

Director's Report

February 2026 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management
Council December 2025 Meeting Report

South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council December 2025 Meeting Report

South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council January 2026 Meeting Report

Red Snapper EFP Application

Rule Suspensions Memo

December 2025 Council Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met December 16-18, 2025, in Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of actions taken and issues considered during the meeting. Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available on the Council's [December 2025 meeting page](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

During this meeting, the Council:

- Adopted a revised rebuilding plan and 2026-2027 specifications for the Atlantic mackerel fishery
- Revised a component of previously proposed changes to spiny dogfish accountability measures to align with the New England Fishery Management Council's final action
- Adopted status quo recreational summer flounder management measures for 2026-2027*
- Adopted status quo recreational scup management measures for 2026-2027*
- Approved a 20% liberalization in recreational harvest of black sea bass in 2026-2027*
- Reviewed and provided guidance on revised draft alternatives for the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment*
- Reviewed a draft range of alternatives for the Recreational Tilefish Reporting Framework and recommended several modifications
- Approved a 2026 Implementation Plan
- Received an overview of governance-related IRA projects across the three East Coast Councils

** Items denoted with an asterisk (*) were undertaken during joint meetings with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Management Board or Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board*

Atlantic Mackerel Rebuilding and Specifications Framework

The Council adopted a revised rebuilding plan and 2026-2027 specifications for the Atlantic mackerel fishery. Based on a 2025 assessment showing improved stock trends, the revised plan will allow higher catches while continuing to rebuild the stock by 2032. This action reflects the Council's efforts to expand fishing opportunities where stock conditions allow, consistent with the Executive Order on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.

Under the modified rebuilding plan, commercial quotas would increase to 11,237 metric tons (24.8 million pounds) for 2026 and 13,210 metric tons (29.1 million pounds) for 2027. Once approved and implemented by NOAA Fisheries, the new commercial quotas will allow substantially higher initial Atlantic mackerel trip limits, including a 200,000-pound trip limit for Tier 1 permitted vessels. While the higher quota may be implemented relatively quickly, associated trip limit changes may take longer to clear various NOAA regulatory processes.

The Council also voted to increase the federal recreational possession limit to 25 fish for private boats and 50 fish for for-hire patrons (currently 20 fish for all). The higher for-hire possession limit responds to industry comments that customers are discouraged from booking trips at lower possession limits. States may or may not increase their possession limits, and boats are subject to state rules whenever in state waters.

Atlantic mackerel assessments have regularly overestimated the number of fish entering the population in the assessment's last year of data, referred to as the "terminal year recruitment." To ensure the stock remains on track to rebuild even if a future assessment concludes that 2024 recruitment was lower than initially estimated,

the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) replaced the assessment’s very high estimate of 2024 recruitment (1.3 billion) with a much lower value based on the median recruitment from 2009 to 2023 (91 million).

The Council did not recommend any modifications to the existing 129-metric-ton (284,396 pounds) cap on incidental catch of river herring and shad (RH/S). To fully utilize the Atlantic mackerel quota, the fishery must stay below a combined RH/S bycatch rate of about 0.75% (i.e., less than one percent) on typical mackerel trips. From 2015 through 2023, this threshold was exceeded in 3 of 9 years, resulting in fishery closures in two of those years. Accordingly, the current cap continues to provide a strong incentive to avoid RH/S bycatch. The Council has also sponsored development of a [RH/S bycatch risk prediction tool](#) that will help industry identify areas where RH/S are more likely to be encountered. This tool will be available to the fleet starting in early 2026.

The Council will work with NOAA Fisheries to facilitate timely implementation of the revised quotas and trip limits. Details on pending trip limit changes and updates on the implementation process may be found on the [action page](#) for this framework.

Spiny Dogfish Accountability Measures and Specifications Framework

The Council revisited the joint spiny dogfish framework action following action taken by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). The spiny dogfish fishery is jointly managed by the two Councils, and any framework measures must be adopted by both.

The framework addresses modifications to fishery’s accountability measures and sets 2026–2027 specifications for the fishery. The Mid-Atlantic Council selected preferred alternatives and approved the framework for submission to NOAA Fisheries at its October 2025 meeting. During that meeting, the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator raised concerns that aspects of the combined accountability measure approach could result in insufficient catch accountability, particularly related to the treatment of commercial landings overages. Despite these concerns, the Mid-Atlantic Council concluded that the full suite of adopted measures was appropriate to conserve and manage the fishery.

At the NEFMC’s December 2025 meeting, the Regional Administrator provided additional clarification, noting that the combination of not always paying back commercial landings overages and closing the fishery at 105 percent of the commercial quota could allow for repeated uncorrected overages. The Regional Administrator indicated that removing one of these two measures would alleviate major concerns. NEFMC ultimately adopted the same framework measures as the Mid-Atlantic Council with one exception: it did not adopt the 105 percent fishery closure provision, instead voting for no action on that measure.

Given NEFMC’s action and the requirement for consistent measures under a joint framework, the Mid-Atlantic Council reconsidered the action at its December meeting. The Council voted to align with NEFMC by not adopting the 105 percent closure measure, thus allowing the remaining elements of the framework to move forward jointly. Additional information on the final joint action is available in the Councils’ press release: [Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils Take Joint Action on Spiny Dogfish Framework](#).

2026-2027 Recreational Management Measures for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass

The Council met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) to discuss 2026 and 2027 recreational management measures (i.e., bag, size, and season limits) for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. For all three species, the Council and Board followed the Percent Change Approach as outlined in [Framework 19/Addendum XXXVI](#). The first step of the Percent Change Approach is to compare the upcoming two-year average recreational harvest limit (RHL) to a

confidence interval around an estimate of expected harvest in the upcoming two years if the current measures were to remain in place. The Recreation Demand Model developed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center was used to calculate the estimates of harvest under current measures and the associated confidence intervals. The Percent Change Approach also requires consideration of biomass compared to the target level when determining the required overall percent change in expected harvest.

Summer Flounder

The Council and Board agreed the Percent Change Approach requires no change in recreational harvest of summer flounder in 2026 and 2027. This is because the 2026-2027 RHL (8.79 million pounds) falls above the confidence interval around estimated harvest for these years, and stock biomass is greater than 50% but less than 90% of the target level.

The Council and Board approved the use of regional conservation equivalency in 2026 and 2027. Non-preferred coastwide measures, which are written into the federal regulations but waived in favor of state measures, include an 18.5-inch minimum size, 3 fish possession limit, and open season from May 8-September 30. Precautionary default measures include a 20-inch minimum size, 2 fish possession limit, and open season from July 1-August 31. These measures are only intended to be used for states/regions which do not comply with the conservation equivalency process.

Under the no change in harvest outcome, the [current measures](#) are expected to remain in place for states/regions in 2026. Measures for 2027 will be reviewed in 2026 but are expected to remain unchanged unless new information suggests a major change in the expected impacts of those measures on the stock or the fishery. If states/regions would like to make minor changes to their 2026 measures (e.g., to maintain a Saturday opening), those changes will need to be approved through the Commission process in early 2026.

Scup

The Council and Board agreed the Percent Change Approach requires no change in recreational harvest of scup in 2026 and 2027. This is because the average 2026-2027 RHL (12.38 million pounds) falls below the confidence interval around estimated harvest for these years, and the stock is greater than 150% of the target level.

Under the no change in harvest outcome, the Council and Board agreed to status quo federal water measures. [Status quo state water measures](#) are also expected to remain in place in 2026. Measures for 2027 will be reviewed in 2026 but are expected to remain unchanged unless new information suggests a major change in the expected impacts of those measures on the stock or the fishery. If states would like to make minor changes to their 2026 measures (e.g., to maintain a Saturday opening), those changes will need to be approved through the Commission process in early 2026.

Black Sea Bass

The Council and Board discussed application of the Percent Change Approach for setting 2026 and 2027 recreational measures for black sea bass, including consideration of the appropriate confidence interval. When viewed as a percentage range around the median, the updated confidence interval for black sea bass is much wider than those for summer flounder and scup. It is also wider than the confidence intervals used in the past for all three species. The degree of this difference was not anticipated prior to the availability of updated Recreation Demand Model results but can be explained by differences in the input data. Specifically, the black sea bass stock assessment recently transitioned to the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM), which characterizes uncertainty differently than the assessment model structure used for black sea bass in the past and currently used for summer flounder and scup.

Council and Board members emphasized that Framework 19/Addendum XXXVI calls for consideration of the appropriate confidence interval methodology each specifications cycle. In addition, the Recreation Demand Model, as well as stock assessment models and projections, continue to evolve and improve over time. The Council and Board tasked staff to plan a more comprehensive review of confidence interval methods for all three species to better inform future decision-making.

The Council and Board discussed that use of the prior confidence interval method would have resulted in no liberalization for black sea bass in 2026 and 2027, while a slightly narrower interval would have resulted in a 39 percent liberalization. The Council and Board ultimately approved a 20 percent liberalization. They agreed this is appropriately precautionary, especially as harvest would still be expected to be below the 2026-2027 RHL and biomass has been increasing and has been well above the target level for more than a decade. Consistent with the Percent Change Approach, the 20 percent liberalization will be implemented in 2026, with 2027 measures remaining unchanged unless new information suggests a major change in the expected impacts of those measures on the stock or the fishery.

The Council and Board also agreed to waive federal waters measures in favor of state waters measures, as has been done for black sea bass since 2022. They adopted non-preferred coastwide measures consisting of a 14-inch minimum size, a 5-fish possession limit, and a May 15–September 30 open season. These measures are intended to be waived in favor of state waters measures. Precautionary default measures remain unchanged at a 16 inch minimum size, a 2-fish possession limit, and an open season of June 1 – August 31. These measures will only be implemented if needed for states/regions which do not follow the conservation equivalency process. Measures in individual states/regions will be determined in early 2026 through the Commission process.

Recreational Sector Separation Amendment

The Council met jointly with the Commission’s Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board to review and provide guidance on revised draft alternatives for the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. This amendment considers two main issues: 1) recreational mode management (separate for-hire and private mode management measures or strategies), and 2) for-hire permitting and reporting requirements.

The Council and Policy Board discussed [questions and areas of feedback](#) identified by the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team (FMAT/PDT). While some of these questions were addressed, the Council and Board recognized that additional stakeholder input and discussion among managers is needed in order to continue development of alternatives. The groups delayed development of a draft amendment/public hearing document in order to hold a workshop in 2026 to further refine the draft alternatives. Staff will prepare draft workshop objectives and logistics for review by the Council and Policy Board in early 2026.

