council provided guidance on the range of alternatives for a recreational season and bag limit for deep-water species.

#### **Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in September 2017.

### **Action 3. Specify measures to reduce bycatch mortality of deep-water species**

#### **Sub-action 3.1. Establish a recreational season for deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational season for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish is May 1 to August 31. Recreational harvest of golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper is allowed year-round.

**Alternative 2.** Specify a recreational season for deep-water species:

**Sub-alternative 2a.** May 1 to August 31 (would apply to golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** May 1 to June 30

**Sub-alternative 2c.** September 1 to December 31

#### **Sub-action 3.2. Remove recreational minimum size limits for deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone is 12 inches total length.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

#### **Sub-action 3.3. Specify gear requirements for deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There are no gear requirements to target deep-water species (golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper).

**Alternative 2.** Require single-hook rigs when targeting deep-water species (golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, and yellowedge grouper)

Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:

**Action 3. Specify recreational management measures for the proposed deep-water species aggregate**

**Sub-Action 3.1. Specify the recreational season for the proposed deep-water species aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Recreational fishing for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper is allowed May 1 through August 31, annually. Recreational fishing for wreckfish is allowed July 1 through August 31, annually. There are no seasonal restrictions on recreational fishing for other deep-water species (queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, sand tilefish, and golden tilefish).

**Alternative 2.** Allow recreational **fishing? possession?** for proposed deep-water species aggregate annually (including blueline tilefish, snow grouper, wreckfish, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and golden tilefish):

**Sub-alternative 2a.** May 1 through June 30

**Sub-alternative 2b.** May 1 through August 31

**Sub-alternative 2c.** July 1 through August 31

**Sub-alternative 2d.** July 1 through October 31

**Sub-Action 3.2. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed deep-water species aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day including: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per *vessel* per day

<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

The recreational bag limit for wreckfish is one per *vessel* per day.

**Alternative 2.** Specify bag limits for proposed **deep-water species aggregate** (including blueline tilefish, snowy grouper, wreckfish, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and golden tilefish)

**Sub-alternative 2a.** One fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** One fish per person per day with existing restrictions on snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** Two fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2d.** Two fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

**Sub-alternative 2e.** Three fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2f.** Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish.

**Sub-Action 3.3. Remove the recreational minimum size limits for certain deep-water species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone is 12 inches total length.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Sub-Action 3.4. Specify gear requirements for the proposed deep-water species aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** There are no gear requirements to target deep-water species (blueline tilefish, snowy grouper, golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and wreckfish).

**Alternative 2.** Require single-hook rigs when targeting deep-water species (snowy grouper, golden tilefish, queen snapper, silk snapper, blackfin snapper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, and wreckfish).

**IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- Consider consistency among actions in specifying months when fishing is allowed vs. months when fishing is closed.
- “Possession” vs “fishing for” in Sub-Action 3.1, Alt 2: The language may change according to how the Council chooses to specify opening/closing and should be consistent throughout the document. The Council should clarify whether the intent is to discourage fishing for deepwater species outside of the open months due to high release mortality of these species.

**Committee Action:**

- APPROVE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?



## **Action 4. Specify management measures for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate**

### **Discussion:**

- In September 2017, Council staff presented an alternative approach to structure the amendment that would better reflect the Council's Vision and the way in which the fishery currently operates. The Council approved adopting the alternative approach with some modifications and instructed staff to structure actions and alternatives appropriately.
- Action 4 is based on the Council selecting Alternative 3 under Action 2 as preferred.
- The Council provided guidance on range of alternatives to consider for a shallow-water grouper season and recreational bag limits for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate.

### **Action Alternatives:**

As discussed in September 2017:

#### **Action 4. Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) is prohibited annually in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone from January 1 through April 30.

**Alternative 2.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (gag, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) (excluding black grouper) south of 28° North latitude (approximately off Palm Bay, Florida):

**Sub-alternative 2a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 2b.** February – March (two months)

**Sub-alternative 2c.** February – April (three months)

**Sub-alternative 2d.** February – May (four months)

**Alternative 3.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of black grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone south of 28 degrees north latitude

**Sub-alternative 3a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** January

**Sub-alternative 3c.** February

**Sub-alternative 3d.** March

**Alternative 4.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest of shallow-water groupers annually from January 1 to April 30 in the Exclusive Economic Zone off Georgia and east Florida. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off North Carolina and South Carolina

**Sub-alternative 4a.** January – May (five months)

**Sub-alternative 4b.** February – May (four months)

**Sub-alternative 4c.** March – June (four months)

**Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:**

**Action 4. Specify management measures for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate**

**Sub-action 4.1. Specify the recreational season for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Recreational possession of gag, scamp, red grouper, black grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney is allowed annually from May 1 through December 31.

