

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GOLDEN CRAB COMMITTEE

**Charleston Marriott Hotel
Charleston, SC**

September 15, 2014

SUMMARY MINUTES

Golden Crab Committee:

Ben Hartig, Chair
Phil Steele
Jessica McCawley

Chester Brewer
Mark Brown

Council Members:

Dr. Michelle Duval
Anna Beckwith
Chris Conklin
Lt. Morgan Fowler
Dr. Wilson Laney

Mel Bell
Zack Bowen
Jack Cox
Doug Haymans
Charlie Phillips

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood
Mike Collins
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Kim Iverson
Julie O'Dell
Myra Brouwer
Julia Byrd

Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Amber Von Harten
Dr. Mike Errigo
Dr. Brian Chevront
Chip Collier

Observers/Participants:

Monica Smit-Brunello
Bonnie Ponwith

Kevin Anson

Additional Observers Attached

The Golden Crab Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Topaz Room of the Charleston Marriott Hotel, September 15, 2014, and was called to order at 10:05 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: All right, I would like to bring the Golden Crab Committee to order. Our first order of business is approval of the agenda. Are there any additions to the agenda? Seeing none; the agenda is approved. The next order of business is approval of the 2014 Golden Crab Minutes. Are there any changes or deletions to the minutes? Seeing none; the minutes are approved. That brings us to status of commercial catches versus the annual catch limits for golden crab. Phil, are you going to do that?

MR. STEELE: I can do that for you, Mr. Chairman. I got some landings from the Science Center on Friday, most of which are confidential on monthly landings. But for 2013, we landed 826,990 pounds, which is far short of the two million pound whole weight ACL. For 2014 it is apparent that the landings are incomplete, because through September there has only been 232,000 pounds of golden crab landings submitted.

Talking to the Center, they think this is probably incomplete reporting on these guys' part. The permit comes up for renewal in December at which time they will probably see a large influx of landings coming in there. But right now it is about a quarter of the landings of this year compared to last year's 826; this year, 232.

MR. HARTIG: Any questions of Phil? That brings us to Golden Crab Public Hearing Comments under Attachment 1.

DR. CHEUVRONT: This will be very short, Mr. Chairman; there weren't any.

MR. HARTIG: All right, I don't guess we need to provide any guidance then. That brings us to the discussion of Generic Accountability Measures and Dolphin Allocation Amendment; Attachments 2 and 3.

DR. CHEUVRONT: If you all remember, this is the amendment that has two actions in it. Both actions will be addressed when we get to the Joint Dolphin Wahoo/ Snapper Grouper Committee meeting on Thursday. The first action in this amendment applies to golden crab. This is the action that has to do with what are the criteria that will trigger the accountability measures.

For golden crab we're dealing only with a commercial fishery here; but the council's current preferred alternatives here are Alternative 2, Subalternative 2C. If the ACL is reached, the accountability measure will only be triggered if the stock is considered to be overfished and if the total ACL is met.

Since it is just a commercial fishery, if the commercial ACL is met, there can't be any make up or any wiggle room based on recreational landings, because there aren't any for this species. Your AP back in last May had selected either 2A or 2C as their preferred alternatives. Well, 2C matched with what the council had already selected as the preferred for dolphin wahoo and snapper grouper.

The reason why this is coming before you now is that you wanted to go out and see if there were any public comments on this. There weren't any specific public comments related to golden crab. This committee had chosen preferred Subalternative 2C as their preferred; and at this time it would be good for the committee to look at this and decide if they want to discuss it any more, change it or anything.

What the plan is, is that after this meeting we hope that the council have made all the decisions that they want to on this document. When it comes back to you in December, the document will be ready to submit to the Secretary of Commerce. It won't be a kind of thing where you are going to have to give the chairman authority to review any edits and redeem the codified text and all that other sort of thing.

You are going to see the actual thing as it is going to be submitted when it comes back to you in December. Part of the reason why we're doing that for this document is because there is nothing in here that is critical that needs to happen right away. Those of you who might have been around way back in the olden days; that is the way we used to do things before we got into this mad dash of trying to get things done so quickly.

Our goal is to try to get back onto that schedule if at all possible; and that is what we're doing with this amendment. Think of this as your penultimate opportunity to see this amendment – now this is in regards to golden crab right now – and see if there is anything you would like to change at this point. If not, when it comes back to you in December, it will come back ready to be submitted.

MR. HARTIG: Is there any will of the committee to change any of the alternatives? Seeing none; I see head shaking, no one wants to change anything; Brian, I think we're good to go.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, Mr. Chairman, that is really all I have for this amendment for golden crab.