In addition, the Council and Policy Board removed from consideration an option that would have required states to consider or implement state-level mode management during the recreational measures setting process. This option was removed due to concerns about potential administrative burden and stakeholder confusion. However, they intend to further explore an option that would adopt uniform guidelines and best practices for implementing mode management at the state and/or federal levels. Additional guidance is needed on guidelines and best practices that may be included, which will receive further discussion at the workshop. The workshop will also cover the remaining options related to a for-hire Letter of Authorization (LOA) program, as well as for-hire permitting and reporting requirements.

The groups also discussed, but did not approve, removing bluefish from the amendment and pursuing further development of the LOA options only for summer flounder and black sea bass. Some members also expressed concern that mode management approaches using separate allocations had been removed from the document

in August and discussed whether these types of options should be discussed at the planned workshop, but rejected a motion to do so.

Recreational Tilefish Reporting Framework

The Council reviewed a modified range of alternatives for the Recreational Tilefish Reporting Framework. This action considers options to modify or eliminate the permitting and reporting requirements for private recreational tilefish anglers with the goals of reducing the reporting burden, increasing enforceability of regulations, and improving the accuracy and reliability of self-reported data.

The range of alternatives presented to the Council includes options that would either 1) eliminate the current permit and/or reporting requirements or (2) modify the required reporting fields and/or submission timeframe. An initial range of alternatives was presented to the Council during the October 2025 meeting and further refined based on Council discussion.

The Council discussed the importance of the reporting program given the current data limitations for both blueline and golden tilefish, noting that improved recreational catch data remains a major data gap. However, the Council acknowledged that the existing reporting program has not functioned as intended and that the complexity of the requirements has likely contributed to low participation and poor data quality. As a result, the Council emphasized the need to simplify reporting requirements to improve compliance and increase the likelihood of obtaining usable catch data. The Council also discussed enforceability as a key consideration, recognizing that reporting requirements that are easier to understand and enforce may improve program performance.

Several Council members expressed continued interest in obtaining tilefish length data as well as information on fishing location; however, Council members agreed that the mandatory reporting fields need to be made as simple as possible. To avoid adding complexity, the Council agreed to consider making these fields optional rather than required. The Council noted that optional reporting fields could provide opportunities to collect additional biological or spatial information without increasing the regulatory burden.

Final action by the Council is tentatively planned for April 2026. Updates on this action can be found [here](#).

2026 Implementation Plan

The Council approved a draft 2026 Implementation Plan after making several revisions. The plan outlines anticipated work for the upcoming year in the context of the Council's 5-year strategic plan. First, the Council added an action to evaluate and provide guidance on the use of confidence intervals and the role of uncertainty in the Percent Change Approach. The Council also agreed to add development and implementation of a mesh selectivity study for the directed Atlantic mackerel fishery to the "Possible Additions" section of the plan, which includes tasks the Council may work on if time and resources allow. In addition, the Council moved review of revised MRIP Fishing Effort Survey data (including associated allocation changes) to the Possible Additions section. Finally, the Council removed a potential action related to development of an omnibus framework for ACL specification regulations and instead requested that the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Regional Administrator address this issue through Magnuson-Stevens Act Section 305(d) rulemaking.

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Governance Projects

The Council received an overview of the governance-related IRA projects across the three East Coast Councils. The New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Councils all have at least one IRA project that will review, evaluate, and potentially recommend modifications to cross-jurisdictional governance processes, advisory body structure and use, and cooperative management agreements. Many of these projects are underway with

contractors conducting the work on most project components. A significant amount of work is anticipated in 2026 and Council members, advisors, and staff will be involved in a variety of activities throughout the year to offer their feedback and perspectives to help address the project objectives.

Next Council Meeting

The next Council meeting will be held by webinar **February 10-11, 2026**. A complete list of upcoming meetings can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.



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[Meetings](#) 

[Fishery Management](#) 

[News & Updates](#)

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[Citizen Science Program](#) 

[Science & SEDAR](#)

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[Public Comment](#)

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[Home](#) / [News](#) / [News Releases](#) / Council Receives Updates on Red Snapper State Management Efforts; Approves Black Sea Bass and Blueline Tilefish Measures During December Meeting

Council Receives Updates on Red Snapper State Management Efforts; Approves Black Sea Bass and Blueline Tilefish Measures During December Meeting

December 18, 2025



Council meeting planned in January for Oculina Shrimp Access Area

Cold winds continued to blow across the Outer Banks as members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council met this past week in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The Council addressed federal fishery management issues in the South Atlantic region, including measures to reduce the harvest of Black Sea Bass and changes to catch limits for Blueline Tilefish. Council members also received updates on Exempted Fishing Permit applications designed to test state management of Red Snapper in Federal waters.

The Council discussed options for approval of a joint amendment to establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Concern off the east coast of Florida, continued working on measures affecting species managed within the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit, and provided guidance for its Citizen Science Program, including research priorities.

State Management of Recreational Red Snapper

Representatives from each of the South Atlantic states presented information to the Council on their Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for Red Snapper. The applications, submitted to the Secretary of Commerce on November 10, 2025, would explore state management of the recreational (private angler and for-hire) Red Snapper fishery. Copies of the individual EFPs are available in the December meeting briefing book materials.

The Council also received a presentation summarizing results of Year 1 of the Red Snapper EFP that was awarded to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in 2024. Following discussion, Council members drafted comments that



will be used to develop a Council letter providing recommendations in response to the Red Snapper EFPs. NOAA Fisheries and the Secretary determines the approval or disapproval of all EFPs after taking public comment. Public comment on the Red Snapper EFPs will be solicited by NOAA Fisheries in 2026, after the EFPs are determined complete, according to Andy Strelchek, NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator.

Black Sea Bass Reductions

After reviewing public comment and recommendations from its Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, the Council approved Regulatory Amendment 37 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the Amendment would implement measures to reduce harvest and address the continuing decline in the Black Sea Bass stock in the South Atlantic.

The regulatory amendment would reduce the recreational bag limit from 7 fish per person per day to 3 fish per person per day and establish an annual two-month spawning season closure (February 1 – March 31) for both commercial and recreational sectors. No changes to the minimum size limit are being proposed. Regulatory Amendment 37 would establish recreational and commercial annual catch targets (ACTs) equal to 50% of the average landings from 2019–2023. The Council would reconsider the ACTs and associated measures two years after implementation. Additional actions will be considered through Amendment 56 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.



Blueline Tilefish Catch Limits

The Council approved Abbreviated Framework Amendment 5 to update the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Blueline Tilefish in the South Atlantic region. The amendment was developed following the latest stock assessment for Atlantic Blueline Tilefish (SEDAR 92), completed in March 2025, and recommendations from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. The stock assessment includes Blueline Tilefish found within both the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils' jurisdictions.



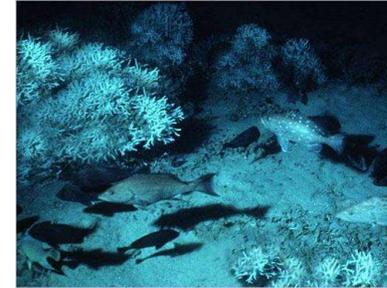
The Council's intent is to implement the new catch limits for Blueline Tilefish for the 2026 fishing season. The total ACL will be equal to 314,058 pounds whole weight upon approval of the Framework Amendment by the Secretary of Commerce. In the South Atlantic region, the fishery is divided between sectors with the commercial fishery allocated 50.07% and the recreational sector 49.93% of the catch limit. The recreational fishery opens annually May 1st, with NOAA Fisheries determining the length of the season based on the recreational ACL. The commercial fishing year begins January 1st, with a trip limit of 100 pounds, and closes once the commercial ALC is projected to be met.

Jurisdictional apportionment between the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions and other management measures will be addressed in a future amendment.

Shrimp Fishery Access Area – Oculina Bank HAPC

The Council reviewed the final draft amendment (Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12) that would create a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern. The area is where the rock shrimp fishery historically operated. The Council was not able to approve the amendment at this meeting because several sections were not updated as planned due to the government shutdown earlier this fall.

The Council will hold a meeting via webinar on Friday, January 23, 2026 from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. to address the necessary updates to the amendment before approving it for consideration by the Secretary of Commerce. Public comment will be accepted. Meeting materials, including an online public comment form, will be available one week prior to the January meeting.



Additional Information

Additional information about the Council's December 2025 meeting, including individual reports from committee meetings and meetings of the Full Council, are available from the Council's website at: <https://safmc.net/events/december-2025-council-meeting/>. The next meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 2-6, 2026, in Jekyll Island, GA.

South Atlantic Fishery
Management Council



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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Full Council and Committee
SUMMARY MOTIONS
December 8-12, 2025

This is a summary of the motions approved by the Council. Motions addressing actions and alternatives for FMP amendments are followed by text showing the result of the approved motion. Complete details on motions and other committee recommendations are provided in the Committee Reports available on the SAFMC website.

Executive Committee

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE UPDATES TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE HANDBOOK AS PRESENTED AND MODIFIED.

MOTION 2: APPROVE THE UPDATES TO THE STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATION PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES (SOPP) AS PRESENTED AND MODIFIED.

MOTION 3: APPROVE THE DRAFT 2026 OPERATIONAL BUDGET AS PRESENTED AND MODIFIED.

Appointments (Full Council)

MOTION 4: APPOINT BOB ZALES TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVISORY PANEL.

MOTION 5: REAPPOINT CHARLES LOCKE AND THOMAS NEWMAN AND APPOINT LYNN GOKEY TO THE MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL

MOTION 6: APPOINT NATHAN EVERETT AND CORY GWINN AS THE MAFMC REPRESENTATIVES ON THE MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL.

MOTION 7: REAPPOINT SEAN ESPENSHIP, GARY NICHOLS, JUSTIN SMITH, AND MIMI STAFFORD AND APPOINT JOHN GRECO III TO THE SPINY LOBSTER ADVISORY PANEL. READVERTISE AN OPEN SEAT ON THE AP (WITH THE INTENT OF APPOINTING A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE CAROLINAS).

MOTION 8: APPOINT DANIEL ROYSER AS THE NCDMF REPRESENTATIVE ON THE HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY PANEL.

