

Issues for Public Comment

The SAFMC is still developing the details of proposed measures the various amendments will include and has not released any public information documents on the amendments. The NCDMF encourages all interested parties to check the SAFMC website (www.safmc.net) frequently for additional information. Broadly, the Council will be seeking scoping input on the following:

- **Amendment 21:** This will examine a number of methods to manage existing quotas in the snapper grouper fishery, including state-by-state quotas and catch shares. An action will be considered to require a referendum before catch share programs will be implemented in the South Atlantic.
- **Amendment 22:** The focus of this amendment will be the long-term management of the red snapper fishery. Snapper grouper Amendment 17A has been approved. This amendment will examine management measures such as seasons, bag limits, quotas, or catch shares for how the fishery will be managed once it can be reopened to fishing.
- **Amendment 24:** This amendment will review and modify management for red grouper. A stock assessment showed that red grouper was overfished and undergoing overfishing. This amendment will focus on the rebuilding of red grouper and to set annual catch limits and accountability measures.

The council will be holding public hearings on the following:

- **Regulatory Amendment 9:** This amendment will examine options for implementation of trip limits for amberjack, vermilion snapper (beeliners), black sea bass and gag.

- **Regulatory Amendment 10:** This amendment will make adjustments to the management measures implemented under Amendment 17A for red snapper. NMFS has put into place an emergency rule to delay the area closures off of Georgia and Florida. The Council recently voted not to implement any closed areas based on the results of a stock assessment, and this amendment seeks to repeal the area closure in Amendment 17A.
- **Comprehensive Annual Catch Limits:** This amendment will establish Annual Catch Limits (ACL) and Accountability Measures (AM) for those snapper grouper species that are not overfished and for which overfishing is not occurring. This is a mandate of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (2006) and is required to be completed by 2011.
- **Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2:** This amendment will examine modifications of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for snapper grouper and other species.

**South Atlantic Fishery
Management Council
Public Hearing and Scoping Session
Jan. 25, 2011
3 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Riverfront Hilton
100 Middle St.
New Bern**

Contact Information

Dr. Brian Chevront
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, NC 28557
phone: 252-808-8015
fax: 252-726-6187
brian.chevront@ncdenr.gov



**N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries
Public Information Brochure
for the
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's
Amendments 21, 22, 23
Regulatory Amendments 9 and 10
and
Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit
Amendment
to the
Fishery Management Plan for
Snapper and Grouper Species**

December 2010



Introduction

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils created by the federal Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, as amended. The act gave the United States the authority to manage fishery resources within waters 3 to 200 miles offshore, called the Exclusive Economic Zone. Under the act, councils are responsible for the development of fishery management plans (FMPs), as directed by the secretary of commerce. The SAFMC consists of four member states from North Carolina to the east coast of Florida, including the Keys, and is headquartered in North Charleston, S.C. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) also holds a voting seat on the council. For more detailed information on the SAFMC, please see www.safmc.net.

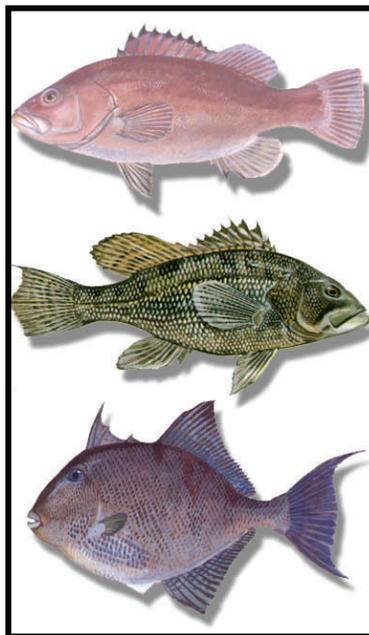
To avoid duplication of effort in the development of FMPs, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission chose to adopt by reference specific SAFMC FMPs as minimum standards for North Carolina through the Interjurisdictional Fishery Management Plan. Snapper grouper species are included in this plan.

Process

The SAFMC is amending the existing FMP for snapper grouper and will publish a public information document outlining issues the council is considering for inclusion in the amendments being developed. "Scoping" is the first step in the formal amendment process. After this initial phase of public input, the council will evaluate potential management measures and impacts. Next, a draft amendment will be developed identifying management measures. The Council will then send the amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for review. During review, the public has an opportunity to comment on the draft amendment. Once all public comment has been received, the secretary of commerce will approve, partially approve, or disapprove the amendment.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform the public of the issues under consideration by the SAFMC and any potential impacts to North Carolina's fisheries. This will allow the public opportunity to comment on changes observed in the fishery, actions that should or should not be taken in terms of management, regulation, research, enforcement or enhancement, and any other concerns about the resource or fishery. Input received at the start of the amendment development process can have a significant influence on the outcome of the final amendment.



Current Management

The snapper grouper complex includes 73 species, not all of which are regularly landed in North Carolina. Some of the more commonly landed species include vermilion snapper (beeliner), black sea bass, gag, snowy grouper, red grouper and triggerfish.

The commercial fishery has been managed using size limits and gear restrictions in the past. More recently, methods such as annual quotas, seasonal closures, and in some cases trip limits are also being used to manage commercial harvest. The recreational fishery has been managed using size and bag limits and seasonal closures. A complete list of regulations for both sectors can be found online at www.safmc.net under the tab "Fish ID and Regs".

North Carolina Fishery

As noted above, only a handful of snapper grouper species are regularly landed in North Carolina. These are bottom species caught using hook-and-line gear in federal waters off the North Carolina coast. These species are important to both recreational and commercial fishing sectors. Black sea bass are also caught by some commercial fishermen using traps. The following table shows the most recent (2009) commercial landings for a number of species.

2009 N.C. Commercial Landings

Species	Landings (Pounds)
Snowy grouper	32,927
Black sea bass (South of Hatteras)	437,951
Gag	220,925
Red grouper	296,255
Red snapper	10,228
Vermilion snapper (beeliner)	361,923
Triggerfish	215,759

Stock Status

Some of the species in the snapper grouper complex have had formal, peer-reviewed stock assessments, while others have not. Some species have had recent regulatory actions designed to end overfishing. As more species undergo stock assessments, management measures can be refined to reflect the most recent information available.

Management Issues

The SAFMC is considering several different management issues that vary from establishing annual catch limits for species that are not overfished, to management and tracking of annual quotas, to review of habitat designations.