Science – Strategic Goal for Draft Vision Blueprint

Background:

In December 2012, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) began its Visioning Project to construct a long-term vision for the snapper grouper fishery through development of a strategic plan for the fishery that would guide management actions into the future. This strategic plan, called the *Vision Blueprint*, consists of four strategic goals – *Science, Communication, Management, and Governance*. Each strategic goal will have specific goals, objectives and action strategies that will be used by the Council to guide future management of the snapper grouper fishery.

Following an approach similar to what the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council used to draft a strategic plan for its managed fisheries, the Council sought stakeholder input early in the process and held a series of 26 informal meetings to solicit stakeholder input in coastal communities throughout the South Atlantic region. Because stakeholder needs and perceptions can vary widely, the Council has been careful <u>not to exclude any input</u> pertaining to the management of the snapper grouper fishery. Therefore, at this stage of the process, items that have been considered in the past as possible management tools but have not been developed further, will continue to be included among the many tools the Council may consider for long-term management of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region. As such, the table below encompasses management actions/strategies as suggested by stakeholders in the fishery as well as those brought forth by the Council members themselves. The goals and objectives are not in order of priority and are all considered draft at this time. As the draft Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery takes shape in 2015, the Council will provide their rationale for management strategies that are eventually excluded from further consideration.

SCIENCE

GOAL: Management decisions are based upon robust, defensible science that considers qualitative and quantitative data analyzed in a timely, clear, and transparent manner that builds stakeholder confidence.		
Objective 1. **Promote collection of quality data to support management plans and programs considered by the Council.**	**Strategy 1.1**	**Evaluate existing data collection, monitoring, and reporting programs affecting fisheries managed by the Council.**
	Actions:	A. Evaluate fishery dependent and independent data programs. B. Evaluate SEDAR. C. Validate data collection programs. D. Identify sampling resources needed to support data programs. E. Improve the timeliness of SAFE reports. F. Consider utilizing third party assessments using a standard stock assessment process.
	Strategy 1.2	**Encourage consistency in data collection programs that incorporates standardized methods, reporting requirements and formats across the South Atlantic region.**

	Actions:	A.	Utilize ACCSP standards for data collection.
		B.	Support efforts to create a uniform reporting mechanism for trip tickets and logbooks (C,FH).
	Strategy 1.3		**Support improvement and expansion of fishery independent programs.**
	Actions:	A.	Identify alternative sources of funding to support expansion of fishery independent surveys.
		B.	Work with management partners to secure long-term funding for the MARMAP survey.
		C.	Support creation of a comprehensive data portal that provides access to all fishery independent data.
Objective 2. **Encourage development of mechanisms to effectively engage and collaborate with stakeholders on cooperative research, data collection and analysis.**	**Strategy 2.1**		**Promote and expand opportunities for cooperative research and surveys in the South Atlantic region.**
	Actions:	A.	Identify sources of funding (both traditional and non-traditional) for cooperative research and surveys.
		B.	Improve partnerships between potential researchers and fishermen. (ALL)
		C.	Support partnerships to enhance habitat and ecosystem mapping in the region.
		D.	Support a multi-disciplinary body to oversee and guide cooperative fishery independent surveys, monitoring, and research.
		E.	Consider use of an industry research set-aside funding program to support fishery research and monitoring needs. (C)
		F.	Utilize fishing vessels and captains as alternative observer platforms. (ALL)
	Strategy 2.2		**Support development of citizen science programs for data collection needs in the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	A.	Support a volunteer angler training program to collect specific data to address a science or management need. (ALL)
		B.	Develop methods to incorporate volunteer data for use in stock assessments, and other management measures. (FH,R)
		C.	
Objective 3. **Improve knowledge about the social and economic elements of the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic.**	**Strategy 3.1**		**Support collection of relevant economic and social data to produce analyses that allows Council to consider effects of management on fishing communities.**
	Actions:	A.	Evaluate cumulative social and economic impacts of proposed and existing management measures and alternatives.
		B.	Support data collection that considers economics when determining allocation strategies.
		C.	Develop partnerships with research institutions, agencies and other organizations with appropriate expertise to collect relevant and timely social and economic data to support the data needs of the Council.

Objective 4. Support improved and expanded monitoring and reporting programs for the snapper grouper fishery.	Strategy 4.1	Consider a wide range of monitoring options for the snapper grouper fishery that will meet a specific management objective.
	Actions:	A. Consider the use of observers in the fishery to monitor for a specific management issue. B. Support the use of observer data to improve discard rate estimates. C. Consider development and use of appropriate electronic monitoring methods (scale, cost, approach, etc.) D. Support for law enforcement to enforce monitoring requirements.
	Strategy 4.2	Support further development of reporting mechanisms for all sectors in the snapper grouper fishery.
	Actions:	Reporting mechanisms that could be improved and considered include: A. Development of a reporting program for the recreational sector. B. Use of electronic reporting mechanisms for all sectors of the fishery (mobile apps, cellphones, web-based, etc.) C. Swipecards for the recreational sector. D. A recreational fishing stamp/permit/license for the snapper grouper fishery. E. Increase dockside biological sampling for the recreational sector. F. Catch card reporting program for specific species. G. Improvements to existing logbook programs (Better resolution on logbook grids, Vessel Trip Report in discard logbook, etc.) H. Incentives for reporting in all sectors. I. Consequences for lack of reporting. J. Support for law enforcement to enforce reporting requirements. K. Increase bycatch/discard reporting. L. Implement Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology M. Develop a model to improve discard rate estimates for all sectors.
Objective 5. Promote data collection and analysis to support ecosystem and habitat considerations for the snapper grouper fishery.	Strategy 5.1	Consider assessment of ecosystem and habitat data needs for the snapper grouper fishery.
	Actions:	A. Improve understanding and consider species interaction with habitats and ecosystems. B. Study the non-fishing ecosystem drivers. C. Consider how to utilize ocean monitoring to support management decisions. D. Improve understanding of the effects of contaminants on habitats/ecosystems. E. Evaluate ocean dumping and impacts to habitat/ecosystems. F. Improve timeliness and accuracy of bottom mapping. G. Determine how habitats contribute to production of managed species and the distribution of different life stages.

		H. Evaluate habitat/ecosystem damage from disturbance (anchors, gear, fishing activities, etc.)
	Strategy 5.2	**Consider climate change impacts when developing management decisions for the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	A. Support development of metrics to evaluate climate change.
		B. Evaluate the impact of sea level rise on the fishery.
		C. Evaluate impacts of cold water intrusion on the fishery.
		D. Evaluate impacts of ocean acidification on the fishery.
	Strategy 5.3	**Support modeling efforts that incorporate habitat and ecosystem considerations for management of the snapper grouper fishery.**
	Actions:	A. Utilize ecosystem modeling.
		B. Use climate change impacts on species in assessments.
		C. Support a simulation model showing ecosystem impacts between fisheries.
		D. Consider expanding the geographical boundary of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit as species spread.
		E. Monitor changes in species distribution and abundance.
		F. Address impacts of non-indigenous species on the fishery and habitats that support the fishery.
		G. Analyze the impacts of management on non-targeted species.
		H. Improve understanding of predator-prey interactions on snapper grouper species.
		I. Consider species habitat models.
		J. Consider external sources of recruitment.