

**SUMMARY OF THE
AD HOC GOLIATH GROUPEL JOINT SCIENCE WORKSHOP
GULF COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM
TAMPA, FLORIDA**

Tuesday, March 12, 2013: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Purpose: Afford experts the opportunity to offer new information about goliath grouper that may not have been considered during the most recent stock assessment and make suggestions about the scientific goals and objectives of management. These goals and objectives will be based on what is currently known about the species and consideration of what needs to be known to move forward with any modifications to the current management strategy.

Council, NMFS, and Staff

Stephen Bortone
Carrie Simmons
Steven Atran
Karen Hoak

Others Attendance

Brittany Barbara
Geoffrey Shideler
Kenny Fex
Daniel Willard
Orian Tzadik
Kai Lorenzen

Committee Attendance

Luiz Barbieri
S. Frias Torres (via conf call)
Angela Collins
Felicia Coleman
Chris Koenig
Monica Lara
Jakob Tetzlaff

All materials presented referred to in the Science Workshop are located on the Gulf Council's FTP Server.

Introduction

Dr. Bortone presented a brief summary of the Councils' directive, the Steering Committee's directive, and a timeline of activities.

Presentations on life history and fishery status:

Chris Koenig, Felicia Coleman, Sarah Frias-Torres, Luiz Barbieri, Angela Collins, Kai Lorenzen

Discussion of Timeline

The report from Kai Lorenzen on the status of the Stateholder Survey and Workshop indicated that all information from both workshops would be available to present to the Councils during their respective June 2013 meetings.

Review of Directive from Councils

The general instruction from the Councils was to convene a panel (steering committee) to explore approaches to move the goliath grouper fishery beyond the moratorium and collect information to support an informative assessment that will allow determination of stock status and possible recovery. Steering Committee met in 29 February 2012 and set up the following goals:

1. Stakeholder Survey to determine their expectations (Kai Lorenzen – UF)
2. Stakeholder Workshop to offer group interaction to determine goals
3. Presentation of Stakeholder Survey & Workshop results to both Councils.
4. Councils would refine goals
5. Science Workshop, to follow, to afford experts the opportunity to offer suggestions as to how to achieve these refined goals
6. Results of the Science Workshop brought to Councils to determine potential management actions

Important questions that need answering

What data are needed to determine the status of the stock, so that the moratorium can be lifted? If the moratorium remains in place, how long should the moratorium continue (e.g., 5 years, 10 years, indefinitely)? Due to the life history characteristics of this species, what stock status criterion needs to be defined so that the requirements of the Magnuson-Steven Act can still be achieved? Are there other stocks have been assessed successfully without directed landings, if so what modeling environment was used? If the moratorium is lifted what information is needed to allow an assessment of trends as a result of use (consumptive/non-consumptive)? What information about the species could be gained from a consumptive type of change in management?

Tasks

An Information/outreach effort should be conducted to inform stakeholders of the special features of the species which require a special approach to management. It is suggested that the Councils approve a joint Council/Agency (i.e., NMFS, Sea Grant) approach to preparing the outreach materials and activities. These materials should address common misconceptions about the species such as goliath grouper are eating all the spiny lobster and finfish on reefs.

Examine Magnuson-Steven Act to determine if leeway for alternative management goals, objectives etc. that may allow more flexibility when managing goliath grouper.

Develop decision tools to address issues below:

1. Continue Moratorium (Yes or No): Given the unique features of goliath grouper, there is need a proxy for stock assessment. Currently no tools available to assess this special species because of life history features (i.e., long life, inshore – juv. Offshore – adults, rare, association with structure – natural and artificial; catch free, data poor, spawning aggregations documented consistently over multiple years in the same locations in the Gulf of Mexico and western Atlantic).
2. Request development of assessment models to account for life history and fishery attributes where none exists now. Alternative techniques and approaches may be

required to assess stock size (or equilibrium situation when more appropriate). A risk assessment could be valuable for this species since it is considered critically endangered by IUCN. When developed then answer regarding altering the moratorium can be considered. Until then, suggestion is to maintain status quo with regard to moratorium.

3. If moratorium is lifted then it is possible that the fisher could open or partially open to allow consumptive and/or non-consumptive uses. If the fishery was partially open then the number, age/size class (juveniles versus spawning adults), opening duration, and potentially designated areas (e.g., Everglades) should be considered.
4. Non-consumptive uses need to be identified and defined. Socioeconomic analyses should be conducted to evaluate the cost/benefit ratios associated with each strategy and the impacts on the stock or its stock proxy relative to equilibrium.
5. Consumptive versus non-consumptive fishery models need to be developed that require both fishery data and socioeconomic data to allow an ACL or equilibrium (i.e., trend) analysis.
6. Define consumptive and non-consumptive uses
7. Both uses should be considered by space and time. Consider habitat bottlenecks for this species based on life history characteristics. Monitor multiple year classes in nursery mangrove habitats.
 - a. Space – depth is a factor owing to barotraumas.
 - b. Time – spawning, aggregation, and migratory seasons
8. Determine the equilibrium level for each status:
 - a. Consumptive value and impacts
 - b. Non-consumptive value and impacts

Research Priorities

Past research recommendations identified in SEDAR 23, Section IV from the Data, Assessment, and Review Workshops will be sent around for comment and editing. Results will be collated. A summary document will be prepared and sent to participants for editorial review. The resulting document will be sent to the Steering Committee.

Post Meeting – Dr. Coleman and her colleagues reviewed and prepared a document that examines past research recommendations. A copy of this can be found on the Gulf Council's FTP site accessed through its webpage (www.gulfcouncil.org).