

**OVERVIEW OF GAG FROM MATERIAL IN  
DRAFT SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 13B**

**Section 3**

**Shallow Water Grouper Unit 1A**

**Status**

According to the NOAA Fisheries' report to Congress on the status of fisheries of the United States in 2003, the South Atlantic stock of gag and scamp are not overfished, but red grouper and black grouper are overfished. Stocks in the unit are overfished when the SPR falls below 30%. Gag, red grouper, and black grouper are considered to be experiencing overfishing. Scamp is not experiencing overfishing. Overfishing is defined as a fishing mortality rate in excess of that corresponding to 30% static SPR. The status of red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, graysby, yellowfin grouper, tiger grouper, and coney is unknown. The Council is reviewing these status determination criteria in this amendment. Characteristics of species in this unit are summarized in Table X.

Table 3-1. Life history characteristics of species in Shallow Water Grouper Unit 1A-C.

	Natural Mortality Rate (M)	Maximum Reported Size	Maximum Reported Age (years)	Change Sex (female to male)?	If change sex, size below which all female	If change sex, size at which 50% female	If change sex, size above which all male	Size at first maturity	Size at which 50% are mature	Size/age at which all are mature	Spawning season	Food	Range/Location
<b>Unit 1A</b>													
Gag (indicator species)	0.15	145 cm (57.5 in TL)/36.5 kg (81 lbs.)	26	Y	87.5 cm (34.7 in) TL	105 cm (41.6 in)	120 cm (47.5 in)	50.8 cm (20.2 in) TL			December through May (March to April peak)	fishes, crabs, shrimps, and cephalopods	North Carolina to Yucatan Peninsula, and throughout GOM

**Section 4**

Unit 1A: Shallow Water Grouper (Gag)

**Background**

Landings & Size Trends

Gag landings trends are also very sporadic (Figure 32). The for-hire and recreational sectors show some increase in the last few years of the time series, whereas the commercial sector shows a decreasing trend.

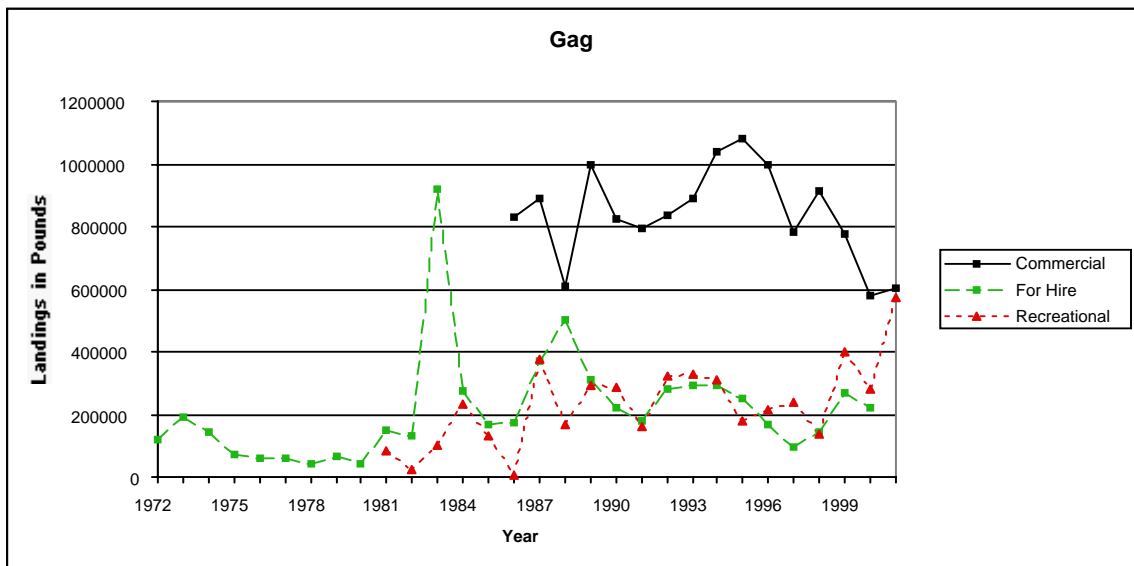


Figure 32. Gag landings by sector.

Before commercial data were recorded, the for-hire sector landed most of the gag (Figure 33). When the commercial data are reported, it dominates the percent of total landings, with for hire and recreational sharing the remainder.

