The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's

South Atlantic Update

Published for fishermen and others interested in marine resource conservation issues **Fall 2009**

Council Approves Measures to Protect Deepwater Coral in S.Atlantic

Historic measures aim to protect over 23,000 square miles of coral habitats

Forty miles off the coast of Cape Canaveral, Florida and nearly 1,400 feet below the surface of the ocean, scientists, locked in a tiny manned submersible, scan portions of deepwater coral reefs never before seen by humans. Beautiful stands of white *Lophelia* coral are illuminated by the submersible's powerful lights as tiny crabs, fish, sharks, and other creatures scurry about in the 45 degree waters. Researchers take samples using the submersible's robotic arm, retrieving tiny clues to better understand the composition of this deep sea habitat that may act as a barometer of the ocean's overall condition.

"Deep sea coral reefs are oases in the deep ocean, a province that was thought to be less diverse than shallower waters. The deepwater reefs provide huge biodiversity, which is required for a healthy ocean."
Dr. Steve Ross, UNC-W

In September, members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council voted unanimously to approve the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1, a move that will bolster the layer of protection for over 23,000 square miles of complex deepwater corals located off the coasts of the Carolinas, Georgia, and eastern Florida. The amendment, upon implementation by the Secretary of Commerce, will protect specific areas of sensitive habitat, deemed Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) that house an invaluable array of deepwater coral species living in waters ranging from 400 meters (1200 ft.) to 700 meters (2300 ft.) deep.

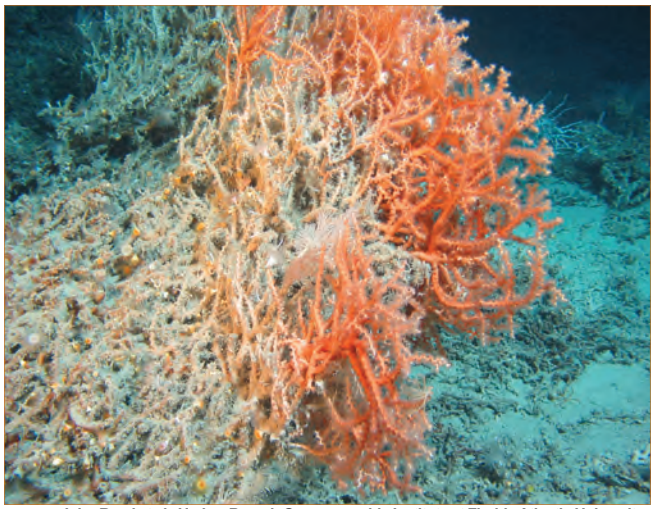
The South Atlantic region is home to what may be the largest contiguous distribution of deepwater corals in the world, including the common *Lophelia* coral, largely responsible for reef mound construction in these cold water areas. The parameters defined within the amendment aim to shield these areas from impacts associated with bottom-tending fishing practices.



Public Hearing Issues Summary Inside
Public comment period open until November 25th.

***Note!* Public Hearings Scheduled for November 2 - 16, 2009**
Measures proposed for Snapper Grouper fishery
See page 4 for details

December 6-11, 2009 Council Meeting
Atlantic Beach, NC
See page 11 for agenda



John Reed et al., Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University

Brightly colored colonies of *Madrepora oculata* coral were recently observed in deep waters off Cape Canaveral, Florida during a multi-day research cruise conducted in August 2009. The Council is proposing regulations to protect 23,000 square miles of deepwater coral reef areas off the South Atlantic - what may be the largest contiguous distribution of deepwater corals in the world.

"I am delighted, after five years of effort, that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has taken this historic step in the protection of deep sea coral habitat," said Council Chairman Duane Harris. "This effort involved working closely with golden crab and royal red shrimp fishermen and coral reef experts to craft measures that allow continued fishing while ensuring these coral areas, some of which are thousands of years old, are protected. The measures will also protect against any possible future shifts of fishing efforts to these coral areas."

At the beginning of the decade few people knew of the existence of vast areas carpeted with corals in deep waters off the South Atlantic coast of the U.S. ***(Continued page 10)***

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Editor's Note

The South Atlantic Update is published by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the Council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Kim Iverson, Editor, *South Atlantic Update*, 4055 Faber Place Dr., Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405, or may be sent via the internet; Email address: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

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Council Member Susan Shipman to Retire as Representative for Georgia DNR Coastal Resources Division



Susan Shipman

After a seasoned career that has spanned 31 years with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Susan Shipman will retire December 1, 2009, serving the agency for the past 7 years as the director of the Coastal Resources Division.

For 22 of those years, Susan has been an integral of part the federal fishery management process in her role as the designee for the State of Georgia on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Appointed to the Council in 1987, Susan has participated in nearly 86 Council meetings, working tirelessly to balance her work at the state level with her responsibilities as a Council representative. She served as chair and vice-chair of the Council from 1990 to 1992, and is well respected by her colleagues for her extensive knowledge of fisheries issues.

"It has been my high honor to serve with Susan Shipman on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council," said Council Chairman Duane Harris. "She has the unique ability to cut to the chase and formulate motions that move the Council forward. And, her institutional knowledge of Council matters, including those from over a decade ago, is nothing short of phenomenal. She will be seriously missed as she retires from her position with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources," said Chairman Harris. "But we know we can call on her to help in the 'memory department' as we move forward."

Susan has dedicated her profession to protecting Georgia's environment. She began her career with the Division working on the Outer Continental Shelf Program, served as Program Leader of the Commercial Fisheries Program from 1981 to 1983 and became Chief of the Marine Fisheries Section in 1983. She was named Coastal Resources Director in 2002. Since 2002, the Division has managed over $9.4 million in grants and special projects that has resulted in $20 million of expenditures to support coastal natural and cultural resource conservation projects.

Susan has also served as Georgia's representative to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission from 1996 to 2009, serving as chair and vice-chair from 1999 to 2001. The Commission recognized Susan with its highest honor, the David H. Hart Award, in 2000.

At the Council's September meeting in Charleston, Susan addressed the Council during her last session as a member. "I want to take a point of personal privilege to thank you all so much for the many years of a wonderful working relationship," said Susan. "I am proud to have been on the Council serving with each and every one of you." Susan will attend the March 2010 Council meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia where she will be formally recognized for her service on the Council.

