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South Atlantic Fishermen's Association

Dear Commercial Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Permit Holder:

At the December 2011 Council meeting, we and other fishermen will ask the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to pursue a Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program for a handful of snapper grouper species (see below). Given the dire economic situation of many fishermen, we will ask the Council to allow fishermen to join and begin fishing in this program starting in the 2013 fishing year.

We will propose a voluntary ITQ program that:

- Gives fishermen the right to choose to join either the Voluntary ITQ program or remain in the current management program to fish for those species and areas listed below.
- Includes the following species able to be harvested in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia: **vermilion snapper, gag, scamp, red grouper, black sea bass, gray triggerfish, and red porgy**.
- Creates an aggregate allocation for the species included in the Voluntary ITQ program based on the historic landings of those fishermen that join the program.
- Allocates a percentage of the Voluntary ITQ program's allocation to each permit entered into the program based on an allocation formula recommended for each species by the fishermen;
- Eliminate some regulations such as trip limits for participants in the Voluntary ITQ. All MPAs and some seasonal spawning closures would remain; [1]
- Requires participants in the Voluntary ITQ program to install a vessel monitoring system (VMS). We will ask NMFS to reimburse the permit owner for the costs of purchasing the VMS units for members of the Voluntary ITQ program;
- Requires vessels with permits enrolled in the Voluntary ITQ program to hail out and then hail into pre-approved landing locations – and to offload during approved hours;
- Allows fishermen in the Voluntary ITQ to exchange and transfer their quota based on their fishing plans and needs; and
- Allows fishermen to manage their fishing across the entire fishing year (with the possible exception of remaining closures for spawning seasons).

We ask you to consider joining us in signing a letter to ask the Council to move forward on developing a Voluntary ITQ program for the 2013 fishing season. If you sign this letter, you are NOT obligated to join the Voluntary ITQ program. You are only asking the Council allow you to have the option to do so.

Thank you,

South Atlantic Fishermen's Association

[1] We will ask the Council to conduct scientific analysis to determine which of the current regulations (size limits, trip limits, area closures, spawning season closures) can be reduced or eliminated for the voluntary ITQ.

Proposed Voluntary ITQ for Snapper Grouper Species
North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia

Question: What species would be included in the Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program?

Answer: Vermilion snapper, gag, scamp, red grouper, red porgy, black sea bass, gray triggerfish.

Question: Who could participate in the voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program?

Answer: Anyone with a commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit could choose to participate in the voluntary ITQ program.

Question: Where could people participate in the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Participants in the Voluntary ITQ could catch these species (vermilion snapper, gag, scamp, red grouper, red porgy, black sea bass, and gray triggerfish) anywhere south of the North Carolina/Virginia border and north of the Georgia/Florida border within the existing federal South Atlantic management area.

Question: How would the Voluntary ITQ relate to management of the rest of the South Atlantic fishery for the identified species?

Answer: NMFS would administer two separate management programs, one that uses existing regulations and one that uses a Voluntary ITQ program. At least six months prior to the beginning of each fishing year, permit holders not already participating in the program would choose to enroll all of their permits (and vessels) in either the Voluntary ITQ program or the traditional management program.

Question: How would existing regulations change for the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Elimination of some regulations such as trip limits is expected. All MPAs and some seasonal closures would remain. The specific changes in regulations for the fishermen participating in the Voluntary ITQ would be finalized prior to fishermen needing to choose between the Voluntary ITQ and the traditional management program.

Question: How would the ITQ be monitored and enforced?

Answer: Vessels in the Voluntary ITQ would use logbooks, VMS, would hail out and hail in and would immediately report landings at the dock through an online reporting system. There would be restricted landing hours and approved landing locations.

Question: Who would be eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed ITQ?

Answer: Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the voluntary ITQ program. As described below, they would need to have quota available to harvest fish included in the Voluntary ITQ.

Question: Would there be a process for reviewing and appealing the initial allocations?

Answer: The Regional Administrator (RA) would review, evaluate, and render final decision on appeals. Hardship arguments would not be considered. Logbooks and state trip tickets could be used to file an appeal, and a total of 3% of the current commercial quota would be initially set-aside to resolve appeals. Any amount remaining in the 3% set-aside after the appeals process is completed would be proportionately distributed back to the permit holders.

Question: Who would be eligible to receive or acquire quota after the initial allocation?

