

Reef Fish Amendment 58A: Modifications to Shallow-water Grouper Management Measures

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Background



- Other Shallow Water Grouper (SWG): scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper, and yellowfin grouper
 - Managed under a total complex ACL
- Recent stock assessment of scamp & yellowmouth grouper together
 - SSC provided updated status determination criteria & catch advice for these two species

Purpose and Need



- The purpose of this amendment is to modify the current management measures and establish new management measures for the species contained with the Other SWG complex in response to the results of a recent stock assessment.
- The need for these actions is to use the best scientific information available, based on a recent stock assessment, to implement measures to avoid future overfishing, and to achieve OY for the species considered herein, consistent with the authority under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Action 1: Modification of the Gulf of Mexico Other SWG Complex and IFQ Share Categories



- Alternative 1: No Action - Maintain the current composition of the Other SWG complex: scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper, and yellowfin grouper. Maintain the IFQ share category associated with the Other SWG complex.
- Alternative 2: Dissolve the Other SWG complex and form two new complexes from the remaining species. The first is the scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex; the second is the black grouper and yellowfin grouper complex. Create two new IFQ share categories: one for the scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex (Scamp Complex) and one for the black grouper and yellowfin grouper complex (Black Grouper Complex). Shares will be distributed such that shareholders will receive the same percentages in each of the two new categories that they held upon dissolution of the Other SWG complex.
- Note: Alternative 1 is inconsistent with the best scientific information available and is therefore not a viable alternative.

Action 2: Establish Biological Reference Points and Status Determination Criteria for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish MSY, MFMT, MSST, or OY for the new scamp complex and the new black grouper complex as established in Action 1.
- Alternative 2: Establish the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) proxy, maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), minimum stock size threshold (MSST), and optimum yield (OY) for the new scamp complex and the new black grouper complex as defined for the Other SWG Complex and for Black Grouper, in Reef Fish Amendment 48 (GMFMC 2021).
- Alternative 3: Establish the MSY proxy, maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), minimum stock size threshold (MSST), and optimum yield (OY) for the new black grouper complex as defined for these species in Reef Fish Amendment 48. Establish the MSY proxy, MFMT, MSST, and OY for the scamp complex based on the SSC recommendations as follows:

Action 2: Establish Biological Reference Points and Status Determination Criteria for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	
	Both complexes	Both complexes	Scamp complex	Black grouper complex
MSY	None	yield when fishing at a 30% spawning potential ratio ($F_{30\%SPR}$)	yield when fishing at a 40% spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$)	yield when fishing at a 30% spawning potential ratio ($F_{30\%SPR}$)
MFMT	None	F_{MSY}	F_{MSY}	F_{MSY}
MSST	None	75% of B_{MSY} ; $0.75 * SSB_{30\%SPR}$ for black grouper	75% of B_{MSY}	75% of B_{MSY} for yellowfin grouper; $0.75 * SSB_{30\%SPR}$ for black grouper
OY	None	90% of MSY	90% of MSY	90% of MSY

Action 3: Establish the Stock Complex OFL and ABC for the Scamp Complex and Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish catch limits for the new scamp complex and the new black grouper complex as established in Action 1.
- Alternative 2: Establish catch limits for the scamp complex based on the SSC's recommendations from SEDAR 68 2022 for 2026+. Catch limits, in gutted weight (gw), were derived in part using MRIP-FES and would be monitored using estimates from MRIP-FES.

Year	OFL	ABC
2026+	257,000	203,000

Action 3: Establish the Stock Complex OFL and ABC for the Scamp Complex and Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 2 (continued): Establish catch limits for the black grouper complex using the time series for each as recommended in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, with the Gulf Council's apportionment of black grouper based on the SSC's recommendations. Catch limits are in gutted weight and in MRFSS data units.

Year	OFL	ABC
2026+	Undefined*	310,844

*OFL is not defined because of incompatible OFLs. The black grouper OFL is for Gulf and South Atlantic combined, while the yellowfin OFL is for the Gulf.

