

Draft Summary Report
Snapper Grouper Committee
Doubletree by Hilton New Bern/Riverfront
100 Middle Street
New Bern, NC
December 2014

The Snapper Grouper Committee met on December 2 & 3, 2014, in New Bern, North Carolina.

Status of landings for quota-managed snapper grouper species

The Committee received an update from Dr. Jack McGovern on the status of commercial landings for snapper grouper species under ACLs. In 2014 commercial landings of blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and snowy grouper exceeded their respective ACLs. Dr. Nick Farmer presented the Committee with an overview of recreational landings. Recreational landings of Atlantic spadefish exceeded the ACL by 104% and recreational fishing of gray triggerfish was closed in November due to landings reaching the recreational ACL.

Status of Amendments Approved for Secretarial Review

The Committee received a status report from Dr. Jack McGovern on the following amendments:

- Regulatory Amendment 14 – approved and regulations effective on December 8, 2014
- Regulatory Amendment 21 (MSST) – approved and regulations effective on November 6, 2014.
- Amendment 29 (ORCS and gray triggerfish) – Notice of Availability (NOA) published on November 24, 2014. The Proposed Rule is expected to publish soon.
- Amendment 32 – submitted to SERO on November 14, 2014.
- Regulatory Amendment 20 – submitted to SERO on December 2, 2014.

Visioning

Amber Vonharten presented draft objectives and strategies under the Management and Communication strategic goals. Refer to the Vision Blueprint Summary Report.

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Report

Mr. Jim Atack, Chair of the Snapper Grouper AP, presented recommendations from the AP's October 2014 meeting.

Scientific and Statistical Committee Report

Dr. Marcel Reichert, Vice Chair of the SSC, presented recommendations from the SSC's October 2014 meeting.

Regulatory Amendment 16 (black sea bass pot closure)

The Committee received presentations from Dr. Mike Errigo (Council staff), Barb Zoodsma and Bob Hoffman (NMFS Protected Resources), and Dr. Nick Farmer (SERO Sustainable Fisheries).

Dr. Brian Chevront (Council staff) gave an overview of the Decision Document. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: MODIFY THE NEED AS FOLLOWS, “The need for the amendment is to MINIMIZE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS ~~increase socio-economic benefits~~ to black sea bass pot endorsement holders while maintaining protection for ESA-listed whales in the South Atlantic region.”

MOTION WITHDRAWN

MOTION: MODIFY THE NEED AS FOLLOWS, “The need for the amendment is to MINIMIZE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS ~~increase socio-economic benefits~~ to black sea bass pot endorsement holders while CONSIDERING THE NEED TO PROTECT ~~maintaining protection for~~ ESA-listed whales in the South Atlantic region.”

SUBSTITUTE MOTION TO MAKE THIS THE MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT’S WORDING FOR ALTERNATIVE 8 AND SUB-ALTERNATIVES 8A AND 8B.

Alternative 8. The black sea bass pot closure applies to the area currently designated as North Atlantic right whale critical habitat, in addition to waters inshore of points 1-29 listed below (Table 2.1.5), approximately North of the Altamaha River, Georgia, to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina (Figure 2.1.6).

Sub-alternative 8a. The black sea bass pot closure applies to the area annually from November 1 through December 15 and March 15 through April 30.

Sub-alternative 8b. For the area off North Carolina and South Carolina, the black sea bass pot closure applies annually from November 1 through December 15 and March 15 through April 30. For the area off Georgia and Florida, the black sea bass pot closure applies annually from November 15 through April 15.

Note: Federal regulations would only apply to that portion of the area within the South Atlantic EEZ. The states will be asked to implement compatible regulations for the portion of the area within state waters.

Note: This area represents North Atlantic right whale critical habitat in the South Atlantic region designated on June 3, 1994. Off North Carolina and South Carolina, the black sea bass pot closure applies in the exclusive economic zone in waters shallower than 20 meters. The eastern boundary of the closure between these two areas was formed by drawing a straight line from the southeastern corner waypoint of the northern portion (NC/SC) to the northeastern corner waypoint of the southern section (FL/GA).”

