

Summary Report

SNAPPER GROUPEL ADVISORY PANEL

Crowne Plaza
4381 Tanger Outlet Boulevard
North Charleston, SC 29418
October 21-22, 2014

1. Status of Amendments under Development and Recently Implemented

The AP received a brief overview of the status and content of amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP that are under review or have been recently implemented.

2. Regulatory Amendment 16 (Removal of Black Sea Bass Pot Closure)

The AP received an overview of the alternatives currently included in the amendment. No analyses were available for the AP to comment on.

The following are highlights from the discussion:

- Concerns that the Council has not been given credit thus far for measures that have been implemented, e.g., endorsement program for pots, restriction on number of pots and soak time, etc.
- There have been no documented interactions between bsb pots and right whales.
- Amendment 18A drastically reduced effort effectively creating a day-boat fishery. Common sense indicates that there is very little risk to whales, especially since there has not been a single interaction between a whale and black sea bass pot even when the number of pots in the water was much larger and with longer soak times.
- While effort could potentially shift based on the area that is closed, it is very unlikely.
- Price of bsb is higher in winter. NC wants their winter fishery back.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED

Alternative 2. Remove the annual November 1 through April 30 prohibition on the retention, possession, and fishing for black sea bass using black sea bass pot gear.

APPROVED BY AP (4 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A SEPARATE ACL FOR THE COMMERCIAL HOOK AND LINE SECTOR FOR BLACK SEA BASS IF THE CURRENT CLOSURE ON BSB POTS IS REMOVED.

APPROVED BY AP

3. Regulatory Amendment 22 (Gag & Wreckfish)

The AP received an overview of items included in Regulatory Amendment 22. The amendment would adjust the ABCs and ACLs for gag and wreckfish in response to the

latest stock assessments for those two species. Also included is an action to adjust the bag limit for gag. The SSC is scheduled to discuss the bag limit analysis at their October 28-30 meeting. The Council approved this amendment for public hearings, which will be held on November 6, 2014 via webinar.

The AP had the following comments on items in Regulatory Amendment 22:

- It doesn't make sense to increase the bag limit on gag. There is some support from recreational divers, but hook and line fishermen aren't catching these fish. In Florida, the gag fishery is a spring and late summer fishery. Concern that the FL fishery could close if the ACL were met in the future.
- Need to have better information on recreational landings before increasing the gag bag limit.
- The current preferred alternative to modify the gag ACL (Alternative 2) would reduce the gag ACL for the first couple of years. However, once Regulatory Amendment 14 goes into place, there will be a step down for gag and the season would be extended.
- There are currently only 3 fishermen fishing for wreckfish. In the last 3 years the ACL has been landed. Also in the last 3 years, the recreational sector has had 0 landings. Why have a recreational ACL set that high? It is taking fish away from the public.
- Comp ACL Amendment set initial ACL for wreckfish. At the time, the Council was concerned that the recreational sector was targeting wreckfish (deep dropping) and there should be an ACL. However, there are few or no intercepts through MRIP.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1

Action 1. Revise the annual catch limits (ACL) and optimum yield (OY) for gag
Alternative 2. ACL = OY = ABC projected landings from 2015-2019 with $P^*=0.3$. The ACL for 2019 would remain in place until modified.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2

Action 2. Modify the recreational bag limit for gag within the aggregate bag limit

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 3

Action 3. Revise the annual catch limits (ACL) and optimum yield (OY) for wreckfish
Alternative 2. ACL = OY = Proposed ABC. The ACL for 2020 would remain in place until modified.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER A 1% RECREATIONAL ALLOCATION FOR WRECKFISH
APPROVED BY AP

4. Joint SA/GM Amendment on South Florida Issues

Council staff presented an overview of the items that are currently included in the amendment and updated the AP on next steps. The amendment addresses management for species that are particularly important in South Florida. The SA and Gulf Councils will review the amendment in June 2015 and consider approving for public hearings.

Yellowtail Snapper: Amendment includes options to delegate management of both commercial and recreational fisheries to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Council would set ACLs and the state would set size limits, seasons, bag limits, trip limits, modifications to gear (e.g., hook type), and fishing year. Also, looking at removing requirement in Gulf to use circle hooks south of designated area.