Action 4: Establish ACLs and Sector Allocations for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish sector allocations for the scamp complex and for the black grouper complex.
- Alternative 2: Establish the scamp complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC. Establish the black grouper complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC, where the ABC for the complex represents the summation of the ABC for yellowfin grouper and the Gulf-apportioned ABC for black grouper. Establish sector allocations for the scamp complex based on apportionment of the stock ACL to the commercial sector established in the Generic Annual Catch Limit/AM (ACL/AM) Amendment (GMFMC 2011). ***The commercial sector is allocated 80.1% of the scamp and yellowmouth grouper combined ACL, and the recreational sector is allocated 19.9%.*** Establish sector allocations for the black grouper complex based on the apportionment of the black grouper ACL and yellowfin grouper ACL between sectors as defined in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment as follows: commercial sector is allocated 73% of the Gulf's apportionment of the black grouper ACL, and the recreational sector is allocated 27%. The commercial sector is allocated 80.1% of the yellowfin grouper ACL and the recreational sector is allocated 19.9%.

Action 4: Establish ACLs and Sector Allocations for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 3: Establish the scamp complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC. Establish the black grouper complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC, where the ABC for the complex represents the summation of the ABC for yellowfin grouper and the Gulf-apportioned ABC for black grouper. Establish commercial-recreational allocations for the scamp complex and black grouper complex. *The scamp complex allocations are based on landings for 2012-2023 excluding the 2020 COVID year, resulting in a split of 38.6% for the commercial sector and 61.4% for the recreational sector.* Maintain the apportionment of the black grouper ACL and yellowfin grouper ACL between sectors as follows based on the Generic ACL/AM Amendment: commercial sector is allocated 73% of the Gulf's apportionment of the black grouper ACL, and the recreational sector is allocated 27%. The commercial sector is allocated 80.1% of the yellowfin grouper ACL and the recreational sector is allocated 19.9%.

Action 4: Establish ACLs and Sector Allocations for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 4: Establish the scamp complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC. Establish the black grouper complex stock ACL and set equal to the ABC, where the ABC for the complex represents the summation of the ABC for yellowfin grouper and the Gulf-apportioned ABC for black grouper. Establish commercial-recreational allocations for the scamp complex by reducing catch limits equally (percentage-wise) between the commercial and recreational sectors based on the most recent three years of landings (i.e. 2021-2023). ***The scamp complex ACL would be split 29.7% for the commercial sector and 70.3% for the recreational sector.*** Maintain the apportionment of the black grouper ACL and yellowfin grouper ACL between sectors as follows based on the Generic ACL/AM Amendment: commercial sector is allocated 73% of the Gulf's apportionment of the black grouper ACL, and the recreational sector is allocated 27%. The commercial sector is allocated 80.1% of the yellowfin grouper ACL and the recreational sector is allocated 19.9%.

Action 4: Establish ACLs and Sector Allocations for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Sector Allocations for Black Grouper, Yellowfin Grouper, and Scamp Complex:

	Alternative 2		Alternative 3		Alternative 4	
	Comm	Rec	Comm	Rec	Comm	Rec
Black grouper	73%	27%	73%	27%	73%	27%
Yellowfin grouper	80.1%	19.9%	80.1%	19.9%	80.1%	19.9%
Scamp complex	80.1%	19.9%	38.6%	61.4%	29.7%	70.3%

Action 4: Establish ACLs and Sector Allocations for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Stock Complex ABC, Stock ACL, Commercial ACL, and Recreational ACL for the Black Grouper Complex and the Scamp Complex:

		Black Grouper Complex	Scamp Complex
Alt 2	Stock complex ABC*	310,844	203,000
	Stock ACL	310,844	203,000
	Comm. ACL	227,735	162,603
	Rec. ACL	83,109	40,397
Alt 3	Stock complex ABC	310,844	203,000
	Stock ACL	310,844	203,000
	Comm. ACL	227,735	78,358
	Rec. ACL	83,109	124,642
Alt 4	Stock complex ABC	310,844	203,000
	Stock ACL	310,844	203,000
	Comm. ACL	227,735	60,291
	Rec. ACL	83,109	142,709

Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish sector buffers between the ACL and ACT for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex.
- Alternative 2: For the scamp complex, establish a buffer between the commercial allocation of the ACL and ACT at 4%, as established in the Generic Annual Catch Limit/AM (ACL/AM) Amendment (GMFMC 2011). The commercial ACT is equal to the commercial quota. For the scamp complex, establish a buffer of 18% between the recreational ACL and the recreational ACT using the Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule and manage the recreational sector to this ACT. For the black grouper complex, establish a buffer between the commercial allocation of the ACL and ACT at 4%, as established in the Generic Annual Catch Limit/AM (ACL/AM) Amendment (GMFMC 2011). The commercial ACT is equal to the commercial quota. For the black grouper complex, do not establish an ACT for the recreational sector and manage the recreational sector to its sector ACL.

Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for Black Grouper Complex and Scamp Complex:

	Action 5, Alt 2	
	Comm ACL/ACT Buffer	Rec ACL/ACT Buffer
Black grouper complex	4%	N/A
Scamp complex	4%	18%

Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Gulf Apportioned Black Grouper and Yellowfin Grouper Catch Limits in lb gw.

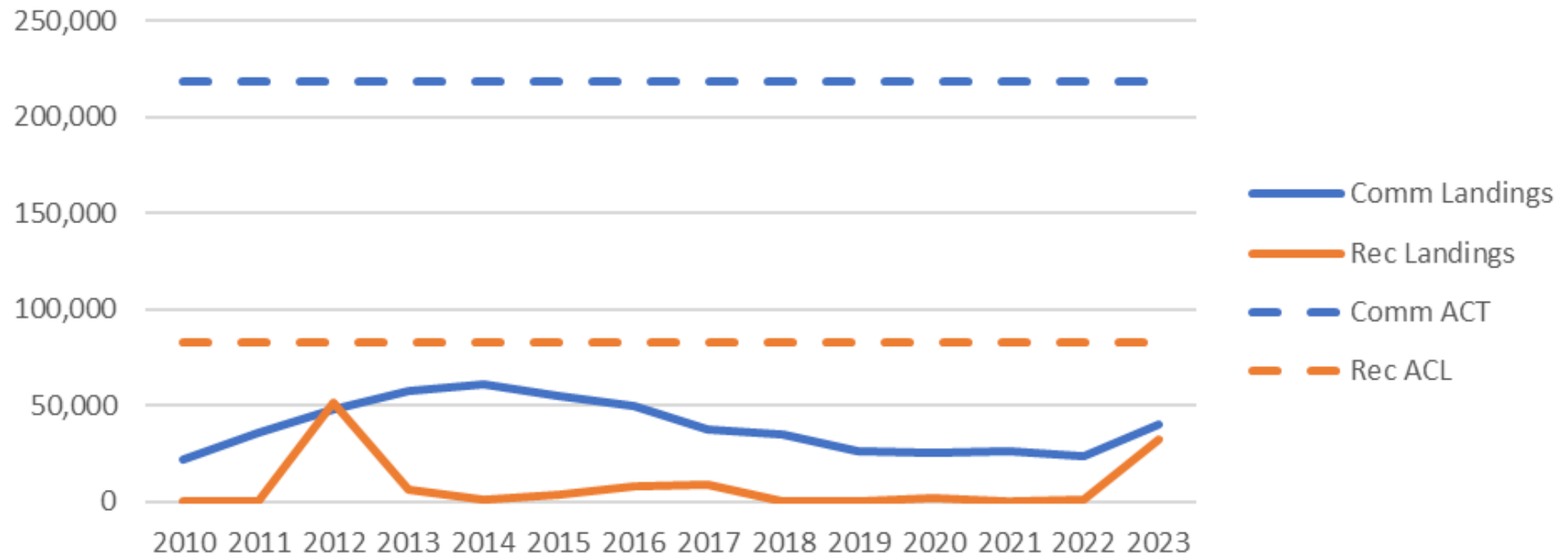
Year	Com ACL	Action 5, Alt 2: Com ACT	Rec ACL
2026+	227,735	218,000	83,109

*In MRFSS data units.

Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



Black Grouper Complex Landings & Proposed Comm ACT and Rec ACL



Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex

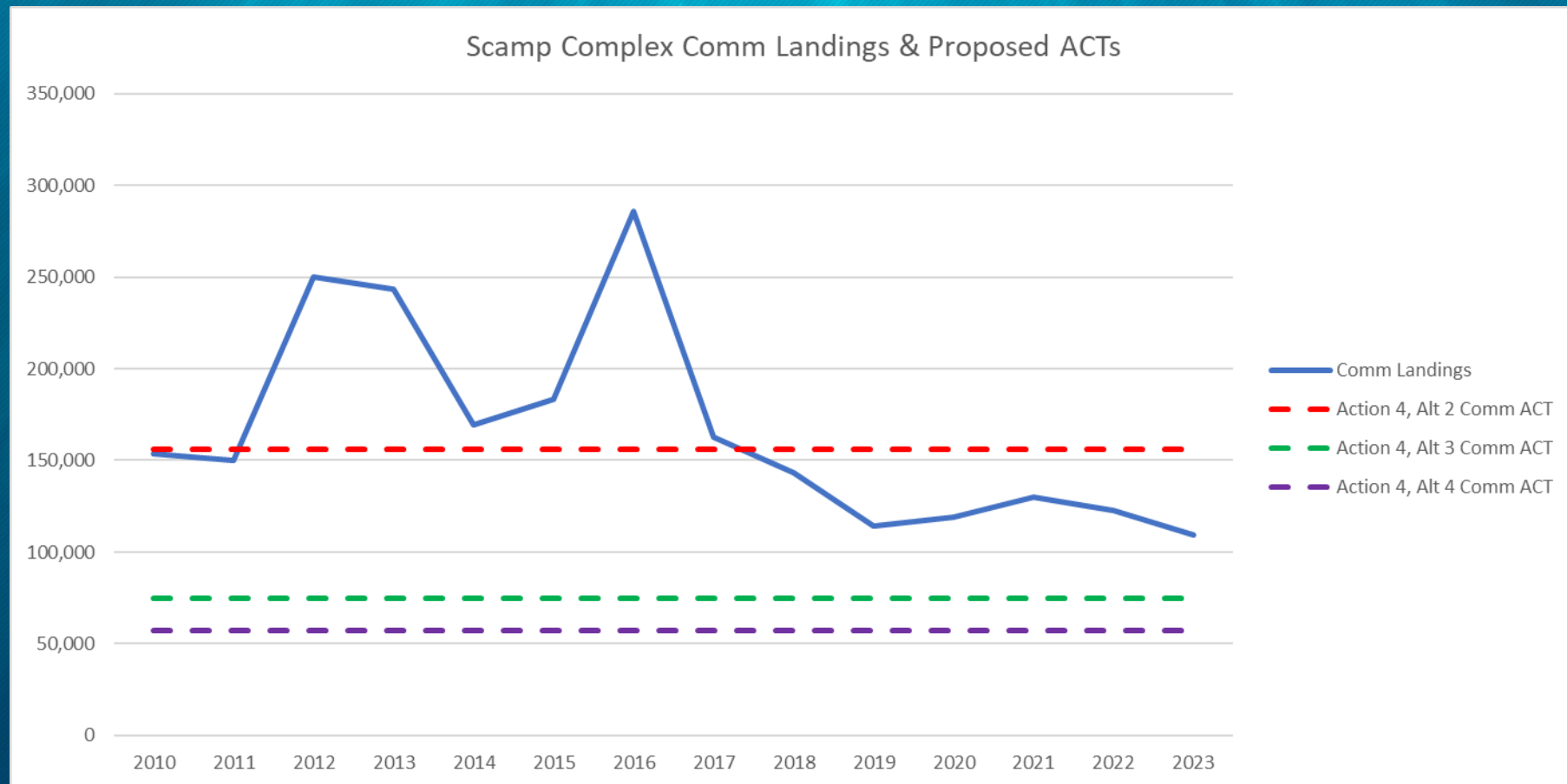


➤ Scamp Complex Catch Limits in lb gw.

