

Conservation, Attention: EFH, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282; telephone: 301/713-2325. The location of the additional public meeting will be announced in a future notice.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lee Crockett, NMFS, 301/713-2325.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Background**

NMFS issued proposed regulations containing guidelines for the description and identification of EFH in fishery management plans, adverse impacts on EFH, and actions to conserve and enhance EFH on April 23, 1997 (62 FR 19723). An extension of the comment period was published on May 19, 1997 (62 FR 27214). The regulations would also provide a process for NMFS to coordinate and consult with Federal and state agencies on activities that may adversely affect EFH. The guidelines are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The purpose of the rule is to assist fishery management councils in fulfilling the requirements set out by the Magnuson-Stevens Act to amend their fishery management plans to describe and identify EFH, minimize adverse effects on EFH, and identify other actions to conserve and enhance EFH. The purpose of the coordination and consultation provisions is to specify procedures for adequate consultation with NMFS on activities that may adversely affect EFH.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: June 6, 1997.

**James P. Burgess,**

*Director, Office of Habitat Conservation,  
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

[I.D. 052897C]

**South Atlantic Fishery Management  
Council; Public Hearings**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Public hearings; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene seven public hearings on Draft Amendment 9 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP) and its draft supplemental environmental impact statement (draft SEIS).

**DATES:** Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. on July 11, 1997. The hearings will be held from June 17 to July 2, 1997. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent: By mail to Bob Mahood, Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699; via fax, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, (803) 769-4520; or via email, safmc@noaa.gov. Copies of the draft amendment and SEIS are available from Susan Buchanan at 803-571-4366. The draft amendment and SEIS will also be available to the public at the hearings.

The hearings will be held in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for locations of the hearings and special accommodations.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Susan Buchanan, Public Information Officer, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 803-571-4366; Fax: 803-769-4520; E-mail address: safmc@noaa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Council will hold public hearings on Draft Amendment 9 to the FMP and the associated draft SEIS.

Amendment 9 includes management measures that would: 1. Increase the red porgy minimum size limit from 12" (30.5 cm.) total length (TL) to 13" (33 cm) TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and establish a recreational bag limit of two red porgy per person per day;

2. Increase the black sea bass minimum size limit from 8" (20.3 cm) TL to 10" (25.4 cm) TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and establish a recreational bag limit of 20 black sea bass per person per day;

3. Require escape vents and escape panels with degradable fasteners in black sea bass pots;

4. Establish measures for greater amberjack that will: Prohibit all harvest in excess of the bag limit throughout the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic during April and May; prohibit sale during April and May; reduce the recreational bag limit from three to one greater amberjack per

person per day; and prohibit coring (removal of head and tail);

5. Increase the recreational vermillion snapper minimum size limit from 10" TL (25.4 cm) to 12" (30.5 cm) TL;

6. Increase the gag minimum size limit from 20" (50.8 cm) TL to 24" (61 cm) TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and prohibit all harvest January through March;

7. Increase the black grouper minimum size limit from 20" (50.8 cm) TL to 24" (61 cm) TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen;

8. Specify that within the current five-fish aggregate grouper bag limit (which includes tilefish and excludes jewfish and Nassau grouper), no more than two fish may be gag grouper or black grouper;

9. Establish an aggregate recreational bag limit of 20 fish per person per day inclusive of all snapper and grouper species currently not under a bag limit;

10. Specify that vessels with bottom longline gear aboard may only possess snowy grouper, warsaw grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish; and

The Council is also evaluating use of one or more of the following measures to reduce fishing mortality, in addition to the species specific actions listed above:

(1) Establish a variable 3-month closure of the EEZ for all temperate mid-shelf species (TEMS) in the snapper-grouper management unit. Individual snapper-grouper permit holders would be allowed to choose which 9 calendar months their permits would be effective. TEMS species consist of red porgy, vermillion snapper, red snapper, speckled hind, gag, scamp, red grouper, gray triggerfish, white grunt, and black grouper; black sea bass may also be included in the TEMS group.

(2) For TEMS, establish an aggregate quota at 75 percent of the 1993-1995 average landings (with and without black sea bass), establish a 2,000-lb (908-kg) trip limit, begin the fishing year on April 1, and close the fishery during February;

(3) Establish a black sea bass quota at 75 percent of the 1993-1995 average landings;

(4) Establish by framework regulatory adjustment procedure closed seasons to achieve reductions in TEMS species (with and without black sea bass) of not less than 25 percent of the 1993-1995 average landings.

The hearings will begin at 7 p.m. and will end when all business is completed. Staff members will be available at the hearing locations from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. (1 hour before the

hearings) to answer questions pertaining to Amendment 9.

The dates and locations are scheduled as follows:

1. Tuesday, June 17, 1997--Pier House Resort, One Duval Street, Key West, FL; telephone: 305-296-4600; 1-800-327-8340;

2. Tuesday, June 24, 1997--Comfort Inn, 5308 New Jesup Hwy, Brunswick, GA; telephone: 912-264-6540;

3. Wednesday, June 25, 1997--Ramada Inn Daytona Speedway, 1798 W International Speedway Blvd, Daytona Beach FL; telephone: 904-255-2422;

4. Thursday, June 26, 1997--Holiday Inn On The Oceanfront, 1350 S Ocean Blvd, Pompano Beach, FL; telephone: 954-941-7300;

5. Friday, June 30, 1997--Sheraton Atlantic Beach, Salter Path Road, Atlantic Beach, NC; telephone: 919-240-1155;

6. Tuesday, July 1, 1997--Holiday Inn Wilmington, 4903 Market Street, Wilmington, NC; telephone: 910-799-1440;

7. Wednesday, July 2, 1997--Town & Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Hwy, Charleston, SC; telephone: 803-571-1000.

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see ADDRESSES) by June 9, 1997.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: June 9, 1997.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 97-15439 Filed 6-11-97; 8:45 am]

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