



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston SC 29405

Call: (843) 571-4366 | Toll-Free: (866) SAFMC-10 | Fax: (843) 769-4520 | Connect: [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)

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Dr. Michelle Duval, Chair | Charlie Phillips, Vice Chair  
Gregg T. Waugh, Executive Director

July 24, 2017

Leann Bosarge, Chair  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100  
Tampa, FL 33607

RE: Request for input on the development of a joint amendment to combine the jurisdictional Acceptable Biological Catches and Annual Catch Limits for yellowtail snapper.

Dear Leann:

At their June 2017 meeting, the South Atlantic Council discussed the recent closure of commercial yellowtail snapper harvest in the South Atlantic region that occurred on June 3, 2017 when the commercial sector ACL was projected to be met. The closure of commercial harvest for yellowtail snapper will remain in place until the next fishing year begins on August 1, 2017. The discussion largely focused on ways to prevent future commercial harvest closures in the fishery and more fully utilize the yellowtail snapper ACL, as the South Atlantic recreational ACL and the Gulf of Mexico stock ACL for the species are not fully harvested each year.

Since yellowtail snapper are considered a single stock in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, the South Atlantic Council is requesting the Gulf Council's input on a possible joint amendment that would combine the jurisdictional Acceptable Biological Catches and ACLs for the species. To help inform the Gulf Council's discussion, enclosed are draft actions from the Joint Generic Amendment on South Florida Management Issues and from Snapper Grouper Amendment 44. At their March 2017 meeting, the South Atlantic Council voted to postpone work on Amendment 44 pending revisions to MRIP estimates.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to continuing to work closely with the Gulf Council in the future.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle A. Duval".

Michelle Duval, SAFMC Chair

cc: SAFMC Members and Staff  
Doug Gregory  
John McGovern and Rick DeVictor, SERO  
Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC  
Bonnie Ponwith and Theo Brainerd, SEFSC

# Draft Action from the Joint Generic Amendment on South Florida Management Issues:

## *Action 2: Establish and Consolidate ABCs and ACLs for Yellowtail Snapper*

**Alternative 1.** No action. Maintain the current commercial and recreational ACLs for yellowtail snapper based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and maintain the current total ACL for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf based on the Reef Fish FMP.

**Alternative 2:** Manage yellowtail snapper as a single unit with an overall combined multijurisdictional acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit (ACL).

**Alternative 3.** Use both Councils' agreed upon ABC for yellowtail snapper and allocate the commercial and recreational ACLs for the Gulf and South Atlantic:

**Option 3a:** Use the following sector allocation formula: divide the sector allocations based on the ratio of landings with 50% of the weighting given to the mean of the landings from 1993-2008, and 50% on the mean of the landings from 2009-2013.

**Option 3b:** Base sector allocations on average landings from 2009-2013

**Option 3c:** Base sector allocations on average landings from 2004-2013

# Draft Actions from Snapper Grouper Amendment 44:

***Action 1. Modify the jurisdictional allocation of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for yellowtail snapper.***

**Alternative 1. (No Action).** The total ABC for yellowtail snapper is split between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions, with 75% of the total ABC allocated to the South Atlantic Region and 25% of the total ABC allocated to the Gulf of Mexico Region.

South Atlantic: The current acceptable biological catch (ABC) for yellowtail snapper is 3,037,500 pounds whole weight (ww).

Gulf of Mexico: The current ABC for yellowtail snapper is 1,012,500 lbs ww.

The jurisdictional allocation is based on the Florida Keys (Monroe County) jurisdictional boundary between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils for yellowtail snapper and was established by using a 50% weighting towards average landings from 1993-2008 + a 50% weighting towards average landings from 2006-2008.

**Alternative 2.** Remove the jurisdictional allocation of the total ABC for yellowtail snapper and manage the fishery in both the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico as a single unit.

**Sub-alternative 2a:** Manage jointly.

**Sub-alternative 2b:** South Atlantic manages the fishery, the Gulf of Mexico delegates authority.

**Sub-alternative 2c:** Gulf of Mexico manages the fishery, South Atlantic delegates authority.

**Sub-alternative 2d:** Allow different regional management measures.

**Alternative 3.** Modify the jurisdictional allocation of the total ABC for yellowtail snapper.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Use a 50% weighting towards average landings from 1993-2015 + a 50% weighting towards average landings from 2013-2015.

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Use a 50% weighting towards average landings from 1995-2015 + a 50% weighting towards average landings from 2013-2015.

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Use average landings from 2013-2015.

**Alternative 4.** Allow sharing of the jurisdictional ABC for yellowtail snapper between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

***Action 2. Specify a single annual catch limit (ACL) for yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.***

**Alternative 1 (No action).**

South Atlantic: The current total ACL is equal to the jurisdictional ABC. The current total annual catch limit (ACL) is 3,037,500 lbs ww.

Gulf of Mexico: The current total ACL is set at 89% of the jurisdictional ABC. The current total ACL is 901,125 lbs ww.

**Alternative 2.** Manage the yellowtail snapper fishery in both the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico under a single ACL that is equal to the sum of the total ACL in the South Atlantic and the total ACL in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Alternative 3.** Manage the yellowtail snapper fishery in both the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico under a single ACL that is equal to the sum of the ACL in the South Atlantic and the jurisdictional ABC in the Gulf of Mexico.

***Action 3. Allow adaptive management of annual catch limits (ACLs) and revise or establish sector allocations for yellowtail snapper.***

**Alternative 1. (No Action).**

South Atlantic: The current sector allocations for yellowtail snapper is 52.56% of the total ACL for the commercial sector, and 47.44% of the total ACL for the recreational sector.