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ADD A NEW ALTERNATIVE 9.

Alternative 9. The black sea bass pot closure applies to the area currently designated as North Atlantic right whale critical habitat, in addition to waters inshore of ~~points 1-29~~ listed below (~~Table 2.1.5~~), approximately North of the Altamaha River, Georgia, to Cape Hatteras, North

Carolina (Figure 2-1-6). For the area off North Carolina and South Carolina, the black sea bass pot closure applies annually from FEBRUARY 15 through April 30. For the area off Georgia and Florida, the black sea bass pot closure applies annually from November 15 through April 15. Note: Federal regulations would only apply to that portion of the area within the South Atlantic EEZ. The states will be asked to implement compatible regulations for the portion of the area within state waters.

Note: This area represents North Atlantic right whale critical habitat in the South Atlantic region designated on June 3, 1994. Off North Carolina and South Carolina, the black sea bass pot closure applies in the exclusive economic zone in waters shallower than 20 meters. The eastern boundary of the closure between these two areas was formed by drawing a straight line from the southeastern corner waypoint of the northern portion (NC/SC) to the northeastern corner waypoint of the southern section (FL/GA).

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ADD NEW ACTION 2. GEAR MODIFICATION

Alternative 1 (No Action). Status quo

Alternative 2. Specify a buoy line strength less than or equal to 2200 lbs and a weak link less than or equal to 400 lbs for black sea bass pots in the south atlantic EEZ.

Alternative 3. Line marking requirements

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

For Full Council:

1. Gear marking alternative(s) for New Action 2.
2. Remove any alternatives that you don't want to consider at this point and move them to the "Considered, But Rejected" Appendix.
3. Choose preferred alternative(s).
4. Vote whether they want to send the amendment out for public hearings in January of 2015.

Amendment 22 (recreational harvest tag program)

Doug Mumford, NC Division of Marine Fisheries staff, gave a presentation on the North Carolina catch card program for highly migratory species. Below are salient points of the presentation and subsequent discussion:

- 25 reporting stations supply tags and other materials
- Only tagged animals can be removed from the vessel
- The only way to obtain a tag is to fill out a catch card
- Once the program was put in place, the tuna quota was never again exceeded
- To implement a harvest tag program at a regional level, state participation would be required
- In 2016, the ACCSP's Access Point Intercept Program will be implemented and could facilitate implementation of a harvest tag program for snapper grouper species
- A mobile application could potentially be used in the future to report "rare event" species
- Outreach is critical for the success of a harvest tag program
- A validation program would need to be included

- MRIP is undertaking pilot programs in 2015 to address “rare event” species. The Committee made no motions pertaining to Amendment 22.

Regulatory Amendment 22 (Gag & Wreckfish)

Myra Brouwer, Council staff, presented a summary of public comments received on Regulatory Amendment 22 and gave an overview of the amendment. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: MODIFY THE NEED STATEMENT AS FOLLOWS:

The need for the amendment is to (1) address the recent stock assessment results for gag and wreckfish and prevent overfishing while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects; and (2) TO INCREASE ACCESS TO THE GAG RESOURCE AND INCREASE FISHING OPPORTUNITIES thus imparting socio-economic benefits to resource users.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

For Full Council: Suggested edits to P&N to address choice of No Action for Action 2:

Purpose: The purpose for the amendment is to: adjust annual catch limits (ACL) and optimum yield (OY) for gag and wreckfish, and assess the need to modify the recreational bag limit for gag.

Need: The need for the amendment is to (1) address the recent stock assessment results for gag and wreckfish, and prevent overfishing while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects; and (2) to ensure the gag recreational bag limit is set at an appropriate level to foster sustainable harvest rates of the species in response to new scientific information.

MOTION: DESELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1

Alternative 4. $ACL = OY = 0.90 * \text{Proposed ABC}$. The ACL for 2019 would remain in place until modified.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: DESELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 1

Alternative 3. $ACL = OY = 0.95 * \text{Proposed ABC}$. The ACL for 2019 would remain in place until modified.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION
MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION. SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2:

Alternative 2. Increase the gag bag limit to 2 fish within the 3 fish aggregate bag limit. Only one fish within the aggregate can be a black grouper.

