

Regulatory Amendment 30 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

(Rebuilding schedule, seasonal prohibition, and
commercial trip limit for red grouper)

Decision Document

Background

The most recent red grouper assessment (SEDAR 53) indicated that the stock is undergoing overfishing and is not making adequate progress towards rebuilding, which is supposed to take place by 2020 under the current rebuilding plan. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) was formally notified of the red grouper stock status via a letter from NMFS dated September 27, 2017, requiring the Council to prepare and implement a plan amendment and regulations within two years to end overfishing immediately and rebuild the stock. The Council has moved to end overfishing through a revised ABC and ACL for red grouper that was implemented via Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 but has not yet revised the red grouper rebuilding plan.

In March 2018, the Council directed staff to begin development of an amendment to revise the current rebuilding plan to meet the statutory deadline of September 27, 2019. The Council discussed options for Regulatory Amendment 30 at their June 2018 meeting and directed staff to consolidate management measures addressing red grouper into the amendment, adding actions to change or extend the spawning season closure for red grouper in the EEZ off of the Carolinas and to implement a commercial trip limit for red grouper in the entire South Atlantic EEZ. During the Snapper Grouper Committee discussion on red grouper, it was noted that a bag limit reduction for the recreational sector was not needed, as analysis in Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 showed less than a 1% change in landings for the species.

Per direction received during the March 2019 Council meeting, this amendment is scheduled to be approved for formal review at the June 2019 Council meeting pending guidance from the SSC on red grouper fishing levels and rebuilding timelines that may result from an updated assessment for red grouper that incorporates revised recreational landings estimates (i.e. MRIP revisions). These rebuilding timelines are essential for formulating the alternatives of **Action 1**, which revises the current rebuilding schedule for red grouper. The SSC reviewed revised stock assessments during their April 9-11, 2019 meeting, but did not accept the assessments as best scientific information available due to concerns over the revised recreational data that was used. The SSC deemed the assessments were not useful for making catch recommendations at the current time; therefore, the ABC recommendations based on the previous assessments still stand. Based on this guidance, the projections for SEDAR 53 were incorporated where appropriate.

Actions in this amendment

- **Action 1.** Revise the Rebuilding Schedule for Red Grouper
- **Action 2.** Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina
- **Action 3.** Modify the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest, possession, sale, and purchase of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina
- **Action 4.** Establish a commercial trip limit for red grouper harvested in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone

Objectives for this meeting

- Review purpose and need for the amendment and make modifications as appropriate.
- Review actions and alternatives and make modifications as appropriate.
- Consider approving the amendment for formal review.

Expected amendment timing

June 2019

Council takes final action on Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 30 and the amendment is sent for Secretarial review.

Purpose and Need statement

Purpose for Action

The *purpose* of this **framework** amendment is to modify the rebuilding schedule for red grouper based on the results of the most recent stock assessment and extend protection for red grouper during the spawning season.

Need for Action

The *need* of this **framework** amendment is to rebuild the red grouper stock; and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

IPT Recommendation:

- Recommended changes are in the highlighted text above.

Committee Action:

- APPROVE THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS.
- DO NOT APPROVE THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS (COMMITTEE TO SUGGEST MODIFICATIONS AND APPROVE).
- OTHER?

Proposed Actions and Alternatives

Action 1. Revise the Rebuilding Schedule for Red Grouper

Action Alternatives:

Alternative 1 (No Action). The current rebuilding schedule is set at the maximum time period allowed to rebuild (T_{max}). This is equal to 10 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2020. 2011 was Year 1.

Alternative 2. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the shortest possible time period to rebuild in the absence of fishing mortality (T_{min}). This would equal 5 years with the rebuilding time period ending in **2023 2024**. **2019 2020** would be Year 1.

Alternative 3. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal 8 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2026. 2019 would be Year 1.

Preferred Alternative 4. Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the maximum time period allowed to rebuild (T_{Max}). This would equal 10 years with the rebuilding time period ending in 2028. 2019 would be Year 1.

