



Tab B, No. 5(a)

Options:

# Modifications to Gag Grouper Recreational Retention Limits



# Regulatory Status

## SEDAR 72 2022: gag is overfished and experiencing overfishing as of 2019

- Amendment 56 establishes a rebuilding plan for gag:
  - Sets  $F_{MSY}$  proxy at  $F_{40\%SPR}$ ; sets OY at ACL when overfished, and at 90% of MSY when not overfished
  - Sets 18-year rebuilding plan, and revises sector allocation to 65% recreational and 35% commercial
  - Sets recreational ACT at 80% of recreational ACL
  - Sets commercial ACT at 95% of commercial ACL, and sets commercial quota equal to commercial ACT
  - Sets recreational fishing season to begin September 1 and close when the recreational ACT is projected to be met



# Council Motion

**RF56 was transmitted to NMFS on June 27, 2023; re-transmitted on September 11, 2023**

- Approved January 17, 2024
- NOAA Fisheries will soon publish final rule to implement

## **Council interest in measures for gag and black grouper:**

- *Motion: To direct staff to develop the following options for exploration in a framework action or amendment:*
  - Lowering the gag and black grouper recreational bag limit
  - Establishing a gag and black grouper recreational vessel limit
  - Spatial areas to protect spawning gag (*to be addressed in a separate document*)
- Black grouper actions removed by Council in 2023



# Council Goals: August 2023

- What to do about gag grouper?
  - Reduce fishing mortality on male gag
    - By default, extend the recreational fishing season duration
  - Constrain future harvests to the ACL
  - Increase the probability of rebuilding the stock
  - Avoid increasing discards
  - Reduce vulnerability of gag during spawning to increase spawning success



# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit

- Current recreational bag limits:
  - Gag: 2 per person per day (pp/pd), within 4 grouper aggregate
- Halving the bag limit (e.g., 2 fish to 1 fish pp/pd) is not estimated to double the fishing season duration
  - Most fishermen don't catch the bag limit



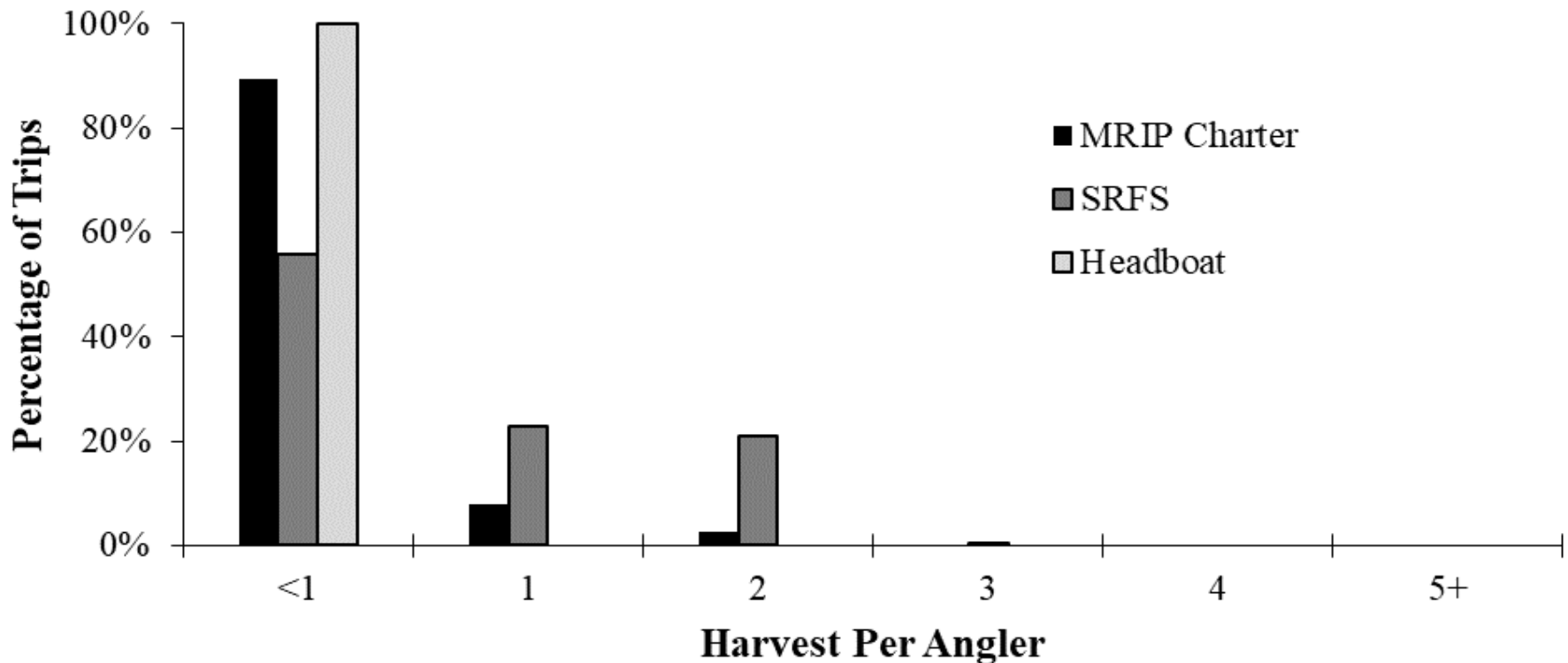
# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit

- Bag limit analysis:
- Years: 2020 to 2023
- Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS), headboats
- MRIP-FES, for-hire
  - Shore mode excluded from graph - almost 100%  $\leq$  1 fish/person
- SRFS, private vessel mode



# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit

- # gag harvest per angler, per trip: 2020 – 2023



- MRIP FES (n = 1,491 trips), SRFS (n = 244 trips), headboat (n = 2,325 trips)

# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit - Possibilities

- Reduce gag recreational bag limit to 1 fish per person per day:
  - No change for shore or headboat

<b>Proposed Bag Limit (# of fish)</b>	<b><u>Private Vessel</u> Predicted Change in Landings</b>	<b><u>MRIP For-hire</u> Predicted Change in Landings</b>
<b>2 pp/day</b>	0%	0%
<b>1 pp/day</b>	-21%	-1%





# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit - Possibilities

- **Including 2023 data**
- Assumes effort will be similar to that estimated in Sept and Oct of 2023
  - Effort in 2023 estimated to be *substantially higher* than in the same months in 2020 – 2022



# Management Options: Recreational Bag Limit - Possibilities

## Action 1, Alternative 1: No Action (2 gag per person per day)

Year	ACL*	ACT	Closure Date	Days Open	Percent Change
2024	288,000	230,000	Sept 28	28	-
2025	399,000	319,000	Oct 8	38	-
2026	499,000	399,000	Oct 17	47	-
2027	613,000	490,000	Oct 27	57	-
2028	751,000	600,000	Nov 6	67	-

## Action 1, Alternative 2: Reduced bag limit (1 gag per person per day)

Year	ACL*	ACT	Closure Date	Days Open	Percent Change
2024	288,000	230,000	Oct 1	31	10.7%
2025	399,000	319,000	Oct 12	42	10.5%
2026	499,000	399,000	Oct 22	52	10.6%
2027	613,000	490,000	Nov 2	63	10.5%
2028	751,000	600,000	Nov 13	74	10.4%

# Questions?

