

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: November 17, 2016
Subject: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Report

Purpose:

Staff will provide Commissioners with a review of actions and discussions from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) September 12-16, 2016, meeting in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Summary:

At their September meeting, the Council discussed several items scheduled for public hearings and scoping in January and February of 2017, including the following.

- Dolphin and yellowtail snapper reallocation: The Council is considering strategies that would allow commercial and recreational sectors access to unused quota, such as establishing a common quota pool or quota sharing, allowing rollover of unused quota into the next year, and temporarily transferring quota between sectors. Permanent sector reallocation is being considered for yellowtail snapper only. The recreational fishery has not met its quota of either species in recent years. In September, the Commission directed staff to support speedy implementation of a strategy to allow harvest of unused quota. Staff conveyed this direction both by letter and in person at the Council meeting.
- Red snapper: The Council is considering long-term management options for red snapper that would allow an annual fishing season while constraining harvest and discards to the quota; improve recreational data collection; and increase the survival rate of released fish. This includes closed areas for bottom fishing, which are unpopular amongst stakeholders and may disproportionately affect Florida.
- Limited-entry for-hire permits: The Council is considering a program that would apply to the federal snapper-grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin-wahoo for-hire fisheries. Stakeholder opinion on a limited-entry program is divided.
- Snapper-grouper recreational bag limits and closed seasons: The Council is considering new aggregate bag limits, such as a deep-water species aggregate, and revisions to existing aggregate bag limits, such as the grouper aggregate. The Council will also re-evaluate the January through April shallow-water grouper closed season to accommodate regional variations in the timing of grouper spawning. This could allow fishermen greater access to grouper in south Florida.

The Council indicated they will take final action on mutton snapper and electronic reporting at their December meeting. The Council's preferred alternatives for mutton snapper are currently consistent with the FWC final rule approved in September. The proposed weekly electronic reporting requirement for all federally-permitted charter vessels is intended to increase data timeliness and accuracy, which most charter operators support.

Lastly, the Council took final action on hogfish management changes at their September meeting. This item will be addressed in a separate Commission presentation.

Staff Recommendation:

This presentation for informational purposes but Commission discussion or direction is welcome.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management