In the News:

Governor's South Atlantic Alliance Established

Governors of four Southeastern states announced on October 19, 2009 an agreement to work together to better manage and protect ocean and coastal resources, ensure regional economic sustainability and respond to disasters such as hurricanes.

The agreement establishes an alliance among North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Georgia. The South Atlantic Alliance will leverage resources from each state to protect and maintain healthy coastal ecosystems, keep waterfronts working, enhance clean ocean and coastal waters and help make communities more resilient after they've been struck by natural disasters.

The Alliance is a state-led partnership leveraging resources from the public and private sectors, business and industry communities, local governments, federal agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations to address regional priorities.
www.southatlanticalliance.org

New Regulations for Rock Shrimp Fishery Permits and Endorsements in the South Atlantic

The Final Rule for Shrimp Amendment 7 was published October 1, 2009, implementing new regulations affecting limited access endorsements for the fishery. According to the Council's Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel, the rock shrimp fishery has changed since limited access endorsements were first required. The fleet dynamics have changed due to economic factors, including fluctuating fuel prices and operating expenses, and imported shrimp products. The Council developed Amendment 7 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan based on those recommendations.


Offloading bags of rock shrimp

The amendment removes the landings requirement for endorsements, reissues endorsements lost due to various factors, requires that all South Atlantic rock and penaeid (white, brown, and pink) shrimp holders provide economic data, if selected, to allow NOAA Fisheries Service to conduct analysis and fully understand how proposed management measures will impact shrimp fishermen and dealers. The amendment also renames the limited access endorsement and open access permit .

New permits for all rock shrimp fishers will be required beginning January 27, 2010. Permits that will expire before January 26, 2010 must complete a renewal application. The new rule also impacts permit transfers.

Details are available from NOAA Fisheries Service at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/.

Red Snapper Management Update

Interim rule request still under review, Amendment 17A to establish long-term measures to end overfishing

Red snapper may arguably be one of the most heavily discussed species ever managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council - and for good reason. In order to meet mandates in the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper stocks, large area closures may be necessary for the entire snapper grouper fishery. The proposed closures would have the most widespread social and economic impacts of any decision in recent Council history.

The red snapper stock in the South Atlantic is undergoing overfishing and has been overfished for the past several decades, according to a stock assessment completed in 2008 through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process. The assessment, approved by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, shows the stock has been overfished for several decades, and despite regulations, overfishing continues.

The Council has heard from many fishermen, including those on its advisory panel, that fishermen are seeing more red snapper and larger fish now than in the past 15 years. The stock assessment suggests a relative increase in the red snapper population after the 1992, 20-inch size limit and 2 fish bag limit went into effect. (The majority of red snapper are harvested by recreational fishermen.)

However, the total red snapper population increase since 1992 is small compared to the large reductions that occurred prior to 1992, and the stock assessment indicates that the fishing mortality is 7.6 times higher than what is allowed by MSA. Age samples collected from the fishery, including over 1,000 recent samples, indicate a severe depletion of the oldest fish.

Because of the high bycatch mortality associated with the fishery, closing the red snapper fishery will not reduce fishing mortality enough to end overfishing. The Council is developing Amendment 17A to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper stocks through a closure of the fishery and additional area closures proposed to address bycatch.

Public hearings are scheduled from Key Largo, FL to Newport News, VA, and a **comment period is open until November 25, 2009.** The Council will review comments during its December meeting in Atlantic Beach, NC.



In March 2009, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS) use an interim rule provision to close the red snapper fishery to help address overfishing as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act until long-term measures to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock could be implemented. The request is still under review.

The Council is developing Amendment 17A that will close the red snapper fishery and in addition, includes alternatives for area closures to address severe overfishing for red snapper. The public is encouraged to comment on proposed regulations. ***Read more on page 5.***

The red snapper fishery continues to be open with a 20" size limit (commercial and recreational) and a 2 fish/per/day recreational bag limit. ***See page 7 for a regulations summary.***

Public Hearing Meetings Scheduled

Council seeks input on snapper grouper management measures

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is holding a series of public hearings regarding management measures proposed in three separate amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan for the South Atlantic Region (FMP). During the hearings, Council staff will provide overviews of the management alternatives for Amendments 17A, 17B and Amendment 18 and will be available to answer questions. Area Council members will be on hand to receive comments and recommendations. Formal comments received during the hearings will be recorded and distributed to all Council members for consideration in management decisions.

Can't attend a hearing? **The Council is accepting written comments until 5:00 PM on November 25, 2009.** Written comments may be submitted by email via the specific email addresses listed in the amendment overviews below or submitted to Bob Mahood, Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405. **Please specify the individual amendment and specifc management alternatives that are being addressed in all written comments.**

Copies of the public hearing documents and summaries are available on the Council's Web site at www.safmc.net or through the Council office. Live video streaming of the public hearings will be available. Details are available online.

Public Hearing Schedule

Meetings will be held from
3:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Note the 11/16/09 hearing will begin at 6:00 PM

- **November 2 - North Charleston, SC**
  Hilton Garden Inn, 5265 International Blvd.
  N. Charleston, SC 29418
- **November 3 - New Bern, NC**
  Hilton New Bern Riverfront, 100 Middle St.
  New Bern, NC 28562
- **November 5 - Pooler, GA**
  Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, 175 Bourne Ave.
  Pooler, GA 31322
- **November 10 - Key Largo, FL**
  Key Largo Grande, 97000 Overseas Hwy
  Key Largo, FL 33037
- **November 11 - Cape Canaveral, FL**
  Radisson at the Port, 8701 Astronaut Blvd.
  Cape Canaveral, FL 32920
- **November 12 - Jacksonville, FL**
  Crowne Plaza Riverfront, 1201 Riverplace Blvd.
  Jacksonville, FL 32207
- ***November 16 - Newport News, VA**
  VA Marine Resources Commission, 3rd Floor
  Newport News, VA 23607

Public Hearing Items

Snapper Grouper Amendment 17A

End overfishing of red snapper, set Annual Catch Limits, Accountability Measures, rebuild the red snapper stock and establish a red snapper monitoring program

A red snapper stock assessment, completed in February 2008 through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, determined the red snapper stock is undergoing overfishing and is overfished. Beginning in the 1950s the stock continuously declined for two decades, with stable but low levels since 1980. Estimates of annual biomass have been well below sustainable levels since the mid-1960s, with some small amount of recovery since implementation of current size limits in 1992.

