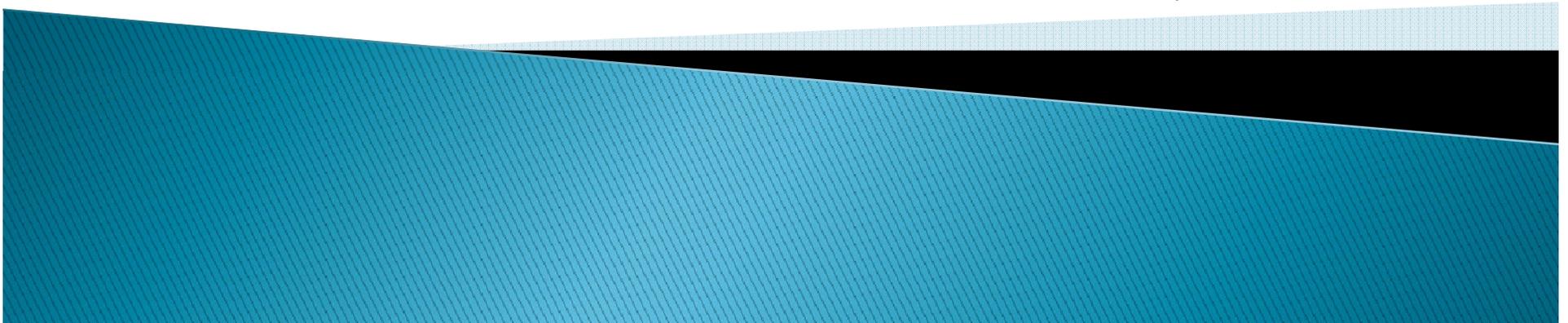


South Atlantic Snapper/Grouper Regulations

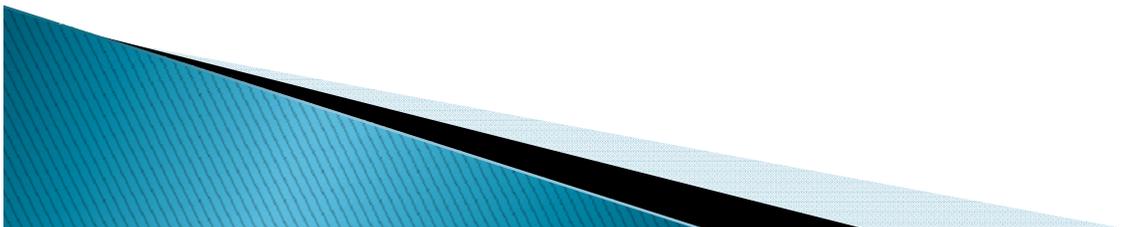
What's current and what's on the horizon

Brian Chevront, NC DMF



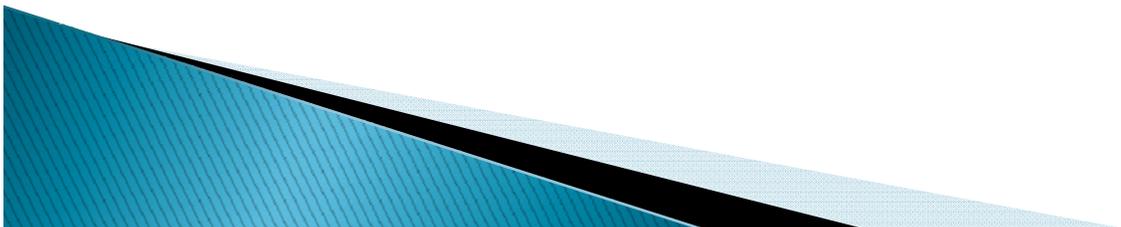
Background

- ▶ What is prompting all these changes?
 - In January 2007 President Bush signed the Reauthorized Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Act