Discussion:

- This proposed action is necessary to satisfy the statutory requirement that the Council revise the rebuilding schedule for red grouper.
- T_{\max} and T_{\min} are set according to guidance found in National Standard 1 (NS 1). T_{\min} is defined as “*the amount of time the stock or stock complex is expected to take to rebuild to its MSY biomass level in the absence of any fishing mortality.*” In the case of red grouper, according to revised rebuilding projections, the minimum timeline for red grouper to rebuild in the absence of any fishing mortality ($F=0$) under long-term average recruitment is 5 years, thus T_{\min} is specified as being 5 years (**Alternative 2**).
- In NS 1, the guidance for setting T_{\max} is as follows: “*If T_{\min} for the stock or stock complex is 10 years or less, then T_{\max} is 10 years.*” This upper bound of the potential rebuilding timeline is captured in **Preferred Alternative 4**. **Alternative 3** is a midpoint between T_{\min} and T_{\max} .
- In **Alternative 2**, 2020 is chosen as Year 1 since this is the earliest timeframe in which management measures could be implemented to achieve harvest levels at $F=0$.
- In **Alternative 3** and **Preferred Alternative 4**, 2019 is chosen as Year 1 because necessary management measures were already implemented in Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 that constrain harvest to levels that would be able to achieve a rebuilt status under these timeframes assuming long-term average recruitment.
- The red grouper stock cannot rebuild by 2020 under the current rebuilding schedule, regardless of the management changes made for the fishery. Thus, **Alternative 1 (No Action)** is not a viable option.
- In general, prescribing less time to rebuild the stock could result in lower ACLs and more restrictive management measures, but would translate into greater biologic, economic, and social benefits from a rebuilt stock in a shorter timeframe.
- The red grouper stock has exhibited low recruitment in recent years and the lack of stock rebuilding may largely be due to ecosystem-related factors. A longer time period for the stock to rebuild, as is the case in **Preferred Alternative 4**, better accommodates the uncertainty relative to stock productivity and allows time where the ecosystem factors that are thought to be affecting recruitment to potentially change in a favorable manner or at least become better understood.

IPT Recommendations:

- Recommend changing Year 1 in **Alternative 2** to 2020 instead of 2019 (wording changes highlighted in yellow). The rationale for this change is that 2020 is the earliest timeframe in which management measures could be implemented to achieve harvest levels at $F=0$.
- These changes were not proposed in **Alternative 3** or **Preferred Alternative 4** because necessary management measures were already implemented in Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 that constrain harvest to levels that would be able to achieve a rebuilt status under these timeframes assuming long-term average recruitment.

Public Comments:

No comments were received on this action during public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 30 which were held on October 3, 2018, at the South Atlantic Council’s (October 2018 meeting. Two public comments were received at the South Atlantic Council’s December

2018 meeting that were in support of the Council's preferred alternatives for all actions in the amendment.

Committee Action:

- APPROVE THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS
- DO NOT APPROVE THE IPT'S SUGGESTED EDITS (COMMITTEE TO SUGGEST MODIFICATIONS AND APPROVE)
- OTHER?

Action 2. Modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

Action Alternatives:

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney).

Preferred Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Revise the timing of these restrictions only for red grouper in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina and South Carolina as follows:

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. January – May (five months)

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

Sub-alternative 2c. March – June (four months)

Sub-alternative 2d. January – June (six months)

Discussion:

- This action was moved from Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 at the June 2018 Council meeting.
- Off North Carolina and South Carolina, spawning activity of red grouper occurs during February-June with a peak in April (**Table 1**, Burgos et al., 2007; McGovern et al., 2002). Off east Florida, spawning occurs from January through May (McGovern et al. 2002).
- **Alternative 1 (No Action)** captures a significant portion of the spawning season for red grouper by retaining the current January 1 through April 30 shallow-water grouper spawning season closure. However, fishermen have indicated that red grouper harvested off North Carolina in May are often in spawning condition and there is concern that the current spawning season closure is not capturing a large portion of spawning activity off the Carolinas (SAFMC, port meetings 2014).
- While all of the alternatives considered in **Action 2** prohibit recreational harvest and possession during peak spawning activity in April, **Preferred Alternative 2** may better capture the overall time period when spawning activity is occurring.