MOTION FAILS

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED FOR ACTION 2.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: APPROVE SNAPPER GROUPER REGULATORY AMENDMENT 22 FOR SECRETARIAL REVIEW
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

TO BE DONE AT FULL COUNCIL:

DRAFT MOTION. DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT FOR REGULATORY AMENDMENT 22 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.

Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs)

Dr. Will Heyman gave a presentation on recent research in the South Atlantic to identify the location of possible spawning aggregations of snapper grouper species. Gregg Waugh, Council staff, presented the Decision Document for Amendment 36. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Purpose: Identify important spawning habitat for snapper grouper species that can be designated for protection to enhance spawning and increase recruitment. Reduce bycatch *and bycatch mortality* of snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper. *Align the existing South Carolina MPA with the permitted site.*

Need: Protect spawning fish; promote recruitment; and reduce bycatch *and bycatch mortality* of economically and ecologically important snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, while minimizing *negative short-term social and economic effects and maximizing beneficial long-term, to the extent practicable,* social and economic impacts to snapper grouper fishermen. *Move the existing South Carolina MPA.*

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 1 AS PREFERRED
Action 1. Modify the Special Management Zone (SMZ) procedure

Alternative 2. Modify the SMZ procedure to include protection of natural bottom important for spawning by designating Spawning SMZs.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 2 AS PREFERRED

Action 2. Modify the framework procedure to allow modifications of and/or additional Spawning Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs).

Alternative 2. Modify the framework for the Snapper Grouper FMP to include modifying or establishing new Spawning SMZs.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT WORDING FOR REVISING ACTION 3 AND THE ALTERNATIVES

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

Alternative 1. No Action. There are no Spawning SMZs off North Carolina. Fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit is prohibited year-round in the Snowy Grouper Wreck MPA (190 square miles).

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the MALCHASE WRECK area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Malchase Wreck (2.47 square miles)

~~**Sub-alternative 2b.** Malchase Wreck (2.25 square nautical miles)~~

Sub-alternative 2b. Malchase Wreck (1 square mile)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the 780 BOTTOM area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3a. 780 Bottom (LARGER AREA-square miles)

Sub-alternative 3b. 780 Bottom (smaller portion)

Sub-alternative 3c. 780 Bottom (still smaller portion)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT RECOMMENDATION FOR THE CHANGES TO ACTION 4

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

Alternative 1. No Action. There are no Spawning SMZs off South Carolina. Fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit is prohibited year-round in the Northern South Carolina (67 square miles), Edisto (66 square miles), and the Charleston Deep Artificial Reef (28 square miles) MPAs.

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the DEVIL'S HOLE area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Devil's Hole 3 (LARGER AREA~~27 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 2b. Devil's Hole 3 (smaller portion)

Sub-alternative 2c. Devil's Hole (1 square mile)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the AREA 51 area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.24 square nautical miles).

Alternative 4. Establish Spawning SMZs in the AREA 53 area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round (2.24 square nautical miles).

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES FOR ACTION 5

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

Alternative 1. No Action. There are no Spawning SMZs off Georgia. Fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit is prohibited year-round in the Georgia MPA (102 square miles).

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the GEORGIA MPA RECONFIGURATION area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Georgia MPA Reconfiguration (area outside the existing MPA; LARGER AREA ~~slightly less than 79 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 2b. Georgia MPA Reconfiguration (area outside the existing MPA; smaller area ~~significantly less than 79 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 2c. Georgia MPA Reconfiguration (area outside the existing MPA; even smaller areas ~~significantly less than 79 square miles~~)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the ST. SIMONS area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3a. St. Simons 2 Area (LARGER AREA ~~45 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 3b. St. Simons 2 Area (SMALLER AREA ~~less than 45 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 3c. St. Simons 2 Area (even smaller AREA ~~than 45 square miles~~)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES FOR ACTION 6

Action 6. Establish Special Management Zones (Spawning SMZs) off Florida

Alternative 1. No Action. There are no Spawning SMZs off Florida. Fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit is prohibited year-round in the North Florida (X miles), *Oculina* Experimental Closed Area (108 square miles), St. Lucia Hump (9 square miles), and the East Hump (66 square miles) MPAs.