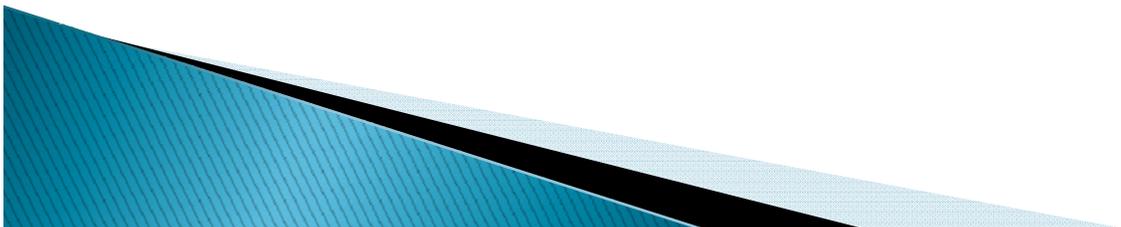
New MSA Requirements

- Councils must implement corrective actions for all fisheries previously declared as “overfished” or “overfishing is occurring” by January 1, 2010.
- A fishery declared to be undergoing overfishing after the Reauthorized MSA went into place had one year to develop a corrective plan.
- The fishery must be rebuilt in no more than one generation plus 10 years.
- If a rebuilding plan cannot restore the stock in that time frame, no fishing mortality is to be allowed until the stock is rebuilt.



New MSA Requirements

- ▶ The Councils may no longer determine whether the data used or the stock assessments themselves are scientifically adequate for management. This responsibility lies with the Science and Statistical Committee.
- ▶ The Councils' role is now to take the results of assessments and come up with the rebuilding plans.



A New Approach

- ▶ The MSA now requires NOAA Fisheries to establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for all managed species.
 - An ACL is the maximum amount of a species the Council determines can be landed. It must not exceed the level established by the SSC.
- ▶ Snapper/Grouper Amendment 17 will set the ACLs for species undergoing overfishing.
- ▶ The SAFMC will write a Comprehensive ACL Amendment for all species not undergoing overfishing.



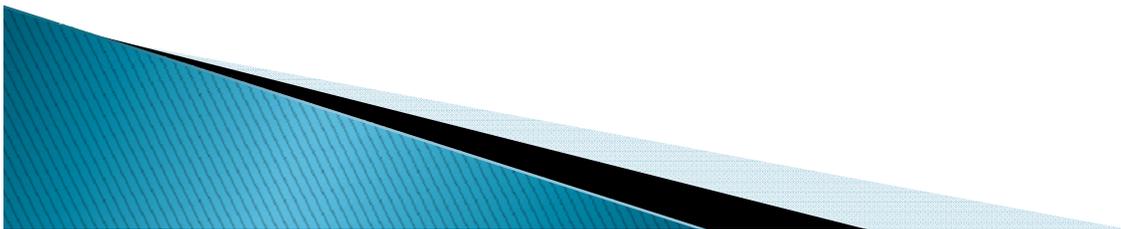
What does this mean for NC fisheries?

- ▶ The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) has 10 species declared as undergoing overfishing:
 - Golden Tilefish
 - **Snowy Grouper**
 - Speckled Hind
 - Warsaw Grouper
 - Black Grouper
 - **Black Sea Bass**
 - **Red Snapper**
 - **Gag**
 - **Red Grouper**
 - **Vermilion Snapper (Beeliner)**



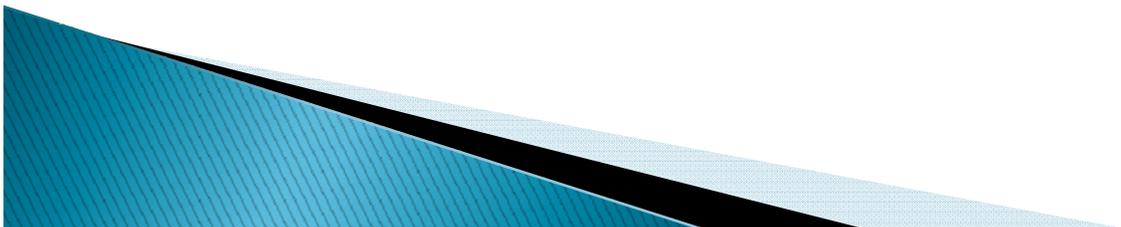
Snapper/Grouper Amendment 17

- ▶ Possession of Speckled Hind and Warsaw Grouper is limited to one of each per vessel per trip and not much is known about them, but are listed as undergoing overfishing.
- ▶ The following slides give information about the remaining 6 species.