Answer: After the initial allocation, only commercial fishermen who join or already are members of the Voluntary ITQ would be able to acquire or trade for quota. For these purposes, commercial fishermen would be defined as: owners of at least one operating fishing vessel, hired captains or hired crew.

Question: Would there be a limit to how much quota an individual can buy or lease?

Answer: The current regulations for the commercial SASG fishery do not limit how many permits an individual can acquire -- and the Voluntary ITQ will not change this fishery-wide regulation. Since the proposed ITQ is voluntary, concentration of the fishery wil be monitored. Therefore, no concentration cap would initially be necessary.

Question: Could someone hold commercial quota and not harvest fish commercially (aka, use-it-or-lose-it)?

Answer: If a permit is enrolled into the voluntary ITQ program, any quota associated with that permit is considered inactive and will be revoked if the ratio of individual permit landings to available landings for that species and that permit over a moving three-year period is less than 30%. Quota is NOT considered inactive if (i) it has been leased to another commercial fisherman or (ii) fishing activity has been affected by the death or disability of the permit holder.

Question: What would happen if a permit holder lands more quota than he holds?

Answer: Prior to taking the next fishing trip, permit holders will need to reconcile their quota balance to their landings for each species and have annual pounds available for the next fishing trip. At the end of the fishing year, permit holders can be no more than 10% above their available allocation on their last trip of the season for each species. Any overage is taken off the following year's allocation.

Question: How would adjustments in the commercial ACL be distributed to the permit holders?

Answer: Adjustments in the commercial quota are allocated proportionately among permits enrolled in the voluntary catch share based on the percentage of the commercial quota allocated to the voluntary ITQ program that each holds at the time of the adjustment.

Question: How much would this Voluntary ITQ cost?

Answer: NMFS would be requested to provide a range of estimated costs for the Voluntary ITQ program based on different levels of participation, ideally nine months before the fishing season and three months before fishermen would be required to make a decision whether to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ. The cost recovery for management of the Voluntary ITQ would cost 3% or less of the gross landed value of the species included. Fees would be the responsibility of the quota holder.

Eligibility & Initial Allocation
Proposed Voluntary ITQ – Snapper Grouper Species
North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia

Question: Who would be eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ program. As described in the related FAQ document, they would need to have quota available to harvest fish included in the Voluntary ITQ.

Who would be eligible to receive an initial allocation of quota for the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Individuals (and individual fishing companies) holding valid commercial unlimited snapper grouper permits with some landings of included species and owning at least one operating fishing vessel would be eligible for an initial allocation of quota for the proposed Voluntary ITQ program.

How would the quota initially be allocated?

Fishermen choosing to participate in the Voluntary ITQ program would be allocated a percentage of the total commercial quota for each species. Each individual's share would be equal to the total landings recorded on their SASG permits, with 50% of the allocation based on the 2001-2009 period and 50% of the allocation based on the 2007-2009 period, divided by the sum of these calculations for all SASG permits during the same period. The landings history for "2-for-1" permits will be combined for all species included in the voluntary ITQ program.

How much total quota will be allocated to the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

The allocation of quota to each program (existing regulations program and Voluntary ITQ program) will be based on the collective catch history for permits that join each program.

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Dear Commercial Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Permits Holder:

At the December 2011 Council meeting, we and other fishermen will ask the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to a Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program for golden tilefish. Given the dire economic situation of many fishermen, we will ask the Council to allow fishermen to join and begin fishing in this program starting in the 2013 fishing year.

We will propose a Voluntary ITQ program that:

- Gives fishermen the right to choose to join either the Voluntary ITQ program for golden tilefish or remain in the current management program to fish for golden tilefish.
- Permit owners choosing to participate in this pilot would choose to enter all or none of their commercial unlimited snapper grouper permits in the Voluntary ITQ;
- Creates an aggregate allocation of golden tilefish for the Voluntary ITQ program based on the historic landings of those fishermen that join the program.
- Allocates a percentage of the Voluntary ITQ program's allocation to each permit entered into the program based on an allocation formula recommended for golden tilefish by the fishermen;
- Eliminate some regulations such as trip limits for participants in the Voluntary ITQ program. All MPAs and some seasonal closures would remain;[1]
- Requires participants in the Voluntary ITQ program to install a vessel monitoring system (VMS). We will ask NMFS to reimburse the permit owner for the costs of purchasing the VMS units for members of the Voluntary ITQ program;
- Requires vessels with permits enrolled in the Voluntary ITQ program to hail out and then hail into pre-approved landing locations – and to offload during approved hours;
- Allows fishermen in the Voluntary ITQ to exchange and transfer their quota based on their fishing plans and needs; and
- Allows fishermen to manage their fishing across the entire fishing year (with the possible exception of remaining closures for spawning seasons).