**Alternative 2.** Allow recreational possession of species included in the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate annually from January 1 through December 31.

**Alternative 3.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational possession of shallow-water grouper aggregate annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species (gag, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney) (excluding black grouper) south of 28° North latitude (approximately off Palm Bay, Florida):

**Sub-alternative 3a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** February – March (two months)

**Sub-alternative 3c.** February – April (three months)

**Sub-alternative 3d.** February – May (four months)

**Alternative 4.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational possession of shallow-water grouper aggregate annually from January 1 to April 30 north of 28 degrees North latitude. Prohibit recreational harvest and possession of black grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone south of 28 degrees north latitude.

**Sub-alternative 4a.** January – March (three months)

**Sub-alternative 4b.** January

**Sub-alternative 4c.** February

**Sub-alternative 4d.** March

**Sub-alternative 4e.** April

**Alternative 5.** Maintain seasonal prohibition on recreational possession of shallow-water grouper aggregate annually from January 1 to April 30 in the Exclusive Economic Zone off

Georgia and east Florida). Prohibit recreational **harvest and possession?** of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off North Carolina and South Carolina.

**Sub-alternative 5a.** January – May (five months)

**Sub-alternative 5b.** February – May (four months)

**Sub-alternative 5c.** March – June (four months)

**Sub-action 4.2. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per *vessel* per day

<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

**Alternative 2.** Specify bag limits for proposed **shallow-water grouper aggregate**

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Two fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Two fish per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** Three fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2d.** Three fish per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**Sub-alternative 2e.** Four fish per person per day.

**Sub-alternative 2f.** Four fish per person per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper.

**IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- Consider consistency in specifying months when fishing is allowed vs. months when fishing is closed.
- Clarify using “fishing for”, “possession”, or “harvest and possession”. Current language in regulations states “During January through April each year, ***no person may fish for, harvest, or possess*** in or from the South Atlantic EEZ any South Atlantic shallow-water grouper (SASWG) (gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney). In addition, for a person on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, the provisions of this closure apply in the South Atlantic, regardless of where such fish are harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters.
- Consider adding Alternative 2
- Consider removing sub-alternative 4a and adding sub-alternative 4e

### **Committee Action:**

- APPROVE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?

### **Action 5. Specify management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate**

#### **Discussion:**

- In September 2017, Council staff presented an alternative approach to structure the amendment that would better reflect the Council's Vision and the way in which the fishery currently operates. The Council approved adopting the alternative approach with some modifications and instructed staff to structure actions and alternatives appropriately.
- The revised Action 5 is based on the Council selecting Alternative 3 under Action 2 as preferred.
- Old Action 5 has been incorporated as a sub-action under Action 3 (management measures for the deep-water species aggregate)
- The Council provided new guidance specification of a bag limit (see action 2) and had previously indicated interest in considering specific bag limits within the aggregate for gray triggerfish and Atlantic spadefish.
- Sub-action 5.2 is former Action 7.

### **Action Alternatives:**

**As discussed in September 2017:**

#### **Action 5. Remove the recreational minimum size limit for certain deep-water snapper species**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone is 12 inches total length.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the 12-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:**

#### **Action 5. Specify management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate**

**Sub-action 5.1. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day including: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per vessel per day

<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: 20 fish per person per day including: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

Individual species' bag limits are as follows:

Black sea bass – seven per person per day

Vermilion snapper – five per person per day

Greater amberjack – one per person per day

Red porgy – three per person per day or three per trip, whichever is more restrictive

Hogfish –one per person per day off East Florida, two per person per day off GA, SC and NC

Wreckfish – one per vessel per day

Mutton snapper – *pending*: five per person per day

**Red snapper?**

There is no bag limit for tomtate.