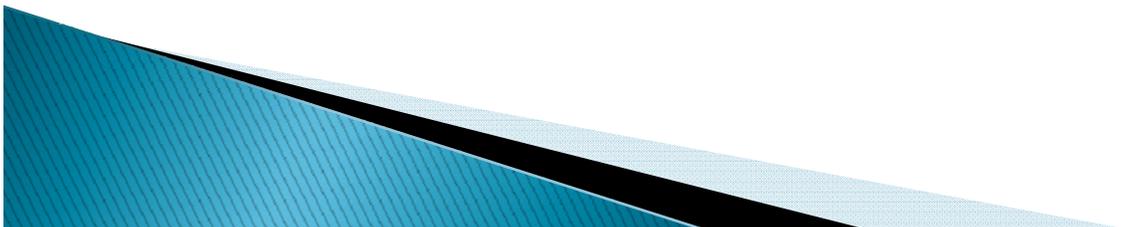
Snowy Grouper

- ▶ Fishing mortality in the South Atlantic is limited to 87,254 pounds (gutted). This includes landings and dead discards.
- ▶ Landings are currently allocated to 95% commercial and 5% recreational.
- ▶ Within the 5-fish recreational grouper aggregate bag limit, no more than one of the fish may be a snowy grouper.
- ▶ Commercial fishermen are not allowed to land more than 100 pounds per trip.



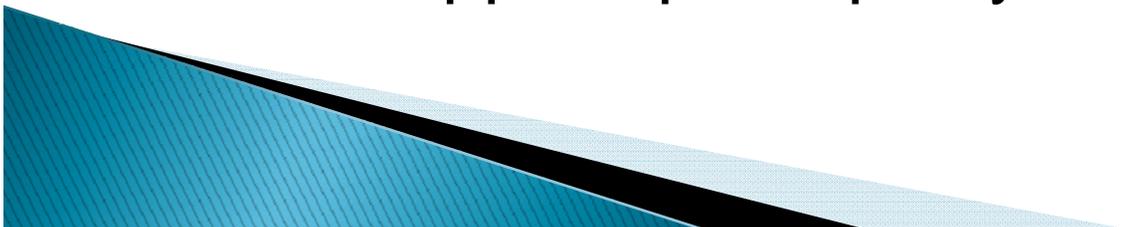
Black Sea Bass

- ▶ Fishing mortality in the South Atlantic is limited to 718,000 pounds (gutted). This includes landings and dead discards.
- ▶ Landings are currently allocated to 43% commercial and 57% recreational.
- ▶ 12-inch minimum size limit
- ▶ 15-fish recreational bag limit
- ▶ No commercial trip quota. Once their overall quota is taken the fishery is shut down.



