

White Paper

Development of Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10

December 2015

At their September 2015 meeting in Hilton Head, South Carolina, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed current issues facing the dolphin fishery. The Council directed staff to develop Dolphin Wahoo Regulatory Amendment 1 and consider beginning the development of Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 (Amendment 10) at the December 2015 Council meeting.

The Council discussed several items to be included in a proposed Amendment 10. Possible items for a new amendment could be:

Modification of the Purpose and Need of the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to allow a directed commercial fishery for dolphin

The FMP for dolphin and wahoo states that for the commercial sector, the fishery is a bycatch fishery. However, commercial landings of dolphin indicate that there is commercial targeting of dolphin and wahoo that is occurring. The Council recently voted to increase the commercial sector ACL for dolphin in Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 8 (Amendment 8), which will be implemented in time for the 2016 fishing year.

Commercial gear sector allocations for (longline and hook and line)

When the commercial sector of the dolphin fishery closed on June 30, 2015, all commercial fishing for dolphin ceased for the rest of the calendar year. Traditionally, the longline gear sector makes the majority of their catches between late April and early July. The hook-and-line gear sector in the past has continued to fish throughout the year. In 2015, the hook-and-line gear sector was not able to fish as they had historically. The Council wanted to consider sub-allocations of the commercial ACL to the gear sectors so that increased landings by one gear will not adversely affect other gear sectors' ability to fish for dolphin.

Make the commercial dolphin wahoo permit limited entry

In September of 2015, the Council voted to set a control date of June 30, 2015 for commercial dolphin wahoo fishing permits. The concern is that as HMS Amendment 7 went into effect in 2015, it might encourage vessels that had traditionally participated in HMS fisheries to become more reliant on dolphin and wahoo catches. Also, the commercial dolphin wahoo fishing permit is currently one of only a few open access permits. Limiting the number of permits could slow down growth in the fishery by limiting the number of participants.

Establish a common pool allocation or reserve category allocation

While Amendment 8 permanently increased the commercial allocation for dolphin to 10%, there are still issues regarding dolphin allocations that remain. The recreational sector typically does not land its entire sector ACL. Some interests would like to see if some of the uncaught ACL by one sector could be made available to the other sector. One way to consider such a situation is to create a common pool allocation or set aside some of the overall ACL into a reserve that would be tapped into by either the commercial or recreational sector only if it needed the additional pounds of fish to keep from going over its sector ACL.

Consider permanent or temporary allocation shifts between commercial and recreational sectors

Another way to consider allocation would be either to allow temporary allocation shifts between sectors when it appears that one sector is not going to land its entire ACL while the other sector is likely to be closed. If a temporary allocation shift occurred, it would only be valid for the fishing year in which the shift occurred. The following season would go back to the regular sector allocations. Additionally, the Council could consider permanent allocation shifts between sectors such as occurred in Amendment 8.

Consider a circle hook requirement for the dolphin fishery

As a resource conservation measure, the Council may want to consider the use of circle hooks for the commercial and/or recreational sectors.

The Council could choose to add additional action items for consideration in Amendment 10.

Should the Council decide to move forward with developing a new Amendment 10, the Dolphin Wahoo Committee recommended that they would like to make sure the amendment includes summaries showing temporal (monthly)/spatial (throughout the range) landings history for dolphin.

If the Dolphin Wahoo Committee/Full Council would like to pursue the development of Amendment 10, a motion could be made to send it out for scoping.

SUGGESTED MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP A SCOPING DOCUMENT AND SEND DOLPHIN WAHOO AMENDMENT 10 OUT FOR SCOPING IN JANUARY OF 2016.