



# Overview of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16

Changes to the Seasonal Closure for  
the Black Sea Bass Pot Sector



*Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team*

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# Outline of Presentation

- Introduction
  - Background on the South Atlantic black sea bass pot fishery
  - Regulatory Amendment 16
- Action 1 summary of alternatives
- Action 2 alternatives
- Discussion and Questions



# South Atlantic Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery

- 55-70% of commercial BSB landings
- BSB pot endorsement to cap participation– 32 endorsements( 15 in NC; 9 in SC; 7 in FL)
- 35-pot limit
- Must bring pots at end of each trip
- 1,000-lb gutted weight daily trip limit
- ALWTRP requirements
- No documented interactions with right whales and South Atlantic BSB pots



# Why is the South Atlantic Council Considering Action in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16?

- Increase in annual catch limit (ACL) for black sea bass (Regulatory Amendment 19 - Sept 2013)
- Higher ACL= Extended fishing season past November 1
- Overlap with large whale migration and right whale calving.
- Reg Am 19 had a Nov 1-Apr 30 closure to minimize delay in implementing the higher ACL → i.e., Formal ESA Consultation and Biological Opinion from Protected Resources Division



# Why is the South Atlantic Council Considering Action?

- Intent is to review the closure in Regulatory Amendment 16
  - Can it be refined to allow some BSB pot fishing during winter but still minimize right whale interaction risks?
- SAFMC is considering: shortening of the timeframe and spatially designating the closure boundaries.
- Goal is to minimize socio-economic impacts to black sea bass pot endorsement holders while considering the need to protect ESA-listed whales in the South Atlantic region.



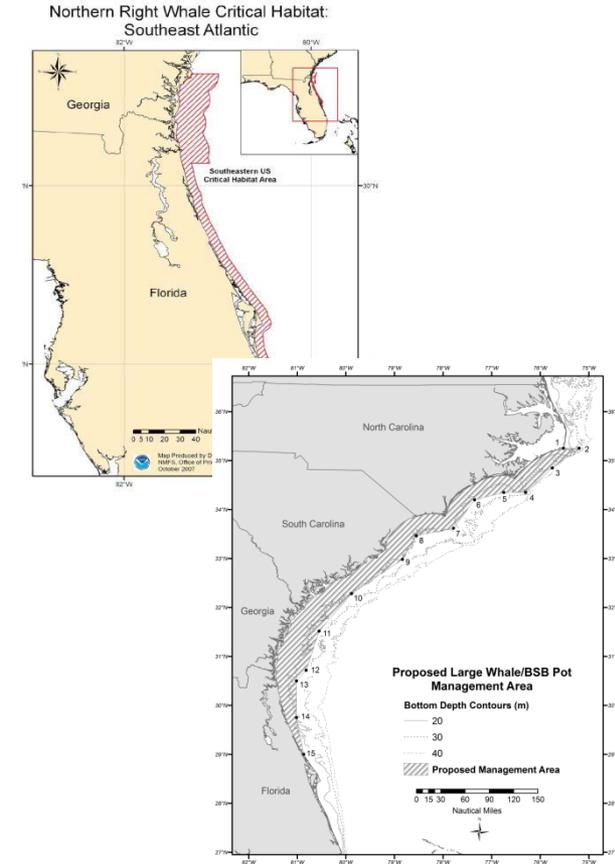
# Timing for Reg 16

- **March 2015**- South Atlantic Council will review the biological and economic analyses.
- **June 2015**- South Atlantic Council will review and approve for public hearings.
- **August 2015**- Public hearings
- **September 2015**- South Atlantic Council will review public comments and draft biological opinion.
- **December 2015**- South Atlantic Council will consider final action.



# Spatial Considerations for Modifying the Closure

- Right Whale Critical Habitat
- Core Calving Area GA/FL
- Modeled Calving Area
- ALWTRP Southeast Seasonal Gillnet Restricted Area
- Whale Sightings



# Temporal Considerations for Modifying the Closure

- **November – April: right whale calving**
- **Migration south through NC/SC waters in early months**
- **Migration north with calves through NC/SC waters in later months**
- **Market for black sea bass**



# **Action 1: Modify the annual November 1 - April 30 prohibition on the use of black sea bass pot gear**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** No black sea bass pots from November 1 through April 30.

NOTE: Alternatives 2-10 would only apply to the portion of the area within the South Atlantic EEZ, and the states would be asked to implement compatible regulations.