The Council is proposing management measures in Amendment 17A to end overfishing of red snapper and rebuild the stock as required by the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The amendment will also establish a monitoring program for red snapper.

Depending upon the rebuilding strategy chosen by the Council, an 84 to 88 percent reduction in the total kill of red snapper is necessary to end overfishing. The Council's preferred rebuilding strategy would set an Annual Catch Limit for 2010 of 79,000 pound whole weight.

Email comments to: SGAmend17APH@safmc.net.

(Continued page 6)

Amendment 17A Management Alternatives Summary

The Public Hearing Document outlines all of the management alternatives proposed in Amendment 17A. Measures for consideration include:

- **A closure of the red snapper fishery (recreational and commercial) in the South Atlantic**

  Note: Because of bycatch mortality associated with the red snapper fishery, a closure will not achieve the necessary reductions to end overfishing and rebuild the stocks. As a result, ***in addition to a closure of the fishery,*** the Council is considering the following measures (the Council has not chosen a preferred alternative).

- **Area closures where fishing for all species in the snapper grouper management complex would be prohibited**

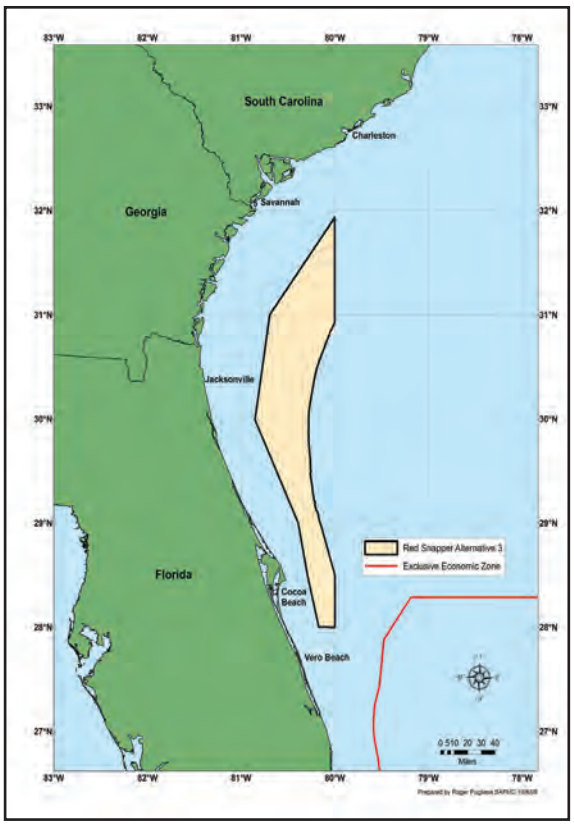
  The four areas under consideration (see next page) focus on areas where catches of red snapper are concentrated. Alternatives to allow black sea bass pots, spearfishing, and fishing for golden tilefish are also included in the amendment.

- **Establish a limited, designated snapper grouper fishing zone** (or zones) between 28 degrees N (approx. Stuart, FL) and 33 degrees N (Cape Romaine, SC) within the South Atlantic EEZ. Allocate a portion of the total ACL (79,000 lbs.) as non-directed removals, i.e., bycatch mortality. After subtracting the allotment for areas north and south of the fishing zone(s), divide the remaining ACL among commercial, recreational, and for-hire sectors within the fishing zone(s). Fishing within the permitted zone(s) would require tracking and accountability measures including Vessel Monitoring Systems for all sectors, reporting requirements, video monitoring and other requirements.

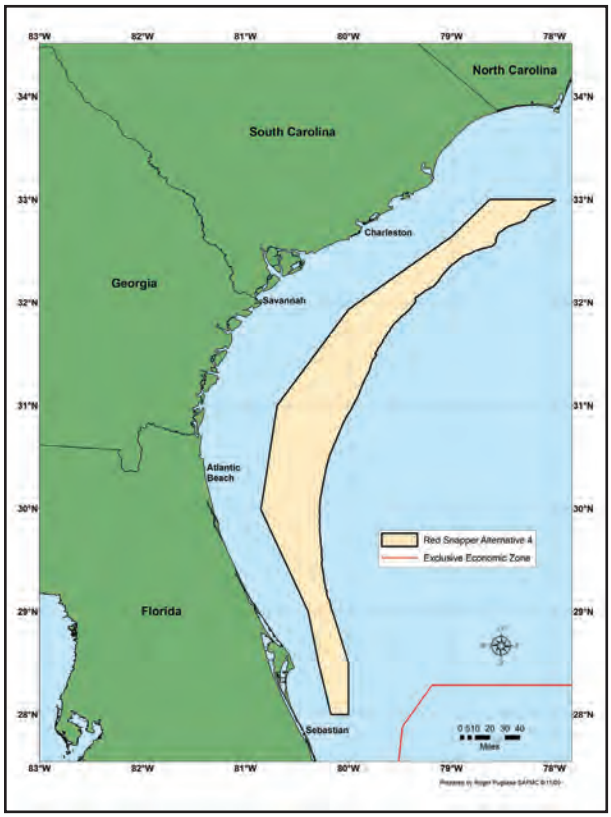
- Alternatives to **allow transit** through closed areas;

- Alternatives for requiring the **use of circle hooks**;

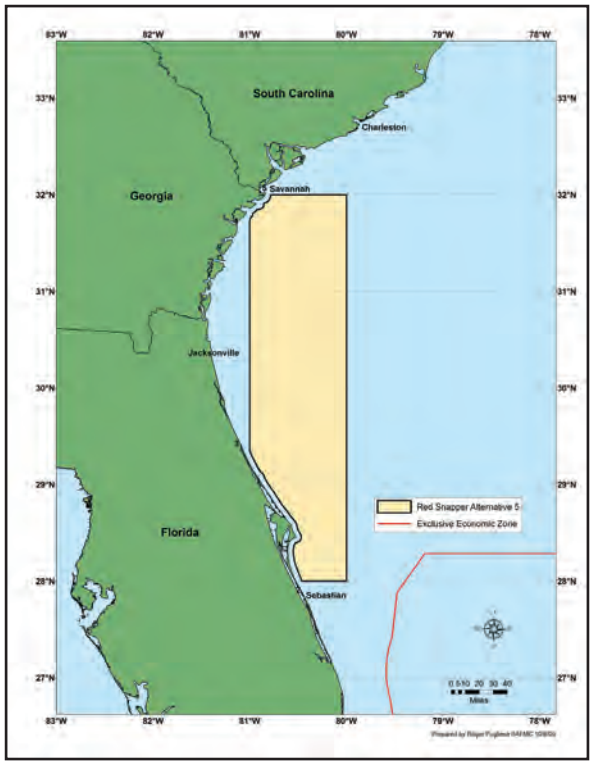
- Alternatives to establish a **red snapper monitoring program**, including both fishery-dependent (utilizing for-hire sector) and fishery-independent (research vessels).