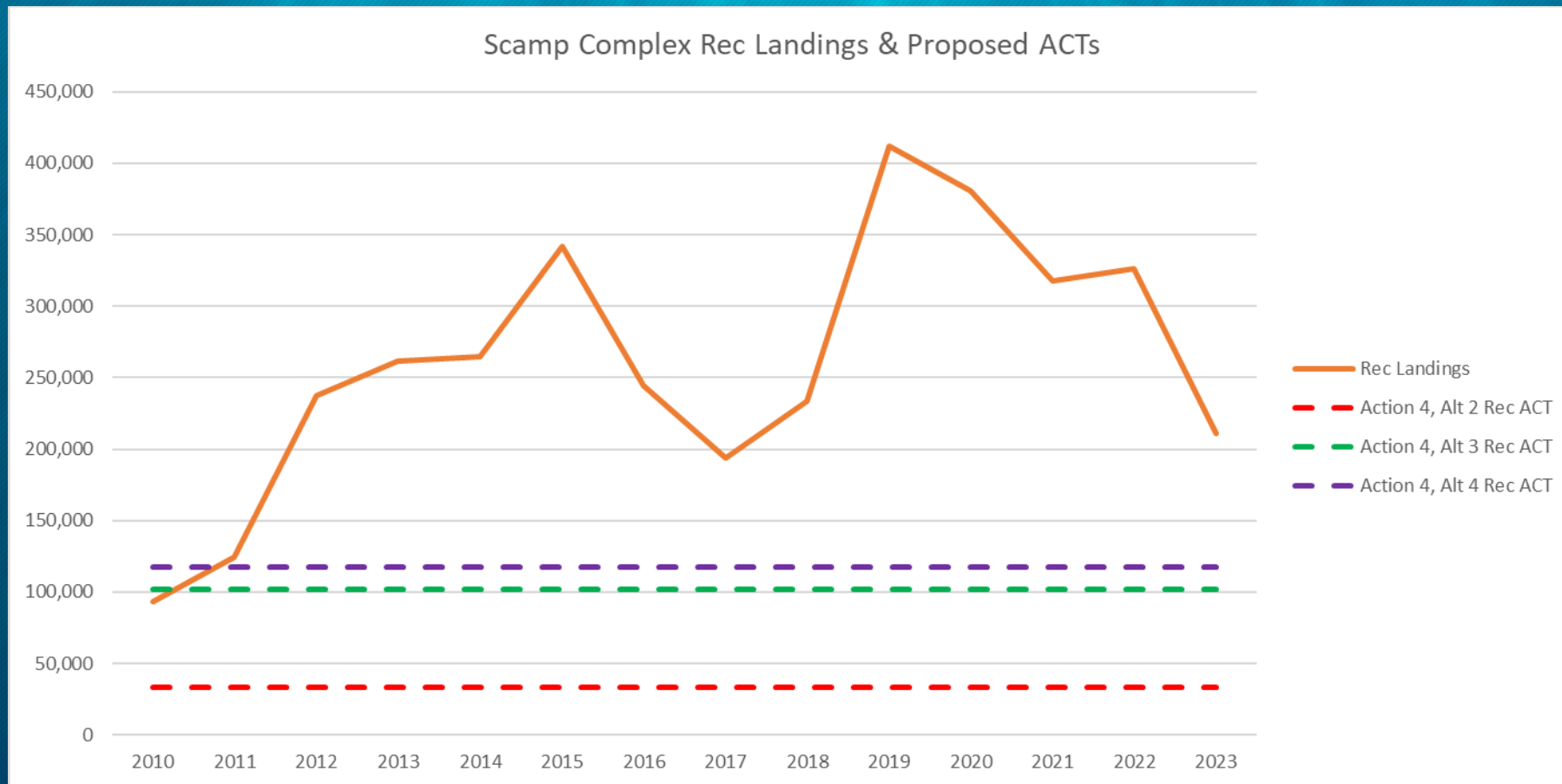
Year		Comm ACL	Action 5, Alt 2: Comm ACT*	Rec ACL	Action 5, Alt 2: Rec ACT
2026+	Action 4, Alt 2	162,603	156,000	40,397	33,125
2026+	Action 4, Alt 3	78,358	75,000	124,642	102,206
2026+	Action 4, Alt 4	60,291	57,000	142,709	117,021

*Commercial quota is the commercial ACT rounded down to the nearest 1,000.

