



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Hearings Scheduled in November for Proposed Federal Fisheries Management Measures

Commercial Dolphin Trip Limit for Atlantic Coast; Blueline Tilefish, Yellowtail Snapper and Black Sea Bass in South Atlantic

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is soliciting public input in November on measures affecting fishermen as far north as New England. Commercial fishermen that target dolphin (fish) in federal waters along the Atlantic coast may be operating under a new commercial trip limit if measures proposed by the Council are approved during its December 7-11, 2015 meeting in Atlantic Beach, NC. The Council is developing Regulatory Amendment 1 to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan with trip limit alternatives designed to help extend the commercial season. On June 30, 2015, the commercial dolphin fishery was closed for the first time when NOAA Fisheries projected that the annual catch limit of 1,157,001 pounds would be met. Dolphin are managed from New England to the Florida Keys under the fishery management plan, and the closure impacted the commercial fishery along the entire Atlantic coast. The Council approved measures in December 2014 to modify the allocation between commercial and recreational sectors, increasing the commercial allocation to 10% and the annual catch limit by 377,484 pounds. NOAA Fisheries is currently reviewing the measures approved by the Council. As proposed, the trip limit would become effective once a designated portion of the commercial annual catch limit is reached. Fishermen and other interested members of the public are being asked to provide their comments on various alternatives by participating in public hearings being held via webinar or by submitting written comments (see details below).

The Council is also requesting public input on proposed management measures for blueline tilefish, yellowtail snapper and black sea bass in Regulatory Amendment 25 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. New annual catch limits for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic and other management parameters are being considered based on a new Acceptable Biological Catch of 224,100 pounds. Changes to commercial trip limits and recreational bag limits for blueline tilefish are also being considered. For yellowtail snapper, a species commonly targeted off the southeastern coast of Florida, the amendment includes alternatives to change the fishing year and modify accountability measures. The change in the current fishing year is being requested by fishermen in order to allow harvest during the winter season and have any closures that may occur due to meeting the annual catch limit coincide with the spring/summer spawning season. The final action in Regulatory Amendment 25 would allow an increase in the current recreational bag limit for black sea bass of 5 fish per person per day. Alternatives range from increasing the bag limit to 6 fish up to a total of 10 fish per person per day. Once overfished, the stock was deemed rebuilt based on the 2013 stock assessment and the annual catch limit more than doubled. The Council is scheduled to approve measures in Regulatory Amendment 25 during its December meeting in Atlantic Beach, NC.

The public is encouraged to provide written comment and participate in upcoming public hearings scheduled via webinar with concurrent comment stations at various locations. A public hearing scheduled for Monday, November 9th will address actions proposed in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25. A public hearing scheduled for Thursday, November 12th will address commercial trip limits for dolphin through Dolphin Wahoo Regulatory Amendment 1 and measures proposed in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25. The public hearings begin at 6:00 PM.

(Continued)

November Public Hearings (Continued)

Learn More – Q&A Webinar

Monday, November 2, 2015 at 6:00 PM - Question and Answer Webinar for Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25. Registration for the webinar is required and information is available from the *Public Hearing and Scoping Meeting* page of the Council's website at www.safmc.net. Public Hearing Summary documents for each amendment and other materials will be posted on the same page by October 30, 2015.

Submit Written Comment

Written comments for both amendments can be submitted via mail, fax, and email and will be accepted until **5:00 PM on November 16, 2015**. Instructions for submitting comments are available from the Public Hearing and Scoping Meeting page of the website or by contacting the Council office at 843/571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10.

Public Hearing Webinars and Comment Stations

Public hearings will be held via webinar in conjunction with comment stations throughout the region beginning at 6:00 PM. Stakeholders have two options for participating in the public hearings: Option 1) Participate via webinar on the scheduled dates listed below; and Option 2) Participate in person at one of the designated comment stations in NC, SC, GA and FL on the scheduled dates listed below. **Registration is required for each webinar.** Webinar registration links are available from the *Public Hearing and Scoping Meeting* page of the Council's website at www.safmc.net. Council staff will be available one hour prior to each webinar to assist with setup if needed. Call 843/571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10 for assistance. Council staff will review the amendments via webinar beginning at 6:00 PM and local Council members will be on hand at each comment station and tuned into the webinar. Members of the public on the webinar and at comment stations will then have an opportunity to go on record to provide comments for consideration by the Council.

SAFMC November 2015 Public Hearings

Webinar and Comment Station Dates

6:00 PM

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25

Monday, November 9th

Public Hearing via Webinar

Register at www.safmc.net

Comment Stations:

GA Department of Natural Resources
Coastal Resources Division
One Conservation Way
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
Phone: 912/264-7218

Hilton Garden Inn Charleston Airport
5265 International Boulevard
North Charleston, SC 29418
Phone: 843/308-9330

Dolphin Wahoo Regulatory Amendment 1 and Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25

Thursday, November 12th

Public Hearing via Webinar

Register at www.safmc.net.

Comment Stations:

Dare County Government Complex
Room 168, 1st Floor
954 Marshall C. Collins Drive
Manteo, NC 27954
Phone: 252/475-5000

Wingate by Wyndham (Hotel)
2465 State Route 16
St. Augustine, FL 32092
Phone: 904/824-9229