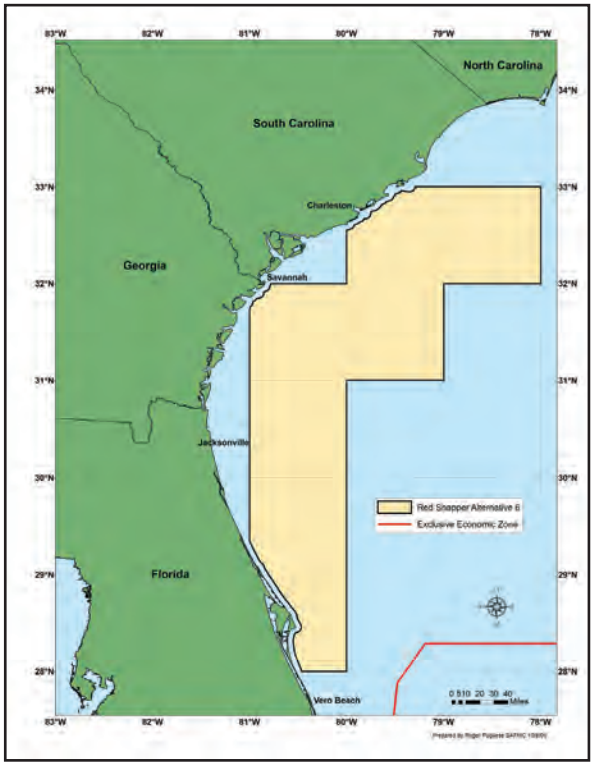
Closed Area Alternative 3



Closed Area Alternative 4



Closed Area Alternative 5



Closed Area Alternative 6

Alternatives for Snapper Grouper Area Closures

In ***addition*** to a year-round closure of the red snapper fishery, four alternatives for area closures are currently under consideration in Amendment 17A to end overfishing of red snapper. (Note: Alternative 1 is a "no action" alternative and Alternative 2 is a fishery closure.) The alternatives target areas where red snapper landings are highest and are based on logbook reporting grids. **Fishing for *all* species in the snapper grouper management complex (with proposed exceptions for black sea bass pots, spearfishing and fishing for golden tilefish) would be prohibited within the closed area.**

Alternatives 3 and 4 follow depth contours ranging from 98 feet (30 meters) out to 240 feet (73 meters), while Alternatives 5 and 6 follow logbook grid lines. Because of the mixed species nature of the snapper grouper fishery, the Council is considering area closures to reduce release mortality associated with the red snapper fishery and end overfishing. The Council has not chosen a preferred alternative.

Public Hearings ***(Continued)***

Snapper Grouper Amendment 17B

Specify ACLs and AMs for 9 species listed as undergoing overfishing, modify management measures to limit harvest to or less than the ACL, and update framework procedures

By 2010, fisheries subject to overfishing must have Annual Catch Limits (in pounds or numbers of fish) specified at levels that prevent overfishing and do not exceed the limits specified by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. This mandate is included as part of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act.

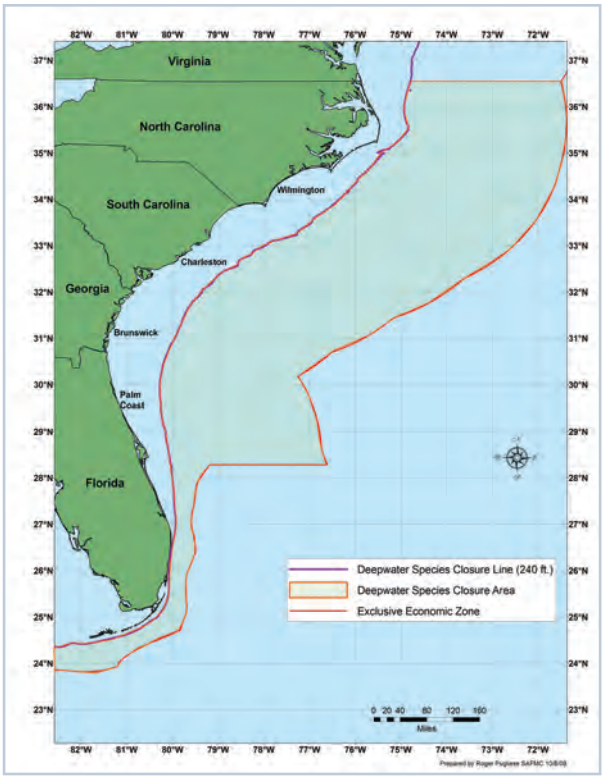
Accountability Measures (AMs) must also be established to make sure that Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) are not exceeded, such as implementation of an in-season monitoring program and corrective measures if overages do occur.

While Amendment 17A addresses overfishing and sets ACLs and AMs for red snapper, the Council is developing Amendment 17B with alternatives for setting ACLs and AMs for the other 9 species currently listed as undergoing overfishing. The nine species are: **golden tilefish, snowy grouper, speckled hind, warsaw grouper, black grouper, black sea bass, gag, red grouper, and vermilion snapper.** Amendment 17B also sets allocations for golden tilefish and updates management framework procedures. A framework procedure is a vehicle by which management measures may be easily modified, including ACLs and AMs.
Email comments to: SGAmend17BPH@safmc.net.

