

OVERVIEW

Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting

December 8-10, 2009
Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel
2717 West Fort Macon Road
Atlantic Beach, NC

The Snapper Grouper Committee needs to: (A) receive an update on outreach efforts associated with the *Oculina* Bank Experimental Closed Area; (B) receive a report on the red snapper interim rule; (C) receive a report on data analyses from the Science Center (including new rebuilding projections for red snapper); (D) review alternatives in Amendment 17A, modify document as necessary, select preferred alternatives, and approve for DEIS review; (E) review alternatives in Amendment 17B, modify document as necessary, review the proposed rule, and approve to submit to the Secretary of Commerce; (F) review alternatives in Amendment 18, modify document as necessary, select preferred alternatives where possible, and provide guidance to staff; (G) review alternatives in Amendment 20 and provide guidance to staff as necessary; (H) review the proposed actions in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, modify document as necessary, and provide guidance to Team; and (I) review the Terms of Reference for upcoming SEDARs, modify as necessary, and assign participants.

A. *Oculina* Monitoring Report

The *Oculina* Bank tabletop exhibit and kiosk was displayed at the SC Marine Educators Association annual conference at the SC DNR complex in Charleston, SC on November 6-7, 2009. Forty teachers from around SC were in attendance at the event which featured an 'Extreme Marine' theme. To complement the exhibit, Council staff provided *Oculina* Bank regulations brochures, issues of the *South Atlantic Update* Newsletter (Fall 2009), Deepwater Coral fact sheets, and SC Sea Grant *Coastal Heritage* publications featuring an article on cold-water corals.

Oculina Bank regulation brochures were also included with the handout materials for attendees at the Florida Snapper Grouper public hearings, November 10-12, 2009 and also at a recent Deepwater Coral Teacher Workshop held in Raleigh, NC on November 7-8, 2009. Council staff participated in the workshop and facilitated a session on management.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

B. Red Snapper Interim Rule (Attachments 1-7)

A SEDAR assessment was completed in February 2008 and indicated that red snapper are overfished and undergoing overfishing (**Attachment 1**). The Council received notification, in a letter dated July 8th, 2008, that the South Atlantic red snapper stock is undergoing overfishing and is overfished and that the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to prepare a plan amendment or proposed regulations to end overfishing within one year (**Attachment 2**). Pursuant to Section 305(c)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as reauthorized, the Council discussed, at their June 2008 meeting, a prohibition on harvest and possession of red snapper to be implemented through interim measures. The Council approved the following motion at their June 2008 meeting in Orlando, Florida after reviewing the SSC's approval of the SEDAR stock assessment, extensive public input received during the scoping process, and input from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel:

“The Council directed staff to develop a letter to the Regional Administrator requesting the regional office develop an interim rule closing harvest of red snapper and implementing the reductions in fishing mortality as specified in the preferred alternatives in Amendment 16 for gag grouper, vermilion snapper, black grouper, and red grouper.” The Council's intent is that the Interim Rule would be brought before the Council for consideration at the September 2008 meeting.

A letter, dated July 16th, 2008, was sent to the Regional Administrator requesting the Regional Office to develop an interim rule (**Attachment 3**). NOAA Fisheries (SERO) presented actions in the interim rule to the Committee at the September Council meeting. The Council decided not to proceed with a red snapper interim rule at the time and decided to postpone discussions until the December Council meeting. The Council discussed a red snapper interim rule at the December 2008 meeting, decided to not to take action, and decided to discuss at the March 2009 meeting.

At the March 2009 meeting, the Council made the following two motions:

MOTION #19: Request an interim rule to implement no harvest of red snapper in the EEZ off NC, SC, GA & FL. [Intent to request an extension for a total of a one year closure and to request the states to adopt compatible regulations].

MOTION #20: Request the Regional Administrator not to publish the final rule (for the interim rule) prior to June 2009 Council meeting.

