

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** October 2, 2019  
**Subject:** South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Report

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## **Purpose:**

To report on actions from the SAFMC's September 16 through 20 meeting in Charleston, SC, and provide information on efforts to gather public input on Atlantic state waters recreational bag limits for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper.

## **Summary:**

The SAFMC is scheduled to meet the third week of September, two weeks prior to the October Commission meeting. Briefing documents will be updated as soon as possible after the SAFMC meeting.

The SAFMC is expected to take final action on best practices for snapper grouper fishing. They may require recreational and commercial fishermen have a descending device on board their vessels. They may also require harvesters use only non-stainless steel hooks to target snapper grouper species with hook and line gear. In areas where circle hooks are required, the SAFMC is expected to ban use of off-set hooks. Stakeholders support these best fishing practices, especially the descending device requirement, because they should increase post-release survival rates of discarded fish.

Anticipated SAFMC discussion topics include public comment on future red snapper seasons, several items related to the dolphin wahoo fishery, and king mackerel commercial vessel limits.

The SAFMC may approve public hearings for proposed actions related to shrimp, golden crab, and deep-water corals. The SAFMC is considering expansion of golden crab and rock shrimp fishing areas within or adjacent to deep-water coral protected areas. For golden crab, they are considering vessel tracking to monitor harvester compliance with fishing areas. At the request of shrimpers, the SAFMC may replace their various provisions for shrimp trawl transit through protected areas with a single, uniform provision to ease compliance.

FWC staff are currently gathering public input on Atlantic state waters bag limits for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper. In the past, SAFMC and NOAA Fisheries asked FWC to consider reducing Atlantic state waters recreational bag limits for these deep-water species and aligning them with the federal waters bag limits because it could help prevent in-season federal closures.

## **Staff Recommendation:**

No direction requested at this time; however, input of SAFMC items is always welcome.

## **Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management