



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Duane Harris, Chairman  
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Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director  
Gregg Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

September 26, 2008

Dr. Roy E. Crabtree  
Regional Administrator  
NOAA/NMFS Southeast Regional Office  
263 13th Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Dear Dr. Crabtree:

Pursuant to Section 305(c)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as reauthorized, the Council requests the measures in Snapper Grouper Amendment 16 addressing groupers be implemented through interim measures (see specific measures in motion below). The Council, with an eight to five vote, approved the following motion at their September 2008 meeting in Charleston, South Carolina after reviewing all the public input (DEIS and SDEIS), Advisory Panel input, and input received during a public comment period at the Council meeting:

“Submit the interim rule to NOAA Fisheries for approval: (1) Prohibit recreational and commercial harvest or possession of gag, black grouper, and red grouper during January-April 2009; (2) Establish a 352,940 lb gutted weight commercial quota for gag during January-June. When the quota for gag is met, no harvest or possession would be allowed for gag, black grouper, and red grouper; (3) Reduce the bag limit from 2 gag or black grouper (combined) to 1 gag or black grouper (combined) within the existing 5-grouper aggregate bag limit; (4) Reduce the bag limit for red grouper to a maximum of 3 fish within the existing 5-grouper aggregate bag limit; and (5) the provisions of the interim rule with respect to federally permitted vessels for South Atlantic snapper grouper would apply regardless of where the fish are harvested (i.e., in state or federal waters).”

The Council received notification, in a letter dated June 12, 2007, that the South Atlantic gag stock is undergoing overfishing and is approaching an overfished condition and that the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council to prepare a plan amendment or proposed regulations to end overfishing within one year. The proposed interim rule would end overfishing upon implementation. Permanent measures to end overfishing have been developed in Amendment 16. The Council’s current schedule is to submit Amendment 16 for formal review and implementation in early October, 2008.

We appreciate your assistance in expediting implementation of this request. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Bob Mahood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Duane Harris".

Duane Harris  
Chairman

cc: Council Members & Staff  
Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel  
Scientific & Statistical Committee  
Bonnie Ponwith & Tom Jamir, SEFSC  
Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC  
Phil Steele & Jack McGovern, NMFS SEFSC