- In general, the longer the spawning season closure for red grouper, the greater the biological benefits to the stock from allowing the species to have additional spawning opportunities. Since new stock biomass can be increased through growth and recruitment, reducing fishing pressure and protecting red grouper during their vulnerable spawning stages can be expected to increase stock abundance and biomass.
- A longer spawning season prohibition could also create indirect, long-term, positive economic and social effects through the availability of increased numbers of harvestable fish in the future.
- There could be some direct, short-term negative social and economic effects if fewer fish are available to harvest under a longer spawning season prohibition.
- For analysis purposes, recreational data on red grouper are extremely limited, especially when stratified by area and month; hence, the predicted effect on landings as a result of proposed modifications to the seasonal closure for this species is highly uncertain.
- **Preferred Sub-alternative 2a** is projected to reduce recreational red grouper landings by approximately 300 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) or about 40 fish which represents 0.2% of total recreational red grouper landings in the South Atlantic Region. This reduction in recreational landings is expected to reduce consumer surplus by approximately \$4,200 (2017 dollars) (**Table 2**).
- An in-season harvest closure is predicted for recreationally caught red grouper due to reaching the revised sector ACLs implemented via Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 (**Figure 1**). Changes in the closure dates due to **Action 2** are likely minor given the minimal projected change in total recreational landings.

Table 1. South Atlantic red grouper spawning season, and **Action 2** proposed spawning season alternatives.

	Number of closed months	January	February	March	April	May	June
South Atlantic red grouper spawning season**	-				PEAK	*	
Alternative 1 (No Action)	4				PEAK	*	
Alternative 2, Preferred Sub-alternative 2a	5				PEAK	*	
Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2b	4				PEAK	*	
Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2c	4				PEAK	*	
Alternative 2, Sub-alternative 2d	6				PEAK	*	

* Fishermen have indicated that red grouper harvested in May off North Carolina are often in spawning condition

**North Carolina and South Carolina: spawning occurs during February-June with a peak in April;

** East Florida: spawning occurs during January through May

Table 2. Projected change in recreational red grouper landings (number of fish) compared to the no action alternative by modifying the recreational seasonal prohibition for red grouper in **Action 2**.

Sub-alternative	Change in landings (#s of fish)	Percent change in landings	Change in consumer surplus (2017 dollars)
Pref. Sub-alternative 2a (Jan-May)	-40	-0.2%	-\$4,219
Sub-alternative 2b (Feb-May)	-40	-0.2%	-\$4,219
Sub-alternative 2c (Mar-June)	-80	-0.3%	-\$8,439
Sub-alternative 2d (Jan-June)	-80	-0.3%	-\$8,439

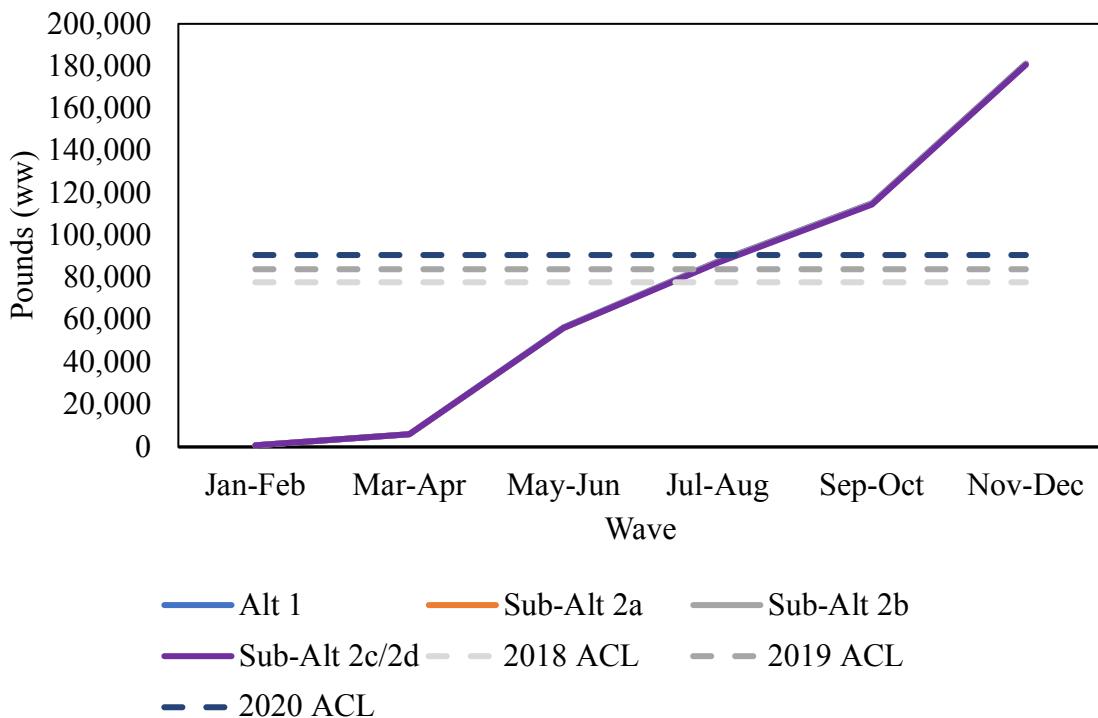


Figure 1. Projected cumulative recreational red grouper landings (lbs ww) under the proposed alternatives and sub-alternatives of **Action 2** and the proposed recreational red grouper ACL from 2018, 2019, and 2020 and beyond.

