The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's

South Atlantic Update

Published for fishermen and others interested in marine resource conservation issues

Visioning Project to Address Long-Term Management of Snapper Grouper

Regional port meetings scheduled for Winter/Spring 2014 to gather stakeholder ideas

Fishermen and others with fishery interests have long attended public hearings and Council meetings, providing public comment and bringing with them first-

"The snapper grouper fishery is a healthy, sustainable fishery that balances and optimizes benefits for all."

Draft Vision Statement



hand accounts of how management measures implemented by the Council affect their livelihoods, the resource, and their ability to access the resource. With 60 species in the snapper grouper management complex, management measures are often difficult to follow and change rapidly as annual catch limits are met, seasons open and close, and other regulations are implemented. This approach has resulted in many stakeholders asking for new management approaches to address the longterm viability of the fishery in the region.

What began as an exploratory discussion to look at how the snapper grouper fishery is currently managed, in turn. led Council members to start thinking about how management could be made better. In December 2012, the Council began work towards developing a long-term vision and plan for future management of the snapper grouper fishery. Since that time, the Council has held five Council Member Visioning Workshops at each of the quarterly Council meetings to discuss developing a process for creating a vision statement and long-term goals and objectives for the snapper grouper fishery.

The Council recognized from the start that the

March 3-7, 2014 Council Meeting Savannah, GA

See page 7 for details

Informal Q&A Session Wednesday, March 5 at 5:30 PM

Formal Public Comment Thursday, March 6 at 5:30 PM



What is the best approach for long-term management of the 60 species in the snapper grouper management complex? The Council is looking for input from fishermen, seafood dealers, restaurant owners, environmental groups and others interested in fisheries management as part of its Visioning Project. A series of informal port meetings will be held from the Outer Banks of NC to the Florida Keys to gather input. Additional information is available at www.safmc.net.

process needed to be transparent and inclusive to all fishery stakeholders. As a result, Council is working on strategies to collect information from stakeholders about their knowledge and ideas for management of the snapper grouper fishery. "I have always believed that the current public hearing structure is not conducive to public discourse and needed to more fully explore (Continued p. 6)

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Editor's Note

The South Atlantic Update is published by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the Council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Kim Iverson, Editor, *South Atlantic Update*, 4055 Faber Place Dr., Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405, or may be sent via the internet; Email address: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

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A Vision for the Future

When I was reappointed to the Council several years ago there were two priorities, outside mainstream management, that I wanted to pursue that I thought would help the management process improve in the future.



The first was to identify and proceed with a more informed mechanism that would allow the public to have discussion with Council members and staff on how to better manage our fisheries in the future (Visioning Process). The second was to implement the Marine Research and Education Program (MREP) in the Southeast, which we will explore in more detail in our next newsletter.

One of my strengths as a full-time fisherman and Council member is identifying ideas that have the potential to improve our management process. My corresponding weakness is not following through with the idea after bringing it before the Council or other Council members. That was the case with the current "visioning process". The idea had been discussed for a number of years after the Council received the results from a workgroup of fishermen organized to explore the use of a Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP), now known as "catch shares", for the snapper grouper fishery. Based on the workgroup report and public comment, the Council concluded that there was not enough support in the snapper grouper fishery to move forward.

Since that time the Council has been faced with productivity estimates from recent stock assessments that are lower than catch levels in the past. During the same timeframe, the Council had to revamp its entire management system, based on the 2006 Magnuson Stevens Act Reauthorization, to implement Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and corresponding allocations for all managed species. The Council has struggled with management measures that try to extend seasons while still allowing trip limits high enough to make trips viable for snapper grouper fishermen. Derby fisheries have developed for some species, and discard mortality is lowering potential yield for some stocks and may be responsible for the stalled rebuilding for the red porgy fishery. (Continued page 6)

In the News:

Alert: Right Whales on the Move

This time every year marine biologists with NOAA Fisheries and state fisheries agencies remind all boaters that North Atlantic right whale calving season



begins in mid-November and runs through mid-April, which means these large whales are on the move, making their way down the Atlantic coast of the U.S. Scientists estimate there are as few as 400 right whales left, making them one of the most endangered marine mammals in the world.

Each winter pregnant right whales travel more than 1,000 miles from their feeding grounds off Canada and New England to the warm coastal waters of SC, GA and northeastern FL to give birth and nurse their young.

Boaters are reminded to keep a watchful eye. The whales are protected under the Endangered Species Act and restrictions are in place for some vessels. Learn more at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/shipstrike/.

