

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting Report  
September 3, 2013 Webinar**

**Final (9-10-2013)**

## **PURPOSE**

Topic to address during this meeting:

- Review the wreckfish assessment proposal submitted by Dr. Doug S. Butterworth.

## **CONTENTS**

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	3
2.	PUBLIC COMMENT .....	3
3.	WRECKFISH PROPOSAL REVIEW .....	3
4.	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW, PUBLIC COMMENT .....	5
5.	ADJOURN.....	6

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 SSC webinar meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm, as scheduled.

The Chair reviewed the agenda and outlined the general format and conduct of the meeting.

## **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The public is provided two opportunities to comment on SSC agenda items during meetings. The first at the start of the meeting and the final at the end during the review of recommendations. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

Accordingly, at this point in the meeting the Chair opened the floor for the first opportunity for public comment. Public comments were provided by Mr. Shaun Gehan (Kelley Drye & Warren LLP). Mr. Gehan thanked the committee for the opportunity to participate and explained that Dr. Butterworth had a scheduling conflict and would not be able to participate in the webinar.

## **3. WRECKFISH PROPOSAL REVIEW**

### 3.1. Overview

John Carmichael provided a general introduction to the topic of discussion and turned the meeting over to the Chair.

### 3.2. Committee Action: Review and Comment on the Proposal

The Chair requested that SSC members provide their comments in the order that numbered items were presented in the proposal. These numbered items followed the list of topics outlined in the Council's approved guidelines for 3<sup>rd</sup> party stock assessments.

## **SSC REVIEW COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*1) How the Work Addresses Council Priorities:*

The SSC felt that the work being proposed is very relevant to ongoing SAFMC discussions regarding wreckfish management and agrees this addresses a Council priority.

*2) Data providers, sources, and means of validation:*

The SSC agrees that the analytical team made a legitimate effort to approach data providers, clarify data sources, and validate the data to be used in the proposed assessment. However, the Committee expressed a number of concerns regarding the availability, and appropriateness of the data in its current format and resolution level for the analysis being proposed (i.e., application of a statistical catch at age assessment model). A summary of these concerns follows:

- It is unclear how and where updated age data are acquired and how they will be used in the assessment. Updated age information, including a recent age validation study are available and information should be used.
- More recent ageing information suggests significant changes in estimates of wreckfish longevity. In particular, the SSC feels that this new information may impact the way the proposed model is to be parameterized.
- A statistical catch at age (SCAA) model requires the use of non-aggregated catch data. The SSC has concerns regarding the analytical team's ability to overcome data confidentiality issues to obtain original, wreckfish landings data on an annual basis.
- More specific information on data sources is needed. The proposal suggests that wreckfish landings info was obtained from the NMFS ALS database. What might be the impact of using data obtained from the NMFS Logbook database?
- The assessment report to be produced should clearly specify the methods used for standardizing the CPUE index. For example, trip selection, data exclusions, etc.

*3) Scope of the work and documentation of the method:*

The SSC agrees that the scope of work and documentation of the method meets the standards outlined in the Council approved guidelines. However, the Committee expressed a number of concerns and made a number of suggestions:

- The proposal is not clear on how assessment uncertainty will be evaluated and expressed. Since an SCAA assessment falls under Tier 1 of the Council's ABC control rule the SSC is requesting that the analytical team generate a probability density function of OFL (presumably provided by the assessment's MSY estimate) for application of the P\* method as outlined in Prager and Shertzer (2010).

- Given limitations with wreckfish data the SSC requests that the assessment report explicitly outline the assumptions used to assess the stock using a SCAA model.
- The SSC has concerns that model selection has been accomplished *a priori* and that the analytical team should explore alternative models (e.g., surplus production, DCAC) and justify the base assessment model chosen.
- The SSC expressed concerns re. the assumed stock structure for the assessment. Genetic analysis, the presence of European hooks in wreckfish caught in South Atlantic waters, and other lines of evidence strongly suggest that the eastern and western Atlantic represent a unit stock. The SSC requests that the assessment report explicitly indicate how this issue is being addressed in the assessment's analytical structure.

#### 4) *Participation in review*

The SSC agrees that the proposal clearly states the analytical team's willingness to participate in an assessment review process and provide additional runs as requested by the Review Panel. However, the Committee felt that some of the language under this item included what could be interpreted as an 'Assessment Workshop' and the parameters of how this would be accomplished need to be clarified. Specifically, the proposal describes working with NMFS and SSC members through webinars and a "round table meeting", apparently prior to the Final Peer Review. This suggests an additional step in the peer review process (between steps II. 4. SSC completion of "this" memorandum, and III. Submission of completed analyses), not contemplated in the Council-approved SSC peer review process document.

#### 5) *Timeline*

The SSC expressed some concerns re. the timelines involved. In particular, the Committee felt that planning on completing the analysis plus the review during a series of meetings/webinars between mid-September and mid-November might be an over ambitious schedule given SSC members' additional commitments during this timeframe.

## **4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW, PUBLIC COMMENT**

In summary, despite some concerns and suggestions the SSC finds the proposal acceptable, but requests that concerns outlined in this report be addressed. The SSC recommends that the analytical team proceed with the work and prepares an assessment report for review.

The public is provided an additional opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items. At this time Mr. Shaun Gehan thanked the committee for taking the time to review the proposal.

## **5. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm