



# **Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel April 2022 Meeting Summary**



**June 2022 Council Meeting  
Chris Burrows, AP Chair**

# Overview of the Dolphin Wahoo AP Meeting

- Met April 20-21 in Charleston, SC.
- Reviewed multiple topics including:
  - 1) Recent and developing Council actions
  - 2) An update on the Citizen Science Program
  - 3) **Development of an updated Fishery Performance Report (FPR) for Dolphin**
  - 4) **Regulatory Amendment 3 (Modifications to the minimum size limit, recreational retention limits, and the for-hire captain and crew bag limits)**



# Dolphin Fishery Performance Report

- *Stock Abundance, Catch Levels, and Seasonality*
  - Consensus that dolphin abundance is lower than it used to be in the South Atlantic.
    - Noted similar trend in some HMS fisheries.
- *Effort Shifts and Discards*
  - Generally, an increase in recreational effort, particularly for the private recreational component.
  - In New England, there has been a developing fishery in recent years focusing on dolphin nearshore (15 to 20 miles).
- *Price and Demand*
  - Very strong demand across all sectors.



# Dolphin Fishery Performance Report

- *Changes in Infrastructure, Community Importance, and Adaptation*
  - Dolphin is a culturally iconic species.
  - Dock space is becoming limited or very expensive.
- *Environment and Habitat*
  - Shark abundance and predation is impacting the fishery.
  - Notably warmer water temps during the winter in the S. Atl.
- *Management Measures*
  - Largely captured in discussion of Regulatory Amendment 3.
  - “Council boats” fishing longline gear should be addressed to provide a level playing field with HMS permitted vessels and reduce problems with localized depletion.



# Regulatory Amendment 3

- **Action 1** (Modifying the applicable geographic range of the minimum size limit)
  - Split opinion amongst the AP with those from NC generally opposed and those from other states in favor.
  - Recommendations:
    - Consider extending the size limit to be consistent across the entire management unit.
    - Do not make changes to the size limit.
    - A 20” minimum size limit could have a provision for a certain number of fish in the bag or vessel limit that could potentially be short of that size.
      - This approach could minimize the impacts on the for-hire sector while also incurring some of the benefits of a size limit such as discouraging targeting of small fish (i.e., a hybrid approach).
    - Consider potential variation between size limits onboard for-hire and private vessels.



# Regulatory Amendment 3

- **Action 2** (Modify the daily recreational bag limit)
  - Noted majority of harvest from private recreational vessels.
  - For-hire vessels would be hurt more by a reduction than private.
  - Recommendations:
    - If limits are changed, consider higher limits for charter vessels than private vessels.
    - Help protect the viability of the charter industry by maintaining an incentive for customers to book trips while also encouraging buy-in if other measures are considered.
    - If the bag limit is changed for charter vessels, change the bag limit onboard headboat vessels to the same number of fish.
    - AP members from Florida felt that the charter mode should remain at 10 fish per person while the limit could be dropped to 5 fish per person onboard private vessels.



# Regulatory Amendment 3

- **Action 3** (Modify the recreational vessel limit)
  - For-hire vessels typically catch more dolphin per trip than the private recreational.
  - Headboat catch of dolphin is insignificant in regard to the ACL.
  - Recommendations:
    - Do not implement a vessel limit for headboats.
    - Several AP members advocated for a higher vessel limit for charter boats than for private recreational vessels.
    - If the vessel limit is changed, maintain a limit divisible by 6.
    - AP members from Florida felt that the charter vessels could go with 30 dolphin per vessel.
    - AP members from North Carolina felt that charter vessels could not go with a lower vessel limit than was passed in Amendment 10 (54 dolphin per vessel).



# Regulatory Amendment 3

- **Action 4** (Modify captain and crew bag limits)
  - Consensus from all AP members that captain and crew should still be able to retain a daily bag limit.
  - Recommendations:
    - Maintain captain and crew bag limits.
    - Make captain and crew bag limits the same as bag limits for anglers onboard charter vessels.
    - These limits are important on charter trips, particularly those with a low number of anglers onboard.
    - Could be used as a conservation tool that also maintains the viability of the charter industry if individual bag limits are reduced.





# Questions?