We ask you to consider joining us in signing a letter to ask the Council to move forward on developing a Voluntary ITQ program for golden tilefish for the 2013 fishing season. If you sign this letter, you are NOT obligated to join the Voluntary ITQ program. You are only asking the Council allow you to have the option to do so in the future.

Thank you,

South Atlantic Fishermen's Association

[1] We will ask the Council to conduct scientific analysis to determine which of the current effort controls (size limits, trip limits, area closures, spawning season closures) can be reduced or eliminated for the voluntary catch share.

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Proposed Voluntary ITQ for Golden Tilefish
Federal South Atlantic Management Area

Question: What species would be included in the Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program?

Answer: Golden tilefish

Question: Who could participate in the Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program?

Answer: Anyone with a commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit could choose to participate in the voluntary ITQ program.

Question: Where could people participate in the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Members of the Voluntary ITQ could catch golden tilefish anywhere within the federal South Atlantic management area.

Question: How would the Voluntary ITQ relate to management of the rest of the South Atlantic fishery for the identified species?

Answer: NMFS would administer two separate management programs, one that uses existing regulations and one that uses a Voluntary ITQ program. At least six months prior to the beginning of each fishing year, permit holders not already participating in the program would choose to enroll all of their permits (and vessels) in either the Voluntary ITQ program or the traditional management program.

Question: How would existing regulations change for the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Elimination of some regulations such as trip limits are expected. All MPAs and some seasonal closures will remain. The specific changes in regulations for the fishermen participating in the Voluntary ITQ would be finalized prior to fishermen needing to choose between the Voluntary ITQ and the traditional management program.

Question: How would the ITQ be monitored and enforced?

Answer: Vessels in the Voluntary ITQ would use logbooks, VMS, would hail out and hail in and would immediately report landings at the dock through an online reporting system. There would be restricted landing hours and approved landing locations.

Question: Who would be eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed ITQ?

Answer: Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the voluntary ITQ program. Quota share or annual pounds for voluntary ITQ golden tilefish would be required to harvest fish.

Question: Would there be a process for reviewing and appealing the initial allocations?

Answer: The Regional Administrator (RA) would review, evaluate, and render final decision on appeals. Hardship arguments would not be considered. Logbooks and state trip tickets could be used to file an appeal. A total of 3% of the current commercial quota would be initially set-aside to resolve appeals. Any amount remaining in the three-percent set-aside after the appeals process has been terminated would be proportionately distributed back to the permit holders.

Question: Who would be eligible to receive or acquire quota after the initial allocation?

Answer: After the initial allocation, only commercial fishermen who join or already are members of the Voluntary ITQ would be able to acquire or trade for quota. For these purposes, commercial fishermen would be defined as: owners of at least one operating fishing vessel, hired captains or hired crew.

Question: Would there be a limit to how much quota an individual can buy or lease?

Answer: The current regulations for the commercial SASG fishery do not limit how many permits an individual can acquire – and the Voluntary ITQ will not change this fishery-wide regulation. Since the proposed ITQ is voluntary, concentration of the fishery will be monitored. Therefore, no concentration cap would initially be necessary.

Question: Could someone hold commercial quota and not harvest fish commercially (aka, use-it-or-lose-it)?

Answer: If a permit is enrolled into the voluntary ITQ program, any quota associated with that permit is considered inactive and will be revoked if the ratio of individual permit landings to available landings for that species and that permit over a moving three-year period is less than 30%. Quota is NOT considered inactive if (i) it has been leased to another commercial fisherman or (ii) fishing activity has been affected by the death or disability of the permit holder.

Question: What would happen if a permit holder lands more quota than he holds?

Answer: Prior to taking the next fishing trip, permit holders will need to reconcile their quota balance to their landings for each species and have annual pounds available for the next fishing trip. At the end of the fishing year, permit holders can be no more than 10% above their available allocation on their last trip of the season for each species. Any overage is taken off the following year's allocation.

Question: How would adjustments in the commercial ACL be distributed to the permit holders?

Answer: Adjustments in the commercial quota are allocated proportionately among permits enrolled in the voluntary catch share based on the percentage of the commercial quota allocated to the voluntary ITQ program that each holds at the time of the adjustment.

Question: How much would this pilot Voluntary ITQ cost?