*Differences in projected landings among the alternatives are minimal and overlap in the figure.

SSC/Advisory Panel Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper AP approved the following motion during their October 17-19, 2018 meeting:

MOTION: INCLUDE ALL 4 STATES IN SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D (FOR RED GROUPER ONLY).

11 IN FAVOR, 5 ABSTENTIONS

Public Comments:

Public hearings for Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26, which encompassed changes to red grouper management before Regulatory Amendment 30 was developed, were held on May 8-10, 2018. Below is a summary of comments relevant to **Action 2**:

- One commenter from the Florida Keys maintained that every grouper caught during the full moon in April is in spawning condition. Consider extending the closure through May.
- One commenter from Wilmington stated that shallow water groupers (and hogfish) in North Carolina spawn in the May-June timeframe. Consider adjusting spawning closure accordingly, but give fishermen an alternative, healthy fishery to pursue during that closure such as 2 gags per person. Gags rarely are found where the other shallow water groupers are in the area where he fishes.

- One commenter from Cape Hatteras expressed support for extending the closure on red grouper through May.
- One commenter from Florida said that the spawning season closure could be revised to incorporate the months of May and June, and potentially drop January and/or February.

No comments were received on this action during public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 30 which were held on October 3, 2018, at the South Atlantic Council's (October 2018 meeting. Two public comments were received at the South Atlantic Council's December 2018 meeting that were in support of the Council's preferred alternatives for all actions in the amendment.

Committee Action:

- NONE REQUIRED.

Action 3. Modify the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest, possession, sale, and purchase of red grouper in the Exclusive Economic Zone off South Carolina and North Carolina

Action Alternatives:

Alternative 1 (No Action). During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Additionally, during January through April, no person may sell or purchase any shallow-water grouper harvested from or possessed in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Preferred Alternative 2. During January through April, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess in or from the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, graysby, or coney). Additionally, during January through April, no person may sell or purchase any shallow-water grouper harvested from or possessed in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone. Revise the timing of these restrictions only for red grouper in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina and South Carolina as follows:

- Preferred Sub-alternative 2a.** January – May (five months)
- Sub-alternative 2b.** February – May (four months)
- Sub-alternative 2c.** March – June (four months)
- Sub-alternative 2d.** January – June (six months)

Discussion:

- This action was moved from Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 at the June 2018 Council meeting.
- Off North Carolina and South Carolina, spawning activity of red grouper occurs during February-June with a peak in April (**Table 1**, Burgos et al., 2007; McGovern et al., 2002). Off east Florida, spawning occurs from January through May (McGovern et al. 2002).

- **Alternative 1 (No Action)** captures a significant portion of the spawning season for red grouper by retaining the current January 1 through April 30 shallow-water grouper spawning season closure. However, fishermen have indicated that red grouper harvested off North Carolina in May are often in spawning condition and there is concern that the current spawning season closure is not capturing a large portion of spawning activity off the Carolinas (SAFMC, port meetings 2014).
- While all of the alternatives considered in **Action 3** prohibit commercial harvest and possession during peak spawning activity in April, **Preferred Alternative 2** may better capture the overall time period when spawning activity is occurring.
- In general, the longer the spawning season closure for red grouper, the greater the biological benefits to the stock from allowing the species to have additional spawning opportunities. Since new stock biomass can be increased through growth and recruitment, reducing fishing pressure and protecting red grouper during their vulnerable spawning stages can be expected to increase stock abundance and biomass.
- A longer spawning season prohibition could also create indirect, long-term, positive economic and social effects through the availability of increased numbers of harvestable fish in the future.
- There could be some direct, short-term negative social and economic effects if fewer fish are available to harvest under a longer spawning season prohibition.
- The analysis of the action required backfilling of landings in North Carolina and South Carolina for the Jan-Apr closed time period using landings from 2007-2009 to provide an estimate of landings during this period if the fishery was open.
- Landings in the Jan-Apr period are projected to be relatively high; however, this analytical approach does not account for the potential redistribution of peak effort to May following the implementation of the Jan-Apr closure in 2009, nor does it account for potential declines in catch rates in the May-Dec period if the fishery opened earlier in the calendar year.
- Thus, it is likely that the projected change in landings and revenue presented in **Table 3** and **Table 4** are an upper bound for what may occur if the spawning season closure months were modified under **Preferred Alternative 2**.
- **Preferred Sub-alternative 2a** is projected to reduce commercial red grouper landings by approximately 6,800 pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) which represents 13% of total commercial red grouper landings in the South Atlantic Region (**Table 3**). This reduction in commercial landings is expected to reduce gross revenue, net cash flow, and net revenue by \$31,573, \$13,261, and \$7,546 respectively (2017 dollars) (**Table 4**).
- Commercial landings of red grouper are projected to stay below the revised commercial ACL implemented through the final rule for Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 and no in-season closures are expected under any of the alternatives of sub-alternatives of **Action 3** (**Figure 2**).

