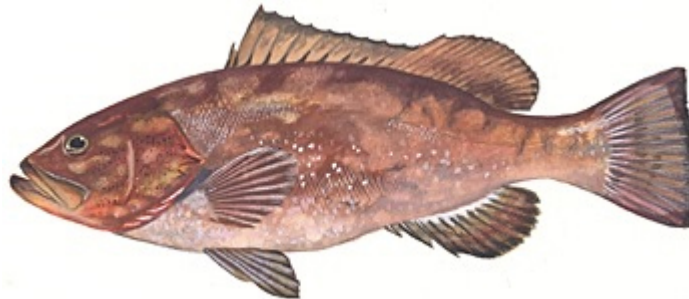


Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1

Decision Document

Annual Catch Limit Adjustment for Red Grouper



Background

During the June 2017 meeting, the Council discussed options for addressing the overfished and overfishing determinations for red grouper and staff explained that the projections delivered with the assessment were based on management starting in 2017. Also, staff explained that the Council could request projections from the SEFSC based on different recruitment scenarios. Hence, the Council passed a motion to request projections based on management starting in 2018, under both high and low recruitment scenarios for exploitations levels of 75% F_{MSY} and F_{MSY} . In September 2017, the Council directed staff to develop an abbreviated framework amendment to adjust the ACL based an ABC recommendation from the SSC using the low recruitment scenario. The SSC convened on October 24-26, 2017, and reviewed the red grouper projections and recommended an ABC based on the low-recruitment scenario to manage the red grouper stock over the short-term. The National Marine Fisheries Service has determined that this action to change the ACL falls under a Categorical Exclusion for NEPA environmental review purposes.

Action in this amendment

- Modify the annual catch limit (ACL) for red grouper

Objectives for this meeting

- Review Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 to modify the ACL for red grouper
- Vote whether to recommend sending Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework 1 to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for approval.

Expected amendment timing

June 2017	Council receives results of SEDAR 53 indicating that the red grouper stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing
September 2017	Council voted to begin Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1
December 2017	Council Receives public comments and makes final changes to the action/alternatives
December 2017	Council takes final action on Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1
December 2017	Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 sent in for Secretarial review

Purpose and need statement

A formal purpose and need statement is not needed as part of the abbreviated framework process.

Proposed Action

Table 1. shows the proposed changes to the ACL for red grouper.

Table 1. Proposed red grouper ACLs for 2018-2020 in lbs ww. Sector allocations are 56% recreational and 44% commercial.

	Total ACL	Commercial ACL	Recreational ACL
Current	780,000	343,200	436,800
2018	139,000	61,160	77,840
2019	150,000	66,000	84,000
2020	162,000	71,280	90,720

Discussion:

With a large reduction in the ACL, commercial harvest of red grouper is expected to be primarily bycatch while targeting other snapper grouper species. Potential high-grading should be minimal in this sector. Targeting of red grouper by the recreational sector would likely be relatively limited in scope, and the proposed action is not anticipated to substantially increase bycatch of co-occurring species.

For the commercial sector, even though the proposed red grouper ACLs are lower than the current ACL, it is unlikely that the commercial sector would close due to reaching its proposed ACL for red grouper based on recent landings. Therefore, realized direct economic effects are not anticipated for the commercial sector. The anticipated reduction in consumer surplus (CS) for the recreational sector resulting from the proposed ACLs would be approximately \$1.76 million in 2018 and decrease thereafter to approximately \$1.67 million in 2019 and \$1.57 million in 2020 (2016 dollars). It is important to note that other substitute species of grouper (such as gag, scamp, or black grouper) that have the same or similar CS values would be available to anglers. As such, the provided estimated reductions in CS may be viewed as a relatively upper range estimate of the negative economic effects resulting from this action, as these effects could be offset by harvesting other comparably valued species on recreational fishing trips that may land red grouper.

The proposed red grouper commercial ACL is unlikely to result in restricted harvest and cause corresponding social consequences. The proposed ACL would likely result in in-season closures for the recreational sector. Restricted access to the red grouper portion of the snapper grouper fishery would result in social consequences for private and for-hire anglers. The short-term negative social effects would be greatest in 2018, with an anticipated recreational closure on July 26, and negative effects would decrease as the available ACL increases in 2019 and 2020 (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Predicted South Atlantic red grouper recreational closure dates for the recreational ACLs. Predicted landings are based on the average 2014-2016 recreational landings.

	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
ACL	77,840 lbs ww	84,000 lbs ww	90,720 lbs ww
Closure Date	26-Jul	6-Aug	19-Aug

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPEr ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 1 FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.