

Discussion Document for Revising the Goals and Objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic

Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel
August 2019
Webinar

Introduction

The Fisheries Allocation Review Policy (NMFS Policy Directive 01-119) issued in July 2016 encourages the use of adaptive management in respect to allocation revisions, which includes “*periodic re-evaluation and updating of the management goals and objectives to ensure they are relevant to current conditions and needs.*” As part of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s (Council) process for creating an Allocation Review Trigger Policy, the goals and objectives of all fishery management plans (FMPs) that include sector allocations will be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

It is likely that the Council may need to discuss revisions to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP’s goals and objectives over several meetings. Once approved by the Council, the revised goals and objectives will be implemented as part of the next plan amendment. This could be Amendment 10 or Amendment 12 to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP. At this meeting, the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel (AP) will be asked to review the revised goals and objectives of the Dolphin Wahoo FMP and provide recommendations on edits or additional items that the South Atlantic Council should consider.

Background

The goals and objectives of the Dolphin Wahoo FMP were implemented in the original plan¹ that went into place in 2004² and have not been revised since then. At the time that the Council was formulating the original Dolphin Wahoo FMP, there was concern over increased landings of dolphin and wahoo. The Council was also proactively attempting to address potential commercial effort shifts towards dolphin that could have occurred due to consolidation within the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fleet. For reference purposes, total commercial landings as well as original and revised recreational landings can be found in the Appendix section at the end of this document in **Table A-1**.

¹ The original Dolphin Wahoo FMP can be accessed at:
https://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/dw/archives/dolphinwahoo_fmp_jan_2003.pdf

² The Federal Register notice implementing the original Dolphin Wahoo FMP can be found at:
https://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/rules/sa/dw/2004/fmp_fr_052704.pdf

Within the FMP, it is noted that *“the Councils are concerned that recent increases in landings could result in localized depletion of stocks and a shift in the historical levels of catch between commercial and recreational fishermen. This increase in landings has resulted from both the commercial longline fishery and the historical recreational fishery, with the most significant increase in harvest of wahoo and dolphin coming from the recreational sector, more specifically the charterboat fishery. Another complicating factor in determining landings by sector is that commercial landings also include fish that were caught by the recreational sector.”*

For additional context, the original Dolphin Wahoo FMP outlines the following “problems and issues” that were identified by the Council and addressed by the FMP:

- 1) *“Localized reduction of fish abundance due to high fishing pressure. (What is the best approach to maintain a sufficiently high abundance level?)*
- 2) *Disruption of markets. (What is the best approach to maintain stable markets for dolphin?)*
- 3) *Conflict and/or competition between recreational and commercial user groups of dolphin fish. (What is the best approach to reduce conflict and/or competition that has recently developed between these two sectors of the fishery?)*
- 4) *Reduced social and economic benefits. (What is the best approach to optimize social and economic benefits of the dolphin fishery?)*
- 5) *Bycatch. (Given the mandate in the Magnuson-Stevens Act to address bycatch in all fishery management plans, what is the best approach to quantify and reduce existing bycatch within the fishery, as well as, prevent an increase in non-target bycatch?)*
- 6) *Importance of predator/prey relationships between dolphin and other pelagic species.*
- 7) *Limited biological, habitat, economic, and social information on dolphin and wahoo stocks and fisheries.”*

The Council is in the process of updating the Dolphin Wahoo FMP goals and objectives to reflect the current vision for management of the fisheries for dolphin and wahoo and provided initial recommendations for updating goals and objectives at their June 2019 meeting. The draft version of these revisions can be found in the following section.

Draft Revised Dolphin Wahoo FMP Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 (Precautionary Approach): Support a precautionary and risk-averse approach to management which in the first instance attempts to maintain historic catch levels and prevent overfishing from occurring.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Maintain catch levels that do not exceed catch level recommendations for dolphin or wahoo and do not directly change the balance of landings in comparison to the historic fishery to the extent that conflict is created between the recreational and commercial sectors.