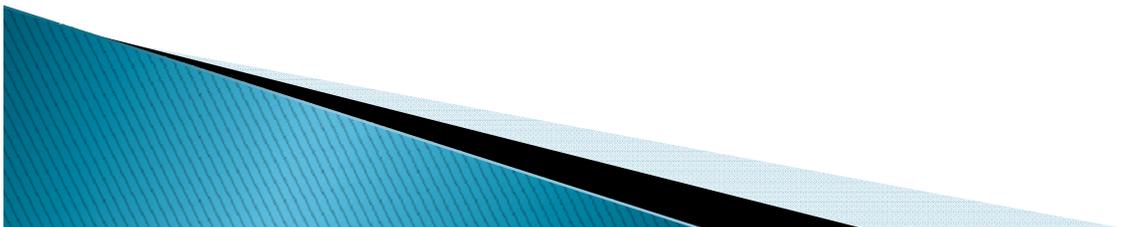
Red Snapper

- ▶ The SSC determined red snapper to be severely overfished based on the results of a recent stock assessment.
- ▶ Even if possession of red snapper were no longer allowed, the expected bycatch mortality would exceed the level that would allow the fishery to recover within one generation plus 10 years (46 years).
- ▶ The SAFMC has not decided yet how to manage red snapper - perhaps by June 2009.



Gag

- ▶ A 2007 stock assessment determined gag is undergoing overfishing. It is not certain whether it is overfished.
- ▶ Fishing mortality in the South Atlantic is limited to 694,000 pounds (gutted). This includes landings and dead discards.
- ▶ Landings are currently allocated to 51% commercial and 49% recreational.
- ▶ 24-inch minimum size limit
- ▶ Within the 5-fish recreational grouper aggregate bag limit, no more than two of the fish may be gag.
- ▶ No commercial sale during March and April. Additionally, once Amendment 16 is in effect, when the commercial quota is taken the fishery will be shut down.



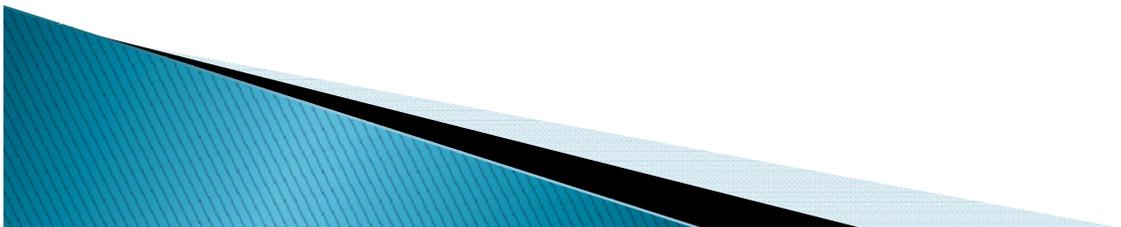
Red Grouper

- ▶ A stock assessment is scheduled to begin in 2009.
- ▶ Red grouper is listed as overfishing is occurring based on a preliminary analysis.
- ▶ There are no restrictions in place currently for red grouper except the aggregated bag limit.
- ▶ Because red grouper are caught along with black grouper and gag in some states (but not necessarily in NC), when gag is closed January – April, red grouper will be closed as well.



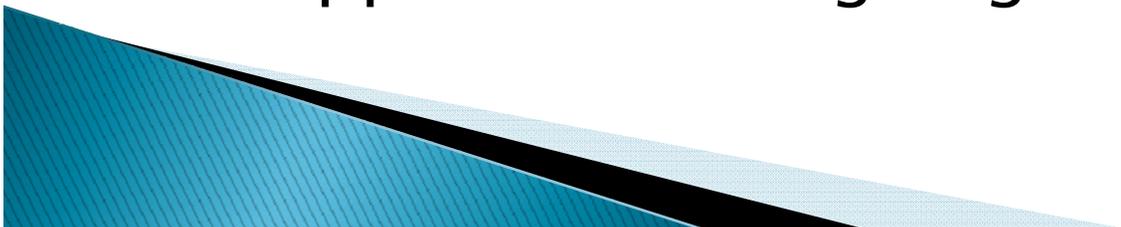
Vermilion Snapper (Beeliner)

- ▶ Current Regulations:
 - 12 inch minimum size limit
 - 10-fish recreational bag limit
 - 1.1 million-pound commercial quota with no possession or sale of vermillion snapper after the commercial quota has been taken