Action 5: Establish Sector ACL and ACT Buffers for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



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Action 6: Establish Recreational Sector Accountability Measures for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish recreational sector accountability measures for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex.
- Alternative 2: Recreational fishing would close for the scamp complex when NMFS projects that the recreational ACT (as established in Action 5) is met. Recreational fishing would close for the black grouper complex when NMFS projects that the recreational ACL (as established in Action 4) is met.

Action 7: Establish a Fixed Recreational Closed Season for the Scamp Complex and the Black Grouper Complex



- Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish a fixed closed season for the recreational sector for the scamp complex and the black grouper complex.
- Alternative 2: Establish a fixed closed season for the recreational sector for the scamp and complex and the black grouper complex. The scamp complex will be closed from January through April each year (open on May 1 until December 31) or require closure based on when the recreational ACT is projected to be met.
- Alternative 3: Establish a fixed closed season for the recreational sector for the scamp complex. The scamp and yellowmouth complex will be closed from January through June each year (open on July 1 until December 31) or require closure based on when the recreational ACT is projected to be met.



Motions from October 2024 Council Meeting

- Motion: To direct staff to begin work on a framework action to consider options to revise catch limits for the Other Shallow Water Grouper complex for 2026 to allow time for completion and implementation of Reef Fish Amendment 58A. Catch limits would be informed by the percent reduction necessary to achieve harvest reductions consistent with the results of the recent scamp and yellowmouth grouper stock assessment.
- Motion: Request the Council's SSC provide a comparison of MSY Proxy of $30\%_{SPR}$ and $40\%_{SPR}$ and associated catch level projections for scamp grouper. In addition to catch level projections, the comparison should highlight the consequences for management of using either MSY Proxy.

Anticipated Timeline for RF 58A



- For RF 58A to be implemented prior to Jan 1, 2027, the Council will need to take Final Action at its November 2025 meeting.
 - This is due, in part, to the intricacies of the IFQ program for Other SWG.



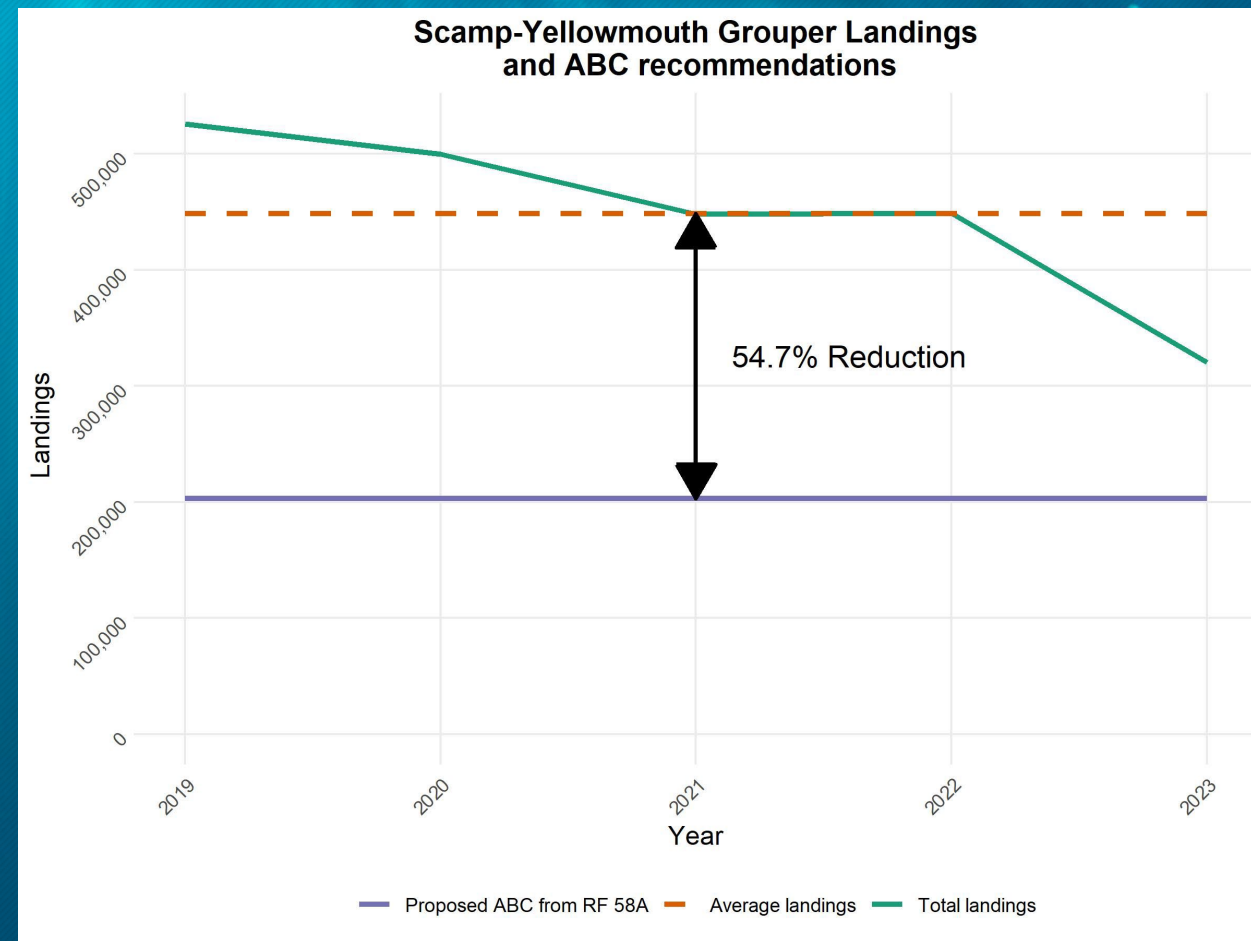
Framework Action to Modify SWG Catch Levels in 2026