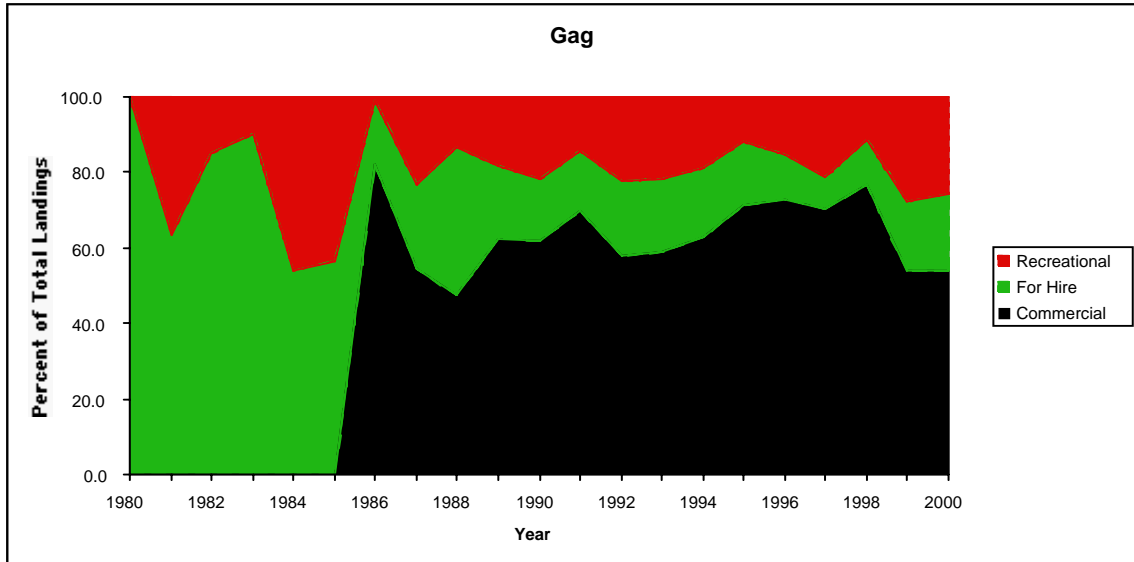


Figure 33. Gag percent landings by sector.

Mean weights of gag in the for-hire sector decreased in the late 1980s but increased in the early 1990s (Figure 34). Mean weights of gag in the recreational sector show an increasing trend over time. Mean weights in the commercial fishery are variable and show no definitive trend. The increasing mean weight trends may be results of a 20” minimum size limit in 1992 and a 24” minimum size limit in 1999.

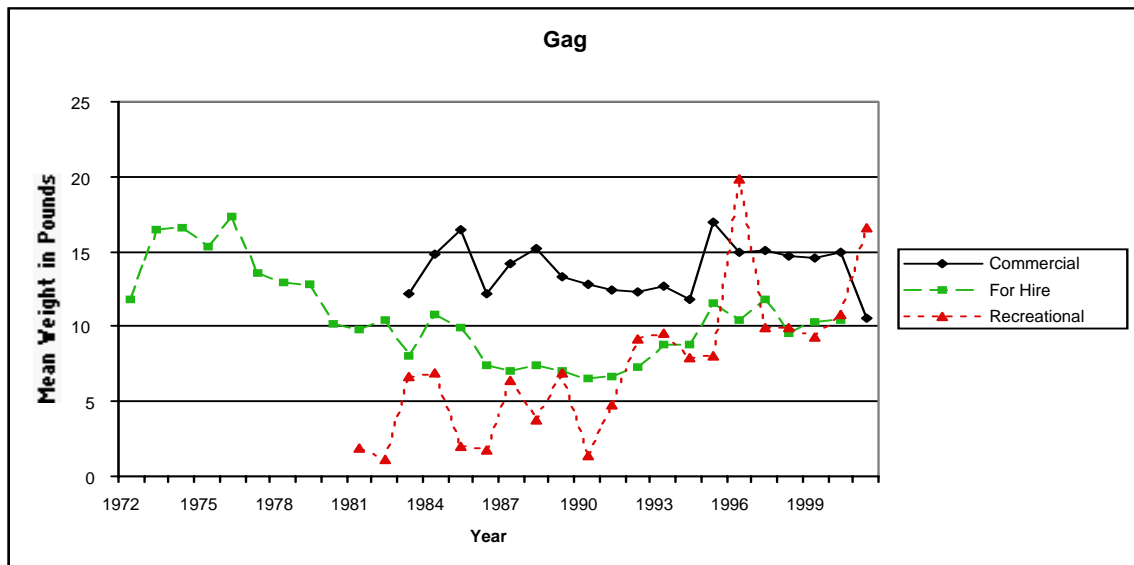


Figure 34. Gag mean weight by sector.

Review of Regulations

Table 24. Regulations for gag.

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Plan or Amendment</b>
4" trawl mesh size	8/31/83	Original FMP
Prohibit trawls	1/12/89	Amendment 1
Prohibit fish traps, entanglement nets & longlines within 50 fathoms; 20" size limit and 5 grouper bag limit; rebuilding timeframe	1/1/92	Amendment 4
Oculina Experimental Closed Area	6/27/94	Amendment 6
Limited entry program: transferable permits and 225-pound non-transferable permits	12/98	Amendment 8
24" size limit and within 5 grouper bag limit only 2 may be gag or black. March & April - no harvest above bag limit & no sale. Vessels with longlines may only possess deepwater species	2/24/99	Amendment 9

Compliance

Compliance is summarized by sector in Table 24B. See Burton (2002) for the breakout by region and for numbers of fish measured. Burton (2002) established a criteria of number of fish measured must be greater than or equal to 15 and percent of fish below the size limit must be greater than or equal to 15 as the minimum combination that had to be met in order to return a finding of significant non-compliance.

Table 24B. Compliance with gag grouper size limits; note changes to minimum size limits as shown in Table 24A. Source: Burton (2002).

	Percent	Landed Below	Legal Size Limit
Year	Commercial	Headboat	Private & Charter
1992	2.5	3.6	13.0
1993	1.2	2.8	7.1
1994	2.2	1.1	24.0
1995	0.3	0.4	9.1
1996	0.3	2.1	6.7
1997	0.3	4.0	7.9
1998	0.2	5.2	9.6
1999	1.4	21.0	5.6
2000	2.8	17.8	22.9
2001	3.5	9.0	14.0

Gag are most abundant in the commercial and headboat intercept data, and in most years the gradient of abundance runs from the Carolinas (most) to south Florida (least). In February 1999 a new 24-inch size limit was enacted. Compliance from the commercial sector was excellent. Non-compliance was evident for the Carolinas headboat fishery, as well as for the private recreational sector from the Carolinas and south Florida.