Table 3. Projected change in commercial red grouper landings (lbs gw) compared to the no action alternative in **Action 3** by modifying the commercial seasonal prohibition for red grouper.

Sub-alternative	Change in landings (lbs gw)	Percent change in landings
Pref. Sub-alternative 2a (Jan-May)	-6,790	-13%
Sub-alternative 2b (Feb-May)	-4,183	-8%
Sub-alternative 2c (Mar-Jun)	-7,992	-16%
Sub-alternative 2d (Jan-June)	-13,610	-26%

Table 4. Projected change in gross revenue, net cash flow, and net revenue compared to the no action alternative in **Action 3** by modifying the commercial seasonal prohibition for red grouper (2017 dollars).

Sub-alternative	Estimated change in gross revenue	Estimated change in net cash flow	Estimated change in net revenue
Pref. Sub-alternative 2a (Jan-May)	-\$31,573	-\$13,261	-\$7,546
Sub-alternative 2b (Feb-May)	-\$19,451	-\$8,169	-\$4,649
Sub-alternative 2c (Mar-Jun)	-\$37,165	-\$15,609	-\$8,882
Sub-alternative 2d (Jan-June)	-\$63,287	-\$26,581	-\$15,126

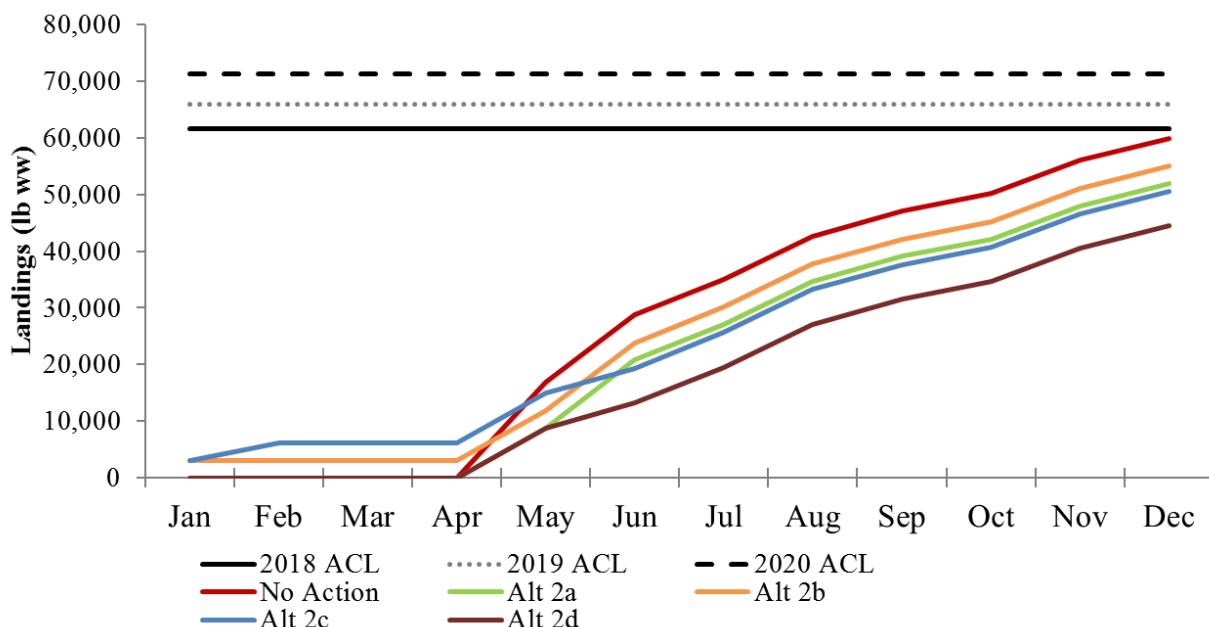


Figure 2. Predicted South Atlantic red grouper commercial landings (lbs ww) by month of the alternatives and sub-alternatives of **Action 3** with the commercial ACLs implemented through Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 to predict South Atlantic red grouper commercial closure dates.

