

Summary Update on Port Meetings

As part of the Council’s Visioning Project, a total of 27 port meetings have been scheduled in South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. The schedule is listed below and the full meeting information can be found at: <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/2014-port-meetings>.

South Carolina:	North Carolina:	Florida:	Georgia:
Feb 11 – Murrells Inlet (2 meetings)	March 17 – Southport	March 25 – St. Augustine (2 meetings)	April 14 – Savannah
Feb 12 – Charleston	March 17 – Shallotte	March 26 – Titusville (2 meetings)	April 15 – St. Simons Island
Feb 17 – Charleston	March 18 – Sneads Ferry	March 27 – Port Salerno	April 15 – Brunswick
Feb 18 – Bluffton	March 19 – Morehead City	March 27 – Lake Park	April 16 – Shellman Bluff
Feb 20 – Columbia	March 19 – Raleigh	March 31 – Key West	
April 22 - Charleston	March 20 – Wanchese	April 1 – Marathon	
	March 20 - Hatteras	April 2 – Key Largo	

Port Meetings Conducted To Date

To date, **27 port meetings** have been conducted in South Carolina , North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia with a **total of 346 participants** representing the commercial, recreational, for-hire, and snapper-grouper federal dealer sectors.

Summary of Issues

The issues that fishermen discussed at the port meetings had similarities across the region. However, there were some regionally specific and sector specific issues that were brought up at each of the meetings. Below is a preliminary snapshot of some of the key management issues fishermen felt could be improved.

- Reporting – *Concern over the lack of reporting in the recreational sector and redundancy in commercial sector; the need to use new electronic technology (web-based, mobile apps) for reporting.*
- Science/Stock Assessments –*Questions about the accuracy of the science and timeliness of assessments; results do not match what fishermen are seeing on the water; the need to incorporate anecdotal information from fishermen in stock assessments.*
- Data Collection –*Frustration with recreational data collection programs; the need to utilize cooperative data collection programs with fishermen.*
- Cooperative Research – *The need for more opportunities to collect data in conjunction with scientists to help fill in some of the gaps for stock assessments and use in other management measures.*
- Permits – *Stakeholders concern over permit requirements in all sectors.*
- Flexibility in Management Strategies – *Addressing Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), fishing seasons, size/bag/trip limits, timeliness of implementing new regulations when stocks recover.*

- Reducing Discards – *The need to develop strategies that allow fishermen to either keep what they catch or use tools that decrease discard mortality (descending devices, etc.).*
- One Size Fits All Management vs. Regional Management – *Concerns about the geographical differences in fishery over a four state region and the same management measures in place for the whole region.*
- Time/Area Management – *Frustration with seasonal closures that do not effectively address the management intention (shallow water grouper spawning closure); concern with existing Marine Protected Areas*
- Allocation – *How the fish are divided up between the sectors and also the need to possibly consider regional allocations/quotas for certain species.*
- Species Specific Issues – *Black sea bass, red snapper, Shallow-water Grouper, Jacks complex and how to manage these more effectively.*
- Endorsement Program Issues – *Black sea bass and Golden Tilefish.*
- Catch Shares – *Conflicting opinions about the potential use of this strategy in the future.*
- Goliath Grouper, Lionfish, & Sharks – *The need to address these species that are interacting with and affecting the snapper grouper fishery.*
- Conflicting Regulations/Permits – *Conflicting state and federal regulations and specific regional jurisdictional issues in both the Outer Banks of NC and South Florida.*

Participants crafted an extensive list of potential solutions to address each of the issues identified and these solutions will be presented to the Council to be considered in the development of the long-term strategic plan for the fishery. Approximately 350 fishery stakeholders participated in the port meetings throughout the South Atlantic region. Written comments are still being accepted and can be submitted using the [Port Meeting Discussion Form](#) available on the Council’s website under the Visioning Project tab.

Next Steps

Summaries of each port meeting will be available on the Councils website in the coming weeks as staff work to compile the results from each meeting. Each port meeting summary will then be further compiled into a draft summary report showing the results of all 27 meetings. The draft summary report will organize results by state to identify state specific issues and also by sector to identify sector specific issues. The council will receive the draft summary report at their next Council meeting to be held in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL on June 9-13, 2014.

Outreach Efforts – Promotion of Port Meetings

- The port meeting flyer reviewed by Council at the December 2013 meeting was distributed in hard copy to over 1,900 federal commercial snapper grouper permit holders (225-lb limited and unlimited), for-hire snapper grouper permit holders, and federal snapper grouper dealers.
- Port meeting information has been posted to the Council’s website:
 - <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/2014-port-meetings>
 - <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/council-visioning-project>

- A web-based port meeting discussion comment form was developed by staff and posted on the Council's website to collect additional comments and ideas from fishery stakeholders. The web comment form lists the same discussion items that will be discussed at the in-person port meetings and also asks for additional ideas. All results collected from the web comment form will be incorporated into the results of the port meetings. See: <http://www.safmc.net/resource-library/port-meeting-discussion>.
- An announcement about the kick off of the port meetings was sent out to over 1500 constituents via the Council's Constant Contact e-mail distribution list.
- Information on the port meetings and visioning project was featured as the cover story in the Council's Winter 2014 issue of the *South Atlantic Update* and in the Chairman's Corner article written by Chairman Hartig. (*Circulation is 4500+.*)
- Several news articles, fishing forum posts and e-news blasts from partner agencies and organizations have featured information about the port meetings. These are being compiled by staff.
- Staff is compiling a list of all port meeting outreach efforts and strategies to assess the success of these strategies for use in future outreach programs.