



Public Hearing Overview

Snapper Grouper Regulatory

Amendment 29

(Best Fishing Practices and Powerheads)

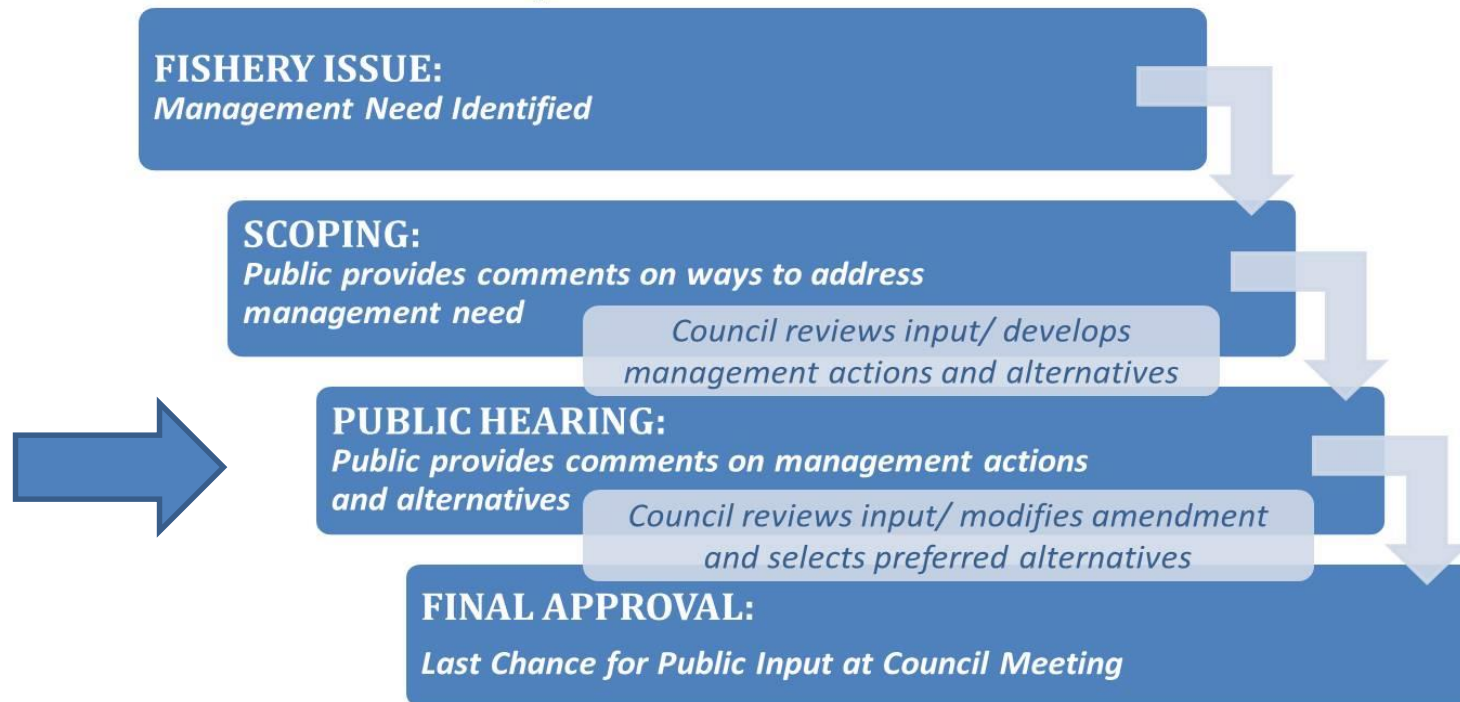


May 2019

Prepared by Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

Where are we in the amendment development process?

Council Process – *FMP/Plan Amendment*



Why is the Council considering action?

- Released fish commonly die due to foul hooking, injuries caused by barotrauma (floaters), and predation.
 - The Council would like to find effective ways to reduce the number of released snapper grouper species and improve survivorship of released fish.
- Powerheads (bang sticks) are prohibited in the EEZ off South Carolina.
 - The Council would like create consistent regulations for the dive component of the snapper grouper fishery.

Actions being considered in Regulatory Amendment 29 are consistent with objectives and strategies in the Vision Blueprint



What is barotrauma and why does it happen?

- Barotrauma occurs when a fish is rapidly reeled up from depth. The change in pressure causes the fish's swimbladder to expand or burst. This causes air to fill the body cavity.
- The expansion can cause internal damage and prevent the fish from swimming back down, decreasing its chance of survival and making it more vulnerable to predators.



Photo: Brendan Runde
Department of Applied Ecology, NCSU

Signs of Barotrauma

- Bulging eyes
- Swollen abdomen
- Stomach protruding from mouth
- Intestinal prolapse



Best Fishing Practices for Improving Survivorship of Released Fish

- Venting Devices
 - hollow tools that can be used to release gases that have over expanded due to barotrauma.
- Descending Devices
 - tools that will quickly send a fish back down the depth where it was caught.
- Circle Hooks
 - fishing hooks designed such that the point turns back towards the shank creating a circle or oval shape.