**\*\*Please refer to the Summary Document provided for full language in the alternatives and additional information \*\***



**Alternative 2.** From November 15 - April 15, closure applies to the area currently designated as North Atlantic right whale critical habitat.

**Alternative 3.** From November 1 - April 30, closure applies to the areas based on models of calving grounds.

**Alternative 4.** From November 1 – April 30, closure applies to the area with most whale sightings.

- waters 30m or shallower in NC/SC
- waters 25m or shallower in GA/FL

**Alternative 5.** Form November 1- April 30, closure applies to :

- the area based on models of calving grounds for GA/FL
- from shore to 30nm out for SC/NC.



**Alternative 6.** From November 1 – April 30, closure applies to:

- the area of ALWTRP Southeast Seasonal Gillnet Restricted Area for FL/GA/SC
- waters shallower than 30m for NC

**Alternative 7a.** From November 1 - December 15 and March 15 - April 30, closure applies to:

- area designated as right whale critical habitat for FL/GA/SC
- waters shallower than 20m for SC/NC

**Alternative 7b.** From November 15 - April 15, closure applies to the area currently designated as right whale critical habitat for FL/GA. From November 1 - December 15 and March 15 - April 30, closure applies to waters shallower than 20m for SC/NC.



**Alternative 8.** From November 15- April 30, closure applies to the area currently designated as right whale critical habitat for FL/GA/SC

From February 15 - April 30, closure applies to waters shallower than 20m for SC/NC.

**Alternative 9a.** From November 1 – April 15, closure applies to:

- the area based on models of calving grounds for GA/FL
- waters shallower than 25m for SC/NC

**Alternative 9b.** From November 15- April 15, closure applies to the area based on models of calving grounds for GA/FL

From November 1 – December 15 and February 15 - April 30, closure applies to waters shallower than 25m for SC/NC



**Alternative 10a.** From November 1 – April 15, closure applies to:

- the area based on models of calving grounds for GA/FL
- waters shallower than 20m for SC/NC

**Alternative 10b.** From November 15- April 15, closure applies to the area based on models of calving grounds for GA/FL

From November 1 – December 15, closure applies to waters shallower than 20m for SC/NC

From February 15 - April 30, closure applies to waters shallower than 25m for SC/NC



# Action 2: Modify black sea bass pot gear

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Status quo

**Alternative 2.** Specify a buoy line strength less than or equal to 2200 lbs and a weak link less than or equal to 400 lbs for black sea bass pots in the South Atlantic EEZ.

**Alternative 3.** Existing trap/pot buoy line marking requirements established in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan will be supplemented to include a distinguishing feature specifically linked to the South Atlantic black sea bass pot fishery. In addition to the 3 12-inch color marks at the top, midway, and bottom sections of the buoy line specified for the individual management area in which the gear is deployed, a 2-inch wide colored band will be added at the center of each required 12-inch colored mark.



# Questions and Discussion



## Need more Information?

Regulatory Amendment 16 Questions:

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# South Atlantic Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery

- Fishing year is Jan 1- Dec 31 (recently implemented)
- Because of low ACL the season closed early:
  - 2009/10: June 1- Dec 20
  - 2010/11: June 1 – Oct 7
  - 2011/12: June 1- July 15
  - 2012/13: July 1\*- Oct 8
- 2013/14 had larger ACL and the pot closure Nov-Apr, and commercial harvest did not meet the ACL (almost- 99.58%)

\*2012/13 season opening was pushed back a month to get the endorsement program in place



# ALWTRP Requirements

## Black Sea Bass Commercial Pots

- Southern Nearshore, Offshore and [new] Southern Restricted Area North (~Murrells Inlet SC to ~ New Smyrna Beach FL)
- Surface buoy markings – vessel ID
- Line markings- colors on the line
  - Black for offshore
  - Orange for Southern Nearshore
  - Blue/Orange for state waters in the Southeast Restricted Area North (SERAN)
  - Green/Orange for federal waters in the SERAN



# ALWTRP Requirements

## Black Sea Bass Commercial Pots

- Weak links in vertical lines
- Sinking groundlines
- New regs for the Southern Restricted Area North (effective Nov 1)
  - sinking buoylines AND groundlines
  - weak links  $\leq 600$  lbs
  - vertical lines maximum breaking strength
  - only one trap per buoy- no multi-trap trawls
  - bring back pots every day (already in place through Am 18A)