Amendment 17B Management Alternative Summary

The Public Hearing Document outlines all of the management alternatives proposed in Amendment 17B. Measures for consideration include:

- Establish an ACL of zero (0) for **speckled hind and warsaw grouper**.
- Establish an ACL for **snowy grouper** and reduce the daily bag limit to **1 snowy grouper per vessel per day**.
- **Deepwater closure to prohibit fishing for deepwater species** (snowy grouper, blueline tilefish, yellowedge grouper, speckled hind, misty grouper, queen snapper, and silk snapper) **seaward of 240 feet (40 fathoms) throughout the South Atlantic EEZ**. Alternatives allow fishing for golden tilefish because of low bycatch associated with the fishery.
- For **golden tilefish**, allow the current commercial quota (321,003 lbs. gutted weight) to serve as the ACL for both commercial and recreational sectors. Establish an **allocation** between commercial and recreational sectors with alternatives ranging from 97% commercial and 3% recreational to a 50/50 split.
- Aggregate ACL alternatives for **gag, black grouper and red grouper**.
- ACL values for **black sea bass** and **vermilion snapper** will be based on previous amendments (Amendments 13C and 16 respectively).
- **Accountability Measures** include closures for the commercial fishery once the quota is projected to be met. Recreational AMs include alternatives to use a range of landings to determine overages of ACLs, with the preferred alternative using a 3-year range beginning in 2012.
- Changes to **framework procedures** to make it easier to adjust ACLs and AMs and actions necessary to avoid exceeding ACLs such as bag limits, vessel limits, closed seasons and closed areas.



Proposed Closure for deepwater snapper grouper species in Amendment 17B. The closure would extend from 240 feet seaward.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 18

Amendment 18 includes several proposed actions that were developed in response to: A) fishing effort occurring on South Atlantic species in areas outside the Council's jurisdiction and the requirement to track those landings (Actions 1 & 8); B) the expectation of increasing fishing effort in the golden tilefish and black seabass fisheries (Actions 2, 3, & 6); C) the interstate competitive pressure placed on species with newly decreased commercial quotas and recreational allocations (Actions 4 & 5); and D) the desire to improve data reporting in the commercial, for-hire and private recreational sectors (Action 7).
Email comments to: SGAmend18PH@safmc.net.

Amendment 18 Management Actions

- Action 1: **Extend the range** of the snapper grouper FMP north ;
- Action 2: Limit participation and effort in the **golden tilefish fishery;**
- Action 3: Modifications to management of the **black sea bass pot fishery;**
- Action 4: Separate **snowy grouper quota** into regions/states;
- Action 5: Separate the **gag recreational allocation** into regions/states;
- Action 6: Change the **golden tilefish fishing year**;
- Action 7: Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of **fisheries statistics;**
- Action 8: Designate **Essential Fish Habitat** in new northern areas.

South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Complex Regulations Summary

Effective July 29, 2009 (changes in red)

List of Species in the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Management Unit

Snappers
Lane Snapper
Yellowtail Snapper
Gray Snapper
Mutton Snapper
Vermilion Snapper
Red Snapper
Black Snapper
Queen Snapper
Schoolmaster
Blackfin Snapper
Cubera Snapper
Mahogany Snapper
Dog Snapper
Silk Snapper

Groupers
Gag
Scamp
Red Grouper
Black Grouper
Speckled Hind
Snowy Grouper
Warsaw Grouper
Wreckfish
Rock Hind
Graysby
Yellowedge Grouper
Coney
Red Hind
Goliath Grouper
Misty Grouper
Nassau Grouper
Yellowmouth Grouper
Tiger Grouper
Yellowfin Grouper

Porgys
Red
Sheepshead
Grass
Jolthead
Saucereye
Whitebone
Knobbed
Longspine
Scup

Triggerfish
Gray
Queen
Ocean

Jacks
Greater Amberjack
Yellow Jack
Blue Runner
Crevalle Jack
Bar Jack
Almaco Jack
Lesser Amberjack
Banded Rudderfish

Tilefishes
Golden Tilefish
Blueline Tilefish
Sand Tilefish

Grunts
White Grunt
Black Margate
Porkfish
Margate
Tomtate
Smallmouth Grunt
French Grunt
Spanish Grunt
Cottonwick
Sailors Choice
Blue Stripe Grunt

Spadefishes
Spadefish

Wrasses
Hogfish
Puddingwife

Sea Basses
Black Sea Bass
Bank Sea Bass
Rock Sea Bass

Shallow-water Grouper Spawning Season Closure - January 1 through April 30th

Prohibition on **recreational and commercial** harvest of shallow-water grouper species (Gag, Black Grouper, Red Grouper, Scamp, Rock Hind, Red Hind, Coney, Graysby, Yellowfin Grouper, Yellowmouth Grouper, and Tiger Grouper).

Possession of a dehooking device is required (commercial and recreational) when fishing for snapper grouper species, as well as the use of such device as needed to release fish with a minimum of injury.

Recreational Retention Limits

Vermilion Snapper Recreational Closed Season
November 1 through March 31 - harvest prohibited

Aggregate bag limit of three (3) groupers per person/day

includes:*Black, *Gag, Misty, Red, Scamp, ***Snowy, **Speckled Hind, Tiger, **Warsaw, Yellowedge, Yellowfin, Yellowmouth Groupers, and also includes Blueline Tilefish, ***Golden Tilefish, Sand Tilefish, Coney, Graysby, Red & Rock Hind.

* **No more than 1 may be a gag or black grouper**
** 1 per vessel per trip. May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea
*** No more than 1 fish may be snowy grouper
*** No more that 1 fish may be golden tilefish

Ten (10) snapper, excluding vermilion snapper, per person/day with the following exceptions:

- Maximum of 2 red snapper
- Maximum of 2 cubera per person for fish 30" Total Length (TL) or larger off Florida. These are not included in the 10 snapper bag limit. Cubera less than 30" TL are included in the 10 fish bag limit.

In addition, fishermen may retain:

- **5 vermilion snapper per person/day**
- One amberjack per person/day (in **April**, limit 1 per person/day or 1 per vessel/trip, whichever is more restrictive)
- A limit of 15 black sea bass per person/day
- 5 hogfish per person/day, off the coast of East Florida
- 3 red porgy per person/day or 3 per trip, (whichever is more restrictive)

Other Snapper Grouper Complex Species:

Aggregate bag limit of 20 fish/person inclusive of all fish in the snapper grouper management unit currently not under bag limit, excluding tomtates and bluerunners. This means you may catch your bag limits and in addition retain up to 20 other fish for which there is no individual bag limit.