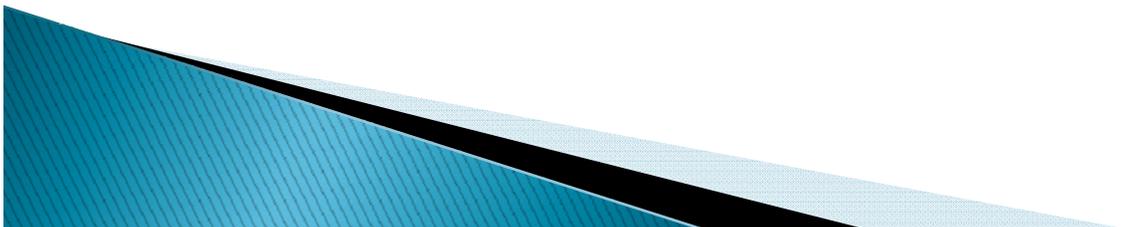
Vermilion Snapper

- ▶ A recent stock assessment determined that vermilion snapper are not overfished, but are subject to overfishing.
- ▶ The assessment review panel determined this conclusion is highly uncertain due to problems with key model assumptions.
- ▶ The SAFMC SSC concluded that vermilion snapper are undergoing overfishing.



Snapper/Grouper Amendment 16

- ▶ There will be no interim rule for Snapper Grouper Amendment 16.
 - No gag and red grouper recreational closure January through April of 2009.
 - No red grouper commercial closure in 2009.
 - No gag commercial closure in January & February of 2009.
- ▶ Amendment 16 is expected to be signed by the Secretary of Commerce in midsummer 2009.



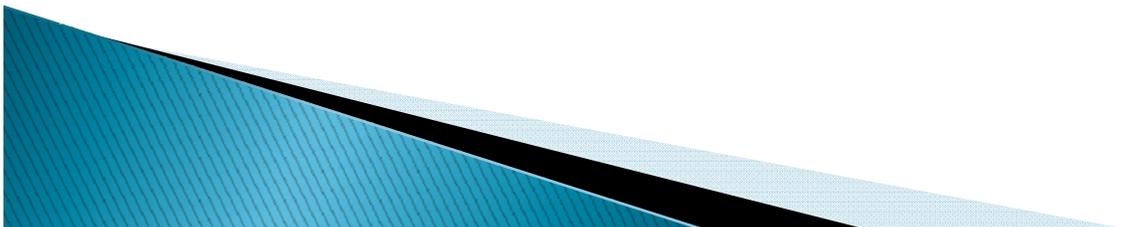
▶ Once Amendment 16 is in effect:

■ Gag, and red grouper

- January – April closure for both commercial and recreational fisheries. Gag landings will be held to the ACLs.

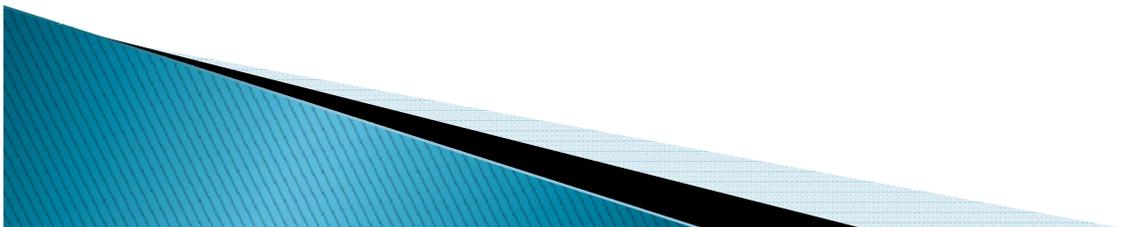
■ Vermilion snapper

- Recreational closure from November to March
- There will be a 5-fish recreational bag limit
- The commercial fishery will be split into two seasons:
 - January through June = 315,523 pounds
 - July through December = 302,523 pounds
- When the quota for a season is reached, the fishery will shut down until the next season begins.



