

**Summary Report**  
**Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting**  
**Technical Advisory Panel**  
Meeting 3: May 15, 2023

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel (AP) convened via webinar on May 15, 2023.

AP members approved the agenda for the meeting. There was no public comment offered.

**1. Comment on potential Council actions in Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting)**

After reviewing background information on recent Council actions related to Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, the AP reviewed draft actions in the amendment, providing the following comments and recommendations for the Council's consideration:

**\*AP recommendations are *italicized* and highlighted.**

**DRAFT Action 1. Establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess Snapper Grouper species in the South Atlantic region**

Vessel vs. angler based permit:

- In choosing a permit type, need to ensure that it does not raise a challenge to the use, application, or inclusion into existing surveys (such as MRIP or FL SRFS).
- Vessel based permitting is somewhat preferred for the intercept survey under MRIP as it has advantages:
  - Potentially less error prone than targeting all anglers;
  - Vessels have existing registration ID;
  - Anglers are surveyed now but are linked by vessels
- However, angler based permitting can also be incorporated into MRIP.
- Choosing a consistent approach (vessel or angler) will enable consistency of methods across the region – such an approach will eliminate an extra variable in the estimation process and will increase likelihood of a permit being useful. Consistency across the region is a stronger preference choosing whether there is an than angler or vessel based.
- Consideration of shore anglers: The snapper grouper fishery is mostly vessel based, with some exceptions such as gray snapper, especially in South Florida. Vessel based would allow improving estimates for private vessel mode, but not impact shore mode.
  - Coming up with a recommendation for inclusion or exclusion of shore based-anglers may also include a discussion of discards. Need further information:
    - Is shore mode estimate a concern for the species covered by permit?
    - If so, is the magnitude sufficient to justify shore permit requirement?
    - Are we dissatisfied with estimates from MRIP for shore mode?
  - All modes could be covered, possibly by different programs or approaches if permit applied. Discards will likely remain self-reported.

- Vessel may not provide the ‘census’ of the angler universe. Still require estimation to determine number of anglers.
- Vessel permit integration into FES –
  - Simplest, fastest, first step from status quo - If a permit has address information associated with it, MRIP can use that to flag or designate in FES frame. Then FES can stratify its frame to create a dedicated sample targeted to households associated with permits. Will require some design changes.
    - Could lead to FES questionnaire changes by adding specific reef fish questions; may trigger APAIS changes as well.
  - Benefit is the additional stratification of the sample to focus on snapper grouper participants – gains in precision and a reduction in bias to the extent this group of permitted anglers are different than other general population (those who don’t fish, only inshore fish, etc.).
- *Alternative 4 is problematic – it may not result in complete identification of the universe of participants since it would not cover every vessel nor every angler. This would result in coverage complications from vessel or angler estimation approaches.*
  - *Not advisable from a technical perspective.*

Permit recommendation:

- Struggling to separate permit questions from survey approaches to formulate a recommendation. Need further information.
  - May need a clear statement on how survey would be applied to each permit option included in amendment and how that would be enough to focus on vessel vs angler. Work with AP members to address MRIP aspects (given Council has moved away from a dedicated, separate reporting component).
  - Need details of how a survey will use the various permit options to improve estimates – while actions focus on permit, they are not independent from survey since improved catch and effort estimates is the goal.
  - Need further discussion of intended use of a permit to come up with recommendation:
    - If integrated into a new survey, then vessel based may be preferred.
    - If integrated into existing survey and licensing framework, then angler based may be preferred.
  - Also difficult to recommend a permit type without knowing which species will be included and whether shore mode may be of interest.
    - *Consider discussion of shore based catches, integration into a survey, and species selection at a future AP meeting to help formulate recommendations on Action 1.*

**DRAFT Action 2. Specify the species that would be covered by a private recreational snapper grouper permit**

- No clear reason for picking one alternative over or another. Each has pros and cons. The species choice may also be impacted by the vessel vs angler permit type as well as the survey choices into which the permit is integrated.
- Only choosing assessed species (**Alternative 3**) today may preclude better data for stocks requiring a future assessment.

- However, assessed species would be very beneficial to management.
- Including tilefish would promote constancy with the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Exceedingly rare species may still require reporting to get acceptable catch and effort estimates.
- Limiting species will result in missing some individuals from “the universe” that the permit is intended to identify. Especially when considering discards:
  - Florida is experiencing this to some extent now (e.g., grunt fishermen releasing red snapper). – Argues for larger and more inclusive species list given that many species are often caught together or on the same trip.
- When choosing species consider regulatory burden and potential future requirements:
  - If staying with a survey based approach, then be more inclusive of species or include all species.
  - If considering reporting in the future, then potentially limit the species that are included to limit regulatory burden.

**DRAFT Action 3. Specify the area where a private recreational snapper grouper permit would be required to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region**

- Same comment as species list – to cover the universe of participants, the utility of the permit will benefit from covering all areas.
- The growing concern over discards also contributes to support for being more inclusive in the permit.
- More coverage will allow for better outreach and education as well.
- Need further information – Can a federal permit be required in state waters for anglers or vessels that do not fish for snapper grouper species in the EEZ?
  - So far, with robust rationale, the guidance has been that the Council can extend permit requirement into state waters for federally managed species.
  - What about those only fishing in state waters? What would be the federal mechanism to require a permit?

**Other permit related actions:**

Discussion of federal permit:

- Clarified prior recommendation for a federal permit and potential of addition of state opt out option with the following discussion on further consideration of state based permit.
  - NC noted support for federal option – also state legislature currently supporting some permits & possibly reporting for state managed species.
  - SC – would also require legislative action for state permit.
  - States are concerned about resources – costs, personnel, time, legislative attention for implementing permits.
  - Would need further Council discussion on federal vs state approaches to provide recommendations. The ability to opt out system would require criteria, conditions, and mechanism.
  - AP reiterated the purpose of the permit is improved catch and effort estimates.
- *Reiterated previous recommendations for annual renewal or issuance terms.*

- *Technical recommendation to make sure that the sampling frame and contact information is regularly updated.*

**(DRAFT Actions 4-6) Education component-related actions**

- Question: What will the education requirement encompass (video, written test, online course, etc.) – not addressed yet.
- Recognize details need to be worked out and will need to follow once the program details are determined – AP satisfied with status at this point with actions and range of alternatives.
- *Reiterated support for education component.*

**Next steps at a future meeting:**

- See previously stated requests for additional information.
- Evaluate discards by mode (including shore) to help inform recommendations on permit type, species list, area covered, etc.
- Follow up with some AP members to summarize the data collection component for vessel vs individual options and how it may fit into a revised sampling framework.
- Item 2 – benefits statement – at later meeting. Will be improved by further discussion of the permit-survey connections.

**2. Review draft statement on potential benefits of a private recreational permit for the Snapper Grouper fishery**

Due to time constraints and additional information requested, discussion of this item was postponed to a future meeting.

**Other Business**

There were no items under other business

**Advisory Panel Members**

Luiz Barbieri, FL FWC, Chair  
Amy Dukes, SC DNR, Vice-Chair  
John Foster, NMFS/S&T/MRIP  
Kai Lorenzen, SSC  
Brandi Salmon, NC DMF  
Bev Sauls, FL FWC  
Geoff White, ACCSP