Goliath Grouper and Nassau Grouper
closed to all harvest or possession.
Wreckfish - only ITQ shareholders or their designees may harvest or possess wreckfish.

Note: All species in the snapper grouper management unit must be maintained with heads and fins intact. (Cobia, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, dolphin, and wahoo must be landed with heads and fins intact.) Goliath and Nassau grouper must be released by cutting the line and **not** removing the fish from the water.

Commercial Regulations

Commercial quota for vermilion snapper:
January through June - **315, 523 lbs.** (gutted weight), and July through December - **302,523 lbs.** (gutted weight)

Commercial quota for gag (began January 1, 2009):
Annual quota 352,940 lbs. (gutted weight) Once quota met, all shallow-water grouper will be closed to commercial harvest.

Summary Table for New Regulations

Regulations	NEW as of July 29, 2009 (Amendment 16)
Recreational	
Grouper aggregate bag limit	3 fish
Gag/black grouper bag limit within aggregate	1 gag *or* black grouper
Vermilion snapper bag limit	5 fish
Shallow-water grouper closed season	January - April
Vemilion snapper closed season	November - March
Commercial	
Shallow-water grouper closed season	January-April (all shallow-water grouper)
Gag quota	352,940 lbs. gutted weight
Vermilion snapper quota	315,523 lbs. gutted weight (January-June); 302,523 lbs. gutted weight (July - December)

RECREATIONAL RECREATIONAL RECREATIONAL

SNAPPER GROUPER RECREATIONAL REGULATIONS

Effective July 29, 2009 (changes in red)

Common Name	Local Names	Size Limit	Daily Bag Limits	Other Regulations
Black Grouper	Blackfin Grouper	24" TL	No more than (1) Black or Gag Grouper (included in 3 grouper per person) - *Closed January - April	
Black Seabass	Seabass, Blackfish	12" TL	15 per person	See "Allowable Gear"
Blackfin Snapper		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Cubera Snapper	Cuban Snapper	12" TL	2 per person (not to exceed 2 per boat) for fish 30" TL or larger off East Florida. See "Retention Limits"	
Dog Snapper		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Gag	Charcoal Belly	24" TL	No more than one (1) Black or Gag Grouper (included in 3 grouper per person) - *Closed January - April	
Gray Snapper	Mangrove Snapper	12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Gray Triggerfish	Triggerfish	12" TL off East Florida only	Included in 20 fish snapper grouper aggregate	See "Allowable Gear"
Greater Amberjack	Amberjack, A.J.	28" FL; no coring	1 per person/day. In April, limit to 1 per person/day or 1/vessel/trip, whichever is more restrictive	See "Allowable Gear"
Hogfish	Hog Snapper	12" FL	5 off east Florida only	See "Allowable Gear"
Goliath Grouper	Jewfish, Giant Seabass	Closed to possession or harvest		
Lane Snapper	Redtail Snapper, Candy Snapper	8" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Mahogany Snapper		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Mutton Snapper	Muttonfish	16" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Nassau Grouper		Closed to possession or harvest		
Queen Snapper		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Red Grouper	Grouper	20" TL	Included in 3 grouper per person	*Closed January - April See "Allowable Gear"
Red Porgy	Pink Porgy, Silver Snapper, Pink Snapper	14" TL	3 per person	See "Allowable Gear"
Red Snapper	Mules, Sow Snapper, Spot Snapper, American Snapper	20" TL	2 red snapper (included in 10 snapper per person)	
Scamp	Broomtail	20" TL	Included in 3 grouper per person	*Closed January - April See "Allowable Gear"
Schoolmaster		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Silk Snapper	Yelloweye Snapper	12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Snowy Grouper	Snowflake	None	1 per person	Included in 3 grouper bag limit
Speckled Hind	Strawberry Grouper, Kitty Mitchell, Calico Grouper	None	1 speckled hind per vessel per trip (included in 3 grouper per person). May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea.	
Golden, Blueline, Sand Tilefish	Golden - Rainbow Tilefish; Blueline - Gray Tilefish	None	Included in 3 grouper bag limit. Golden Tilefish limited to 1 per person per day.	
Vermilion Snapper	Beeliner, Night Snapper	12" TL	5 (in addition to the snapper bag limit)	*Closed Season November - March
Warsaw Grouper	Jewfish (Miscalled), Grouper	None	1 per vessel per trip (included in 3 grouper per person). May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea.	
Wreckfish	No recreational harvest allowed. Individual Transfer Quota (ITQ) Program in place. No one other than shareholders or their designees may possess wreckfish.			
Yellowfin Grouper		20" TL	Included in 3 grouper per person	*Closed January - April See "Allowable Gear"
Yellowtail Snapper		12" TL	Included in 10 snapper per person limit	See "Allowable Gear"
Yellowmouth Grouper	Yellowtail	20"TL	Included in 3 grouper per person	*Closed January - April See "Allowable Gear"

*January - April Shallow-Water Grouper Closure includes: gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper and tiger grouper

- Possession of a dehooking device is required on board a vessel when fishing for South Atlantic snapper grouper
- Allowable gear modifications available at www.safmc.net

Check the Council's website at www.safmc.net for updated information.

Snapper Grouper Commercial Regulations

Effective July 29, 2009 (changes in red)

