



This is a review and discussion of actions and discussions at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) March 3-7, 2014, meeting in Savannah, GA.

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Snapper Grouper Visioning Process



- Part of the Council's strategic planning process to develop long term management goals for the snapper grouper fishery
- Stakeholders encouraged to attend upcoming "port meetings" to submit comments and ideas
- Florida meetings to be held March 25 – April 2



The Council is undergoing a strategic planning process to develop a long-term "vision" for its snapper grouper fishery. As part of this process, the Council will hold a series of informal public visioning workshops called "port meetings" this spring. Public input about the overall goals of the snapper grouper fishery will be collected at these workshops and be used to help develop a proactive management plan for the fishery. Topics to be discussed include conflicting regulations, discards, electronic monitoring and reporting, allocations, communication with stakeholders, and alternative management methods. Florida meetings will be held in late March and early April. Dates, locations, and times for all Florida meetings are listed on slide 8 of this presentation.

Bringing Fish Back From the Bahamas - Update



- Council is considering action that would allow recreational anglers to bring dolphin and wahoo caught in the Bahamas back to the U.S. through federal waters as fillets
 - Can already bring snapper and grouper back as fillets



The Council continued discussions on an amendment that would allow anglers fishing in the Bahamas to bring dolphin and wahoo fillets back to the U.S. through federal waters. Current federal regulations require that dolphin and wahoo must be maintained in whole condition until landed. However, federal regulations provide an exception that allows anglers to bring lawfully harvested snapper and grouper back from the Bahamas through U.S. waters as fillets instead of whole fish. Recreational anglers who fish in Bahamian waters would like to be able to bring back filleted dolphin and wahoo in addition to snapper and grouper.

The Council discussed several options in the amendment, such as leaving the skin intact on fillets for identification purposes and requiring anglers bringing fillets back from the Bahamas to have stamped and dated passports onboard their vessel. These options could help aid in enforcement if the Council moves forward with this amendment. The Council will continue to discuss this amendment at future meetings and is trying to finalize the amendment at their September meeting.

King Mackerel, Spanish Mackerel, and Cobia – Final Actions



- Joint amendments with Gulf Council
- Small modification to king mackerel commercial trip limits and adjusted fishing year for a commercial king mackerel zone, adjustment to cobia annual catch limit
- Modifications to annual catch limits for Gulf and Atlantic group Spanish mackerel
- Gulf Council scheduled to take final action in April



At the March 2014 meeting, the Council took final action on an amendment (20B) that would modify trip limits and fishing seasons for Gulf king mackerel and adjust the annual catch limit for Gulf and Atlantic cobia. This amendment has been developed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). The Council removed an action from the amendment that could have changed the commercial king mackerel fishing season opening date for the Western Zone (federal waters off Texas – Alabama). The Council decided to remove this action because both councils have been unable to agree on an opening date for the Western Zone. If the Gulf Council removes this action at their April 2014 meeting and approves the resulting final amendment, the amendment will be sent to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

The Council also took final action approving Framework Amendment 1 that would increase annual catch limits for Gulf and Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. This amendment must be approved by the Gulf Council at their April 2014 meeting before being submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Other actions for the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries such as sector allocations and separate commercial permits for the Gulf and Atlantic fisheries are on the horizon, but on hold until after the new king mackerel stock assessment that is underway is completed.

Snapper Grouper Discussions



- Removing or modifying the Nov. 1 – April 30 black sea bass commercial pot closure
- Modifications to acceptable biological catches for data-poor species
- Gray triggerfish measurement method
- Accountability measures for snapper grouper species
- Management changes for snowy grouper



The Council continued discussions on several snapper grouper management measures. Public meetings on these potential management changes were held in late January to collect public input.

The Council discussed an amendment that could modify the annual Nov. 1 – April 30 commercial black sea bass pot closure that was originally enacted to help minimize fishery interactions with Endangered Species Act-listed right whales. The Council is considering modifying this closure to balance the economic needs of the commercial black sea bass pot fishermen while still protecting endangered right whales. There are currently several other restrictions on the use of black sea bass pots that may help limit risk of right whales interacting with black sea bass pots.

The Council also discussed modifying acceptable biological catches for several data-poor species that have not had stock assessments and have limited data available. Also in this amendment, the Council is considering modifications to gray triggerfish management, including setting recreational and commercial size limits and commercial seasons and trip limits.

Finally, the Council is discussing changes that would make accountability measures in the snapper grouper fishery more consistent across species. Accountability measures are management tools designed to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded and are established for both recreational and commercial fisheries. There are both in-season accountability measures to prevent the annual catch limits from being exceeded when monitoring of the fishery allows and post-season accountability monitoring (e.g., an annual catch limit reduced by the amount of the quota overage) when fishery monitoring is much more delayed as in most recreational fisheries.

Recently, a snowy grouper stock assessment was completed and indicated that snowy grouper is no longer experiencing overfishing, but still overfished. The Council's Science and Statistical Committee will review the stock assessment in April and present a report to the Council in June. In the meantime, the Council began discussing an amendment that would modify annual catch limits and other management measures for the recreational and commercial sectors to help rebuild the stock.

No Direction Requested



- Input on Council items is welcome
- Next Council meeting is June 9-13 in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL



No specific direction on Council issues is requested at this time, but staff welcomes Commission direction on any Council issues. The next Council meeting will be held in Ponte Verde Beach, FL, on June 9-13.

The following slides are considered backup material and are not anticipated to be part of the Commission meeting presentation



Florida Port Meetings



- St. Augustine – March 25
- Titusville – March 26
- Stuart – March 27
- Lake Park – March 27
- Key West – March 31
- Marathon – April 1
- Key Largo – April 2



St. Augustine - March 25: 1:30 – 3:30 PM (Meeting 1) and 6:00 – 8:00 PM (Meeting 2) at the St. Augustine Shrine Club

Titusville – March 26: 2:00 – 4:00 PM (Meeting 1) and 6:00 – 8:00 PM (Meeting 2) at Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant

Stuart – March 27: 1:30 – 3:30 PM at the Port Salerno Civic/Community Center

Lake Park – March 27: 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Lake Park Marina

Key West – March 31: 4:00 – 6:00 PM at the Gato Building (1st Floor Conference Room)

Marathon – April 1: 4:00 – 6:00 PM at Keys Fisheries

Key Largo – April 2: 4:00 – 6:00 PM at Key Largo Fisheries