Alternative 2. Establish Spawning SMZs in the WARSAW HOLE area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 2a. Warsaw Hole (2 square miles)

Sub-alternative 2b. Warsaw Hole (less than 2 square miles)

Alternative 3. Establish Spawning SMZs in the DAYTONA STEEPLES area that prohibits fishing for, harvest, and/or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit year-round.

Sub-alternative 3a. Daytona Steeples (LARGER AREA ~~27 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 3b. Daytona Steeples (SMALLER AREA ~~less than 27 square miles~~)

Sub-alternative 3c. Daytona Steeples (even smaller AREA ~~than 27 square miles~~)

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 7 AS PREFERRED

Action 7. Move the Existing Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the Northwest to Match the Boundary of the Permitted Site

Alternative 2. Move the Existing Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the northwest to match the boundary of the permitted site.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: REMOVE ACTION 8 FROM AMENDMENT 36

Action 8. Consider Time-Area Spawning Closures

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: ADD AN ACTION TO OUTLINE THE TRANSIT PROVISIONS AND THE ANCHORING PROVISIONS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Amendment 35 (Remove Species)

Myra Brouwer, Council staff, gave an overview of the actions and alternatives currently in the document. The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION: ACCEPT THE IPT'S EDITS TO THE PURPOSE & NEED

Purpose: The purpose of Amendment 35 is to ensure that only snapper grouper species that require federal management are included in the Snapper Grouper FMP, that regulations for snapper grouper species in south Florida are as consistent as possible across state and federal jurisdictional boundaries, and that regulations implemented to govern the use of golden tilefish longline endorsements are aligned with the South Atlantic Council's intent for establishing the endorsement program.

Need: In accordance with national standards set forth in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the need for Amendment 35 is to simplify federal management of the snapper grouper fishery without reducing protection for species rarely caught in states other than Florida, make regulations consistent across jurisdictional boundaries, and ensure that regulations for commercially harvested golden tilefish are clear as to what quota golden tilefish longline endorsement holders may fish under; while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socioeconomic impacts.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: SELECT 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.

*Note this species is currently an ecosystem component species.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION: MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 2 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Action 2. Clarify regulations for the golden tilefish longline endorsement to reflect the South Atlantic Council's intent regarding to which gear-specific quota endorsement holders may fish under

Alternative 4. Revise the golden tilefish longline endorsement regulations to indicate that vessels with golden tilefish endorsements are eligible to fish for golden tilefish using hook-and-line gear under the 500-pound gutted weight golden tilefish hook-and-line trip limit.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

For Full Council:

COMMITTEE ACTION ON SELECTING PREFERRED(S):

OPTION 1. DO NOT SELECT A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AT THIS TIME

OPTION 2. SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED

OPTION 3. OTHERS?

COMMITTEE ACTION ON PUBLIC HEARINGS:

OPTION 1. DO NOT APPROVE AMENDMENT 35 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

OPTION 2. APPROVE AMENDMENT 35 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

OPTION 3. OTHERS?

Timing & Tasks

DRAFT MOTION: APPROVE THE FOLLOWING TASK AND TIMING ITEMS:

1. Direct staff/IPT to address monitoring/evaluation needs upfront in the Amendment 36 document and reference the Monitoring/Evaluation Appendix.
2. Direct staff/IPT to look within the areas identified for Spawning SMZs off each state and, using bottom topography, bring alternative boxes back at the March 2015 meeting for the Committee's consideration. Include any surveys of biomass in the areas that are available.
3. Direct staff to discuss options for rebuilding plan for hogfish with Gulf Council.
4. Direct staff to look into scheduling presentation(s) on sector management for March 2015 Council meeting.
5. Direct staff to develop alternatives for an almaco trip limit. Bring to AP for their input in 2015. Develop alternatives that would allow for year-round fishery.
6. Submit Regulatory Amendment 22 for formal review?
7. Prepare Regulatory Amendment 16 for public hearings?
8. Prepare Amendment 35 for public hearings?