

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: December 12, 2018
Subject: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Report

Purpose:

Update Commissioners on actions from the South Atlantic Council's (SAFMC's) September 30 – October 4 meeting in Charleston, SC, and their December 3-7 meeting in Kitty Hawk, NC.

Summary:

At their September/October meeting, the SAFMC approved several changes that now await approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce:

- Spiny lobster: Alignment of current and future federal regulations with FWC regulations. This will allow FWC to propose spiny lobster changes for federal waters directly to NOAA Fisheries.
- Commercial snapper grouper regulations: Modifications to minimum size limits, fishing season structure, and trip limits for several species. These changes, which are supported by Florida's fishermen, include lowering the gray triggerfish minimum size limit to match FWC's regulations.
- King mackerel: Increases to commercial trip limits off east Florida.
- Vermilion snapper and black sea bass quotas: Increases to the vermilion snapper quota and reductions to the black sea bass quota based on the results of the latest stock assessments. Neither stock is overfished nor undergoing overfishing; however, the black sea bass assessment showed the current quota is too high and should be significantly reduced.

At this meeting, the SAFMC voted to end consideration of a limited-entry program for federal snapper grouper for-hire permits following public feedback that largely opposed the program.

The SAFMC elected Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management Director, as their Chair.

The next SAFMC meeting is the week prior to the Commission's December meeting; briefing documents will be updated following the SAFMC meeting. Some of the items they may take final action on include:

- Yellowtail snapper: Revising the commercial accountability measures, which could delay commercial in-season closures. Although this action was once largely supported by commercial yellowtail fishermen, some leaders in the fishery now oppose the proposed change.
- Recreational snapper grouper regulation changes: Modifying recreational snapper grouper regulations to reduce the gray triggerfish minimum size limit to match FWC's 12-inch size limit, create a season and aggregate bag limit for deep-water groupers and tilefish, and modify the 20-fish aggregate bag limit to allow anglers to retain a maximum of 10 fish of a single species.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff may request direction on items following the SAFMC December meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management