Joint Council Committees Address South Florida Management Issues and Goliath Grouper

Conflicting fishing regulations were just one of several items on the agenda in early January when representatives from the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico fishery management councils and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission met in Key Largo to begin adressing management issues specific to South Florida. Fishermen have repeatedly expressed their frustrations to fishery managers over confusing cross-jurisdictional regulations between state and federal agencies in the Florida Keys and South Florida, often making it difficult to follow regulations.

In addition, area fishermen have requested managers consider having separate management structures or boundaries for South Florida and the species commonly found in the tropical waters.

As a result, the two councils and FWC held informal workshops in 2013, and the councils formed a joint committee to help address the issues.

During the Key Largo meeting, the joint committee discussed options for creating a separate South Florida management area and possible management boundaries. Discussions also included species-specific options for mutton snapper, yellowtail snapper, hogfish and other species commonly encountered in South Florida.

Meeting participants also discussed goliath grouper management, including options for lifting the current moratorium in place prohibiting harvest in both the Gulf and South Atlantic. The committee reviewed stock assessment information, ongoing research, and heard reports from earlier workshops.

The joint committee will continue to meet periodically and provide recommendations to council members for consideration. Visit the Other Meetings section at www.safmc.net for updates.



New Council Member Appointed to At-Large Seat



Zack Bowen

Bowen of Savannah, Georgia was sworn in as the newest appointee to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council during the December 2013 Council

Zack

meeting in Wilmingon, North Carolina. He represents the Council as an At-Large member. A charter captain since 1999, Zack now owns and operates Guess Hoo Charters out of Savannah, fishing for snapper, grouper, black sea bass, amberjack, wahoo, king and Spanish mackerel, tuna, dolphin, and billfish.

In addition to his years of experience offshore, Zack has been an active participant in the Council process, having served on both the Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and King and Spanish Mackerel Advisory Panel. He has also participated in SEDAR fisheries data workshops for stock assessments of red snapper and black sea bass.

In 2009, Zack worked with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and NOAA Fisheries Service to collect over 500 red snapper for both data collection on fish age and growth and for genetic research in collaboration with Texas A&M University. These samples provided critical information for scientists to better understand the status of the red snapper stocks off the coast of Georgia and the Southeast U.S., and the stock structure between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic.

"I am honored to represent Georgia's fishery interests on the Council and look forward to working with my fellow Council members to make the best decisions for the resources and the people who rely on them for their livelihoods and enjoyment."



Apply now for an opportunity to attend the workshops and learn more about the fishery science & management processes used in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean fisheries region.

Fishermen learn about these complex processes outside of formal council meetings, ask questions of senior scientists and managers, and build on their own understanding through a tailored educational experience.

An application is required, and can be found online: www.gmri.org/fishedu. Applications are needed by March 1, 2014. Participation is limited. Travel expenses will be covered for applicants selected to attend. *Don't delay!*

Public Input Sought on Proposed Measures for Snapper Grouper and Mackerel Fisheries Public Hearing/Scoping Meetings Scheduled - Written comments accepted until February 3, 2014

The Council is seeking public comment on proposed management measures that may impact species within the snapper grouper management complex as well as both king and Spanish mackerel. A series of public hearing and scoping meetings are being held and the Council is also accepting written comments (including email) until **February 3, 2014** for the measures listed below.

Documents approved by the Council for public hearing are further along in the overall management process. They include analysis of proposed measures and may include the Council's preferred management alternatives. Public scoping occurs early in the process and includes options for Council consideration.

For Public Hearing Snapper Grouper Amendment 29

(ORCS and gray triggerfish measures)

The amendment would revise the method for determining the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for 14 species in the snapper grouper management complex that do not have stock assessments and where data is limited primarily to catch statistics - known as "Only Reliable Catch Stocks" or ORCS.

The amendment also includes alternatives for gray triggerfish to modify the measurement methods for consistency (total length vs forklength), minimum size limits, commercial trip limits and split seasons. Email comments to: SGAmend29Comments@safmc.net.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Framework Amendment 1

(Spanish mackerel annual catch limits)

The amendment includes alternatives to modify annual catch limits for both Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico migratory group Spanish mackerel based on the recent stock assessment. Email comments to: MackFmwkAm1Comments@safmc.net.

For Public Scoping

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16

(commercial black sea bass pots)

The amendment includes options to address the current seasonal prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots from November through April. Email comments to: SGRegAmend16Comments@safmc.net

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendments 24 and 26

Amendment 24 includes allocation options for Spanish and king mackerel, while Amendment 26 considers options for separating commercial mackerel permits between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Email comments to: CMPAmend24Comments@safmc.net and CMP26Comments@safmc.net, respectively.