MOTION 9: APPOINT TRACEY DUNN AS THE LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVISORY PANEL REPRESENTATIVE AND VINCENT BONURA AS THE SNAPPER GROUPE ADVISORY PANEL REPRESENTATIVE ON THE WRECKFISH ADVISORY PANEL.9

MOTION 10: APPOINT WALTER BUBLEY, FRED SCHARF, AND LUIZ BARBIERI TO THE SEDAR 106: SOUTH ATLANTIC GAG GROUPE TOPICAL WORKING GROUP.

MOTION 11: APPOINT GENNY NESSLAGE AS CHAIR (WITH MARCEL REICHERT AS ALTERNATE), AND CHRIS DUMAS AND ALEXEI SHAROV AS SSC REVIEWERS TO THE SEDAR 90: SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER REVIEW PANEL.

MOTION 12: APPOINT KAI LORENZEN, ALEXEI SHAROV, AND JIE CAO TO THE (JOINT WITH GULF) MSY PROXIES WORKGROUP.

MOTION 13: APPOINT MARCEL REICHERT AS CHAIR AND LUIZ BARBIERI AS SSC REVIEWER FOR THE SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER RESEARCH PROJECT REVIEW PANEL.

MOTION 14: APPOINT LUIZ BARBIERI AS CHAIR AND STEVE TURNER AND MARCEL REICHERT AS SSC REVIEWERS FOR THE GREATER AMBERJACK INDEPENDENT ESTIMATE PROJECT REVIEW PANEL.

MOTION 15: APPOINT THOSE IN THE TABLE BELOW TO THE ESA SECTION 7 SHRIMP WORKGROUP. ALSO APPOINT SOMEONE FROM THE SEFSC TO THIS WORKGROUP (NAME WILL BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE).

Name	Affiliation	State
Carolyn Belcher	SAFMC	GA
Charlie Phillips	SAFMC	GA
Allie Iberle	SAFMC Staff	
Christina Curtis	SAFMC Staff	
Chip Collier	SAFMC Staff	
Jennifer Lee	NOAA	
Sarah Roberts	NOAA	
Robert (Bob) Zales	Industry	FL
Mike Merrifield	Industry	FL
Laurilee Thompson	Industry	FL
Gregg Poulakis	FL-FWCC	FL
Jared Flowers	GA-DNR, SSC	GA
Bryan Fluech	GA-SeaGrant	GA
Graham Wagner	SC-DNR	SC
Chris Stewart	NC-DMF	NC
Chuck Bangley	NC-DMF	NC
Blake Price	Southern Shrimp Alliance	
Jessica Pate	Marine Megafauna Foundation	

MOTION 16: APPOINT MATTHEW DAMIANO TO THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE AGENCY DESIGNATED SEAT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE.

Citizen Science Committee

MOTION 17: ADOPT THE UPDATED CITIZEN SCIENCE RESEARCH PRIORITIES WITH MODIFICATIONS AS SUGGESTED.

MOTION 18: REMOVE THE ‘CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM ADVISORY PANEL’ FROM THE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM’S STANDARD OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (SOPPS).

MOTION 19: ADD AN AP SEAT FOR AN ACCSP REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CITIZEN SCIENCE OPERATIONS ADVISORY PANEL.

MOTION 20: APPOINT JULIE SIMPSON (ACCSP) TO THE CITIZEN SCIENCE POOL AND TO THE ACCSP SEAT ON THE CITIZEN SCIENCE OPERATIONS AP.

Habitat Ecosystem & Shrimp Committees

Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12

MOTION 21: APPROVE MODIFICATIONS TO THE NEED STATEMENT.

Need for Action

The need for this amendment is to optimize yield in the rock shrimp fishery by expanding access to fishing grounds while minimizing negative impacts to deepwater coral in the Council’s jurisdiction.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION 22: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

Update the economic and social environment sections (chapters 3.3 and 3.4) of the draft amendment and organize an ad-hoc webinar Council meeting to review updates and approve for submission to be held on January 23, 2026, at 10:00 am.

Snapper Grouper Committee

Regulatory Amendment 37 (Black Sea Bass)

MOTION 23: DE-SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 (2 FISH) AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 (3 FISH) AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 3 (BAG LIMIT).

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Action 3. Reduce the recreational bag limit for South Atlantic black sea bass

Alternative 3. Reduce the recreational bag limit for South Atlantic black sea bass to 2 fish per person per day.

Preferred Alternative 4. Reduce the recreational bag limit for South Atlantic black sea bass to 3 fish per person per day.

MOTION 24: MOVE ACTION 4 (SIZE LIMIT) TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX

Action 4. Reduce the recreational minimum size limit for South Atlantic black sea bass

MOTION 25: APPROVE REGULATORY AMENDMENT 37 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

Abbreviated Framework 5 (Blueline Tilefish)

MOTION 26: APPROVE ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK 5 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SNAPPER GROUPER FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND REDEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper & Mutton Snapper)

MOTION 27: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT FOR SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 44.

The purpose of these fishery management plan amendments is to revise the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper stock overfishing limit, and stock acceptable biological catch, based on the results of the SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96 stock assessments, respectively. The amendments would also revise the jurisdictional apportionment between the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, the regional annual catch limits, and the South Atlantic sector allocations.

The need for these fishery management plan amendments is to update existing catch limits, jurisdictional apportionments of the ABCs, and South Atlantic sector allocations for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper to be consistent with the best scientific information available, and achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

Golden Tilefish

MOTION 28: ADD UPDATING THE ABC AND ACL FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH IN A SNAPPER GROUPER FMP AMENDMENT BASED ON THE SSC RECOMMENDATION.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION 29: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Continue development of Amendment 60 (Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency) via subcommittee for Council approval for public hearings in June 2026.

- Prepare information for Council discussion of the headboat vessel limits to bring to the March Council meeting.
- Continue development of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation.
- Prepare and submit Regulatory Amendment 37 (Black Sea Bass) and Abbreviated Framework 5 (Blueline Tilefish) to the Secretary of Commerce.
- Develop a report of landings for unmanaged and ecosystem component species in the region with the intent that this report be updated and provided to the Council annually (in the second half of the year by Council and NMFS staff).
- Continue development of Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper), including a preliminary analysis.
- Continue development of Amendment 61 (Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision), including requested additional information and presentations, for review at the March 2026 meeting.
- Prepare list of topics for the Spring meeting of the Snapper Grouper AP to bring to the March 2026 meeting. Include on the list of topics discussion of changing the opening of the recreational golden tilefish season.
- Include time on the March 2026 agenda to finalize the SG Innovation Plan.
- Prepare a letter to send to NOAA Fisheries on the black sea bass EFP.
- Prepare a letter to send to NOAA Fisheries on the state management EFPs submitted by FL, GA, SC, and NC.
- Add updating the ABC and ACL for golden tilefish based on the SSC recommendation in a snapper grouper FMP amendment.

SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Via Webinar
January 23, 2026

The Council approved the agenda and the Joint Habitat and Ecosystem and Shrimp Committee Minutes from December 2025.

NOAA General Counsel provided a refresher on the rules and regulations regarding financial conflicts of interest, disclosure, and recusal under the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Council had no questions regarding the topic.

Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12

Staff reviewed the final draft amendment, including the updated economic and social description of the rock shrimp fishery.. Staff explained that the updated information did not result in changes to the expected biological, economic, social or administrative effects of the proposed action. The Council had no questions regarding the amendment updates.

The Council received to public comments during the public comment session. As during in-person meetings, commenters were given 3 minutes to provide comments to the Council. Those unable to comment or wanting to provide additional input not covered during the allotted 3 minutes were informed that written comments are also accepted.

During subsequent discussion of the proposed action, Council members noted the long history of Council attention to the proposed action, which began during the final phase of Coral Amendment 8 in 2014. Coral Amendment 8 implemented the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, erroneously encompassing an area that had been previously accessible to the rock shrimp fishery. Since that time, the Council has attempted to correct the error, developing and submitting Coral Amendment 10. The National Marine Fisheries Service did not approve Coral Amendment 10 due to insufficient information (see disapproval letter [HERE](#) for more detail). Council members reiterated their intent to return access to a historic fishing area to the rock shrimp fishery noting that recent studies have shown no coral (standing, dead, or coral rubble) present in the proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA) and there is enough distance between known coral pinnacles and the SFAA to prevent damage to living coral from sediment deposition caused by trawling activity. Council members maintained that recommending implementation of the SFAA is the best compromise to balance the shrimpers' need for access with protection of areas where deepwater coral is known to exist.

MOTION 1: APPROVE CORAL AMENDMENT 11 SHRIMP AMENDMENT 12 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CORAL AND LIVE HARDBOTTOM HABITAT OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION AND THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SHRIMP FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION, RESPECTIVELY, FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND REDEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL



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Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

January 23, 2026

Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

The state of North Carolina re-submits the attached updated EFP to begin work on the long-term task of creating a new state data collection system to be used for state management of red snapper. In this updated EFP, we have made several changes. First, we have removed the limited 100 participants and have changed to allow for more access and participation similar to GA, and SC EFP applications. Discussions with NOAA staff indicated that our proposal compared to the other states “muddies the water”. Secondly, NC has reworked objectives to be short-term in nature for this first year EFP. We will now work to determine a universe of anglers fishing for red snapper, to test the use of an on-the-water application by private recreational anglers, and to test NC’s ability to collect data on removals of red snapper over MRIP Wave Four. This will be alongside SC and GA.

NC will be using the same data program application (VESL) as GA and SC as well as the same data variables. This should ensure similar design and data collection that will meet requirements of NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology (OST) with the expectation of coordinating with OST in the future as we progress forward toward improving data collection for red snapper across the south Atlantic.

Concerning the harvest requirement in 50 CFR 600.745(b)(2)(v). NC is concerned about producing a number of expected harvest for this 2026 EFP. The poor quality of MRIP red snapper catch data over time (as indicated in Table 1 of the EFP) makes it extremely difficult to determine a reasonable harvest amount. Any projected Atlantic red snapper harvest extrapolated from MRIP data would be extremely unreliable. We are also concerned that a number would be used punitively toward the state by either shortening the requested season, defining a regional quota, and/or establishing state allocations. However, we should be able to project a number for the 2027 EFP based on harvest data collected in 2026 if we are allowed to test the data collection application and use Wave four as an accountability measure.