Common Name	Local Names	Size Limit	Trip Limits	Other Regulations
Black Grouper	Blackfin Grouper	24" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April	
Black Seabass	Seabass, Blackfish	10" TL	Fishing year is June 1 - May 31. Annual Quota = 423,000 lbs. from 6/1/07 through 5/31/08; and 309,000 lbs. from 6/1/08 until modified. See p. 12 for sea bass pot restrictions. *	
Blackfin Snapper		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Cubera Snapper	Cuban Snapper	12" TL	2 per person (not to exceed 2 per boat) for fish 30" TL or larger off Florida.	
Dog Snapper		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Gag	Charcoal Belly	24" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April; Quota = 352,940 lbs.	
Gray Snapper	Mangrove Snapper	12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Gray Triggerfish	Triggerfish	12" TL off E. FLA only	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Greater Amberjack	Amberjack, A.J.	36" FL; no coring	Commercial fishery closed April 1 - 30; 1,169,931 lb. quota. No sale after quota is reached. No sale in April. Possession limited to 1/person/day or 1/person/trip, whichever is more restrictive. 1,000 lb trip limit until quota is reached.*	
Hogfish	Hog Snapper	12" FL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Goliath Grouper	Spotted Jewfish, Giant Seabass		Closed to possession or harvest	
Lane Snapper	Redtail Snapper, Candy Snapper	8" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Mahogany Snapper		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Mutton Snapper	Muttonfish	16" TL	During May and June, possession limited to 10 per person per day or per trip, whichever is more restrictive.	
Nassau Grouper			Closed to possession or harvest	
Queen Snapper		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Red Grouper	Grouper	20" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April	See "Allowable Gear"
Red Porgy	Pink Porgy, Silver Snapper, Pink Snapper	14" TL	Annual Quota = 127,000 lbs. January through April sale or purchase prohibited and possession is limited to 3 per person/day or 3 per person/trip, whichever is more restrictive. Commercial trip limit of 120 fish per trip May through December.	
Red Snapper	Mules, Sow Snapper, Spot Snapper, American Snapper	20" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Scamp	Broomtail	20" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April	See "Allowable Gear"
Schoolmaster		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Silk Snapper	Yelloweye Snapper	12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Snowy Grouper	Snowflake	None	Annual quota = 118,000 lb. with 175 lb. trip limit through 12/31/07. Annual quota after 12/31/07 = 84,000 lb. with 100 lb. trip limit until modified.*	
Speckled Hind	Strawberry Grouper, Kitty Mitchell, Calico Grouper	None	1 per vessel per trip	May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea.
Blueline, Sand Tilefish	Rainbow Tilefish; Blueline - Gray Tilefish	None	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Golden Tilefish	Golden	None	Annual Quota = 295,000 lbs. with 4,000 lb. trip limit until 75% of quota is taken, then trip limit reduces to 300 lbs. (If 75% of quota has not been taken on or before Sept. 1, the trip limit will not be reduced).*	
Vermilion Snapper	Beeliner, Night Snapper	12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear". Quota = 315,523 lbs. January through June; 302,523 lbs. July through December
Warsaw Grouper	Jewfish (Miscalled), Grouper	None	1 per vessel per trip	May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea.
Wreckfish	Individual Transferable Quota Program in place. No one other than shareholders or their designees may possess wreckfish. Spawning season closure: January 15-April 15.			
Yellowfin Grouper		20" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April	See "Allowable Gear"
Yellowtail Snapper		12" TL	None	See "Allowable Gear"
Yellowmouth Grouper	Yellowtail	20" TL	Shallow-Water Grouper closed season January - April	See "Allowable Gear"

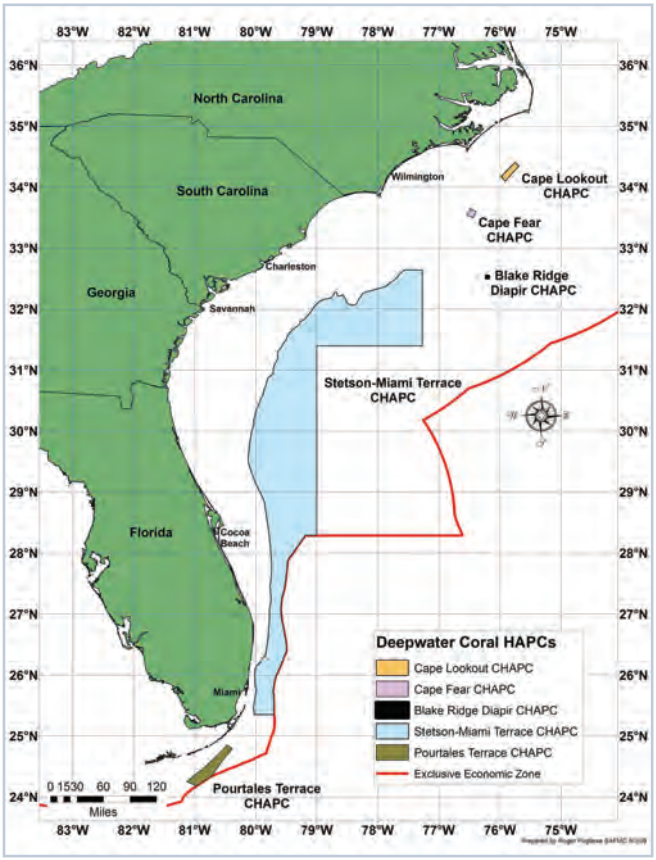
*After the commercial quota is met, all purchase and sale is prohibited and harvest and/or possession is limited to the recreational bag limit. This prohibition does not apply to fish harvested, landed, and sold prior to the quota being reached and held in cold storage by a dealer. Quotas are given in gutted weights.

- Possession of a dehooking device is required on board a vessel when fishing for South Atlantic snapper grouper
- Allowable gear modifications available at www.safmc.net

Check the Council's website at www.safmc.net for updated information.

COMMERCIAL COMMERCIAL COMMERCIAL

Deepwater Coral Protection *(Continued from page 1)*



The Council approved the establishment of a series of deepwater Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (CHAPCs) to help protect more than 23,000 square miles of deepwater coral ecosystems. Potential threats to the deep ocean include damage from fishing gear and energy exploration/development. Measures in the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1 would prohibit the use of bottom longline, trawl (mid-water and bottom), dredge, pot, or trap gear.

Scientists at that time were beginning to realize the extent and importance of these "hidden" ecosystems. In 2003, the Council tasked two of those scientists, Dr. Steve Ross, with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and John Reed, of the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, to compile two reports on what was known to date about the deepwater coral ecosystems in the region.

Based on these two reports and following the recommendation of its Habitat and Coral Advisory Panels, the Council quickly chose to move forward to protect the area from fishing impacts. A collaborative process involving conservationists, scientists, managers, and fishermen ensued and, over the following 5 years, culminated with the development of the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1. If approved for implementation by the Secretary of Commerce, regulations to establish the Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern would likely become effective in early 2010.

"In both the process involved and the results achieved, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has set a new standard for management of valuable ecosystems," stated Dr. Doug Rader, chairman of the Council's Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel. "I know of no other example where the finest science available was translated through interactive work with managers and fishermen into world-class protection." This impressive 'win-win' should be celebrated by all those who love the sea, and who appreciate eating sea food they know is harvested in ways that protect its bounty."