MR. HARTIG: All right; other business, Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I just wanted to point out to everybody that at the AP meeting last May – and I believed we discussed this in June – is that the Golden Crab AP members, which basically comprise the entire fishery; they asked to get together for another AP meeting, which we're going to be holding in November.

At this meeting what they wanted to look at were any changes in bottom mapping that had occurred since the allowable golden crab fishing zones were set up a number of years ago, to see if those could be modified or should be modified. We've been working on that since June. We've gotten some information in.

Roger has prepared the maps that shows all the additional mapping that has gone on. A number of the fishermen have expressed that they really don't want to change anything in the middle and southern zones. This was prompted largely by a request from folks fishing in the northern zone, which you have two permits fishing up there. They wanted to see if there were other additional areas or maybe that it would be okay for them to fish in.

We've gotten some data from Glenn Ulrich, who is retired from South Carolina DNR, who did a lot of golden crab research back in the 1980s; and he has actually been able to help us uncover some information. This AP is going to meet in November. Whatever comes out of that – I have talked to the AP members.

I said if you guys want to try to change something, it would be really good if we could craft some rough actions and alternatives about things; how you would like to have them changed, which we could bring back to the council. Then the council could decide probably in December if you want to go ahead and start a new golden crab amendment that might address any of the concerns that they have.

There was also one other action that they wanted the council to consider and that was moving the start date of the fishing year. Right now it starts January 1; and they would really prefer to see it start either September 1 or October 1, because they don't really fish in the summer. They would like to be able to definitely be able to fish in the fall through at least the early part of winter, if they ever get to that point where they are going to get shut down early for meeting their ACL.

They don't want to have it be open in the summer and closed in the fall, which they see as their prime fishing time. That would be an action that would be included in the next amendment. It is not something that needs to be dealt with right away. They are just trying to be proactive in case this does happen in the future.

That would be an additional action that could go into another golden crab amendment. If it doesn't happen, it is something to get put into another amendment at some other time. But, anyway, I just wanted to let you all know that is what is happening with the golden crab. Even though you will be voting on this in December to send this amendment to the secretary, there may be another golden crab amendment on the heels of this one.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any other questions of Brian? We've got three. I will take them in a row. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Brian; I am not on the committee. As a matter of efficiency and they are going to look at maybe making some changes; would it make sense to just wait a little bit on this one and put them all together or does it really not matter?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Are you talking about this amendment? I don't think that you are going to get anything beneficial out of doing that.

MR. BELL: I was just going to ask Brian; you know these guys better than anybody. No public comment and we have a preferred alternative; I guess that means they are cool with that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: These guys are very cool with your preferred. They met last May and we talked about this. I believe the council had already had a preferred. I talked about what is already in place for dolphin wahoo and the CMP species, which are the same as the preferreds that you have in this amendment; and they were very happy with that.

They didn't see any big issue with that; because, remember, this is a fishery that has not been assessed. They've never exceeded the ACL. They have never gotten more than about half of the ACL that they are allowed now. They don't see this as an imminent problem.

MR. BOWEN: Mr. Chair; I'm not on your committee either. But to that point, Brian, you mentioned maybe a future amendment of changing the fishing year. I wonder why when we are sitting at 25 percent of our catch this year versus last year? I think last year we were 800 and some thousand; almost 2 million pounds ACL. I don't understand why we would even consider that at this point.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, Zack, what is happening is this is a growing fishery, and there are more vessels that are moving into the fishery. There are a number of the permits that are not currently being used, but the owners of those permits who happen to be the people who are already on the AP; each permit is by zone.

There are people who want to bring more vessels in and to fish in other areas. The AP members believe that the fishery could handle the additional pressure, but this is very much a market-driven fishery. They are not catching more because they are not there; it is they are not going to go out and fish unless they know they have a buyer waiting for them.

There are now starting to be more buyers. In the last six months I have heard from two additional folks who wanted me to put them in contact with golden crab fishermen, because they wanted to buy product. This is a fishery that I think over time we can see is going to see some expansion. We just don't know how quickly it is going to occur.

