

# Overview

## Snapper Grouper Committee

The Charleston Marriott Hotel  
170 Lockwood Boulevard  
Charleston, SC

The Committee will: (A) receive an update on recent *Oculina* research activities, if any; (B) receive a presentation from the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation titled “Catch and Discard Characterization for Red Snapper, Warsaw Grouper and Speckled Hind”; (C) receive reports from SERO and the SEFSC on the status of commercial and recreational catches versus the respective ACLs for snapper grouper species; (D) receive a status report from SERO staff on snapper grouper amendments under Secretarial review; (E) discuss requesting that NOAA Fisheries delay the start of the golden tilefish season to allow for the endorsements to be in place (Amendment 18B); (F) receive an overview from Council staff on input received during the Florida and North Carolina MPA Workshops, receive an update on SSC discussions regarding status of speckled hind and warsaw grouper, and provide guidance to staff on development of alternatives and timing; (G) receive an update from Council staff on Regulatory Amendment 13 (adjustments to ACLs based on MRFSS/MRIP calibration); (H) receive an overview from Council staff on the Options Paper for Amendment 22 (tag program for red snapper and deepwater snapper grouper species) and provide guidance to staff on development of alternatives and timing; (I) receive an overview from Council staff on the Options Paper for Regulatory Amendment 14 and provide guidance on development of alternatives and timing; (J) receive an overview of issue regarding landings of blue runner in the mackerel gillnet fishery and take action as appropriate; (K) discuss long-term strategic planning and development of a vision statement for snapper grouper fisheries; and (L) address issues under Other Business as appropriate.

### **A. Update on *Oculina* research activities**

There are no recent activities to report

### **B. GSAFF Presentation (*Attachment 1*)**

Frank Helies, Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation (GSAFF), will present results of their observer work. Many species within the snapper grouper fishery management unit are data-poor. As a result, many of the species specific stock assessments have a high level of uncertainty associated with the models, including catch characterization, effort, and quantity of discards. To enhance the universe of data that are available to stock assessment scientists, the GSAFF conducted a fishery observer program within the snapper grouper vertical hook-and-line (bandit rig) fishery from 2007 to 2011. Through

cooperation of the commercial fishing industry, an observer was placed onboard commercial vessels to collect a variety of data quantifying the participation, gear, effort, catch, and discards within the fishery. The data collected during this project can help better assess the impact of current effort and discards in the snapper grouper fishery. The presentation will focus on red snapper, speckled hind and warsaw grouper.

**C. Status of landings for quota-managed snapper grouper species (Attachments 2a & 2b)**

The Council will receive an update on the status of landings (commercial and recreational) for all snapper grouper species with ACLs.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**D. Status of Amendments Approved for Secretarial Review**

The Committee will receive a status report from SERO staff on the following amendments:

1. Red Snapper Temporary Rule by Emergency Action
2. Regulatory Amendment 12/EA (Golden Tilefish ACL Adjustment)
3. Resubmittal of Action 4 in Amendment 18A (Transferability of black sea bass endorsements)
4. Amendment 20A/EA (Wreckfish ITQ)
5. Amendment 18B/EA (Golden Tilefish)

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**E. Emergency Rule to delay start of the golden tilefish season**

The Committee should discuss whether to recommend that the Council request that NOAA Fisheries delay the start of the golden tilefish season in order to allow for Amendment 18B to be implemented. Amendment 18B would implement an endorsement program for the longline sector, among other measures.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**F. Discussion on MPAs and HAPCs for speckled hind and warsaw grouper**

Four public workshops were held in August 2012 to solicit further input on areas to consider for MPA designation to protect speckled hind and warsaw grouper. Three workshops were held in Florida and one in North Carolina. Council staff will summarize input received during the workshops and comments submitted during the comment period (*Attachment 3*). The Committee received input during their June 2012 meeting from the workshops held in Charleston, SC and Pooler, GA during May 2012 and instructed staff to proceed with additional workshops. The Committee should consider the input obtained through all of the public workshops and that from the MPA Expert Workgroup to provide guidance on development of alternatives and timing for MPA designation.

Options the Committee could consider include putting the action back in CE-BA 3, adding to CE-BA 4, or beginning development of a separate amendment.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and provide guidance on alternatives and timing for development.