Answer: NMFS would be requested to provide a range of estimated costs for the Voluntary ITQ program based on different levels of participation, ideally nine months before the fishing season and three months before fishermen would be required to make a decision whether to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ. The cost recovery for management of the Voluntary ITQ would cost 3% or less of the gross landed value of the species included. Fees would be the responsibility of the quota holder.

Eligibility & Initial Allocation Proposed Voluntary ITQ for Golden Tilefish
Federal South Atlantic Management Area

Who is eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ program. As described in the related FAQ document, they would need to have quota available to harvest fish included in the Voluntary ITQ.

Who would be eligible to receive an initial allocation of quota for the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Individuals (and individual fishing companies) holding valid commercial unlimited snapper grouper permits and owning at least one operating fishing vessel would be eligible for an initial allocation of quota for the proposed Voluntary ITQ program.

How would the quota initially be allocated?

Fishermen choosing to participate in the Voluntary ITQ program would be allocated a percentage of the total commercial quota for Golden Tilefish. Each individual's share would be equal to the total landings recorded on their SASG permits, with 50% of the allocation based on the 2001-2009 period and 50% of the allocation based on the 2007-2009 period, divided by the sum of these calculations for all SASG permits during the same period. The landings history for "2-for-1" permits will be combined for all species included in the voluntary ITQ program.

How much total quota will be allocated to the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

The allocation of quota to each program (existing regulations program and Voluntary ITQ program) will be based on the collective catch history for permits that join each program.

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Dear Commercial Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Permit Holder:

At the December 2011 Council meeting, we and other fishermen will ask the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to pursue a Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program for a handful of snapper grouper species (see below). Given the dire economic situation of many fishermen, we will ask the Council to allow fishermen to join and begin fishing in this program starting in the 2013 fishing year.

We will propose a program that:

- Gives fishermen the right to choose to join either the Voluntary ITQ program or remain in the current management program to fish for those species and areas listed in (2) below.
- Includes the following species able to be harvested in the Florida Keys (south of the Dade/Monroe county line): **snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, blueline tilefish**.
- Creates an aggregate allocation for the target species in the Voluntary ITQ program based on the historic landings of those fishermen that join the program.
- Allocates a percentage of the Voluntary ITQ program's allocation to each permit entered into the program based on an allocation formula recommended for each species by the fishermen;
- Eliminate some regulations such as trip limits for participants in the voluntary ITQ program. All MPAs and some spawning closures would remain;[1]
- Requires participants in the Voluntary ITQ program to install a vessel monitoring system (VMS). We will ask NMFS to reimburse the permit owner for the costs of purchasing the VMS units for members of the Voluntary ITQ program;
- Requires vessels with permits enrolled in the Voluntary ITQ program to hail out and then hail into pre-approved landing locations – and to offload during approved hours;
- Allows fishermen in the Voluntary ITQ to exchange and transfer their quota based on their fishing plans and needs; and
- Allows fishermen to manage their fishing across the entire fishing year (with the possible exception of remaining closures for spawning seasons).

We ask you to consider joining us in signing a letter to ask the Council to move forward on developing a Voluntary ITQ program for the species listed above for the 2013 fishing season. If you sign this letter, you are NOT obligated to join the Voluntary ITQ program. You are only asking the Council allow you to have the option to do so.

Thank you,

South Atlantic Fishermen's Association

[1] We will ask the Council to conduct scientific analysis to determine which of the current effort controls (size limits, trip limits, area closures, spawning season closures) can be reduced or eliminated for the voluntary catch share.

Proposed Voluntary ITQ
Snapper Grouper Species – Florida Keys

Question: What species would be included in the Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program?

Answer: Snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, blueline tilefish

Question: Who could participate in the Voluntary Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) program?

Answer: Anyone with a commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit could choose to participate in the voluntary ITQ program.

Question: Where could people participate in the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Members of the voluntary ITQ could catch species (snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, and blueline tilefish) anywhere south of the Miami-Dade county line within the existing federal South Atlantic management area.

Question: How would the Voluntary ITQ relate to management of the rest of the South Atlantic fishery for the identified species?

Answer: NMFS would administer two separate management programs, one that uses existing regulations and one that uses a Voluntary ITQ program. At least six months prior to the beginning of each fishing year, permit holders not already participating in the program would choose to enroll all of their permits (and vessels) in either the voluntary ITQ program or the traditional management program.

Question: How would existing regulations change for the Voluntary ITQ?

