



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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David Cupka, Chairman
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Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director
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June 19, 2012

Dr. Roy E. Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA/NMFS Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Dear Dr. Crabtree:

Pursuant to Section 305(c)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as reauthorized, the Council requests measures addressing the red snapper fishery be implemented through emergency regulations. The Council, by a 12 to 1 vote, approved motions at their June 2012 meeting in Orlando, Florida to request that the National Marine Fisheries Service initiate emergency action to:

- Set the 2012 Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for red snapper = 13,067 fish;
- Set the 2012 recreational allocation at 71.93% of the ACL = 9,399 fish;
- Set the 2012 commercial allocation at 28.07% of the ACL = 3,668 fish or 20,818 pounds gutted weight;
- Established Recreational Accountability Measures (AMs) = track recreational landings and close the recreational sector when the recreational ACL is met or projected to be met;
- Established Commercial Accountability Measures (AMs) = track commercial landings and close the commercial sector when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met;
- Allow for the recreational ACL to be landed during 3-day weekends (Fri-Sun) the number of which would be determined by the agency and the opening dates would be subject to modification based on weather conditions;
- Open the season as soon as possible;
- Set the recreational bag limit at 1 fish per person per day with no size limit;
- Open the commercial season in 7-day mini-season increments subject to the remaining quota; and
- Allow for the commercial ACL to be landed under a 50-pound trip limit and without a size limit.

New information was provided to the Council shortly before the June Council meeting in the form of projections and the value for ABC in 2012. Subsequently, discussions were held between the NMFS SERO/SEFSC staff and Council staff pertaining to this issue. It was determined the ABC for 2012 could allow some directed harvest after accounting for 2012 discard mortalities. NMFS offered to prepare some options for the Council's consideration.

The Council reviewed the "Options for Possible Reopening of South Atlantic Red Snapper" prepared by NOAA Fisheries Service (**attached**) and chose to calculate the number of red snapper available for harvest using the average of 2010-11 estimated mortalities plus 2012 projected mortalities and comparing that number to the projected amount of discard mortalities in 2012. The resulting potential allowable landings were 13,067 fish (86,000 projected 2012 discard mortality – 72,933 estimated 2012 discard mortality). This was acceptable to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center based on their review of the materials and participation during the Council's deliberations.

The Council is requesting this emergency action to address this new information and to provide some regulatory relief and positive social/economic benefits to fishermen in the form of a limited opening in 2012. The Council is also preparing a plan amendment to address long-term management of red snapper in 2013 and future years.

We appreciate your assistance in expediting implementation of this request. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Bob Mahood.

Sincerely,



David Cupka
Chairman

cc: Council Members & Staff
Scientific & Statistical Committee
Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel
Bonnie Ponwith, Theo Brainerd & Tom Jamir, SEFSC
Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC
Phil Steele & Jack McGovern, NMFS SERO