

Revised Overview

Law Enforcement Advisory Panel

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The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LEAP) will receive information and provide recommendations, as appropriate, on: (A) recently completed and developing fishery management plan amendments; (B) recently implemented regulations regarding transport of snapper grouper, dolphin, and wahoo fillets from The Bahamas; (C) proposed regulations on hogfish management (Snapper Grouper Amendment 37); (D) proposed changes to reporting requirements for for-hire and commercial vessels in the South Atlantic and overview of reporting compliance by sector, (E) minimum size and bag limit compliance; (F) law enforcement component of System Management Plans for Deepwater MPAs and Spawning SMZs; (G) Turtle Excluder Device (TED) compliance in the shrimp fishery; (H) election of Chair and Vice-Chair; and (I) other business as appropriate.

A. Recently Completed and Developing FMP Amendments (*Attachment 1*)

Council staff will update the LEAP on recently submitted and developing amendments to South Atlantic Fishery Management Plans. The LEAP is encouraged to provide guidance and recommendations, as appropriate.

B. Transport of fillets from The Bahamas (Snapper Grouper Amendment 33 and Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 7; *Attachment 2*)

Brian Chevront, Council staff, will brief the LEAP on recently implemented regulations governing the transport of snapper grouper, dolphin, and wahoo fillets into the U.S. EEZ from The Bahamas. Regulations became effective on January 27, 2016. LEAP representatives (NOAA OLE, NOAA GC, Florida FWC, and USCG, as appropriate) should discuss enforcement activities planned for federal and state waters.

C. Snapper Grouper Amendment 37 (Hogfish; *Attachment 3*)

Amendment 37 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) contains twelve actions pertaining to management of hogfish in federal waters of the South Atlantic. Hogfish in the South Atlantic can be split into two genetically distinct stocks: one off Georgia and the Carolinas (GA-NC) and one Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock. This recommended split is based on recent research by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The stock status for the GA-NC stock is unknown due to insufficient data for the stock assessment to be accepted. The FLK/EFL stock of hogfish is undergoing overfishing and is overfished based on a completed stock assessment in 2014 (SEDAR 37 2014). Since the FLK/EFL stock is overfished a rebuilding plan is needed.

Amendment 37 would specify the boundary between the FLK/EFL hogfish stock, managed by the South Atlantic Council (Council), and the Gulf of Mexico stock, managed by the Gulf Council. This demarcation would aid in enforcing regulations and properly tracking landings for

each stock. Amendment 37 also includes actions to specify Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), and Optimum Yield (OY) for both stocks, establish a rebuilding plan for the FLK/EFL stock, and implement or modify management measures for both stocks to attain the desired level of harvest.

D. Amendments to improve reporting for for-hire and commercial vessels in the South Atlantic (Attachments 4a-4e)

Regulations to require electronic reporting for headboats in the South Atlantic were effective in January 2014. Headboats in the South Atlantic region are currently required to report electronically at weekly intervals (or at intervals shorter than a week, if notified). Electronic reports are due on the Sunday following a reporting week. During the March 2015 meeting, the South Atlantic Council approved draft actions/alternatives that would require weekly electronic reporting by charter vessels in similar fashion to the reporting requirements for headboats. An amendment to implement these requirements is currently under development and public hearings were held in January/February 2016. The amendment proposes to also shorten the timing so electronic reports for both headboats and charter vessels would be due on the Tuesday following each reporting week. The Council is interested in how the state and federal agencies plan to enforce, or are currently enforcing, reporting requirements for commercial dealers and for-hire (headboat) operators, what the compliance rate is (if available), or is expected to be, and what can be done to increase compliance and stakeholder buy-in. In addition, the Council would like to be briefed on the process for enforcing current and future reporting requirements.

E. Minimum size and bag limit compliance (Attachments 5a & 5b)

To better inform decisions on the use of minimum size limits and bag limits, the Council requests the LEAP provide information on compliance with these management measures in the region. State and federal enforcement representatives should discuss the process and challenges of enforcing existing regulations and provide recommendations.

F. Enforceability of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZ): Evaluation for System Management Plans (Attachments 6a-6c)

The Council has developed draft System Management Plans (SMPs) for existing MPAs and proposed Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs) that would be put in place through implementation of Amendment 36 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (being approved for formal review at March 2016 meeting). The intent of the SMPs is to evaluate existing research and monitoring, outreach, and enforcement efforts for the existing MPAs and establish a means to obtain information and evaluate the efficacy of the proposed SMZs, if implemented. The SMPs contain planned activities for each component (research and monitoring, outreach, and enforcement) to better characterize and measure the overall effects of the closed areas in managing fishery resources of the South Atlantic region. Federal and state law enforcement representatives should discuss planned enforcement activities and needed resources for effective enforcement, respectively.

Chip Collier, Council staff, will present an overview of the law enforcement component of both SMPs. The LEAP should discuss and provide recommendations.

G. Turtle Excluder Device (TED) Compliance (*Attachment 7*)

The April 18, 2014 Biological Opinion (BiOp) is the current Endangered Species Act (ESA) authorization for the shrimp fisheries in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The BiOp required NMFS to develop a policy to evaluate compliance in both regions and that it be completed within a year of the BiOp publication. In May 2015, NMFS issued a draft compliance policy for Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), including compliance thresholds. A revised policy was issued by the agency in February 2016. The LEAP will receive a briefing from Southeast Regional Office staff on how this draft policy is being implemented.

H. Election of LEAP Chair and Vice-Chair

While there are no policies governing the terms of the chair and vice-chairmanship for advisory panels, they are encouraged to discuss such terms and, if appropriate, conduct elections.

I. Other Business

The LEAP will discuss other business as appropriate.