Public Hearing and Scoping Meetings 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

- January 21 N. Myrtle Beach, SC
 Bay Watch Resort & Conference Center
 2701 S. Ocean Blvd.
 N. Myrtle Beach, SC 29582; 843/272-4600
- January 22 Atlantic Beach, NC
 Doubletree by Hilton
 2717 West Fort Macon Road
 Atlantic Beach, NC 28512; 252/240-1155
- January 27 Key West, FL
 Key West Marriott Beachside
 3841 N. Roosevelt Blvd.
 Key West, FL 33040; 305/296-8100
- January 28 Cocoa Beach, FL
 Doubletree by Hilton
 2080 N. Atlantic Avenue
 Cocoa Beach, FL 32931; 321/783-9222
- January 29 Jacksonville, FL
 Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk
 1515 Prudential Drive
 Jacksonville, FL 32207; 904/396-5100
- January 30 Pooler, GA
 Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum
 175 Bourne Avenue
 Pooler, GA 31322; 912/743-8888

Miss a public hearing/scoping meeting in your area? Written comments are being accepted until Monday, February 3, 2014. Video presentations and copies of the meeting documents are available on the Public Hearing and Scoping Meetings page at www.safmc.net.



Generic Accountability Measure and Dolphin Allocation Amendment

Public Scoping via webinar 6:00 PM Monday, February 3, 2014

The Council will conduct an informal public scoping meeting via webinar for accountability measures impacting species in the snapper grouper and golden crab fisheries. The amendment also contains draft alternatives for sector allocations (commercial and recreational) for dolphin. Information on the amendment and how to sign up for the webinar is available on the Public Hearing and Scoping Meetings page at www.safmc. net. Comments are due by February 14, 2014. Email: AMDolphinAllocAmendC@safmc.net.

Data Collection: Improvements Include Increased Reporting Requirements... and Sanctions

New reporting requirements for federally permitted headboat operators in the South Atlantic go into effect on **January 27, 2014** and similar measures are proposed for federally permitted seafood dealers in the Gulf of Mexico and along the entire Atlantic coast. The requirements are part of an effort by the fishery

managers
to better
monitor annual
catch limits.
Exceeding catch
limits may
significantly
disrupt fishing
behavior the
following fishing
year, reducing
revenue and



behavior the headboat owners and operators will help to improve timeliness of data collection and better track annual catch limits.

profit for fishermen and dealers alike. Overages may also decrease the ability of overfished fish populations to rebuild.

The For-Hire Reporting Amendment requires headboat operators to report weekly electronic landings records to NOAA Fisheries. "The majority of operators have been reporting electronically for the past year," explained Ken Brennan, Coordinator of the Southeast Region Headboat Survey for NOAA Fisheries. "The biggest change is the weekly reporting requirement and the consequences of non-compliance." Headboat owners and operators who are delinquent in submitting their reports will be prohibited from continuing to harvest and possess South Atlantic snapper grouper, Atlantic dolphin and wahoo, and South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic fish until they have submitted all required reports. Additional information is availaable from NOAA Fisheries at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable fisheries/s atl/2013/for hire reporting/index.html.

Seafood Dealer Amendment - Comment Period Open

NOAA Fisheries is currently accepting public comment on a proposed rule that would establish a single federal dealer permit for the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico and require *weekly* electronic reporting. Dealers are currently required to report every two weeks. In addition, delinquent reports would automatically result in dealers becoming ineligible to receive the specified federally managed species until the reports are current. The requirements extend along the Atlantic coast for dealers handling dolphin and coastal migratory pelagic species.

The measures will affect approximately 700 federal dealers. **Comments are due by February 3, 2014**. A copy of the Fishery Bulletin is posted at www.safmc.net.

Snapper Grouper Regulations Snap Shot



Shallow-Water Grouper

Annual Spawning Season Closure January 1st - April 30th Both commercial and recreational fisheries - includes gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, and yellowmouth grouper.

Recreational

Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit

3 grouper per person/day includes: (*indicates spawning season closure) *black, *gag, misty, *red, *scamp, snowy, yellowedge, *yellowfin, *yellowmouth grouper, and also includes blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, sand tilefish, coney, graysby, and red and rock hind.

- No more than 1 may be a gag **or** black grouper (each 24" TL)
- Snowy grouper-1 fish per vessel per day
- · No more than 1 fish may be golden tilefish
- Wreckfish -1 per vessel per day. Season open July 1 August 31.