- Goal: Develop short-term management measures for 2026 that will reduce fishing mortality for the Other Shallow-Water Grouper complex to a level comparable to the results of Scamp-Yellowmouth Grouper stock assessment.

- Key Features:
 - Temporary measure for 2026
 - Would continue to manage all four stocks as a single complex
 - Would not affect sector allocation
 - Would result in harvest reduction to reduce likelihood of overfishing Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper
 - Harvest reductions would apply to both sectors
 - Three action alternatives for consideration

Proposed Approach

- Compare recent landings of Scamp and Yellowmouth grouper with ABC recommendation
- Calculate percent reduction necessary to reduce harvest from recent 5 year mean to ABC
- Results in a reduction of 54.7%
- Apply this reduction as a percentage to the SWG complex in 2026 to allow completion of Amendment 58A
- Would reduce likelihood of overfishing for scamp
- Would not affect allocation in this action or change the species in the SWG complex
- Is not a long-term solution



Management Alternatives to Modify Catch Levels for 2026



- Three action alternatives to modify ABC for the Other SWG complex
 - **Alternative 1: No Action**
 - **Alternative 2: Reduce SWG ABC 54.7%**
 - **Alternative 3: Reduce recent (5 year average) landings of SWG by 54.7%**
 - **Alternative 4: Use recent 5 year landings of black grouper; reduce the landings of the other stocks by 54.7%**
 - **Calculation of ACLs and ACTs would follow current practice**

Potential Other SWG ABCs for 2026		
Alternative	ABC	Note
Alt 1.	710,000	Status quo
Alt 2.	322,000	Reduce ABC 54%
Alt 3.	219,000	Reduce landings 54%
Alt 4.	242,000	Use avg. landings for BG; reduce avg. landings 54% for others

Recreational Management Measure



- Action 7 (Recreational Closed Season) from Amendment 58A would be moved to this framework action:
 - Alternative 1: No Action - Do not establish a fixed closed season for the recreational for SWG.
 - Alternative 2: Establish a SWG fixed closed season for the recreational sector. The SWG complex will be closed from January through April.
 - Alternative 3: Establish a SWG fixed closed season for the recreational sector. The SWG complex will be closed from January through June.
- This action is necessary as landings will likely exceed ABC if open year-round to recreational harvest at proposed ABC levels
- The commercial harvest would continued to be constrained by the IFQ program and quota would be distributed based on the ABC and would not be expected to result in any commercial overage.