- There was support from commercial AP members to keep FWC out of management.
- If there was a closure due to the commercial ACL for yellowtail snapper being met, it is best if it happens in the summer instead of during winter when prices and demand are higher. August 1st also starts the lobster fishery. Changing the fishing year to begin on August 1 would keep year-round fishermen fishing while limiting the number of part-time fishermen who participate in the fishery in the summer months.
- YT spawn in May, June and July.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: KEEP YELLOWTAIL COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT AT THE COUNCIL LEVEL
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: CHANGE THE COMMERCIAL YELLOWTAIL FISHING YEAR TO BEGIN ON AUGUST 1
APPROVED BY AP

Mutton Snapper: Similar proposed options for management as yellowtail. The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: KEEP MUTTON SNAPPER COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT AT THE COUNCIL LEVEL.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: CHANGE THE COMMERCIAL MUTTON SNAPPER FISHING YEAR TO BEGIN ON AUGUST 1
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: DO NOT SET A COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT FOR MUTTON SNAPPER DURING THE GENERAL SEASON
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: SET A COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT OF 10 FISH/PERSON/DAY FOR MUTTON SNAPPER DURING THE SPAWNING SEASON (MAY & JUNE)

Alternative 5: Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the spawning season (May-June).

Option 5c: 10 fish/person/day

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

There was concern that the recreational bag limit of mutton snapper can currently be sold during the spawning season closure but should not be allowed to be sold. There was also concern that the 10 fish/person per day during the spawning season is too many.

Black grouper: similar proposed measures as for yellowtail and muttons snapper but only for the recreational sector.

- The AP did not make a motion but indicated their support for this action.
- The amendment includes alternatives for allocations between Gulf and SA with an overall ABC and ACL. Note that these alternatives are being developed because the Gulf has ACLs that are not sector specific – the ACL is combined for both commercial and recreational sectors. There is a need to address this discrepancy between SA and Gulf.
- AP members expressed concern about the ability for the Gulf to catch the majority of the ACL. Specifically, the ability of the commercial longline fishery in the Gulf to catch black grouper would create an unfair advantage.

Hogfish: Options to change management of hogfish were removed from the amendment. The hogfish stock assessment is pending SSC review. Note there are 3 genetically different stocks (based on limited data), one in Gulf, one in S. FL and one in the Carolinas.

5. Amendment 36 (spawning SMZs)

Council staff presented an overview of the document including background and purpose and need. The AP was reminded of the overall move world-wide toward developing “community-supported” areas that are smaller and where fishermen have more buy-in and self-regulating with fishermen reporting illegal activity.

- AP members showed some skepticism and stated this is another way of creating MPAs. They expressed concern that current spawning season closures are not being considered. Also, some of the MPAs that are in place may not be effective.
- Concern about using the SMZ process. With MPAs the process is more deliberate and involved. The SMZ approach would limit the opportunity for public input.

- Supports for establishment of SMZs specific to spawning seasons.
- The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 3

Action 3. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off North Carolina

Alternative 2. Establish the following new Spawning SMZ(s) off North Carolina.

Sub-Alternative 2a. Candidate area NC-1. MALCHASE WRECK

Sub-Alternative 2b. Candidate area NC-2. 780 BOTTOM

APPROVED BY AP (2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 1 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 4

Action 4. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off South Carolina

APPROVED BY AP (4 OPPOSED)

MOTION: DO NOT CHOOSE A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AT THIS TIME

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: ADD ALTERNATIVE 3 TO ACTION 5.

Action 5. Establish new Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Georgia

Alternative 3. Investigate the following new spawning SMZs off Georgia:

Sub-alternative 3a. Candidate area GA-1. GA MPA RECONFIGURATION (the area outside the existing MPA)

Sub-alternative 3b. Candidate area GA-2. ST. SIMONS 2 AREA

APPROVED BY AP

The AP declined to make further recommendations for candidate areas at this time citing lack of analyses:

MOTION: THE AP HOLDS OFF ON ANY DECISIONS UNTIL COUNCIL STAFF GIVES US THE ANALYSIS SO WE CAN MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: REMOVE ACTION 8 FROM AMENDMENT 36

Action 8. Consider Time-Area Spawning Closures

APPROVED BY AP (3 OPPOSED)

MOTION: FOR EVERY SQUARE MILE THE COUNCIL CLOSES WITH THE NEW SMZs THEY OPEN AT LEAST AN EQUIVALENT AMOUNT OF PREVIOUSLY CLOSED AREAS.

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

6. Amendment 35 (removal of species and golden tilefish endorsements)

Amendment 35 proposes the removal of four snapper grouper species (black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster) from the management unit. Scoping on this amendment took place in August 2014. At their September 2014 meeting, the Council reviewed scoping comments and opted to add an action to the amendment to address golden tilefish longline endorsements.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVES 2-5 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 1

Action 1. Remove species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU)

Alternative 1. No Action. Retain the four species in the Snapper Grouper FMU.

Alternative 2. Remove black snapper (*Apsilus dentatus*) from the Snapper Grouper FMU.

Alternative 3. Remove dog snapper (*Lutjanus jocu*) from the Snapper Grouper FMU.

Alternative 4. Remove mahogany snapper (*Lutjanus mahogoni*) from the Snapper Grouper FMU.

