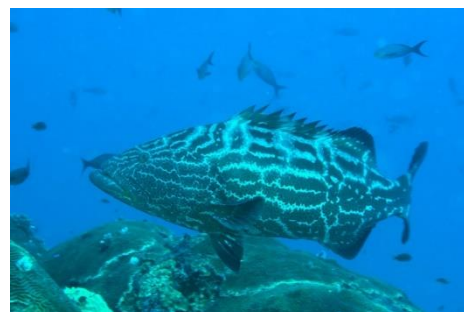


7/31/2023

Black Grouper (*Mycteroperca bonaci*)

Description:

Black grouper inhabits the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean as well as the western Atlantic from Massachusetts down to Southern Brazil. This fish is an olive gray to dark brown color with rectangular dark gray blotches on its side. The dorsal, caudal, and anal fins have dark inner margins with very narrow whitish outer margins. Black grouper can look very similar to gag (*Mycteroperca microlepis*). The most recent attempt to assess U.S. black grouper was SEDAR 48 (2017); however, that assessment was suspended due to data concerns. Based on the previous assessment (SEDAR 19, 2010), black grouper was not considered overfished or undergoing overfishing through 2008.



Gulf Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 19, 2010)

Natural mortality rate (M):	0.136
Reproductive maturity:	Age 50% of females reach maturity predicted is 6.5 years, or 33.7 inches (85.6 cm)
Maximum age:	33 years
Maximum weight:	220 lbs (100 kg) whole weight (FishBase)
Maximum length:	59.0 inches (150 cm) TL (FishBase)
Discard mortality:	20% fishery-wide

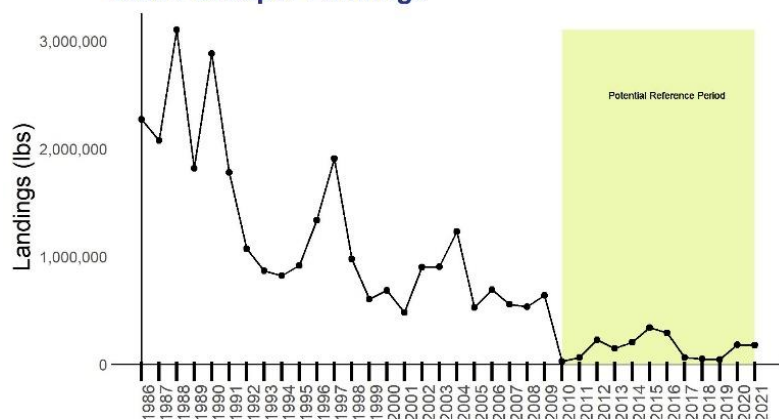
Life History and Distribution: (SEDAR 48, 2017)

Black grouper lives offshore and prefers rocky bottoms and coral reefs. Post-larvae are found in estuarine habitats; younger fish move into deeper waters as they mature. Adults are solitary but do form spawning aggregations. Spawning occurs during late winter months to early spring (November to May), with peak spawning from January through March in the southeastern U.S. Eggs are planktonic. Black grouper is a protogynous hermaphrodite; they all begin life as females then a certain percentage of the population transitions to terminal males. It is not known what governs the transition from female to male; it may be a combination of physiological, behavioral, and environmental cues.

Current Regulations:

Black grouper is part of the shallow water grouper (SWG) complex and is managed with a stock ACL of 710,000 lbs. The SWG complex is managed under an IFQ program for the commercial sector. The combined commercial ACL for the complex is 547,000 lbs gutted weight (recent landings shown below).

Black Grouper Landings



Recreational sector:

24-inch TL minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of 4 fish per person per day within the 4 grouper aggregate bag limit. A SWG seasonal closure occurs each year from February 1 – March 31 in the Gulf, seaward of a line that approximates the 20-fathom depth contour.

Commercial sector: 24-inch TL minimum size limit; there is no daily trip limit. Commercial fishermen must possess IFQ allocation to land black grouper.