

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: September 8, 2016
Subject: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Preview

Purpose:

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

Summary:

The Council's meeting will occur the week following the September Commission meeting. The Council is scheduled to take final action on proposed management changes for the Florida Keys/East Florida hogfish stock to end overfishing and rebuild the population. The Council proposes a small quota of 36,449 pounds, a 16-inch minimum size limit, a 1-fish recreational bag limit, a May through October recreational season, and a 25-pound commercial trip limit for hogfish in federal waters off the Keys and East Florida. The recreational and commercial quotas are significantly lower than recent landings, 84% and 72% respectively, which has raised concerns from fishermen. There is general support for a size limit increase and lower recreational bag limit, but commercial harvesters in the Keys are largely against a trip limit.

The Council will continue discussions on potential modifications to federal red snapper regulations. The Atlantic red snapper stock remains under a rebuilding plan, as the 2016 stock assessment determined the stock is still overfished and undergoing overfishing. Some of the changes the Council is considering, such as requiring the use of descending devices and creating seasonal area closures for snapper-grouper fishing, could minimize dead discards and allow limited harvest opportunities. Past proposals to close areas for snapper-grouper fishing to protect red snapper were largely unsupported by stakeholders. The Council may approve a suite of options for public scoping meetings to take place in November 2016.

Other anticipated Council discussions include:

- Temporary and permanent allocation shifts between the commercial and recreational sectors for dolphin and yellowtail snapper, or establishment of a common pool allocation for both sectors;
- Establishment of a limited-entry program for all federally-permitted South Atlantic for-hire fisheries; and
- Modifications to recreational snapper-grouper regulations based on concepts developed through the Council's Visioning process.

This memo may be updated prior to the Commission meeting as additional information becomes available.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff may request direction on Council-related items, depending upon information released prior to the Council meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management