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NC would like to request an increase in the presence of NOAA law enforcement officers during the proposed season to help with compliance of anglers participating in the EFP study.

We look forward to having this EFP approved as quickly as possible, so we may begin our efforts for implementation during the 2026 fishing season.

Thank you for your staff input to improve NC's EFP application, and we look forward to working with you and answering any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Kathy B. Rawls
NC Division of Marine Fisheries Director



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D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

i. Jan 23, 2026

ii. **Applicant:** Kathy B. Rawls, Director
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iii. **Purpose and Goal:**

This is a request that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) be issued to NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) to develop, implement, and test a pilot state recreational data collection program with the long-term intent to implement state management of the recreational red snapper fishery. This EFP may be requested annually for up to three years, beginning with the short-term focus of testing NC's ability to develop a defined recreational red snapper angler universe, and to test an on-the-water data collection application. NC intends to use this first year as a steppingstone to explore the ability to collect in-season recreational red snapper catch in order to meet the long-term goal of managing NC's recreational red snapper fishery. This work will lead to improved coordination with NOAA Fisheries and the Office of Science and Technology and will enhance future data collection of other offshore federally managed South Atlantic Council species. This EFP does NOT include any changes to existing management measures for the commercial fishery and still expects the NOAA fisheries to open the commercial fishing season on the second Monday in July 2026. North Carolina is working in cooperation with South Carolina, Georgia and east coast Florida, in development of EFPs to improve data collection to inform recreational management of red snapper by the south Atlantic states.

Justification for Issuance of an EFP

Federal management of the recreational red snapper fishery faces several challenges, including rising discard rates, truncated seasons, and a lack of adequate snapper-specific data. The issuance of this EFP will allow NC to begin exploration of monitoring and managing red snapper in federal waters off NC. This first year will entail testing a pilot



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recreational data collection program to collect recreational harvest and discard information of red snapper through mandatory reporting to determine if NC can monitor in-season removals of red snapper.

The SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) 73 completed in 2021 indicated the red snapper population was overfished and that overfishing was occurring. However, an update to SEDAR 73 (2024) indicated that the stock is no longer overfished and is progressing toward being rebuilt with higher-than-expected recruitment during 2014-2021. Although not yet fully rebuilt, results of the last four stock assessments have shown a strong rebuilding trajectory. Secretarial Amendment 59 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (2024) reported the red snapper to not be overfished and based on the new proxy, overfishing is no longer occurring.

Despite these positive trends, recreational red snapper fishing seasons have become shorter, with the high numbers of discards identified as the key issue. The current total Annual Catch Limit (ACL) is 509,000 fish, of which 475,000 fish are counted as dead discards. This **allows for only 6.7% of the total ACL to be harvested**. The 2025 recreational fishing season was open for two days (July 11-12) and was based on a recreational ACL of 22,797 fish (4.5% of the total ACL).

Recreational anglers are frustrated with MRIP data collection and have voiced their frustrations at council meetings, advisory panel meetings, and through news and social media. For example, North Carolina red snapper MRIP estimates are poor quality with percent standard errors (PSE) ranging from 127.5 (1984) to 39.2 (2011) with only one year, 2021 (27.4) meeting the <30 threshold for a precise estimate (Table 1.). Also, MRIP is not designed for in-season monitoring because the base sampling interval is in two-month waves. This is especially problematic for mini seasons like recreational red snapper. Thus, a recreational data collection program capable of collecting more real time data is needed for effective in-season monitoring of the recreational harvest and discards in the red snapper fishery off NC.

In 2024, recreational angler groups reached out to the south Atlantic states to consider state based recreational data collection programs for red snapper, similar to the Gulf states. The states met with these groups throughout the year and reviewed other data programs from the Gulf and the Pacific coast. State directors and proxies met internally to discuss how to go forward and by consensus, it was decided to apply for EFPs that would allow each state to test other data collection approaches.



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Table 1. NC Red Snapper Catch Estimates with PSEs and Standards from MRIP.

Year (Annual)	Total Catch (A+B1+B2) (Numbers of Fish)	PSE Total Catch (A+B1+B2)	Does Total Catch (A+B1+B2) Meet MRIP Standard
1984	11,475	127.5	NO
1985	78,489	95.6	NO
1986	759	103.6	NO
1987	32,695	41.9	CAUTION
1988	8,592	56.7	NO
1989	3,681	39.7	CAUTION
1990	2,828	54.4	NO
1991	8,082	53.1	NO
1992	1,902	62.5	NO
1993	3,364	78	NO
1994	4,309	48.4	CAUTION
1995	9,685	61.1	NO
1996	1,312	50.5	NO
1998	1,816	97.7	NO
1999	2,288	48.7	CAUTION
2000	3,185	67.8	NO
2001	4,484	43.6	CAUTION
2002	5,022	44.5	CAUTION
2003	2,733	66.2	NO
2004	2,947	98.4	NO
2005	7,492	66.3	NO
2006	4,770	82.2	NO
2007	227	100.8	NO
2008	1,575	60.1	NO
2009	2,552	50.6	NO
2010	3,702	60.1	NO
2011	2,118	39.2	CAUTION
2012	14,656	69	NO
2013	956	65.5	NO
2014	9,279	80.7	NO
2015	4,295	52.2	NO
2016	20,467	55.1	NO
2017	3,270	52	NO
2018	840	43.3	CAUTION



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Year (Annual)	Total Catch (A+B1+B2)	PSE Total Catch (A+B1+B2)	Does Total Catch (A+B1+B2) Meet MRIP Standard
2019	7,827	81.6	NO
2020	22,269	46.2	CAUTION
2021	256,55	27.4	YES
2022	56,176	49.4	CAUTION
2023	62,776	41.2	CAUTION
2024	73,904	61.2	NO

Data Source MRIP Query Tool (1/20/2026)

North Carolina is closely collaborating with South Carolina and Georgia to test the same recreational data collection program and mandatory reporting and is coordinating with the state of Florida to explore the states’ ability to manage the federal red snapper recreational fishery. Florida already has a data collection program that has been used successfully in the Gulf and has been approved by MRIP. Because Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina do not have a similar data collection program or the current capacity to develop one, the three states collectively recognized the need to have a similar approach for collection of recreational information and initially attempted to submit a single EFP.

The South Atlantic state agencies will continue to coordinate and collaborate throughout the EFP process. State agency staff from the four states will meet at least bi-weekly to discuss any challenges as the EFPs are occurring and how each state is working to resolve those challenges. States will try and have as similar a response as possible to any challenges that occur during the EFPs and continually learn from the experiences of the other states. At the end of year 1 of the EFPs, the state agency staff will meet at least once for an all-day, in-person meeting to discuss lessons learned and changes for year 2. These discussions will ensure the data collected are as similar as possible, enabling a direct comparison of effort, landings, and angler behavior across the region. Any differences will be discussed and changes made (if possible) within each state’s authority to ensure similarity across experiments and useable data for the future. Following the state agency meeting, a meeting will also be held at the end of year 1 with NOAA Fisheries and the states about how year 1 went, including what challenges were encountered, and how the states propose to modify their EFPs for year 2. These meetings serve as an accountability measure to fix any problems encountered before year 2 begins. Any modifications to EFPs will be submitted by all states for subsequent years as changes are made to the methodology.



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Methodology:

This EFP will allow NCDMF to:

1. Pilot test VESL, a state-based recreational data collection application to collect near-real-time harvest and discards of red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in North Carolina's adjacent federal waters.
2. Pilot test the ability for North Carolina to implement in-season monitoring of removals of red snapper over a 62-day season.
3. Determine an offshore universe of anglers fishing for red snapper.
4. Collect biological information of red snapper off North Carolina through its Carcass Collection Program.
5. Collect demographic, social and economic data through surveys of private recreational anglers, and for-hire captains fishing for red snapper in North Carolina.

Under this EFP, private recreational anglers will be allowed to harvest one red snapper per person or 4 per vessel per day, whichever is more restrictive (Table 2). Charter boat captains (for hire operations of six or less passengers) will also be allowed to harvest one red snapper per paying customer per day with a vessel limit of 4, whichever is more restrictive (Table 2). Headboat captains (for-hire operations with more than six passengers) will be allowed to harvest 20 red snapper per vessel per day (Table 2). For-hire captain and crew will be excluded from possessing a bag limit of red snapper. The timeframe will be during MRIP Wave four (July and August) which coincides with SC and GA EFP proposals.

Private recreational anglers will be required to meet NC Coastal Recreational Fishing License (CRFL) licensing requirements unless otherwise exempted (e.g., under 16 years of age). For-hire guides will need to hold either a NC Blanket Vessel CRFL or a NC For-Hire Captains CRFL AND a South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Permit. To prevent false inflation of new entrants, for-hire vessels must have possessed both a NC DMF for-hire license AND a valid South Atlantic Charter/Headboat permit for Snapper Grouper prior to January 1, 2026.

Electronic reporting will be completed through an application created by Bluefin Data, LLC. This same application will be utilized by North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia state agencies to ensure standardization in data collection methods and allow for cost effective implementation. Bluefin Data specializes in developing electronic reporting platforms for fisheries data and built VESL. Bluefin Data currently provides South Carolina with an



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electronic reporting platform (See Appendix 1) and is also used to collect electronic commercial trip ticket data from North Carolina-permitted dealers.

Private recreational anglers will self-register in the VESL application as a user and will attest to conditions stipulated by the EFP including mandatory reporting during the defined season. The requirement stipulated in 50 CFR 600.745 (b) (7) and (8) and (d) (7) for the inspection of and requirement for the issued NOAA Fisheries EFP to be in the possession of persons authorized will be accomplished by including a digital (view only) copy in the VESL application. If an angler does not agree with the conditions, they will not be allowed to legally harvest red snapper during the season.

Through this VESL application, private recreational anglers will be required to declare a fishing trip no earlier than five days prior to the start of a trip to receive a trip authorization code linked to each trip. Anglers will have the ability to cancel the trip authorization should they encounter an issue (e.g., inclement weather or mechanical issues). For non-licensed private recreational anglers (e.g., under 16 years of age) or licensed anglers who do not have access to a smartphone or computer that are fishing under this EFP, alternate trip participants may submit data on their behalf. A method will be included in the mandatory post-trip reporting application for this purpose; additional data fields will be displayed for the designated representative to complete reporting for these individuals. Lastly, the trip authorization code will be directly linked to the post-trip mandatory reporting requirement, which must be completed within 24 hours of trip departure time. Any trip authorization and mandatory report must be completed and submitted prior to the initiation of a new trip with a unique authorization code.