Alternative 5. Remove schoolmaster (*Lutjanus apodus*) from the Snapper Grouper FMU.

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE STATE OF FLORIDA REQUIRE A VALID SG PERMIT FOR THE SALE OF THESE SPECIES

APPROVED BY AP (1 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action. Modify Eligibility to Fish on the 500-Pound Gutted Weight Commercial Golden Tilefish Hook-and-Line Quota

Alternative 3. Vessels that have valid or renewable golden tilefish longline endorsements are not eligible to fish for golden tilefish anytime during the golden tilefish fishing year using hook-and-line gear under the 500-pound gutted weight golden tilefish hook-and-line trip limit.

APPROVED BY AP (0 OPPOSED)

7. Update on Amendment 22 (recreational harvest tag program)

Council staff gave the AP the presentation that staff of the SE Regional Office (SERO) gave to the Snapper Grouper Committee during the September 2014 Council meeting on the status of Amendment 22. The AP had no recommendations at this time.

8. Stock Assessment Updates

Council staff will update the AP on the SEDAR 41 (red snapper and gray triggerfish) assessment and those for hogfish and mutton snapper:

SEDAR 41: Following the SEDAR 41 Data Workshop, the panel received comments from fishermen with concerns about the validity of the headboat data. The concerns are serious enough that the assessment was stopped until the issue is addressed. This affects both red snapper and gray triggerfish. There are implications for other assessments as well. Concern over the validity of headboat data was first brought up during SEDAR 25 (black sea bass).

Hogfish and Mutton Snapper Updates: Both assessments were conducted through FWC and have been completed with CIE review. The SAFMC SSC will review at the end of October and the Gulf SSC will also review in January 2015. There are 3 genetic stocks of hogfish – 1 in Gulf, 1 in FL and another off the Carolinas.

9. Update on Electronic Reporting (EM)

- Electronic Implementation Plan – National project with deadline in December 2014. Council provided NMFS with comments. It is expected that, in the future, the industry will have to provide some cost share for EM.
- Pilot Study – SERO is conducting EM for commercial logbooks – software changes may be completed by August 1, 2015. Some AP members may be contacted to participate.
- Council is working with ACCSP to bridge gap for fishermen to report electronically as well as the paper logbook. Francine Karp – contractor working on a system developed in Rhode Island gave the AP a presentation of the application that was developed in the Northeast. A similar type of program may be used here. The Council is working with ACCSP to try to implement voluntary e-reporting in 2015 on a voluntary basis. This system allows for the full potential of the logbook to be realized and can provide information on discards by specific area.
- Joint Gulf and SA Charterboat Logbook Amendment – Technical sub-committee has been formed and a draft report has been released. Final report will be presented in December 2014. Idea is to have a system similar to the electronic reporting currently used for headboats.
- There was a lot of support among AP members for e-reporting, including e-reporting for the private recreational sector.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL MOVE FORWARD WITH IMPLEMENTING VOLUNTARY ELECTRONIC LOGBOOK REPORTING FOR ALL FEDERALLY-PERMITTED VESSELS

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A VOLUNTARY ELECTRONIC REPORTING SYSTEM FOR PRIVATE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS TO IMPROVE RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION

APPROVED BY AP

10. Update on Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery

- Staff will do a gap analysis for the Council Workshop. Will look at input from port meetings and identify issues that may have been discussed at port meetings but not at the Council Workshop.
- At December Visioning Workshop there will be a draft Vision Blueprint document for review.
- Will discuss how to get more public input on the draft blueprint.
- Tentative plan is to have another Council member workshop in the Spring of 2015 to begin prioritizing strategies.

11. Other Business

An issue was brought up concerning the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper. An AP member stated that a local dealer asked about options to have a reduced trip limit for the second opening of the vermilion snapper fishery. There are concerns that vessels stop fishing for other species and all target b-liners at one time. In Mayport there are vessels targeting vermilion snapper and other species are not being made available to dealers. The AP made a motion to consider lowering the trip limit for the second commercial season. However, that motion failed for lack of a second. Ultimately, the AP reasoned that making changes to trip limits would be beneficial for some but not others and opted for no change to current management.

The AP made the following motions:

MOTION: RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL THAT SOUTH FLORIDA BECOME A SEPARATE MANAGEMENT ZONE
APPROVED BY AP (9 IN FAVOR, 2 OPPOSED)

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING A LIMITED ENTRY PROGRAM FOR THE FOR-HIRE SECTOR.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION: RECOMMEND THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER CHANGING THE START DATE OF THE FISHING YEAR FOR THE COMMERCIAL HOOK-AND LINE GOLDEN TILEFISH FISHERY TO MARCH 15.
APPROVED BY AP

AP member Terrell Gould resigned his seat on the AP.