



Update on Dolphin Wahoo Amendments

Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel
August 2019
Webinar

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 9 (For-hire Electronic Reporting Amendment)

This amendment proposes mandatory electronic reporting for charter vessel operators with a federal for-hire permit in the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, or coastal migratory pelagic fisheries with alternatives for weekly or daily reporting; reducing the time allowed for headboat operators to complete their electronic reports; and requiring location reporting by charter vessels with the same detail now required for headboat vessels. The proposed rule published on April 4, 2018, with a comment period through May 4, 2018. The South Atlantic Council was notified on June 12, 2018, that the amendment was approved by NMFS.

At their January 2017 meeting, the Gulf Council approved a generic amendment to modify charter vessel and headboat reporting requirements for vessels with a Gulf charter/headboat reef fish or a federal Gulf charter/headboat coast migratory pelagics permit. The amendment proposes daily electronic reporting for both Gulf charter and Gulf headboat vessels, a hail-in and hail-out requirement, as well as requirements to report on NMFS approved hardware/software, and a system to report archived GPS coordinates.

Publication of the final rules for both the South Atlantic and Gulf amendments is pending.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 (dolphin and wahoo management measures)

In March 2016, the South Atlantic Council (Council) directed staff to begin development of Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 to examine different ways to allocate or share quota between the commercial and recreational sectors for dolphin. Development of the amendment was suspended pending the availability of revised recreational data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), per guidance from the March 2017 Council meeting. With revised recreational data available, the Council directed staff at the December 2018 meeting to start work again on Amendment 10.

During the June 2019 meeting held in Stuart, FL, the Council reviewed Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10. While discussing actions in the amendment, the Council voted add an action that would allow the for-hire fleet North of the Virginia/North Carolina border to fillet dolphin at sea. This action was added in response to a request from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management

Council. The Council also voted to remove an action that would allow bag limit sales of dolphin for dually permitted for-hire and commercial dolphin wahoo permit holders after a lengthy discussion on the topic. In doing so, the Council noted that there were recommendations from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel as well as public comments advising against pursuing bag limit sales for dolphin. Additionally the Council noted that pursuing such an action would be contrary to some of the goals and objectives of the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan, would provide notable challenges with accounting for dolphin landings, would likely lead to bag limit sales being requested for other species, would incentivize additional harvest of dolphin that otherwise would not have occurred, and could provide an unfair dis-advantage to full-time commercial fishing operations landing dolphin. During discussion of this action, the Council noted that dolphin has a very large bag limit in comparison to other species and at times customers may not want all fish harvested, harvest is capped at the recreational limit thereby limiting total landings per trip below those of commercial operations, challenges with accounting for dolphin landings could be overcome, and allowing bag limits sales would provide additional domestically caught fish for the marketplace as well as additional economic opportunities for charter boats. In the end, the majority of the Council felt that the potential downsides of the action outweighed the potential upsides.

Amendment 10 will be reviewed at the September 2019 SAFMC meeting in Charleston, SC. Below are the management measures that will be up for consideration:

- Revise annual catch limits (ACLs) for dolphin and wahoo to accommodate new recreational landings data.
- Revise sector allocations for dolphin and wahoo.
- Revise the optimum yield (OY) definition for dolphin.
- Allow adaptive management of sector ACLs for dolphin.
- Revise the accountability measures for dolphin and wahoo.
- Allow properly permitted commercial vessels with trap, pot, or buoy gear onboard to possess dolphin and wahoo.
- Remove the requirement of vessel operators or crew to hold an Operator Card in the dolphin wahoo fishery.
- Reduce the recreational vessel limit for dolphin.
- Modify gear and training requirements in the directed commercial longline fishery for dolphin and wahoo to align with Highly Migratory Species requirements.
- Allow filleting of dolphin at sea onboard charter or headboat vessels in the waters north of the Virginia/North Carolina border.

Amendment 10 is in its early stages of development, with the next step in the amendment process being public scoping to gather comments on the actions being considered. Scoping will likely occur after the December 2019 South Atlantic Council meeting. The Dolphin Wahoo AP will likely review this amendment in detail at the AP's spring 2020 meeting.

Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 11 (ABC Control Rule Revisions for Dolphin Wahoo)

In December 2016, the Council directed staff to start work on a plan amendment that would modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the MSA and revise how

uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs. The Amendment includes actions to: 1) revise how the SSC evaluates assessment uncertainty; 2) revise how the risk tolerance is specified; and 3) allow phase-in and carry-over of ABCs. An IPT was formed to develop actions and alternatives, and the SSC and Council have regularly reviewed progress and provided guidance during 2017 and 2018. Scoping was held in January 2019 and comments reviewed in March 2019. The Council will likely discuss this amendment their December 2019 or March 2020 meetings.