**G. Regulatory Amendment 13 (Adjustments to ACLs based on MRFSS/MRIP calibration; Attachment 4)**

At the June 2012 meeting, the Committee requested that a document be prepared for revision and approval at the September 2012 meeting. An Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) has been formed and the first meeting was held August 21, 2012. A southeast region MRIP calibration conference call was held on July 25, 2012 among Regional Office and Science Center staffs (the Council staff representative was not able to participate). NOAA Fisheries is exploring the possibility of taking action through Categorical Exclusion (CE), which would not need NEPA review. NOAA Fisheries will provide guidance on whether a document (Regulatory Amendment 13) will need to be prepared.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**H. Amendment 22 (tag program for red snapper and deepwater species; Attachments 5a & 5b)**

In June 2012, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries re-open harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic via temporary rule based on estimated levels of mortality being below the projected levels from the SEDAR 24 assessment. NOAA Fisheries subsequently prepared an Environmental Assessment to re-open the fishery in fall of 2012. The Committee also discussed long-term management of red snapper via a tag program and requested that an amendment be prepared to consider options for such a program. The Council had sought input on development of a recreational tag program for management of deepwater snapper grouper species (snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and wreckfish) during the scoping phase of the Comprehensive Ecosystem-based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3). Although the public supported development of such a program, the Council decided not to include the action in CE-BA 3. A tag program would require close cooperation with state agencies and the Council felt that more time would be needed to begin development than was allowed for under the CE-BA 3 timeline. Hence the IPT is recommending that an action to consider a recreational tag program for deepwater species be added to Amendment 22.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Review the Options Paper, and provide guidance in the development of alternatives and timing.

**I. Regulatory Amendment 14 (Management measures for greater amberjack, mutton snapper, gray triggerfish, black sea bass, and vermilion snapper; Attachment 6a & 6b)**

At the June 2012 meeting, the Council approved a motion to begin development of a regulatory amendment that would address trip limit and fishing year changes for greater amberjack, management measures to protect mutton snapper during its spawning season, modification to the gray triggerfish size limit, and modification to the black sea bass fishing year. In addition, the Snapper Grouper Committee Chair later requested that an action to revisit the trip limit for vermilion snapper be added to the Options Paper. In addition, landings trends for several grouper species through 2011 (*Attachment 6b*) will be discussed to consider whether changes in recreational management measures are warranted at this time. Council staff will present the Regulatory Amendment 14 Options Paper and request guidance from the Committee on development of actions and alternatives as well as timing for this amendment.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**J. Discussion of blue runner issue**

Council members were recently made aware of an issue that recently surfaced regarding landings of blue runner in the mackerel gillnet fishery. According to fishermen, blue runners have been landed in the mackerel fishery for a long time, especially early in the season when they are mixed in with Spanish mackerel. Blue runners are in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit (FMU) and a snapper grouper permit is required for harvest and sale. Blue runners have been included in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit since the management plan was put in place in 1983. During development of the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, landings of blue runner were deemed substantial enough to maintain the species in the FMU and specify the following:

1. OFL = unknown
2. ABC = 1,289,941 pounds whole weight (3<sup>rd</sup> highest landings 1999-2008 as per South Atlantic Council/SSC ABC Control Rule)
3. ACL = OY = ABC = 1,289,941 pounds whole weight
4. Commercial ACL (14.6%) = 188,329 pounds whole weight
5. Recreational ACL (85.4%) = 1,101,612 pounds whole weight
6. Recreational ACT = 892,305 pounds whole weight
7. Accountability Measures:

**Comm.:** If the commercial sector ACL is met or projected to be met, all purchase and sale is prohibited and harvest and/or possession is limited to the bag limit. If the commercial sector ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial sector ACL in the following season by the amount of the overage only if the species is overfished.

**Rec.:** If the rec. sector ACL is exceeded, the following year's landings would be monitored in-season for persistence in increased landings. The Regional Administrator will publish a notice to reduce the length of the fishing season as necessary.

According to fishermen, they have been landed along with mackerel since the net ban went into effect in 1995. Blue runners are managed in state waters by the FWC. There are currently no bag or size limits and either a recreational fishing license or a saltwater products license is the only requirement to harvest them.

**K. Vision Statement and Long-Term Strategic Planning (*Attachment 7*)**

At the request of the Snapper Grouper Committee Chair, an agenda item has been added to hold initial discussions on development of a vision statement and long-term planning for the snapper grouper fishery. The Council has, in the past, intended on engaging in such a discussion; however, regulatory deadlines and other issues have taken precedence.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.

**L. Other Business**

The Committee will address items under Other Business as appropriate.

**REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:** Discuss and take action as necessary.