



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director
Gregg Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

June 22, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bonnie Ponwith

FROM: Bob Mahood *RKM*

SUBJECT: Data Request in Support of SSC ABC Recommendations

Through this memorandum the Council is requesting information and analyses for actions being considered in the SAFMC Comprehensive ACL Amendment and Amendment 2. The Council requests that information listed below for golden crab and octocorals be provided to Council staff by August 1, 2010, for consideration by the SSC in August 2010. Recommendations of the SSC will be considered by the Council in September 2010.

Our Scientific and Statistical Committee considered OFL and ABC recommendations for golden crab and octocorals at its April 2010 meeting. For golden crab, the SSC noted that there were several assessments attempted during the late 1990's, results of which were questioned by subsequent review bodies. This led the Council to decline to adopt MSY values in prior amendments. The SSC acknowledged that further evaluation of the existing golden crab data could lead to more robust and scientifically based ABC and OFL values. For octocorals, the committee considered FWRI landings reports, and anecdotal composition information provided by the Coral AP. The Committee noted considerable uncertainty in landings species composition, life history, and parameters such as regeneration rates, in making OFL and ABC recommendations.

The Golden Crab Committee met in June 2010 and considered the SSC's recommendations regarding OFL and ABC. These recommendations were deemed inadequate because they were based on a data-poor control rule rejected by the Council. Additionally, the Committee agreed with SSC discussions suggesting that evaluation of information available for golden crab could lead to an ABC with a stronger scientific basis than the recommendation from April 2010 that

was based on landings alone. The Golden Crab Committee and Council directed staff to convene a meeting of the SSC, prior to the September 2010 Council meeting, to further consider information available for golden crab and develop an ABC control rule that accommodates un-assessed stocks with information in excess of landings.

The Council requests the following information for Golden Crab:

1. Landings, mean size, effort, and CPUE over all available years.
2. Evaluation of prior assessments (Harper et al 1998 and 2000), the estimate of MSY put forth in the SEFSC memo from Dr. Powers dated 9/12/01, and other evidence used to determine stock status as reported in the 1999 and 2004 SAFE reports, to assist the SSC in developing recommendations for OFL and ABC.
3. Review of any golden crab research conducted since 2000.
4. Evaluation of the proportion of the population's distribution that is exploited by the current fishery, including consideration of the extent to which distance from shore, pending Deepwater Coral HAPCs, and Bahamian waters protect portions of the stock from harvest.

The Ecosystem-Based Management Committee met in June 2010 and considered the SSC recommendations for octocoral OFL and ABC. The ABC was rejected because it was developed using the data poor control rule rejected by the Council. Additionally, the Committee did not consider the SSC recommendation for OFL adequately justified nor supported by the available data. As a result, the Committee and Council directed staff to request the SEFSC provide further evaluation of octocoral landings and fishery impacts for SSC consideration in September 2010.

The Council requests the following information for octocorals:

1. Evaluation of landings in state and federal waters.
2. Evaluation of the area fished relative to the available habitat area.
3. Evaluation of the regeneration rate of harvested areas.
4. Identification of any evidence that the existing harvest levels pose a threat to the octocoral resource, with particular consideration to issues such as local depletion and susceptibility of individual species.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact John Carmichael or me.

cc: SAFMC Members
Monica Smit-Brunello
Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Carolyn Belcher
Luiz Barbieri