**Alternative 2.** Specify a 20-fish daily maximum per person per day for the other shallow-water species aggregate. Retain 10 snappers within the aggregate (lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, and cubera snapper) and existing individual species' bag limits (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, mutton snapper, and hogfish). **Exclude tomtate and red snapper?**

**Alternative 3.** Specify a 20-fish daily maximum per person per day for the other shallow-water species aggregate where 10 fish can be gray triggerfish. Retain 10 snappers within the aggregate (lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, and cubera snapper) and existing individual species' bag limits (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, mutton snapper, and hogfish). **Exclude tomtate and red snapper?**

**Alternative 4.** Specify a 20-fish daily maximum per person per day for the other shallow-water species aggregate where 10 fish can be gray triggerfish and 10 can be Atlantic spadefish. Retain

10 snappers within the aggregate (lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, and cubera snapper) and existing individual species' bag limits (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, and mutton snapper, hogfish). **Exclude tomtate and red snapper?**

**Alternative 5.** Specify a 10-fish daily maximum per person per day for the other shallow-water species aggregate. Retain 10 snappers within the aggregate (lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, and cubera snapper) and existing individual species' bag limits (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, mutton snapper, and hogfish).

**Sub-action 5.2. Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the exclusive economic zone off east Florida**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone off east Florida is 14 inches fork length. The recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the Exclusive Economic Zone off Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina is 12 inches fork length.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the Exclusive Economic Zone off east Florida to 12 inches fork length.

**IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- Please clarify inclusion/exclusion of tomtate and red snapper
- The IPT recommends inclusion of Alternative 5 for analysis

**Committee Action:**

- APPROVE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?

## Action 6. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed snapper grouper species aggregate

### Discussion:

- In September 2017, the Council approved removing the action to modify the minimum size limit for black sea bass due to delays in the SEDAR 56 assessment and resultant unavailability of data required for analyses.
- The action, as revised, does not adhere to the proposed re-structuring of the amendment as approved by the Council in September 2017 but was added in response to Council guidance at that meeting.
- This revised action would only apply if the Council selected as preferred Alternative 6 under Action 2. Under that scenario, the amendment structure would need to be revised once more to properly include other actions (i.e., modification of the annual closure affecting shallow-water groupers).

### Action Alternatives:

#### As discussed in June 2017:

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone is 13 inches total length (TL).

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone to 12 inches TL total length.

**Alternative 3.** Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone to 11 inches TL total length.

#### Per Council guidance after September 2017 discussions:

### Action 6. Specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed snapper grouper species aggregate

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The following recreational aggregate bag limits are in place in the South Atlantic Region:

Snapper Aggregate Bag Limit: Ten snapper per person per day including: lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, gray snapper, mutton snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. The following species are excluded from the aggregate: vermilion snapper and red snapper.

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit: Three groupers per person per day including: gag<sup>1</sup>, black grouper<sup>1</sup>, red grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock rind, graysby, coney, sand tilefish, snowy grouper<sup>2</sup>, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Maximum of one gag or black grouper (but not both) per person per day

<sup>2</sup>Maximum of one snowy grouper per vessel per day



<sup>3</sup>Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day

Species Without Bag Limit Aggregate: 20 fish per person per day including: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, white grunt, margate, sailor's choice, and Atlantic spadefish.

Individual species' bag limits are as follows:

Black sea bass – seven per person per day

Vermilion snapper – five per person per day

Greater amberjack – one per person per day

Red porgy – three per person per day or three per trip, whichever is more restrictive

Hogfish –one per person per day off East Florida, two per person per day off GA, SC and NC

Wreckfish – one per vessel per day

Mutton snapper – *pending*: five per person per day

**Red snapper?**

There is no bag limit for tomtate.

**Alternative 2.** Specify a 20-fish daily maximum per person maintaining current restrictions for individual species (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, hogfish, wreckfish, mutton snapper, **and red snapper?**) and maintain current aggregate limits (10 snappers; 3 groupers with restrictions for gag, black grouper, snowy grouper, and golden tilefish; and 20 fish of species without a bag limit, **excluding tomtate?**).

**Alternative 3.** Specify a 20-fish daily maximum per person maintaining current restrictions for individual species (black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, hogfish, wreckfish, mutton snapper, and red snapper) and maintain current aggregate limits (10 snappers; 3 groupers with restrictions for gag, black grouper, snowy grouper, and golden tilefish; and 20 fish of species without a bag limit, excluding tomtate?).

**Sub-Alternative 3a.** Specify only 10 fish can be gray triggerfish

**Sub-Alternative 3b.** Specify only 10 fish can be Atlantic spadefish.

## **IPT Comments/Recommendations:**

- Please clarify inclusion/exclusion of tomtate and red snapper
- IPT recommends adding Alternative 3 and sub-alternatives 3a and 3b for analysis

## **Committee Action:**

- APPROVE ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS PRESENTED
- MODIFY ACTION/ALTERNATIVES AS APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE
- OTHERS?