Compliance of private recreational anglers will be enforced by DMF law enforcement. If an officer intercepts a private recreational angler as they are leaving for or returning from trips targeting or retaining red snapper, they will verify authorization codes for that trip.

For-hire captains will be required to have a copy of the EFP and have on board to show participation. In order to receive a copy of the EFP, for hire captains must contact the DMF and provide name, vessel documentation, contact information and attest that they shall adhere to federal rules to report for hire-trips through their respective federal reporting programs. For-hire captains are currently required to report trip information through the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program and through the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. DMF law enforcement will take note of for-hire fishing activities and staff will work with NOAA Fisheries OST to monitor reporting compliance.



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Data collected through the VESL application will be summarized every other week. For-hire data will be requested through NOAA Fisheries OST and used to determine catch at the end of Wave four. Once Wave four is complete, no data will be collected beyond MRIP data collection that already occurs throughout the year. As we progress through this pilot project, we will work with NOAA Fisheries OST regarding sampling design and implementation.

The NCDMF Director has proclamation authority to implement management measures to comply with the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. The recreational snapper grouper proclamation will be amended to address possession and mandatory reporting requirements for both sectors as required through the EFP.

Outreach using press releases and social media will be created and distributed to announce the opportunity to participate. Videos will be developed to demonstrate how to use the VESL app, and relay to recreational anglers and the for-hire fleet information about the EFP and reporting requirements that they must submit to participate on the EFP.

Data variables:

Information to be collected through the state application VESL and will be consistent with information collected by South Carolina and Georgia:

- a. **Prior to fishing:** Name and contact of registered angler (login will be email)/ Trip number / Trip date / Trip start time / Landing county and site / Vessel registration number or US Coast Guard Documentation number
- b. **At trip completion:** Trip end time / Depth fished / Number of red snapper harvested / Number of red snapper released and general fate (alive or dead) / Hours spent fishing for red snapper

A unique trip identification will be created for each fishing trip, and a new trip cannot be initiated without the prior trip's complete and submitted report. Reporting will be mandatory, however the decision to indicate which of the above fields will be mandatory when implemented is still under consideration. The number of red snapper landed and discarded on the fishing trip will be a required field.

Validation of trips will occur alongside opportunistic angler intercept interviews conducted by NCDMF staff at saltwater access points. When feasible, staff will attempt to collect trip authorization codes, vessel registration number, number of anglers, hours fished, and number of fish released and retained. Intercept reports will be cross-referenced to VESL application reports and should shed light on quality of self-reported catch information and



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compliance. Data collection will not include correction factors for non-reporting during this first year. Data will be managed and processed then provided to ACCSP.

Anglers will be encouraged to provide red snapper carcasses through the NC Carcass Collection Program. This is a statewide program where carcasses of finfish are donated by recreational anglers. The division has placed freezers at designated sites across coastal areas to allow anglers to donate fileted fish carcasses. Red snapper carcasses will be collected to provide length, age, and sex data. Incentives will be used to encourage donations of red snapper carcasses. Anglers will fill out catch cards with the trip identifier, date, and other information required when donating carcasses. Depending on availability and capacity, NCDMF staff will coordinate with anglers for placement of coolers for ease of carcass collection as well as meet anglers at the dock to collect biological samples.

Mail Survey

Contact information collected through the VESL application (emails) will be used to survey private recreational anglers. Contact information provided by for-hire captains to receive an EFP will also be used to survey the for-hire sector. Information collected through the survey will include demographic information, social and economic information, input on state management and mandatory reporting and trip satisfaction information.

iv. Documentation required for vessels covered by the EFP

- (A) USCG documentation, state license, or registration of each vessel, or the information contained on the appropriate document
- (B) The current name, address, and telephone number of the owner and master, if not included on the document provided for the vessel

NC DMF will provide a list of documentation and contact information for anglers, captains, and vessels weekly.

v. Targeted species expected to be harvested under the EFP, the amount, arrangements of disposition, and anticipated impacts on the environment, fisheries, marine mammals, threatened or endangered species, and EFH.

The target species to be harvested under this EFP is red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*). North Carolina continues to request the resulting harvest from this EFP be equal to what is harvested during Wave for (62 days) by the private anglers registered on the VESL application and for-hire captains who requested a copy of the EFP and attested to mandatory reporting requirements. The poor quality of MRIP landings and discard data



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makes it extremely difficult to determine a harvest amount. Also, any projected red snapper harvest would be based on mini seasons and is inappropriate to estimate a specific number of fish for the proposed 62-day season. NC will limit harvest by the number of fishing days, bag limits and vessel limits (Table 2). Catch and effort data collected through this EFP will then provide more appropriate data to determine a projected harvest for the second year EFP. We request to be exempted from the recreational ACL and propose to work with NOAA fisheries to make use of dead discards available from the ABC to convert into harvest.

As noted earlier in this EFP, we are proposing one red snapper per person per day may be harvested with no size limit. We are also proposing vessel limits on all recreational sectors to constrain overall harvest (Table 2). Other snapper and grouper species are expected to be incidentally caught but will not be covered under this EFP. Participants will be required to follow current fishing seasons, size and bag limits established by state and federal regulations. Biological information will be provided through the carcass collection program and red snapper that are discarded by participants will be recorded through the VESL application.

Table 2. 2026 Proposed Recreational Bag Limits during EFP.

Sector	Limits
Private Recreational	1 per person or 4 per vessel (whichever more restrictive)
Charter Boat (6 or less)	1 per person or 4 per vessel (whichever more restrictive)
Headboat (Greater than 6)	20 per vessel

No significant impact on the red snapper population is expected. The red snapper is no longer overfished, is rebuilding faster than anticipated and overfishing is no longer occurring. There is minimal risk that harvest resulting from this EFP will impact the overfishing limit (OFL) of 551,000, or the total ACL of 509,000 fish and addresses National Standard 1 because:

- North Carolina is at the northern range of the stock with much of the population occurring further south (Figure 1.).
- It is anticipated that not every private angler and every for-hire captain will fish all 62 days due to weather, life issues, employment, mechanical issues, etc. It was noted, in a previous Florida EFP, 12,000 fish were requested, but only 5,300 were harvested because of these reasons (C.J. Sweetman, FWC personal comment).
- It is anticipated that daily effort will decompress because of the increased number of days available for fishing (Topping, et al. 2019).



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Red Snapper

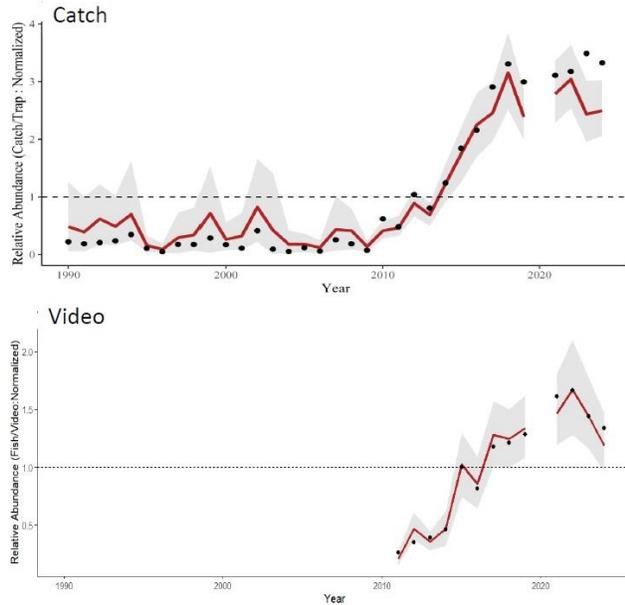
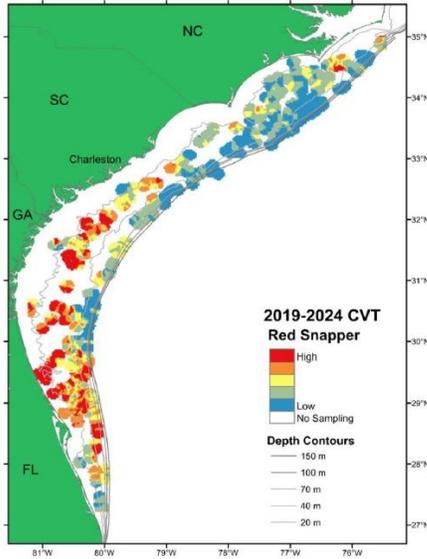


Figure 1. Red Snapper Relative Abundance 2019-2024. Source [Southeast Reef Fish Survey](#), SC DNR.

In the absence of an EFP, red snapper would continue to be regulatorily discarded. By allowing retention of red snapper that would otherwise be discarded, the requested EFP converts discards into harvest, makes use of the fishery resource instead of wasting the resource and therefore addresses both National Standards 5 and 9. This EFP also provides an opportunity to begin characterizing the NC red snapper fishery and addresses National Standard 8 by documenting the importance of the red snapper fishery to North Carolina coastal communities.

No significant impact on the environment, marine mammals, threatened or endangered species or EFH is expected since recreational fishing has and will continue to occur regardless of red snapper harvest.

vi. Time and place fishing will take place and gear to be used.

The time period requested for this EFP is July 1, 2026, through August 31, 2026, which corresponds with MRIP Wave four and what is requested in SC and GA's EFP. The gear will be allowable hook and line gear consistent with current regulations.



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vii. Specific regulations for which an exemption is being requested

50 CFR 622.8 (b) Quota closures

When a quota specified in this part is reached or is projected to be reached, the Assistant Administrator will file a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. On and after the effective date of such notification, for the remainder of the fishing year, the applicable closure restrictions for such a quota, as specified in this part apply. See the applicable ACLs, annual catch targets (ACTs), and AMs sections in [subparts B](#) through [U of this part](#) for closure provisions when an applicable ACL or ACT is reached or projected to be reached.

50 CFR 622.181(c)(2) Red Snapper

Red snapper may only be harvested or possessed in or from the South Atlantic EEZ during the commercial and recreational seasons as specified in [§§ 622.183\(b\)\(5\)](#) and [622.193\(y\)](#). Any red snapper caught in the South Atlantic EEZ during a time other than the specified commercial or recreational seasons specified in [§ 622.193\(y\)](#) must be released immediately with a minimum of harm. In addition, for a person on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, the prohibition on the harvest or possession of red snapper applies in the South Atlantic, regardless of where such fish are harvested or possessed, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

50 CFR 622.193(y)(2) Recreational sector

The recreational ACL for red snapper is 22,797 fish. The AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to announce the length of the recreational fishing season for the current fishing year. The length of the recreational fishing season for red snapper serves as the in-season accountability measure. [See § 622.183\(b\)\(5\)](#) for details on the recreational fishing season. On and after the effective date of the recreational closure notification, the bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.

viii Signature of applicants

Kathy B. Rawls
NC Division of Marine Fisheries Director

Patricia Murphey
Executive Assistant for Councils



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ix. Literature Cited

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Topping, T.S., M.K. Streich, M.R. Fisher, G.W. Stunz. 2019. A comparison of private recreational fishing harvest and effort for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper during derby and extended federal seasons and implications for future management. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, 39:1311 – 1320.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

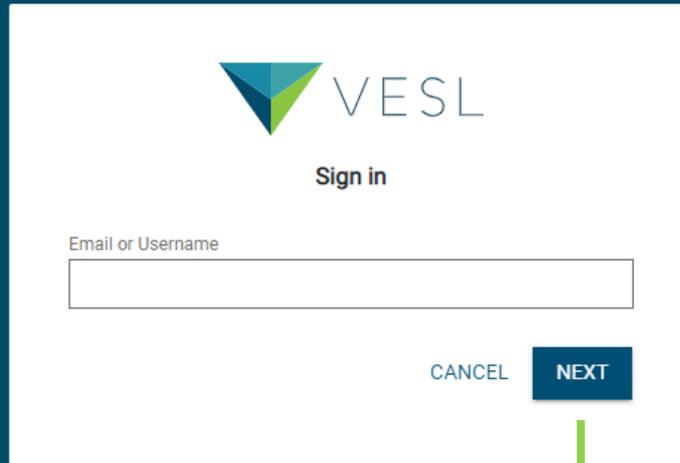


Overview of For-Hire Electronic Reporting

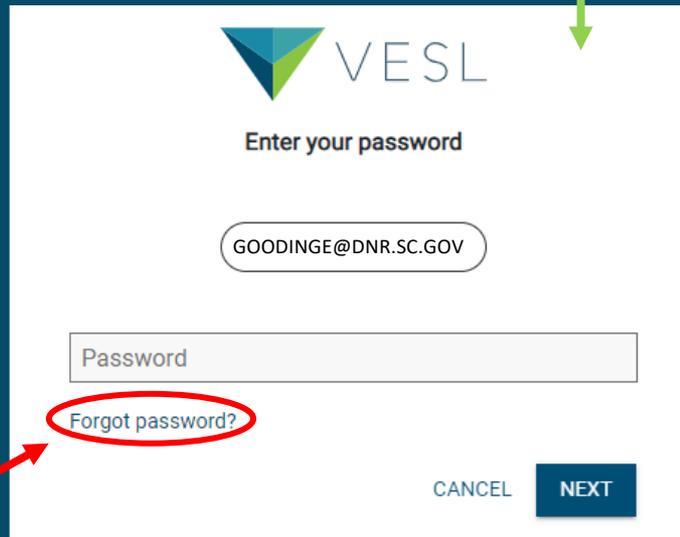
For questions contact:

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Fisheries Statistics Section Manager
(843) 953-0119



The image shows the VESL sign-in screen. At the top is the VESL logo, which consists of a stylized triangle with blue and green segments. Below the logo is the text "VESL" in a large, sans-serif font. Underneath that is the heading "Sign in". There is a text input field labeled "Email or Username". At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: "CANCEL" and "NEXT". A green arrow points from the "NEXT" button down to the next screen.



The image shows the VESL password entry screen. At the top is the VESL logo. Below it is the heading "Enter your password". There is a rounded rectangular field containing the email address "GOODINGE@DNR.SC.GOV". Below that is a password input field labeled "Password". At the bottom left, the text "Forgot password?" is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it from the bottom left of the slide. At the bottom right are two buttons: "CANCEL" and "NEXT".

If you forget your password, click here to reset it. Support@vesldata.com will send a link to the email address we have on file for you. Be sure to check your junk folder and add VESL support to your known contacts to avoid lost emails.

- 
CHARTER TICKET
- Dashboard
- Reporting Status
- Create Trip
- Create No Business
- Find Trip
- Manage
 - Entities
 - Reporting
 - Exports
 - Users

Reporting Status

See an overview of your activity and compliance by month or week (for federally permitted charters)

Create Trip

Enter data for a new trip

Create No Business

File a No Business (no activity) Report for a certain month(s)

Find Trip

See activity/trips for a timeframe you select

These tabs will take you to the same page.

By clicking on these 3 stacked bars, a drop-down navigation menu will appear to the left. The options on this menu are the same as the tabs on the Dashboard (homepage). You can use this menu while on any screen in the site.



We'll explore each of these tabs/pages, with the current working page noted in the upper left throughout the tutorial. Remember that the Reporting Status and Create No Business are the same page – we'll cover submitting no activity in Reporting Status.

In the Reporting Status page, you'll see an overview of the entire fiscal year. Remember DNR's fiscal year is **July 1 → June 30**.



Reporting Status



FILTERS

Vessel

LEGEND

Period is out of compliance and past deadline

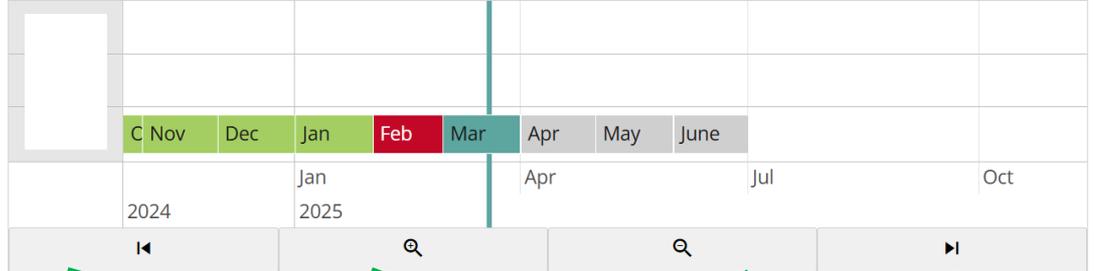
Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline

Current filing period

Period is open for filing

Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY



NOTIFICATIONS [1]

- February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

Use these buttons to change the view of the compliance timeline.

2025 - October

10/01/2024 - 10/31/2024

7 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - November

11/01/2024 - 11/30/2024

1 PENDING TRIP
10 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - December

12/01/2024 - 12/31/2024

11 SUBMITTED TRIPS

2025 - January

01/01/2025 - 01/31/2025

NO BUSINESS FILED

UNDO NO BUSINESS

2025 - February

02/01/2025 - 02/28/2025

CREATE FIRST TRIP

FILE NO BUSINESS

2025 - March

03/01/2025 - 03/31/2025

CREATE FIRST TRIP

FILE NO BUSINESS



Create No Business

FILTERS
Vessel

- LEGEND
- Period is out of compliance and past deadline
 - Reporting period is over, but not past the deadline
 - Current filing period
 - Period is open for filing
 - Period is compliant

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

	C Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
	2024		Jan 2025			Apr		Jul	Oct

NOTIFICATIONS [1]

February: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

2025 - October	7 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - November	1 PENDING TRIP	
2025 - December	11 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - January	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - February	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - March	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - April	--	FILE NO BUSINESS

If you don't fill out a trip entirely, you'll have an incomplete trip saved. If this is your only trip for a month, you'll be marked out of compliance. You can click on the message info (blue letters) to edit, complete and submit trips.

Click this to report no activity for a particular month. You can click it again to undo the action. This can also be done for future months if no activity is expected.



Reporting Status



Create No Business



Federal Permits:

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024w39	2024w40	2024w41	2024w42	2024w43	2024w44	2024w45
6	11	16	21	26	1	6
October 2024				November 2024		

NOTIFICATIONS [0]

Week	Trips	Actions
2025 - 2024w39 09/30/2024 - 10/06/2024	2 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w40 10/07/2024 - 10/13/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w41 10/14/2024 - 10/20/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w42 10/21/2024 - 10/27/2024	3 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w43 10/28/2024 - 11/03/2024	4 SUBMITTED TRIPS	
2025 - 2024w44 11/04/2024 - 11/10/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2024w45 11/11/2024 - 11/17/2024	1 SUBMITTED TRIP	
2025 - 2024w46 11/18/2024 - 11/24/2024	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS

If you purchase federal permits, your reporting requirements will automatically switch to weekly rather than monthly, as shown.

As long as you report your trips through VESL to SCDNR, your reports will be sent to SERO automatically.

Federal Permits:



Reporting Status



Create No Business

The charter shown on the right is compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO.

If you do not report one week in a month, you will be compliant for SCDNR, but out of compliance for SERO and will not be able to renew your federal permits.

This also applies for pending trips. If you only have pending trips, and no submitted trips for a week, you are out of compliance for SERO.

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

2024...	2025w01	2025w02	2025w03	2025w04	2025w05	2025w06	2025w07	2025w08	2025w09
Jan 2025						Feb			Mar

NOTIFICATIONS [1]



25w06: Past Deadline, No Submitted Trips

2025 - 2024w52 12/30/2024 - 01/05/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w01 01/06/2025 - 01/12/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w02 01/13/2025 - 01/19/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w03 01/20/2025 - 01/26/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w04 01/27/2025 - 02/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w05 02/03/2025 - 02/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w06 02/10/2025 - 02/16/2025	CREATE FIRST TRIP	FILE NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w07 02/17/2025 - 02/23/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w08 02/24/2025 - 03/02/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w09 03/03/2025 - 03/09/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS
2025 - 2025w10 03/10/2025 - 03/16/2025	NO BUSINESS FILED	UNDO NO BUSINESS



Now we'll take a look at creating a trip.

Remember, your reporting requirements are trip-level, so if you make multiple trips in a day, you'll need to submit a trip for each one.

+
Create Trip

Use these icons to enter trip date & time and location. Smaller windows will appear to help you select.

New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ
03/18/25 10:00 AM

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ
03/18/25 03:00 PM

Vessel * ⓘ

of Anglers * ⓘ
3

of Crew * ⓘ
1

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ
Wappoo Cut Public Boa...