Snapper

- Red Snapper Closed to Harvest
- Vermilion snapper annual November 1 March 31 seasonal closure has been removed. (effective 9/5/13)
- Aggregate bag limit of 10 snapper per person/day
- In addition to the aggregate bag limit, 5 vermilion snapper per person/day - 12" TL
- Maximum of 2 cubera snapper per person (not to exceed 2 per vessel) for fish 30" Total Length (TL) or larger off Florida. These are not included in the 10 snapper bag limit. Cubera less than 30" TL are included in the 10 fish bag limit.

Fishermen may also retain:

- 1 greater amberjack per person/day (in April, for-hire/charter vessels limited to 1 per person/day or 1 per person/trip)
- Limit of 5 black sea bass per person/day 13" TL
- 5 hogfish per person/day, off east coast of Florida 12" FL
- 3 red porgy per person/day or 3 per person/trip, whichever is more restrictive - 14" TL

An aggregate bag limit of 20 fish per person inclusive of all fish in the snapper grouper management unit currently not under the bag limit, excluding tomtates. You may catch your bag limits and in addition retain up to 20 other fish for which there are no individual bag limits.

Commercial

Vemilion Snapper Trip Limit - 1,000 lbs. until 75% of ACL is caught, then reduced to 500 lbs.

Red Porgy - annual closure January - April

Other Regulations

- Dehooking tools are required
- The sale of bag limit snapper grouper prohibited.
- The following are closed year-round to harvest or possession: Goliath grouper, Nassau grouper, speckled hind, and warsaw grouper.
- Non-stainless steel circle hooks are required for both commercial and recreational fishermen north of 28 degrees
 N. latitude when fishing with natural baits.

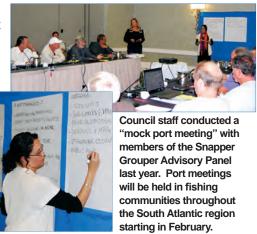
NOTE: Regulations are subject to change. For the latest updates, visit www.safmc.net.



The black sea bass fishery remains open for both commercial and recreational fishermen as this newsletter issue goes to print. Visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov for the latest

information on the status of annual catch limits and download the *SA Fishing Regulations* App for updates.

proposed management actions," explains Council Chairman Ben Hartig. "A more relaxed and user friendly atmosphere is needed where



discussion between the public and Council members can lead to more informed management decisions."

The Council has developed four major strategic goal themes to guide development of the long-term plan: Science, Communication, Management, and Governance. Using these four themes to guide discussions, Council members and staff will hit the road starting in February 2014 to get out into fishing communities to meet and talk informally with all sectors of the snapper grouper fishery about their ideas on management. These informal "port meetings" will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to bring new management ideas to the table for the Council to consider and to share their thoughts about specific fisheries management tools and strategies. Strategies such as bag/size limits, spatial management, electronic reporting, allocations, and reduction of discard mortality are just a few topics the Council hopes to receive feedback and ideas about to help inform the development of a long-term plan.

Port meetings will be scheduled in communities in NC, SC, GA and FL from February through April. The full schedule of meetings will be posted on the Council's Google Calendar and on the Visioning Project page at www.safmc.net. For more information and to get involved, contact Amber Von Harten, Outreach Specialist at amber.vonharten@safmc.net or call 843-571-4366.

Law Enforcement @ Work

Vero Beach Resident Sentenced For Importing Illegal Catch From The Bahamas

Investigative efforts by Federal agents from NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recently resulted in a prosecution involving illegal imports from the Bahamas.

Toby Lamm, 46, of Vero Beach was sentenced in Fort Pierce, Florida on December 17, 2013 for importing illegal catch from the Bahamas. According to the allegations in the information and statements made in court, on or about June 23, 2013, in St. Lucie County, Lamm attempted to import from the Bahamas approximately 338 queen conch, 11 spiny lobster tails, 31 stone crab claws, and 140 pounds of snapper and grouper fillets.

U.S. District Judge Jose E. Martinez sentenced Lamm to two years' probation and a \$2,500.00 fine. Lamm previously pled guilty to one-count and was charged with importing and attempting to import queen conch, spiny lobster, stone crab claws and fin fish (snapper and grouper), violating possession limits for each of the species as set forth in the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, the State of Florida, and the federal Lacey Act.

Excerpt from US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida news release



FWC

Fish fillets, conch, and stone crab claws illegally transported from the Bahamas and seized by federal and state law enforcement personnel.