<i>Objective 2</i>	Minimize unutilized bycatch of dolphin or wahoo through development of management measures that reduce and mitigate bycatch that are not sold or kept for personal use.
Goal 2 (Access): Maintain access to the dolphin and wahoo resource for both the recreational and commercial sectors.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	For the recreational sector, adopt innovative management measures that emphasize the importance of continued access to dolphin and wahoo when the fish are regionally available, while maintaining sufficiently high abundance that supports elevated catch rates.
<i>Objective 2</i>	For the commercial sector, adopt innovative management measures that address the importance of continued access to dolphin and wahoo when the fish are regionally available.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Address potential localized reduction in fish abundance as a result of the possible shift of effort by longline vessels to traditional recreational fishing grounds and the resulting potential reduction in local availability of dolphin and wahoo.
Goal 3 (Minimize Competition Between User Groups): Minimize competition between recreational and commercial user groups.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	If commercial longlining effort and catch on dolphin and wahoo increases, competition may arise if effort shifts to fishing grounds traditionally used by recreational fishermen.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Develop communication approaches that provide streamlined and timely information to increase awareness and engage stakeholders.
Goal 4 (Economic and Social Importance): Recognize and preserve the economic and social importance of the fisheries for dolphin and wahoo.	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Manage the dolphin and wahoo resources to achieve optimum yield on a continuing basis in order to maximize the economic and social net benefits of the fishery.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Minimize market disruption. Commercial markets (mainly local) may be disrupted if large quantities of dolphin are landed from intense commercial harvest or unregulated catch and landing by charter or other components of the recreational sector.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Improve knowledge about the social and economic elements of the dolphin and wahoo fishery in the Atlantic.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of how social and economic issues are linked to fishery management measures.
Goal 5 (Ecosystem Based Management and Research Priorities):	
<i>Objective 1</i>	Support improved and expanded monitoring and reporting programs for the dolphin and wahoo fishery. Promote collection of quality data to support management plans and programs considered by the Council.
<i>Objective 2</i>	Promote research aimed at developing ecosystem based management of dolphin and wahoo.
<i>Objective 3</i>	Support measures that incorporate ecosystem considerations for the management of dolphin and wahoo where practicable.
<i>Objective 4</i>	Direct research to enhance collection of biological and habitat data on dolphin and wahoo stocks and fisheries.

Discussion Questions for the AP:

- Does the AP have any suggested changes or edits to the goals and objectives currently being considered by the Council?
- Are there topics that should be covered in the goals and objectives, but are currently left out? In other words, what (if anything) should the Council consider adding as a goal or objective to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan?

Appendix

Table A-1. Dolphin landings (lbs ww) by sector. Original Rec are recreational landings before the Fishery Effort Survey (FES) and Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) calibrations. Revised Rec are recreational landings after the FES and APAIS calibrations.

Year	Total Original	Original Rec	Commercial	Total Revised	Revised Rec
1986	8,022,026	7,485,664	536,362	7,105,106	6,568,744
1987	5,491,083	4,994,605	496,478	7,667,597	7,171,119
1988	7,786,760	7,262,041	524,719	7,879,048	7,354,329
1989	12,388,991	11,325,592	1,063,399	16,916,490	15,853,091
1990	10,590,511	9,574,615	1,015,896	13,162,489	12,146,593
1991	14,208,752	12,606,054	1,602,698	17,821,010	16,218,312
1992	7,084,072	6,416,889	667,183	9,310,483	8,643,300
1993	11,132,608	10,198,215	934,393	10,372,006	9,437,613
1994	13,913,011	12,712,945	1,200,066	12,542,074	11,342,008
1995	18,079,709	15,943,175	2,136,534	16,187,655	14,051,121
1996	11,321,976	10,096,307	1,225,669	10,657,235	9,431,566
1997	16,935,917	15,333,116	1,602,801	13,119,367	11,516,566
1998	11,612,034	10,788,292	823,742	9,476,445	8,652,703
1999	14,488,382	13,441,221	1,047,161	15,932,741	14,885,580
2000	17,759,811	16,772,185	987,626	20,368,995	19,381,369
2001	17,020,155	16,254,779	765,376	17,944,001	17,178,625
2002	18,966,645	18,258,553	708,092	18,731,751	18,023,659
2003	11,533,067	10,809,559	723,508	14,564,094	13,840,586
2004	7,791,755	6,932,053	859,702	11,098,163	10,238,461
2005	9,217,014	8,639,399	577,615	11,606,173	11,028,558
2006	9,551,724	8,901,416	650,308	14,760,431	14,110,123
2007	10,571,899	9,572,737	999,162	14,409,861	13,410,699
2008	8,481,737	7,645,364	836,373	11,125,956	10,289,583
2009	8,949,529	7,653,516	1,296,013	16,259,670	14,963,657
2010	7,331,699	6,616,330	715,369	10,661,865	9,946,496
2011	7,247,438	6,452,997	794,441	13,982,145	13,187,704
2012	7,045,515	6,183,475	862,040	12,181,306	11,319,266
2013	4,779,301	4,022,845	756,456	9,471,310	8,714,854
2014	6,470,884	5,167,895	1,302,989	15,182,967	13,879,978
2015	8,832,632	7,722,528	1,110,104	21,454,155	20,344,051
2016	7,384,704	6,449,005	935,699	15,956,261	15,020,562
2017	4,483,518	3,830,338	653,180	11,410,918	10,757,738