I think the participants in the fishery are trying to look ahead at least in terms of making sure that if they should exceed their ACL let's make sure that they can fish in the time that they want to fish in the most and things like that. I think it is good thinking on their part what they are trying to do.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions of Brian? Is there any other business to come before the committee? Seeing none; the golden crab committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 o'clock a.m., September 15, 2014.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Graham Transcriptions, Inc.
October 7, 2014

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

2014 Council Membership

COUNCIL CHAIRMAN:

Ben Hartig

9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Dr. Michelle Duval

NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell St.
(PO Box 769)
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/808-8011 (ph); 252/726-0254 (f)
michelle.duval@ncdenr.gov

Robert E. Beal

Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 20001
703/842-0740 (ph); 703/842-0741 (f)
rbeal@asmfc.org

Mel Bell

S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division
P.O. Box 12559
(217 Ft. Johnson Road)
Charleston, SC 29422-2559
843/953-9007 (ph)
843/953-9159 (fax)
bellm@dnr.sc.gov

Anna Beckwith

1907 Paulette Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/671-3474 (ph)
AnnaBarriosBeckwith@gmail.com

Zack Bowen

P.O. Box 30825
Savannah, GA 31410
912/398-3733 (ph)
fishzack@comcast.net

W. Chester Brewer

250 Australian Ave. South
Suite 1400
West Palm Beach, FL 33408
561/655-4777 (ph)
WCBLAW@aol.com

Mark Brown

3642 Pandora Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466
843/881-9735 (ph); 843/881-4446 (f)
capt.markbrown@comcast.net

Chris Conklin

P.O. Box 972
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/543-3833
conklincc@gmail.com

Jack Cox

2010 Bridges Street
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/728-9548
Dayboat1965@gmail.com

Dr. Roy Crabtree

Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727/824-5301 (ph); 727/824-5320 (f)
roy.crabtree@noaa.gov

LT Morgan Fowler

U.S. Coast Guard
510 SW 11th Court
Fort Lauderdale FL 33315
morgan.m.fowler@uscg.mil

Doug Haymans

Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)
doughaymans@gmail.com

Deirdre Warner-Kramer

Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

Dr. Wilson Laney

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
(110 Brooks Ave
237 David Clark Laboratories,
NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)
919/515-5019 (ph)
919/515-4415 (f)
Wilson_Laney@fws.gov

Jessica McCawley

Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E.,
Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)
jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com

Charles Phillips

Phillips Seafood / Sapelo Sea Farms
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-4423 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

MONICA SMIT-BRUNELLO
KEVIN ANSON
BONNIE POWWITH

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

2014 Committees

ADVISORY PANEL SELECTION

Doug Haymans, Chair
Chester Brewer
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Staff contact: Brian Chevront

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Staff contact: Roger Pugliese
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Mark Brown
Staff contact: Brian Chevront

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Mel Bell
Zack Bowen
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Staff contact: Amber Von Harten

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Anna Beckwith
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Jack Cox
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Michelle Duval
Doug Haymans
Jessica McCawley
Charlie Phillips
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Mid-Atlantic Liaison, Pres Pate
Staff contact: Kari MacLauchlin

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Staff contact: Bob Mahood

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Michelle Duval
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Staff contact: Kari MacLauchlin

SCI. & STAT. SELECTION

Michelle Duval, Chair
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Staff contact: John Carmichael

SEDAR

Ben Hartig, Chair
Zack Bowen
Jack Cox
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Charlie Phillips
Robert Beal, ASMFC Representative
Staff contact: John Carmichael

SHRIMP

Charlie Phillips, Chair
Mel Bell
Roy Crabtree
Wilson Laney
Jessica McCawley
Staff contact: Gregg Waugh

(Continued)

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Staff

Executive Director

✓ Robert K. Mahood
robert.mahood@safmc.net

Deputy Executive Director

✓ Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Public Information Officer

✓ Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Fishery Outreach Specialist

✓ Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Senior Fishery Biologist

Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist

✓ Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist

✓ Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Chip Collier
Chip.Collier@safmc.net

Staff Economist

✓ Dr. Brian Chevront
brian.chevront@safmc.net

Science and Statistics Program Manager

✓ John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

✓ Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
✓ Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

Administrative Officer

✓ Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Debra Buscher
deb.buscher@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants

✓ Julie O'Dell
julie.odell@safmc.net

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In order to have a record of your attendance at each meeting and your name included in the minutes, we ask that you sign this sheet for the meeting shown below.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting
Golden Crab Committee Meeting:
Monday, September 15, 2014

<u>NAME & SECTOR/ORGANIZATION:</u>	<u>AREA CODE & PHONE NUMBER:</u>	<u>EMAIL ADDRESS:</u>	<u>MAILING ADDRESS:</u>
Rushy Judson ASFA	386-239-0948	judson@adcom	32120-9351
Joey Collier	843-953-9046		
Wally Rubby SCDNR	843-953-9810	wrubby@dnr.sc.gov	
Lora Clarke PWC			
Don Norman PWC			

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10