Snapper/Grouper Amendment 17

- ▶ In December 2008, the SAFMC SSC decided to review their assessments of overfishing levels (OFLs) and allowable biological catch recommendations (ABCs).
- ▶ Their decision delays the progress of the amendment. The SSC will meet in March to decide how they will determine the values. At their June 2009 meeting they will resolve OFLs and ABC.
- ▶ Amendment 17 will establish ACLs for the 10 species currently undergoing overfishing.



Snapper/Grouper Amendment 18

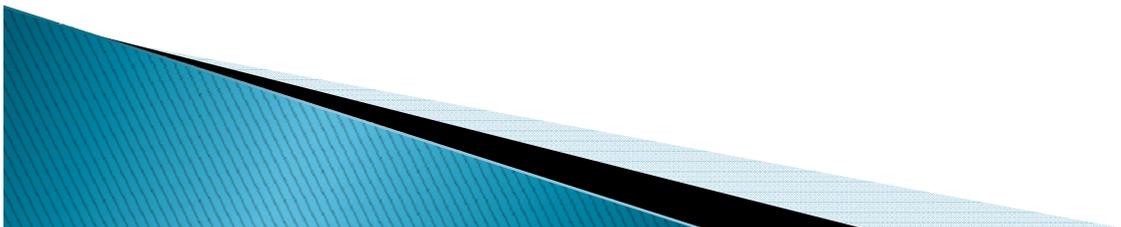
- ▶ Since Amendment 17 is delayed, most other measures that were going to be in that amendment will appear in Amendment 18.
- ▶ These measures include:
 - The use of venting and dehooking tools
 - Limit participation in the black sea bass fishery
 - Extend SAFMC snapper grouper jurisdiction into MAFMC areas
 - Regional/state management of gag recreational allocation



Public Hearing and Scoping

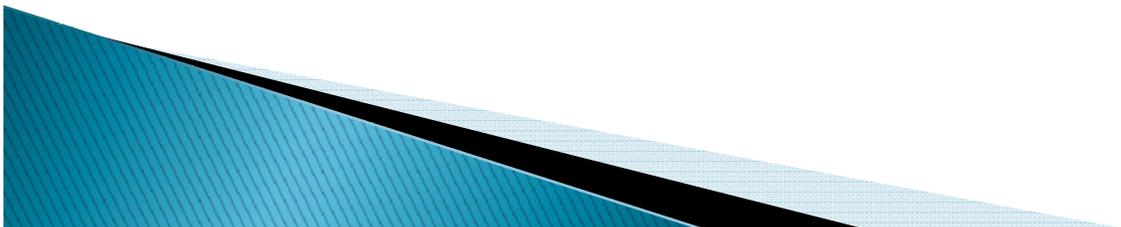
- ▶ January 27th from 3-7 pm in New Bern
 - Bridge Pointe Hotel, 101 Howell Road

- ▶ Topics covered:
 - Public Hearings for –
 - Fishery Ecosystem Plan – no regulatory actions
 - Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Assessment Amend 1 – establish areas to protect deepwater corals while still allowing fishing areas for deepwater shrimp and golden crabs



■ Scoping for -

- ACL Comprehensive Amendment to establish
 - Catch limits and accountability measures for species not undergoing overfishing as required by the MSA
 - Allocations between recreation, commercial & for-hire sectors
- Snapper Grouper Amendment 18
 - Limit participation in golden tilefish and black sea bass fisheries
 - Extend SAFMC snapper grouper jurisdiction into MAFMC areas
 - Regional/state management of gag recreational allocation
- Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2
 - Issues related to octocoral and *Sargassum* harvest



Updates on Mackerels

- ▶ Recent stock assessments showed:
 - King mackerel is not overfished and the assessment could not tell whether overfishing was occurring.
 - Spanish mackerel does not appear to be undergoing overfishing at this time. The assessment could not tell whether or not it was overfished.
- ▶ The Council will not take any action at this time.
- ▶ Catch limits and levels will be set in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment.



Questions?