Action 1. Specify requirements for the use of descending devices and/or venting devices.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Descending devices and/or venting devices are not required.

Preferred Alternative 2. Within six months of implementation, require a descending device be onboard a vessel fishing for or possessing species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. private recreational vessels

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. for-hire vessels

Preferred Sub-alternative 2c. commercially permitted snapper grouper vessels

Alternative 3. Within six months of implementation, require a venting device be onboard a vessel fishing for or possessing species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit.

Sub-alternative 3a. private recreational vessels

Sub-alternative 3b. for-hire vessels

Sub-alternative 3c. commercially permitted snapper grouper vessels.

** Refer to the Public Hearing Summary Document for full action and alternative language.



Gear Definitions for Action 1

For the purpose of this requirement, “**descending device**” means an instrument that will release fish at a depth sufficient for the fish to be able to recover from the effects of barotrauma, generally 33 feet (twice the atmospheric pressure at the surface) or greater. The device can be, but is not limited to, a weighted hook, lip clamp, or box that will hold the fish while it is lowered to depth. The device should be capable of releasing the fish automatically, releasing the fish by actions of the operator of the device, or by allowing the fish to escape on its own. Since minimizing surface time is critical to increasing survival, descending devices shall be rigged and ready for use while fishing is occurring.

For the purpose of this requirement, “**venting device**” means a device capable of penetrating the abdomen of a fish in order to release the excess gas accumulated in the body cavity when a fish is retrieved from depth. A venting device must be a sharpened, hollow instrument, such as a hypodermic syringe with the plunger removed, or a 16-gauge needle fixed to a handle. A larger gauge needle is preferred in order to allow more air to escape rapidly. A device that is not hollow, such as a knife or ice pick, is not a venting device and will cause additional damage.



Questions on the definition of Descending Device

- Does the definition allow fishermen the flexibility to create innovative descending devices while still ensuring that homemade devices are effective?
- Is the definition of descending device enforceable? Think from the perspective of experiencing a law enforcement boarding and having to defend your descending device choice.
- What is necessary for different types of descending devices to be rigged and ready?



Research and Monitoring Plan

- At their March 2019 meeting, the Council directed staff to work with NMFS to develop a research and monitoring plan for addressing descending device usage and release treatment.
- Once developed, the research and monitoring plan will be included as an appendix to this amendment for the Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) and NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) to consider when conducting and/or encouraging research.

Do you think a research and monitoring plan should be included in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29?



Action 2. Modify the requirement for the use of non-stainless-steel circle hooks.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Use of non-stainless-steel circle hooks is required when fishing for and/or possessing species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit with hook-and-line gear and natural baits north of 28 degrees north latitude.

Preferred Alternative 2. Require the use of *non-offset*, non-stainless-steel circle hooks:

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. north of 28 degrees north latitude.

Sub-alternative 2b. throughout the extent of the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

Alternative 3. Require *non-offset*, non-stainless-steel circle hooks be *onboard*:

Sub-alternative 3a. north of 28 degrees north latitude.

Sub-alternative 3b. throughout the extent of the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

Preferred Alternative 4. Require the use of non-stainless-steel hooks.

** Refer to the Public Hearing Summary Document for full action and alternative language.



Action 3. Adjust powerhead prohibitions in the South Atlantic Region.

Alternative 1 (No Action). A powerhead may not be used in the exclusive economic zone off South Carolina to harvest South Atlantic snapper grouper.

Preferred Alternative 2. Allow the use of a powerhead for harvest of species in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery management unit in the exclusive economic zone off South Carolina.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2a. private recreational and for-hire vessels.

Preferred Sub-alternative 2b. commercially permitted snapper grouper vessels.

Alternative 3. Prohibit the use of a powerhead for harvest of species in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery management unit in the exclusive economic zone of the South Atlantic Region.

Sub-alternative 3a. private recreational and for-hire vessels.

Sub-alternative 3b. commercially permitted snapper grouper vessels.

** Refer to the Public Hearing Summary Document for full alternative language.



Opportunities to Provide Your Comments

Public Hearing Webinars

Staff presentation and Q&A followed by an opportunity to provide your comments on the record.

**** We will have two sessions, each starting with the staff presentation****

April 30, 2019 – starting at 6p

May 1, 2019 – starting at 6p

Registration is **required!**

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7170940467466919427> (April 30th Webinar)

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7123079825821481731> (May 1st Webinar)

Scoping summary, presentation and video available here:

<http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/public-hearings-scoping-meetings/>

Submitting Written Comments:

Use our online public comment form, available here: <https://safmc.wufoo.com/forms/snapper-grouper-regulatory-amendment-29/> *Note: The Council requests that written comments be submitted using the online public comment form.*

**DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE COMMENT OVERVIEW FOR THE
JUNE 2019 SAFMC MEETING: May 10, 2019 at 5:00 P.M.**



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Is there something we didn't cover? Do you have more questions? Contact us!

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