Chairman's Perspective (Continued from page 2)

Our Vice-Chairman Michelle Duval took the visioning idea, with substantial support from Council staff, into the implementation phase and the Council will embark on this process in February with port meetings. Thank you Michelle! This is a rare chance for commercial and recreational fishermen and other stakeholders to meet with Council members and staff on their "own turf", in a more relaxed atmosphere to hear your ideas on how you would like to see the snapper grouper fishery managed in the future. It will also allow for suggestions on how we could

change the management process to make it more user friendly. The Council's intent is to try and inform future management for the snapper grouper fishery based on stakeholder ideas put forth during the visioning process. So Get Involved! Come and share your ideas on how to better manage the snapper grouper fishery with us. I am looking forward to it!

Chairman Ben Hartig is a full-time commercial fisherman and marine biologist living in Hobe Sound, Florida. Read more about Ben and other members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management

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SAFMC Meeting Dates and Locations 2014 Schedule

March 3-7, 2014 Hilton Savannah DeSoto 15 East Liberty Street Savannah, GA 31401 Phone: 912/232-9000

June 9-13, 2014 Sawgrass Marriott 1000 PGA Tour Blvd. Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082 New Bern, NC 28560

Phone: 904/285-7777

September 15-19, 2014 Charleston Marriott Hotel 170 Lockwood Boulevard Charleston, SC 29403 Phone: 843/723-3000

December 1-5, 2014 Doubletree Riverfront 100 Middle Street Phone: 252/638-3585

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting

Acronyms

ABC - Allowable Biological Catch

ACCSP - Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program

ACL - Annual Catch Limit

AM - Accountability Measure

ACT - Annual Catch Target

AP - Advisory Panel

ASMFC - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

BRD - Bycatch Reduction Device

EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone

EFH - Essential Fish Habitat

EFH/HAPC - Essential Fish Habitat/ Habitat Area of Particular Concern

FMP - Fishery Management Plan

HMS - Highly Migratory Species

ITQ - Individual Transferable Quota

MSA - Magnuson-Stevens Act

MSY - Maximum Sustainable Yield

MRIP- Marine Recreational Information Program

NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service

OY - Optimum Yield

SEDAR - Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (stock assessment process)

SSC - Scientific & Statistical Committee

TAC - Total Allowable Catch

VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

March 3-7, 2014



Hilton Savannah DeSoto 15 East Liberty Street Savannah, GA 31401 Phone: 912/232-9000

For a detailed agenda contact the Council office toll free at 1-866/SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366. The preliminary agenda is also available on the Council's web site www.safmc.net

PRELIMINARY MEETING AGENDA

Monday	9:00 - 12:00 1:30 - 3:00 3:00 - 5:30	Law Enforcement Advisory Panel Meeting Joint LE AP and Committee Meeting Joint Habitat and Ecosystem Committees Meeting
Tuesday	8:30 - 9:30 9:30 - 10:30 10:30 - 5:30	SEDAR Committee Meeting Protected Resources Committee Meeting Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting
Wednesday	8:30 - 5:30 5:30	Snapper Grouper Committee (continued) Open informal public Q&A session
Thursday	8:30 - 11:00 11:00 - 12:00 1:30 - 3:30 3:30 - 5:00 5:30	Mackerel Committee Meeting Executive Finance Committee Meeting Dolphin Wahoo Committee Meeting Data Collection Committee Meeting Formal Public Comment
Friday	8:30 - 3:00	Council Session

Note! Follow the Council meeting live online

Watch the Council meeting via webinar from Savannah, GA. Registration information is available from the March 2014 meeting information page at www.safmc.net.



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@SAFMC

Mark your calendar...

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February 3	SAFMC Accountability Measures and Dolphin Allocation Amendment Public Scoping (webinar) See page 4 for details www.safmc.net		
M 1 10		South Atlantic Fishery Management Council	
March 19	N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	Meeting March 3 <mark>-</mark> 7, 2014	
April 1-3	SAFMC Habitat Advisory Panel Meeting N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	Savannah, GA	
April 7-8	SAFMC Mackerel Advisory Panel Meeting		
	N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	Samuel Co.	
April 8-11	SAFMC Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	Vicioning Project Port Meetings	
		Visioning Project Port Meetings February - April	
May 2	SAFMC Golden Crab Advisory Panel Meeting Ft. Lauderdale, FL www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	Check the Visioning Project page at www.safmc.net for updates and meeting schedule	
May 5-6	SAFMC Information and Education Advisory Panel Med N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)	eeting and Workshop	
May 6-7	SAFMC Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)		
May 7-8	SAFMC Coral Advisory Panel Meeting N. Charleston, SC www.safmc.net (AP Meeting Page)		

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration

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