Thickets of *Lophelia pertusa* coral dominate deepwater ecosystems in the South Atlantic.

For many years fishermen targeting golden crab and royal red shrimp have set their traps and hauled their nets in areas now known to provide suitable habitat for deepwater corals. These small traditional fisheries, however, operate in distinct areas where fishermen can be sure their gear will not become tangled and possibly damaged. Therefore, "Allowable Golden Crab Fishing Areas" and "Shrimp Fishery Access Areas" within two of the proposed Coral HAPCs are included in the proposal to ensure the continued existence of these fisheries and the communities they support. "The Council itself initiated efforts to alert us of all the ramifications of the developing process and to minimize the impact on the golden crab fishery," said Bill Whipple, chairman of the Golden Crab Advisory Panel. "After dozens of meetings and hundreds of hours with numerous affiliates of the SAFMC, the outcome includes invaluable learning for all involved, deep-rooted respect, and a resolution of the problem which, given the limitations and complexities involved, preserves and maximizes the interests of everyone."

This impressive 'win-win' should be celebrated by all those who love the sea, and who appreciate eating sea food they know is harvested in ways that protect its bounty."

Dr. Doug Rader, Chairman, Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel

An international team of deepwater coral researchers, led by Dr. Ross, is currently conducting a series of research cruises that include exploration of the proposed deepwater coral protected areas off the South Atlantic coast. Using Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution's manned submersible, the Johnson Sea-Link, scientists were able to collect coral samples at depths over 1,000 feet and record never before seen portions of the expansive reefs during the first cruise in August 2009 off of Cape Canaveral, Florida. Coral samples allow scientists to chemically measure environmental changes such as ocean temperatures and productivity, often over thousands of years. The reefs may act as barometers for impacts associated with ocean acidification and climate changes. Scientists are also studying habitat distribution and the composition of deepwater communities. Certain species associated with the corals, such as sponges, may have biomedical applications in the treatment of cancer. "The Council is spearheading efforts to define the boundaries and protect these areas," said Dr. Ross, noting that fishing practices have damaged some deepwater coral areas in other parts of the world. "We're ahead of the game. These deepwater reefs are irreplaceable."

December 6-11, 2009 Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 9 at 5:30 PM

Informal *Q&A* Session

Join NMFS Regional Administrator, Dr. Roy Crabtree and Council Chairman Duane Harris to discuss current fisheries issues.

See Preliminary Agenda below



SAFMC Meeting Dates and Locations 2010 Schedule

March 1-5, 2010
Jekyll Island Club Hotel
371 Riverview Drive
Jekyll Island, GA 31527
Phone: 1/800-535-9547

June 6-11, 2010
Renaissance Orlando Hotel
5445 Forbes Place
Orlando, Florida 32812
Phone: 1/800-545-1985

September 13-17, 2010
Charleston Marriott Hotel
170 Lockwood Boulevard
Charleston, SC 29403
Phone: 1/800-968-3569

December 5-10, 2010
Hilton New Bern Riverfront
(previously Sheraton New Bern)
100 Middle Street
New Bern, NC 28562
Phone: 1/800-326-3745

Acronyms

ABC - Allowable Biological Catch

ACCSP - Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program

ACL - Annual Catch Limit

AM - Accountability Measure

ACT - Annual Catch Target

AP - Advisory Panel

ASMFC - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

BRD - Bycatch Reduction Device

EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone

EFH - Essential Fish Habitat

EFH/HAPC - Essential Fish Habitat/ Habitat Area of Particular Concern

FMP - Fishery Management Plan

HMS - Highly Migratory Species

ITQ - Individual Transferable Quota

LAPP - Limited Access Privilege Program

MSY - Maximum Sustainable Yield

MRFSS - Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey

NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service

OY - Optimum Yield

SEDAR - Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (stock assessment process)

SSC - Scientific & Statistical Committee

SFA - Sustainable Fisheries Act

TAC - Total Allowable Catch

VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting

December 6 - 11, 2009

Atlantic Beach Sheraton Oceanfront
2717 West Fort Macon Road
Atlantic Beach, NC
Phone: 800/624-8875 or 252-240-1155

For a detailed agenda contact the Council office toll free at 1-866 SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366. The agenda is also available on the Council's web site www.safmc.net

PRELIMINARY MEETING AGENDA

Sunday	**3:00-6:00**	**Scientific & Statistical Committee Meeting**
Monday	**8:30 - 5:30**	**Scientific & Statistical Committee Meeting**
	-Concurrent Sessions-	
	1:00 - 2:00	**Spiny Lobster Committee Meeting**
	2:00 - 3:00	**Law Enforcement Committee Meeting**
	3:00 - 4:00	**Joint Executive Finance Committees Meeting**
	4:00 - 5:00	**Protected Resources Committee Meeting**
Tuesday	**8:30 - 3:00**	**SSC Meeting *(continued)***
	-Concurrent Sessions-	
	8:30 - 11:00	**Ecosystem-Based Mgmt. Committee Meeting**
	11:00 - 12:00	**Dolphin/Wahoo Committee Meeting**
	1:30 - 2:30	**Mackerel Committee Meeting**
	2:30 - 5:00	**Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting**
Wednesday	**8:30 - 5:30**	**Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting *(continued)***
	5:30 PM	***Open Informal Public Q&A***
Thursday	**8:30 - 12:00**	**Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting *(continued)***
	1:30 - 5:30	**Council Session**
Friday	**8:00 - 12:00**	**Council Session**

2009 - 2010

Mark your calendar...

November 2-5	***Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission 68th Annual Meeting*** Newport, Rhode Island www.asmfc.org
November 17-20	***South Atlantic Fishery Independent Workshop*** Beaufort, NC www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar
December 8-10	***Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting*** Wilmington, DE www.mafmc.org
January 25-29	***SEDAR 19 Red Grouper and Black Grouper Stock Assessment Review Workshop*** Savannah, GA www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar
February 1-4	***Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting*** Mobile, AL www.gulfcouncil.org

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting
December 6-11, 2009
Atlantic Beach, NC

NOTE: **Public Hearings for Snapper Grouper Begin in November**
Public comment period open until November 25, 2009
See inside for details

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration

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