Based upon the Council's request for an interim rule (**Attachment 4**), NMFS completed an EA for the interim rule (**Attachment 5**). The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) letters (**Attachment 6**), along with the EA, were sent to the states on 3/27/09. The CZMA allows the states a maximum of 90 days to reply; however, NMFS requested the states to review and reply within 30 days of receipt. A proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on July 6th and the comment period ended August 5th (**Attachment 7**). NMFS will summarize the comments received and give a status report on the

remaining steps and schedule. Measures to end overfishing and establish a rebuilding program are being developed in Amendment 17A.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

C. Presentation of Red Snapper Rebuilding Projections and Other Data Analyses (Attachments 8 & 9)

Data requests were made to SEFSC for Amendment 17A (**Attachment 8**). NMFS requested projections of spawning stock biomass, recruitment, landings, discards, and probability of stock recovery from 2007 to T_{MAX} that considers very high recruitment for fishing mortality rates F_{CURR} , $F_{40\%SPR}$, $F_{REBUILD}$, $85\%F_{40\%SPR}$, $75\%F_{40\%SPR}$, and $65\%F_{40\%SPR}$. The analyses were sent to SERO (**Attachment 9**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Take action as necessary.

D. Amendment 17A (Attachments 10-14)

Actions proposed in Amendment 17A (**Attachment 10**) would:

- Specify ACLs for red snapper;
- Modify management measures to end overfishing of red snapper immediately upon implementation of the regulations;
- Specify status determination criteria for red snapper;
- Specify a rebuilding plan for red snapper; and
- Specify a monitoring program for red snapper.

Staff will review the alternatives and public comments received (**Attachments 13 and 14**). The Committee will receive a presentation from Dr. Nick Farmer on the effects of the closed area to the stock.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Modify document as necessary, select preferred alternatives, and approve for DEIS review.

E. Amendment 17B (Attachments 15-19)

The SSC has provided ABC recommendations for warsaw grouper, speckled hind, snowy grouper, black sea bass, red snapper, vermilion snapper, and gag. Black and red grouper are being assessed this year; the Review Workshop will be held January 25-29, 2010. The SSC will most likely review the results when they meet in April of 2010. The SSC approved the TAC in Amendment 13C for golden tilefish and an assessment update is scheduled to begin mid-2010.

Actions proposed in Amendment 17B (**Attachment 15**) would:

- Specify ACLs, ACTs, and AMs, where necessary, for nine species undergoing overfishing;
- Modify management measures as needed to limit harvest to the ACL or ACT;
- Update the framework procedure for specification of TAC.

Staff will review the alternatives and public comments received (**Attachments 17 and 18**). The Committee should review the draft proposed rule (**Attachment 19**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Modify document as necessary, review the proposed rule, and approve to submit to the Secretary of Commerce.

F. Amendment 18 (Attachment 20-23)

Actions proposed in Amendment 18 (**Attachment 20**) would:

- Extend the range of the Snapper Grouper FMP north;
- Limit participation and effort in the golden tilefish fishery;
- Limit participation and effort in the black sea bass pot fishery;
- Separate the snowy grouper quota into regions/states;
- Separate the gag recreational allocation into regions/states;
- Change the golden tilefish fishing year;
- Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of fisheries statistics; and
- Designate EFH in the new northern areas.

Staff will review the alternatives and public comments received (**Attachments 22 and 23**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 18, modify Document as necessary, select preferred alternatives where possible, and provide guidance to staff

G. Amendment 20 (Attachment 24 & 25)

Actions proposed in Amendment 20 (**Attachment 24**) would:

- Specify ACLs & AMs for wreckfish
- Update the wreckfish ITQ program

A program review of the wreckfish ITQ program is outlined in **Attachment 25**.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review alternatives in Amendment 20 and provide guidance to staff as necessary.

H. Comprehensive ACL Amendment (Attachments 26)

The Comprehensive ACL amendment will specify ACLs, ACTs, AMs, and allocations for all species managed by the Council not subject to overfishing (**Attachment 26**). This includes species in the Snapper Grouper, Coral, Sargassum, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs. The SSC is scheduled to provide OFL and ABC recommendations by April 2010.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Modify document as necessary and provide guidance to Team.

I. SEDAR Assessments

Snowy grouper, black sea bass, and red snapper will be assessed through upcoming SEDAR Updates. The Committee should review the Terms of References and assign participants to the assessment.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review Terms of Reference, modify as necessary, and assign participants