The sector allocations were determined using the following equation:

Allocation by sector = (0.5 \* catch history) + (0.5 \* current trend)

Where catch history is equal to the average landings from 1986-2008 and current trend is equal to average landings from 2006-2008.

Gulf of Mexico: There are no sector specific allocations of the total ACL for yellowtail snapper.

**Alternative 2.** Remove sector allocations in the South Atlantic. The current recreational and commercial sector ACLs will be combined into one stock ACL.

**Alternative 3.** Modify sector allocations.

**Sub-alternative 3a.** Allocate X% of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate X% of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on average landings from 2011-2015)

**Sub-alternative 3b.** Allocate X% of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate X% of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on average landings from 2006-2015)

**Sub-alternative 3c.** Allocate X% of the total ACL to the recreational sector. Allocate X% of the total ACL to the commercial sector. (Based on average landings from 2001-2015)

**Sub-alternative 3d.** Modify the sector allocations of the ACL for yellowtail snapper to the catch history being equal to the average landings from 1986-2015 and the current trend being equal to average landings from 2013-2015.

**Alternative 4.** Set aside a portion of the total ACL that can be used by either sector as a common pool allocation.

**Sub-alternative 4a:** 1% of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL is split between the recreational sector and the commercial sector according to the current allocation.

**Sub-alternative 4b:** 2.5% of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL is split between the recreational sector and the commercial sector according to the current allocation.

**Sub-alternative 4c:** 5% of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL is split between the recreational sector and the commercial sector according to the current allocation.

**Sub-alternative 4d:** 10% of the total ACL becomes a common pool category. The remaining ACL is split between the recreational sector and the commercial sector according to the current allocation.

**Alternative 5:** For the next fishing year, conditionally transfer a certain percentage (Sub-alternatives 5a-5d) of the ACL from a sector that is not landing its ACL to the other sector that is landing at least 90% of its ACL, if the landings of the donating sector are below the minimum landings threshold (Sub-alternatives 5e-5g). The highest landings from the donating sector, based on available finalized data from the five years prior, will be used as criteria to determine if landings are below the minimum landings threshold for a conditional transfer to occur.

*Conditional ACL Transfer (MUST CHOOSE ONE):*

**Sub-alternative 5a.** Conditionally transfer 5% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.

**Sub-alternative 5b.** Conditionally transfer 10% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.

**Sub-alternative 5c.** Conditionally transfer 15% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.

**Sub-alternative 5d.** Conditionally transfer 20% of the unadjusted ACL of one sector to the other sector.

*Donating sector's ACL Minimum Threshold (MUST CHOOSE ONE), if the donating sector's landings are:*

**Sub-alternative 5e.** less than 50% of its unadjusted ACL.

**Sub-alternative 5f.** less than 65% of its unadjusted ACL.

**Sub-alternative 5g.** less than 75% of its unadjusted ACL.

## ***Action 4. Revise the accountability measures for yellowtail snapper.***

### **Alternative 1 (No action).**

#### ***South Atlantic Accountability Measures (AM)***

The current commercial AM is an in-season closure if the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. The commercial ACL is reduced by the amount of the commercial overage in the following fishing year only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

The current recreational AM is an in-season closure if the recreational ACL is met or projected to be met. A shortening of the recreational season may be triggered if the recreational ACL is exceeded, but only after recreational landings have been monitored for persistence in increased landings. The length of the recreational season is not reduced if the Regional Administrator determines the best available science shows it is not necessary. If a reduction is necessary, the recreational season may be shortened and the recreational ACL reduced in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

#### ***Gulf of Mexico Accountability Measure (AM)***

If the sum of the commercial and recreational landings, as estimated by the Science and Research Director (SRD), exceeds the stock ACL, then during the following fishing year, if the sum of commercial and recreational landings reaches or is projected to reach the stock ACL, the Assistant Administrator (AA) will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the commercial and recreational sectors for the remainder of that fishing year.

**Alternative 2.** Implement the Gulf of Mexico AM in the South Atlantic region.

**Alternative 3A** in-season closure will not occur until the total ACL is met or projected to be met. Both sectors will close when the total ACL is met.

**Alternative 4.** An in-season closure for either sector will not occur until the total ACL is met. However, if the landings of one or both sectors are estimated by the SRD to have exceeded the sector ACL then:

**Sub-alternative 4a.** The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register, at or near the beginning of the following fishing year, to reduce the length of the fishing season for the commercial sector that year by the amount estimated to prevent that sector's ACL from being exceeded.

**Sub-alternative 4b.** The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register, at or near the beginning of the following fishing year, to reduce the length of the fishing season for the recreational sector that year by the amount estimated to prevent that sector's ACL from being exceeded.

**Sub-alternative 4c.** Implement a trip limit for the commercial sector the following fishing year, if applicable, by the amount estimated to prevent that sector's ACL from being exceeded.

**Sub-alternative 4d.** Implement a bag limit reduction for the recreational sector the following fishing year, if applicable, by the amount estimated to prevent that sector's ACL from being exceeded.

**Alternative 5.** The commercial AM will include an in-season closure if the commercial ACL and the available common pool ACL is met or projected to be met. The commercial ACL is reduced by the amount of the commercial overage in the following fishing year only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

The recreational AM will include an in-season closure if the recreational ACL and the available common pool ACL is met or projected to be met. A shortening of the recreational season may be triggered if the recreational ACL and the available common pool ACL is exceeded, but only after recreational landings have been monitored for persistence in increased landings. The length of the recreational season is not reduced if the Regional Administrator determines the best available science shows it is not necessary. If a reduction is necessary, the recreational season may be shortened and the recreational ACL reduced in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.