Location ⓘ
32, 79 - A2

Locale ⓘ
ESTUARINE

Reef ⓘ

Trip Date & Time (EDT) * ⓘ
03/25/19 12:00 AM

MARCH 2019

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
9	25	26	27	28	01	02
10	04	05	06	07	08	09
11	11	12	13	14	15	16
12	18	19	20	21	22	23
13	25	26	27	28	29	30
14	01	02	03	04	05	06

TODAY CLEAR CLOSE

Location and Reef Selector

After selecting a Location and/or Reef, please click Done.

- Location: --
- Reef: --

Map Satellite

CANCEL DONE

Fishing Activity

Min Depth * ⓘ
3 FT

Max Depth * ⓘ
15 FT

Hours Fished * ⓘ
4 HRS

Target Species ⓘ
Drum, Red

Fishing Methods * ⓘ
ROD AND REEL (BOTTOM)

12 : 00 AM

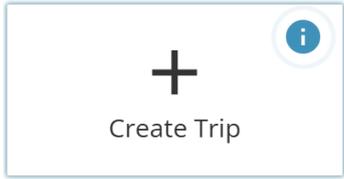
Scroll up/down for hrs/mins
Click to switch AM/PM

Hours fished = time actually spent fishing. Excludes running time, etc.

Next, we'll cover choosing your fishing location and the interactive map.



Common Problem: Overlapping Trips



Sometimes when creating a trip, the end date accidentally jumps a couple days. You will then be unable to submit a trip later in the week during the trip dates accidentally listed.

Pending

1 error must be resolved before submitting.
• The trip start to trip end time overlap an existing trip for this vessel.

This is the error message you will see when trying to submit a trip within dates from extended trip.

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ 09/12/24 02:00 PM

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ 09/12/24 05:00 PM

To check for this error: go to reporting status to review trips and see dates. See date change below.

*Remember: this trip is still pending and needs to be submitted when overlap is fixed!

TRIP #	TRIP DATE & TIME	TRIP END	LAST MODIFIED	STATUS
3	09-12-2024 02:00 PM	09-12-2024 05:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:12 PM	Pending
2	09-10-2024 09:00 AM	09-17-2024 12:00 PM	03-24-2025 02:11 PM	Submitted

Staff can see pending trips, so if you are having trouble clearing an error, call and let us walk you through it.

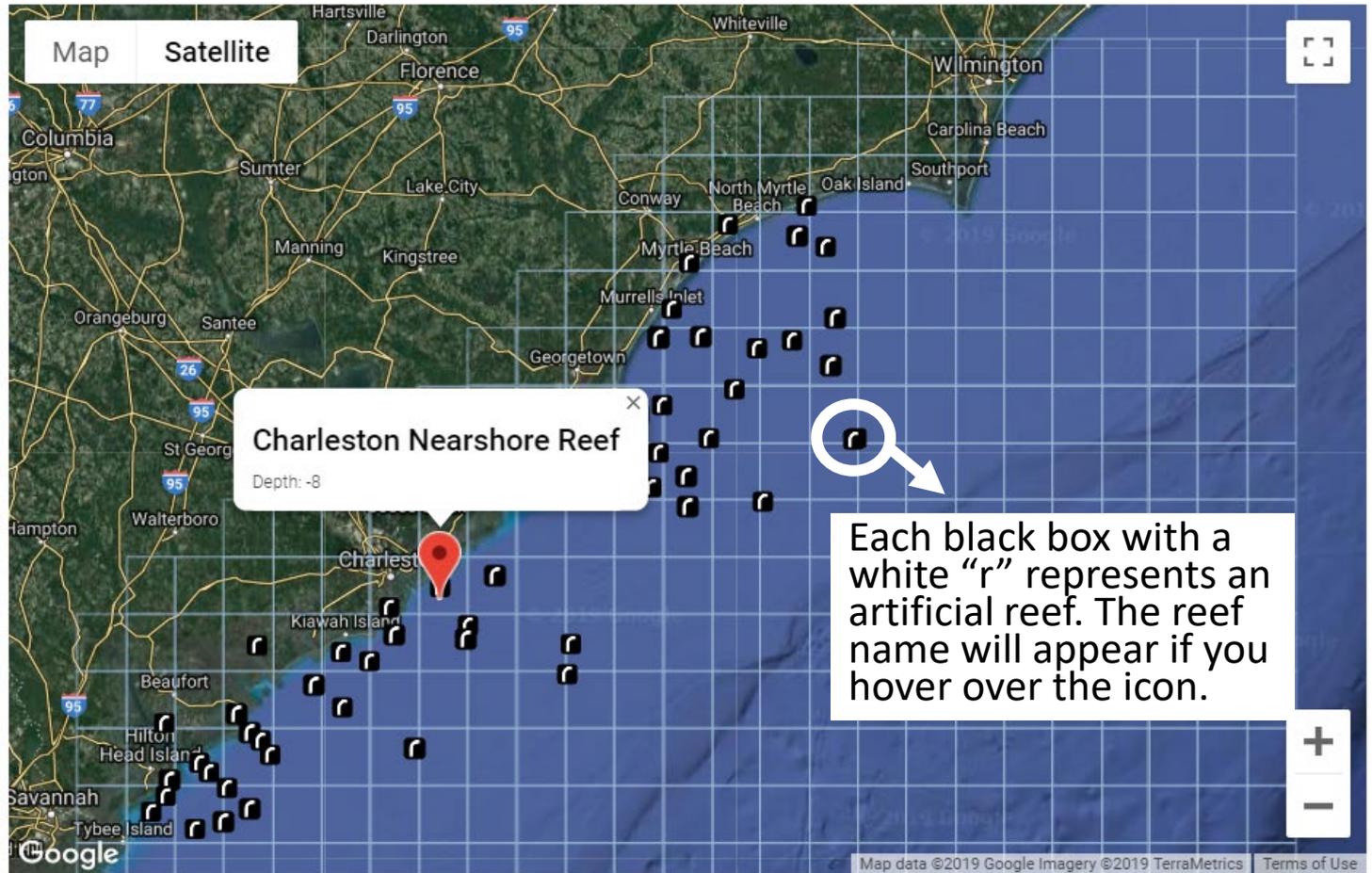
Location and Reef Selector

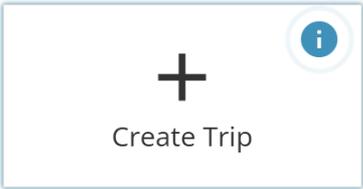
After selecting a Location and/or Reef, please click Done.

- Location: 32, 79 - B2 ✕
- Reef: Charleston Nearshore Reef ✕

Note: if you click on the wrong box or reef, click the red "x" next to the location/reef name.

Each of these boxes represents a 10x10 sq. mile area. Select the box in which most of the fishing activity occurred. If you also fished on an artificial reef, click on the black box that represents it. You'll see the location and reef name populate **above**. Then click done in the bottom right. If no fishing took place on a reef, select your location and then click done.





New Trip

Trip Details

Trip Start (EDT) * ⓘ

Trip End (EDT) * ⓘ

Vessel * ⓘ

of Anglers * ⓘ

of Crew * ⓘ

Location

Departing Marina * ⓘ

Location ⓘ

Locale ⓘ

Reef ⓘ

Marina/landing used.
If name doesn't appear,
enter "Not listed"

of Crew: total number
of crew aboard during the
charter. This includes the
captain and any mates.
This does not include the
anglers.

If you consistently target
multiple species, please
alternate them per trip.

Fishing Activity

Min Depth * ⓘ FT

Max Depth * ⓘ FT

Hours Fished * ⓘ HRS

Target Species ⓘ

Fishing Methods * ⓘ

Now that all of your effort information is entered and accurate, click NEXT to continue to the catch section of the trip. If you have any errors or an incomplete section, you'll get a warning pop up so you can correct it before moving on. →

+
Create Trip

h
kept from

If a zero value applies to a field, the number "0" must be entered

Clicking drop down arrow lists commonly caught species

- 223 total options
Type to filter
- Amberjack, Greater
168689
- Croaker, Atlantic
169283
- Drum, Black
169288
- Drum, Red
169290
- Flounder, Southern

Details

Catch Details

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

If this is the only species you caught

If you need to add additional species

Details

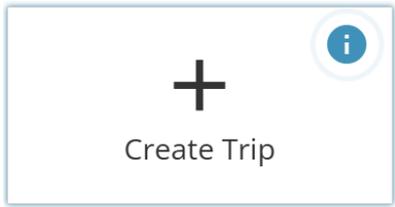
Catch Details

^ COLLAPSE MULTI-ENTRY × CLEAR ALL

Species	Kept	Lbs Kept	Released Alive	Released Dead
× Amberjack, Greater	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Croaker, Atlantic	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Black	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Drum, Red	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
× Flounder, Southern	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> LBS	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

This drop down allows for a species favorite list to enter repeatedly caught species easily



Details

Catch Details

Species ¹ Kept ¹ Lbs Kept ¹ Released Alive Released Dead

LBS

CANCEL ADD ADD & NEW

Edit (blue pencil) or delete (red trash can) species info

SPECIES	KEPT	LBS KEPT	RELEASED ALIVE	RELEASED DEAD
  Croaker, Atlantic	3	3.00 lbs	0	0
Additional species, click here 				

SAVE SUBMIT

Your trip will not be saved and you won't be compliant unless you SAVE, then click SUBMIT!!





Reporting Status



Create Trip



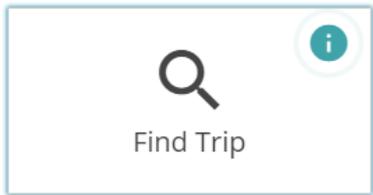
Create No Business



Find Trip

Now let's explore Find Trip.

This icon allows you to see activity/trips for a timeframe you select.



