



Snapper Grouper • Coastal Migratory Pelagics • Dolphin Wahoo

Updating Distributions & Essential Fish Habitat

Resilient Fisheries Project Overview

Description

Understanding and predicting environmentally driven shifts in species distribution is important for effective fisheries management. This project aims to improve our understanding of how ecosystem change affects where key fish species are found in the Southeastern United States. Using state-of-the-art spatiotemporal modeling techniques this project will explore indicators of environmental change in the spatial distribution and habitat associations for the fish and fisheries managed under the SAFMC's Snapper-Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Dolphin Wahoo FMPs. The updated species distributions and Essential Fish Habitat descriptions will inform Council decision-making for more resilient fisheries management and governance. Project outcomes will also inform evaluations of existing governance structures, including cooperative and interjurisdictional governance approaches.

Progress Updates

- The project team are continuing development of the single-species and joint-species models.
- The Project Oversight Team (OT) met in February and received an update on multispecies-modeling efforts, which include dolphinfish and wahoo, and an initial results from Snapper Grouper single-species modeling efforts.
- Following a period of revision and continued development, the models will be reviewed at the October 2026 SSC meeting.

Project Team

Contractors: Jie Cao, NCSU (Co-PI); Janet Nye, UNC IMS (Co-PI), Seungyeon Jade Hong, UNC IMS

Oversight Team: Kathleen Howington, Myra Brouwer, Tori Kentner (MAFMC), Simen Kaalstad (ASMFC), Chip Collier, Lara Klibansky

Project Timeline

2024

- ✓ **Oct.** - Request for proposals released.
- ✓ **Dec.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.

2025

- ✓ **Jan.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- ✓ **Mar.** - Begin quarterly Project Oversight Team meetings with contractors
- ✓ **Apr.** - Begin data gathering, processing and model development

2026

- ✓ **Feb.** - Project Oversight Team review of initial models
- Oct.** - SSC review of spatiotemporal models

2027

- Feb.** - Presentation to Habitat and Ecosystem AP
- Mar.** - Presentation to Council; Submit final report

Implementation will begin with the Council reviewing and considering the approval of project outcomes and recommendations.