Answer: Elimination of some regulations such as trip limits is expected. All MPAs and some seasonal closures would remain. The specific changes in regulations for the fishermen participating in the Voluntary ITQ would be finalized prior to fishermen choosing between the voluntary ITQ and the traditional management program.

Question: How would the ITQ be monitored and enforced?

Answer: Vessels in the voluntary ITQ would use logbooks, VMS, would hail out and hail in and would immediately report landings at the dock through an online reporting system. There would be restricted landing hours and approved landing locations.

Question: Who would be eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed ITQ?

Answer: Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the voluntary ITQ program. As described below, they would need to have quota available to harvest fish included in the Voluntary ITQ.

Question: Would there be a process for reviewing and appealing the initial allocations?

Answer: The Regional Administrator (RA) would review, evaluate, and render final decision on appeals. Hardship arguments would not be considered. Logbooks and state trip tickets could be used to file an appeal. A total of 3% of the current commercial quota would be initially set-aside to resolve appeals. Any amount remaining in the three-percent set-aside after the appeals process has been terminated would be proportionately distributed back to the permit holders.

Question: Who would be eligible to receive or acquire quota after the initial allocation?

Answer: After the initial allocation, only commercial fishermen who join or already are members of the Voluntary ITQ would be able to acquire or trade for quota. For these purposes, commercial fishermen would be defined as: owners of at least one operating fishing vessel, hired captains or hired crew.

Question: Would there be a limit to how much quota an individual can buy or lease?

Answer: The current regulations for the commercial SASG fishery do not limit how many permits an individual can acquire -- and the voluntary ITQ will not change this fishery-wide regulation. Since the proposed ITQ is voluntary, excessive concentration of the fishery will be monitored. Therefore, no concentration cap would be initially necessary.

Question: Could someone hold commercial quota and not harvest fish commercially (aka, use-it-or-lose-it)?

Answer: If a permit is enrolled into the voluntary ITQ program, any quota associated with that permit is considered inactive and will be revoked if the ratio of individual permit landings to available landings for that species and that permit over a moving three-year period is less than 30%. Quota is NOT considered inactive if (i) it has been leased to another commercial fisherman or (ii) fishing activity has been affected by the death or disability of the permit holder.

Question: What would happen if a permit holder lands more quota than he holds?

Answer: Prior to taking the next fishing trip, permit holders will need to reconcile their quota balance to their landings for each species and have annual pounds available for the next fishing trip. At the end of the fishing year, permit holders can be no more than 10% above their available allocation on their last trip of the season for each species. Any overage is taken off the following year's allocation.

Question: How would adjustments in the commercial ACL be distributed to the permit holders?

Answer: Adjustments in the commercial quota are allocated proportionately among permits enrolled in the voluntary catch share based on the percentage of the commercial quota allocated to the voluntary ITQ program that each holds at the time of the adjustment.

Question: How much would this pilot Voluntary ITQ cost?

Answer: NMFS would be requested to provide a range of estimated costs for the Voluntary ITQ program based on different levels of participation, ideally nine months before the fishing season and three months before fishermen would be required to make a decision whether to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ. The cost recovery for management of the Voluntary ITQ would cost 3% or less of the gross landed value of the species included. Fees would be the responsibility of the quota holder.

Eligibility & Initial Allocation
Proposed Voluntary ITQ
Snapper Grouper Species – Florida Keys

Question: Who would be eligible to harvest fish commercially in the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit holders would be eligible to enroll their permits in the Voluntary ITQ program. As described in the related FAQ document, they would need to have quota available to harvest fish included in the Voluntary ITQ.

Who would be eligible to receive an initial allocation of quota for the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

Individuals (and individual fishing companies) holding valid commercial unlimited snapper grouper permits and owning at least one operating fishing vessel would be eligible for an initial allocation of quota for the proposed voluntary ITQ program.

How would the quota initially be allocated?

Fishermen choosing to participate in the Voluntary ITQ program would be allocated a percentage of the total commercial quota for each species. Each individual's share would be equal to the total landings recorded on their SASG permits, with 50% of the allocation based on the 2001-2009 period and 50% of the allocation based on the 2007-2009 period, divided by the sum of these calculations for all SASG permits during the same period. The landings history for "2-for-1" permits will be combined for all species included in the voluntary ITQ program.

How much total quota will be allocated to the proposed Voluntary ITQ?

The allocation of quota to each program (existing regulations program and Voluntary ITQ program) will be based on the collective catch history for permits that join each program.