

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Ad Hoc Committee on Improving Snapper Grouper Private Recreational Catch Estimates
aka *Private Recreational Reporting Working Group*

Working Group Summary and Preliminary Recommendations

Workgroup Goal

Develop recommendations for consideration by the Council for coordinated state-federal data collection and permitting programs to improve estimates of catch and effort for private recreational snapper grouper fishing activities.

Meeting 1: February 17, 2021

Presentations

- FL FWC Reef Fish Survey
- MRIP Rare Event Working Group

Actions

- Finalized Goal and Objectives
- Provided guidance and requests for future meetings

Meeting 2: May 26, 2021

Presentations

- MAFMC Recreational Tilefish Reporting
- HMS Private Recreational Reporting
- MRIP Large Pelagics Survey (LPS)

Actions

- Discussed measures of success and the need for compatibility across programs
- Considered potential challenges to mandatory reporting
- Provided guidance and requests for future meetings

Meeting 3: December 1, 2021

Presentations

- Overviews of state permits and permitting processes
- HMS general recreational permit

Actions

- Compared state programs and discussed federal vs state permitting options
- Provided guidance and requests for future meetings

Public Comments

Verbal comment opportunities were provided during each workgroup meeting.

No written or online form comments were submitted for meetings 1 – 3.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. A federal permitting and reporting solution is the most appropriate course of action for a federal fishery.

The purpose of a recreational permit for snapper grouper fishing is to identify the universe of snapper grouper anglers to improve sampling and catch estimates.

The Working Group recommends that the Council consider a private recreational snapper grouper permit and reporting system, administered through NMFS similar to the HMS permit, with dedicated sampling similar to the MRIP LPS.

Due to the variety of fishing patterns and species in the snapper grouper complex, the Council should consider a range of reporting requirements from census (for rare and low ACL species) to random surveys (for common and higher ACL species).

Most permit and reporting requirements apply to certain species. Council should consider the ability of existing survey programs to provide reliable catch estimates when deciding which species to include in a permitting and reporting program for snapper grouper.

2. To succeed, a private recreational permitting and reporting program requires:
 - Clearly defined goals and objectives
 - Clearly defined measures of success and milestones indicating data improvement
 - Flexibility, timeliness, and adaptability to future situations
 - Effective state-state and state-federal coordination
 - Compatible survey methods across the area of interest (at least South Atlantic, for some stocks this will include the Gulf of Mexico and Greater Atlantic)
 - Accurate angler universe identification (sampling frame); minimized over-subscription (only actual participants in the frame)
 - Outreach
 - Cooperation and compatibility with existing surveys (i.e., MRIP)
3. Research and Data Recommendations
 - MRIP, SEFSC, or the Rare Event Estimation Working group conduct a modeling exercise in which data and estimates for a well-estimated species (i.e., one with acceptable PSE levels) are degraded to mimic rare event circumstances to more thoroughly evaluate the range of alternative estimation methods.
 - Research is required to find ways to collect reliable and representative information on discarded fish.
 - Research is needed to quantify and describe changes in fishing power (i.e., catchability) that have occurred since passage of the MSA in 1976.
 - Census and random survey options should be explored through pilot studies.