SSC/Advisory Panel Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper AP approved the following motion during their October 17-19, 2018 meeting:

MOTION: INCLUDE ALL 4 STATES IN SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2D (FOR RED GROUPER ONLY).

10 IN FAVOR, 4 ABSTENTIONS

Public Comments:

Public hearings for Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27, which encompassed changes to red grouper management before Regulatory Amendment 30 was developed, were held on May 8-10, 2018. Below is a summary of comments relevant to **Action 3**:

- One commenter from North Carolina thought that red grouper should be managed as a by-catch fishery until the stock rebounds. He suggested no changes to the spawning season

closure and a 100-pound trip limit. Extending the spawning closure for one species could result in increased regulatory discards as fishermen target legal grouper.

- Two commenters in North Carolina stated support for the preferred and suggest a small trip limit (200 pounds) to help rebuild the fishery.
- One commenter expressed concern about conflicting regulations in the Carolinas vs. Georgia/Florida. He suggested no changes to the seasonal closure and a 100-pound bycatch limit.
- One commenter from Florida said that the spawning season closure could be revised to incorporate the months of May and June, and potentially drop January and/or February.

No comments were received on this action during public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 30 which were held on October 3, 2018, at the South Atlantic Council's (October 2018 meeting. Two public comments were received at the South Atlantic Council's December 2018 meeting that were in support of the Council's preferred alternatives for all actions in the amendment.

Committee Action:

- CONSIDER UPDATED ANALYSES AND MAKE MODIFICATIONS AS APPROPRIATE.

Action 4: Establish a commercial trip limit for red grouper harvested in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone

Action Alternatives:

Alternative 1 (No Action). There is no commercial trip limit for red grouper harvested in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone.

Preferred Alternative 2. Establish a commercial trip limit for red grouper harvested in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone:

Sub-alternative 2a. 75 pounds gutted weight

Sub-alternative 2b. 100 pounds gutted weight

Sub-alternative 2c. 150 pounds gutted weight

Preferred Sub-alternative 2d. 200 pounds gutted weight

Discussion:

- Under **Preferred Alternative 2** and its sub-alternatives, including **Preferred Sub-alternative 2d**, annual commercial harvest of red grouper would be constrained by the ACL; hence, biological effects of these alternatives would not differ from **Alternative 1 (No Action)** in terms of the risk of overfishing. There are potential benefits that may occur due to enhancements in red grouper rebuilding if red grouper landings are reduced under a trip limit.
- Between 2015 and 2017, a total of 2,447 commercial trips harvested at least one pound of red grouper, and approximately 96% of those commercial trips landed 200 lbs gw or less of red grouper (**Figure 3**). Thus, most commercial trips would not be affected by **Preferred Sub-alternative 2d**.

- Cumulatively, commercial landings of red grouper are expected to decrease with the implementation of trip limits which would create direct, short-term negative economic and social effects.
- Projected changes in commercial landings resulting from **Action 4** that are inclusive of the addition of May to the spawning season closure for the EEZ off of North Carolina and South Carolina (Action 3, Preferred Sub-alternative 2a) are listed **Table 5**.
- **Preferred Sub-alternative 2d** is projected to reduce commercial red grouper landings by approximately 3,800 pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) which represents 8% of total commercial red grouper landings in the South Atlantic Region (**Table 5**). This reduction in commercial landings is expected to reduce gross revenue, net cash flow, and net revenue by \$17,725, \$7,445, and \$4,236 respectively (2017 dollars) (**Table 6**).

