

South Atlantic Snapper Grouper: A Commercial Fishery in Crisis

Key findings of the new report:

Overview of Commercial Fishing in the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery

- **The fishery is complex, with lots of fishermen and many types of fish.**
More than 500 fishermen hold federal commercial permits to fish for the 73 snapper grouper species regulated under this fishery's management plan. Most of the permit holders (65%) live in Florida, with a heavy concentration in the Florida Keys. The vast majority also own permits in other South Atlantic federal fisheries, including recreational fisheries.
- **A small number of fishermen are responsible for most of the commercial harvest.**
Less than 200 vessels (25% of the active vessels) land more than 80% of the major SASG species. In contrast, half of the active commercial vessels in the SASG Fishery land a very small percentage (5%) of the total harvest of major SASG species.
- **Most of the fishermen land a small amount of fish each year from the SASG fishery.**
About half of the active vessels land less than 1,000 pounds of SASG species annually and another quarter land between 1,000 and 5,000 pounds. A very small percentage (3%) of the active commercial vessels harvested more than 50,000 pounds annually.
- **The amount of SASG fish being caught and sold commercially has fallen dramatically.**
Fish brought to the local docks – or “landed” - and sold commercially in 2009 (about 8.6 million pounds) were only half of what they were 20 years ago. Most of these landings were from the following 15 species, which represent 80% of the commercial value of the fishery: Black Sea Bass; Cubera, Gray, Lane and Mutton Snappers; Gag; Golden Tilefish; Greater Amberjack; Red Grouper; Red Porgy; Red Snapper; Scamp; Snowy Grouper; Vermilion Snapper; and Yellowtail Snapper.
- **The number of commercial fishing permits has dropped significantly in the past decade.**
Commercial fishing permits for the SASG fishery have fallen more than 35% in the past decade.
- **The fishery's most valuable fish are less and less available.**
Three of the five species that generated the most revenue in 2009 were closed early or entirely in 2010: Red Snapper (harvest prohibited), Black Sea Bass (open 143 days) and Vermilion Snapper (open 176 days). All of the commercial fishing limits that have been approved for 2011 are below the 2005-2009 average annual harvest levels for those species.

Read the full report at: www.caploggroup.info/publications