



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Hearings for Snapper Grouper Fishery Begin Next Week

Issues include area closures to end overfishing of red snapper stock, deepwater closures for other species

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is holding a series of public hearings regarding federal fisheries management measures proposed for 73 species in the snapper grouper management complex within the South Atlantic region. The measures will impact both commercial and recreational fishermen and include a proposed closure of the red snapper fishery to help end overfishing. Large area closures where fishing for all snapper grouper species would be prohibited are also being considered in order to address the discard mortality associated with red snapper. The alternatives for the closures stretch from offshore of South Carolina southward to Cape Canaveral, Florida. Alternatives for a permitted fishing zone are also included as part of the red snapper management options. To protect warsaw grouper and speckled hind from overfishing, the Council is considering a deepwater closure throughout federal waters. These measures are being proposed in response to mandates outlined in the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act that require ending overfishing and the rebuilding of stocks. Several other management measures are also under consideration.

The Council is soliciting public comment on three separate amendments to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan:

- **Amendment 17A** to address overfishing and the overfished stock status of red snapper. The amendment establishes Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) for red snapper, long-term measures to rebuild the red snapper stock, and a monitoring program for red snapper. Management options include a closure of the red snapper fishery *plus* alternatives for area closures for all snapper grouper fishing to address bycatch of red snapper, a permitted fishing zone, and various monitoring program alternatives.
- **Amendment 17B** to establish ACLs and AMs for 9 remaining species in the snapper grouper complex currently listed as undergoing overfishing. Alternatives include a proposed deepwater closure (waters greater than 240 feet), allocations for golden tilefish, and aggregate ACLs for gag, black grouper, and red grouper.
- **Amendment 18** to address options to limit participation in the commercial black sea bass and golden tilefish fisheries, extension of jurisdictional boundaries for the snapper grouper management unit northward, separation of the snowy grouper quota into regions/states, changes to the golden tilefish fishing year, regional/state management of the gag recreational allocation, and improvements in fisheries statistics.

The hearings will be open from 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM (with the exception of the hearing in Virginia that begins at 6:00 PM). Council staff will provide periodic presentations and be on hand to answer questions. Local Council representatives will take formal comments on the public hearing documents any time between those hours. **The hearings will be video-streamed live online at USTREAM.com as they occur.**

The Council is also accepting written and email comments until 5:00 p.m. on **November 25, 2009**. Copies of the public hearing documents with details on how to submit written comments on each are posted on the Council's web site at www.safmc.net and available by contacting the Council office at 843/571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10.

(Meeting dates and locations on back)

SAFMC Public Hearing Dates and Locations

Monday, November 2, 2009

Hilton Garden Inn
5265 International Blvd.
N. Charleston, South Carolina 29418
Phone: 843/308-9330

Tuesday, November 3, 2009

Hilton New Bern Riverfront (formally the Sheraton)
100 Middle Street
New Bern, North Carolina 28562
Phone: 252/638-3585

Thursday, November 5, 2009

Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum
175 Bourne Avenue
Pooler, Georgia 31322
Phone: 912/748-8888

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Key Largo Grande
97000 S. Overseas Highway
Key Largo, Florida 33037
Phone: 305/852-5553

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

Radisson Resort at the Port
8701 Astronaut Boulevard
Cape Canaveral, Florida 33920
Phone: 321/784-0000

Thursday, November 12, 2009

Crowne Plaza Riverfront
1201 Riverplace Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207
Phone: 94/398-8800

Monday, November 16, 2009 (begins at 6:00 PM)

VA Marine Resources Commission
2600 Washington Ave., 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607
Phone: 757/247-2200

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.