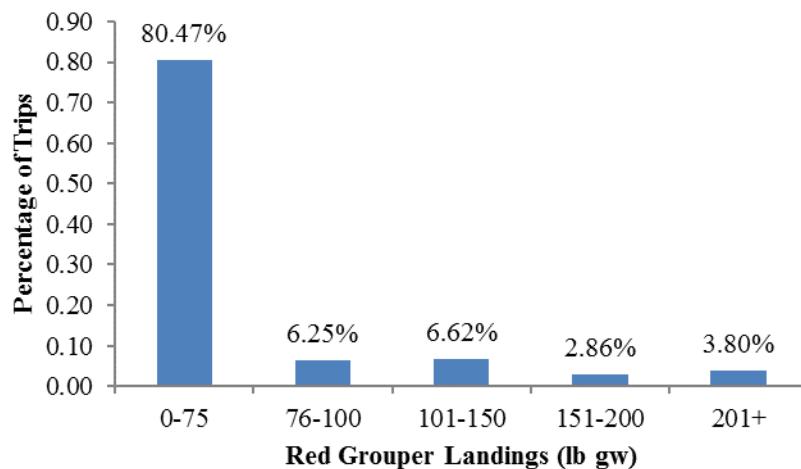


Figure 3. Distribution of South Atlantic red grouper commercial trips within each landing bin. Predicted commercial landings came from the average 2015-2017 commercial landings.

Table 5. Projected change in commercial red grouper landings (pounds whole weight; lbs gw) compared to the no action alternative in **Action 4** by implementing a commercial trip limit for red grouper *with a change to the spawning season closure* (Action 3, Pref. Sub-alternative 2a).

Sub-Alternative	Change in landings (lbs gw)	Percent change in landings
Sub-Alternative 2a	-13,646	-27%
Sub-Alternative 2b	-10,053	-20%
Sub-Alternative 2c	-5,970	-12%
Pref. Sub-Alternative 2d	-3,812	-8%

Table 6. Projected change in gross revenue, net cash flow, and net revenue compared to the no action alternative in **Action 4** by implementing a commercial trip limit for red grouper *with a change to the spawning season closure* (Action 3, Pref. Sub-alternative 2a) (2017 dollars).

Sub-alternative	Estimated change in gross revenue	Estimated change in net cash flow	Estimated change in net revenue
Sub-Alternative 2a	-\$63,453	-\$26,650	-\$15,165
Sub-Alternative 2b	-\$46,748	-\$19,634	-\$11,173
Sub-Alternative 2c	-\$27,762	-\$11,660	-\$6,635
Pref. Sub-Alternative 2d	-\$17,725	-\$7,445	-\$4,236

Public Comments:

Public hearings for Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27, which encompassed changes to red grouper management before Regulatory Amendment 30 was developed, were held on May 8-10, 2018. Below is a summary of comments relevant to **Action 4**:

- One commenter from North Carolina thought that red grouper should be managed as a by-catch fishery until the stock rebounds. He suggested no changes to the spawning season closure and a 100-pound trip limit. Extending the spawning closure for one species could result in increased regulatory discards as fishermen target legal grouper.
- Two commenters in North Carolina stated support for the preferred (in Action 3) and suggest a small trip limit (200 pounds) to help rebuild the fishery.
- One commenter expressed concern about conflicting regulations in the Carolinas vs. Georgia/Florida. He suggested no changes to the seasonal closure and a 100-pound bycatch limit.

No comments were received on this action during public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 30 which were held on October 3, 2018, at the South Atlantic Council's (October 2018 meeting. Two public comments were received at the South Atlantic Council's December 2018 meeting that were in support of the Council's preferred alternatives for all actions in the amendment.

SSC/Advisory Panel Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper AP approved the following motion during their April 11-13, 2018 meeting:

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A BYCATCH COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT FOR RED GROUPER APPROVED BY AP (UNANIMOUS)

While no motion was passed on **Action 4** at the October 2018 Snapper Grouper AP meeting, some AP members noted that a trip limit for the commercial sector may not be effective overall in reducing harvest since that sector is already only harvesting a small portion of the ACL. However, a low trip limit may disproportionately affect fishermen who "specialize" on red grouper in some areas, such as in the Florida Keys.

Committee Action:

- CONSIDER UPDATED ANALYSES AND MAKE MODIFICATIONS AS APPROPRIATE.

Committee Action:

- RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 30 FOR FORMAL REVIEW.

DRAFT MOTION: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF SNAPPER GROUPER REGULATORY AMENDMENT 30 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.

- DO NOT RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 30 FOR FORMAL REVIEW (COMMITTEE TO SUGGEST MODIFICATIONS AND APPROVE ADJUSTED TIMELINE).
- OTHERS?