You can sort trips by any of these categories by clicking on the column header

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP # ^	TRIP DATE & TIME ^	TRIP END ^	LAST MODIFIED ^	STATUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	919	12-17-2024 09:00 AM	12-17-2024 01:00 PM	12-18-2024 12:53 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	918	11-29-2024 12:30 PM	11-29-2024 04:30 PM	11-29-2024 10:42 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	917	11-12-2024 12:30 PM	11-12-2024 04:30 PM	11-12-2024 05:34 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	916	11-02-2024 12:00 PM	11-02-2024 04:00 PM	11-03-2024 12:18 AM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	915	11-02-2024 07:30 AM	11-02-2024 11:30 AM	02-12-2025 02:32 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	914	11-01-2024 08:30 AM	11-01-2024 12:30 PM	12-04-2024 03:57 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	913	10-28-2024 09:00 AM	10-28-2024 12:00 PM	10-28-2024 07:35 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	912	10-26-2024 01:00 PM	10-26-2024 05:00 PM	03-18-2025 12:58 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	911	10-26-2024 08:30 AM	10-26-2024 12:30 PM	10-26-2024 03:48 PM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	910	10-25-2024 08:30 AM	10-25-2024 12:30 PM	02-12-2025 02:33 PM	

First Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Next Last

*All times are in Eastern Time

FILTERS

Vessel
Test Vessel (SCXXXX... x)

Date Range ⓘ
This Month v

License ⓘ
100001 v

Status ⓘ
All v

Status ⓘ
All
Deleted
Pending
Submitted

Date Range ⓘ
Last 12 months v
Last 30 days
This Week
This Month
This Year
Last 12 months
Year + Month
Custom

By clicking on Date Range dropdown, you can select any time period you'd like to see your data appear for. You can also filter by Status. If you accidentally delete a trip, it can always be recovered.

Eye icon = view
Pencil icon = edit

HELP & SUPPORT

Browser address bar: <https://vesldata.com/user/dashboard>

Navigation bar: CHARTER TICKET DASHBOARD

Utility icons: Bell, User, Help (?), Profile

Reporting Status

Create Trip

Create No Business

Find Trip

South Carolina DNR Support

Phone: 843-953-8748

Email: charterreporting@dnr.sc.gov

FAQs: [Help Center](#)

VESL SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK

[VIEW KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

Utility icons: Bell, User, Help (?), Profile

Sydney Bates
bates@dnr.sc.gov

[CHANGE PASSWORD](#)

[SIGN OUT](#)

Frequently Asked Questions can be found here!

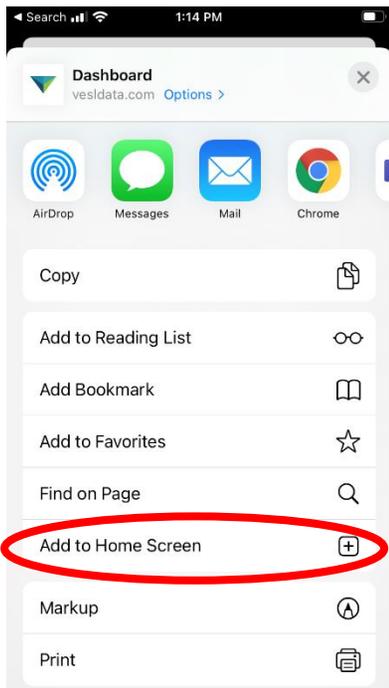
For help with reporting process, how-to, permits etc., contact here for SCDNR - Sydney Bates

Unfortunately, as of now, the VESL app is not compatible with SCDNR. These steps show you how to pin VESL to your homescreen as an app.

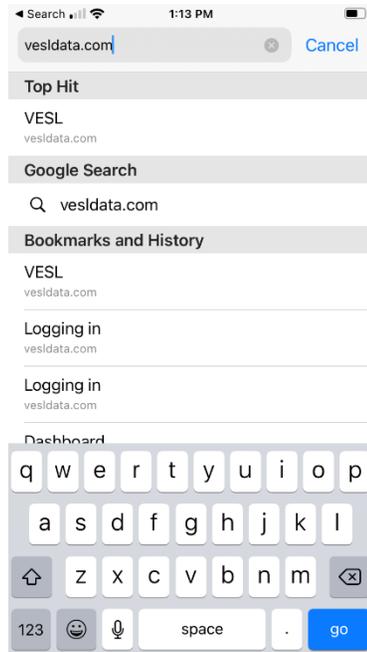
Pinning VESL to Your Home Screen



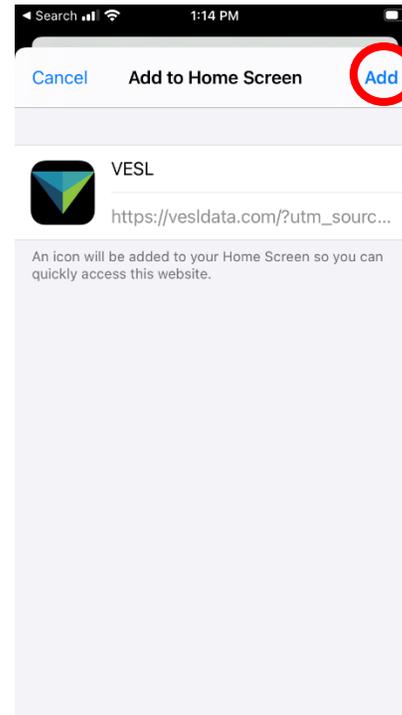
Step 1: Use Safari for Apple products and Chrome for Android products.



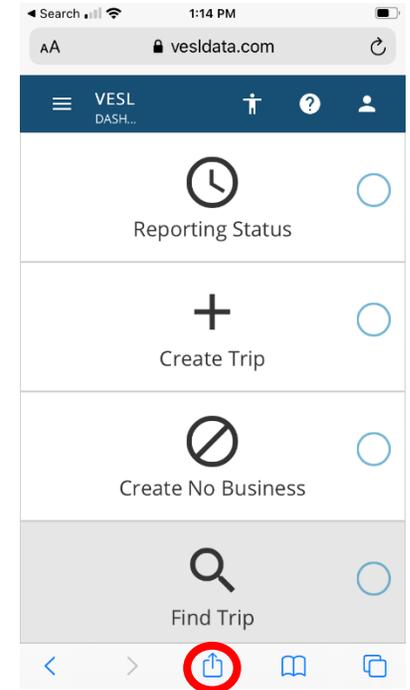
Step 4: Scroll down until you see “Add to Home Screen,” circled above.



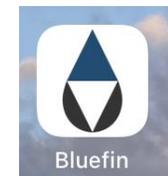
Step 2: Type vesldata.com into the browser.



Step 5: Click “Add,” circled above.

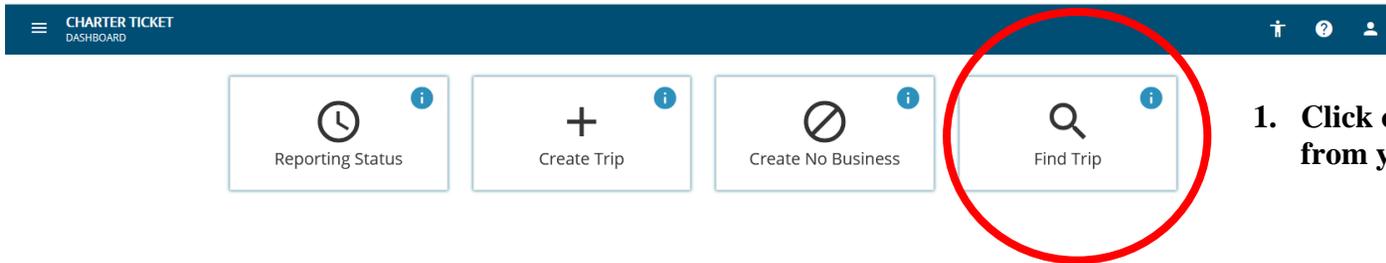


Step 3: When the dashboard appears, click on the symbol circled above.



Step 6: Access VESL from your home screen. App will appear as shown above.

Downloading Your Trip Data



1. Click on "Find Trip" from your dashboard.



2. Enter your vessel number.

3. Choose a date range.

FILTERS

Vessel

Date Range

Status

ACTIONS

* DOWNLOAD SELECTED ITEMS

+ ADD TRIP

<input type="checkbox"/>	TRIP #	TRIP DATE & TIME	TRIP END	LAST MODIFIED	STATUS
No Trips found for the set filters					

*All times are in Eastern Time

4. If interested in all trips within date range, click this box. Otherwise click boxes to the left of specific trips needed.

5. Click "Download Selected Items." Click on Excel (if preferred) and click "OK."



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

February 3, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
FROM: Jason Rock, Fisheries Management Section Chief
SUBJECT: Temporary Rule Suspensions

Issue

In accordance with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Resource Management Policy Number 2014-2, Temporary Rule Suspension, the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission will vote on any new rule suspensions that have occurred since the last meeting of the commission.

Findings

There have been no new rule suspensions since the November 2025 meeting.

Action Needed

No action is needed.

Overview

In accordance with policy, the division will report current rule suspensions previously approved by the commission as non-action items. They include:

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (h) GILL NETS, SEINES, IDENTIFICATION, RESTRICTIONS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to implement year-round small mesh gill net attendance requirements in certain areas of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers systems. This action was taken as part of a department initiative to review existing small mesh gill net rules to limit yardage and address attendance requirements in certain areas of the state. This suspension continues in Proclamation [M-29-2025](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0501 (e)(2) DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS FOR POUND NETS AND POUND NET SETS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to increase the minimum mesh size of escape panels for flounder pound nets



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

in accordance with Amendment 3 of the North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in proclamation [M-34-2015](#) and continues in Proclamation [M-9-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0103 (a)(1) PROHIBITED NETS, MESH LENGTHS AND AREAS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust trawl net minimum mesh size requirements in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation SH-3-2019 and continues in Proclamation [SH-1-2022](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0105 (2) RECREATIONAL SHRIMP LIMITS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to modify the recreational possession limit of shrimp by removing the four quarts heads on and two and a half quarts heads off prohibition from waters closed to shrimping in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [SH-4-2022](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0205 (a) CRAB SPAWNING SANCTUARIES

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to close crab spawning sanctuaries year-round to the use of trawls in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [M-13-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0502 (a) MULLET

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to modify the recreational and for-hire possession limits of mullet in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [FF-27-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0515 (a)(2) DOLPHIN

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust the recreational vessel limit to complement management of dolphin under the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Amendment 10 to the Fishery



JOSH STEIN
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Director

Management Plan for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [FF-30-2022](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03Q .0107 (4) SPECIAL REGULATIONS: JOINT WATERS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust the creel limit for American shad under the management framework of the North Carolina American Shad Sustainable Fishery Plan. This suspension was continued in Proclamation [FF-8-2026](#).