Public Reporting

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Public Comment Form

Meeting

December 2025 Council Meeting

The December Council Meeting will be held from December 8-12, 2025 at the Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk. Meeting agendas, webinar registration, and briefing materials are available here: https://safmc.net/events/december-2025-council-meeting/.

Submit Date	Submitted By	Location	Affiliation	Comment
11/30/2025	First Name: Chris Last Name: McCaffity Email: freefish7@hotmail.com	City: Morehead City State: North Carolina	Commercial	Please consider this reasonable alternative to issuing Exempted Fishing Permits for Red Snapper to each state in the region. Please ask the President to sign an Executive Order suspending hard rebuilding deadlines in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and direct fishery managers to make most of the Total Allowable Catch for Red Snapper harvestable quota rather than allocating 90% of the TAC to assumed dead discards. Please ask Congress to make the change permanent. Please do not approve the Red Snapper EFPs intended to reduce recreational dead discards without first splitting the TAC between sectors before any dead discard deductions are taken off the top. This solution would greatly reduce the 5 MILLION pounds of Red Snapper we are required to waste every year while providing accurate data instead of relying on worst-case-scenario assumptions. Please also consider options for enhancing our fisheries and food supply by using regional hatcheries to stock a wide variety of native larval-stage seafood that lives wild and free as Natural Selection ensures survival of the fittest. We could easily stock snapper, triggerfish, bass, cobia, mahi, and many other species if we try. Grants from the Saltonstall-Kennedy Tax could help fund research hatcheries as they become production facilities that make fishing fun again by sustainably supporting historically high abundance and harvest levels for domestic seafood. It is time we started focusing more on enhancement than enforcement and stopped mandating the wanton waste of our Public Resources. This is a wonderful alternative to letting global corporations use our Public Waters to cage large concentrations of genetically sterilized or otherwise modified species that spread disease, parasites, and antibiotic laced waste to surrounding ecosystems before storms eventually release some of those mutants into the wild. Public Water aquaculture should be limited to stocking naturally reproducing native seafood for everyone to enjoy. I am happy to answer any questions and/or provide more detail. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these practical solutions that would benefit everyone and the environment.
12/4/2025	First Name: Paul Last Name: Rauscher Email: pdrocean@yahoo.com	City: Orlando State: Florida	Private Recreational, Other	Reject the proposed Comprehensive Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12. Please safeguard the Oculina Reef. Nothing is more important than protecting our environment for future generations.
12/4/2025	First Name: Greg Last Name: Braun Email: dgregbraun@aol.com	City: Jupiter State: Florida	Other	I am against proposed Coral and Shrimp Amendment 11-12'. Corals need all the help they can get. Deep-water oculina reefs should be protected from trawling impacts
12/4/2025	First Name: Catherine Last Name: Bruger Email: cbruger@oceanconservancy.org	City: Saint Petersburg State: Florida	Non-Govt Org (NGO)	Please see attachment for Ocean Conservancy's comments to the SAFMC.
12/9/2025	First Name: Kelli Last Name: Dore Email: kellijdore@gmail.com	City: Jensen Beach State: Florida	Private Recreational	I strongly oppose any proposal that would allow Rock Shrimp trawling closer to the Oculina Coral Reef. The Oculina Reef is a rare deep-water coral ecosystem and already faces serious stress from warming waters, acidification, and global coral decline. Allowing trawling activity nearer to this protected area significantly increases the risk of physical damage from gear, sediment disruption, and debris that can smother coral structures. Even small shifts in allowable boundaries introduce real risk, especially given tides and strong currents that make precise vessel control difficult. This reef supports biodiversity essential to other fisheries, acts as habitat for many species, and contributes to long-term coastal resilience. We already have evidence of gear damage and uncontrolled impacts in other areas like Cape Canaveral, and there is no reason to believe Oculina would be better protected if trawling is permitted closer. Worldwide, nearly 15% of coral reefs have disappeared since 2009. Scientists estimate coral ecosystems support hundreds of billions of dollars in ecosystem services, coastal protection, and fisheries. That means the Oculina Reef is not just a local environmental concern—it is part of a global system already under severe strain. The current protections are reasonable, necessary, and in the best interest of long-term fisheries, marine health, and community sustainability. We cannot risk weakening them. Please keep current boundaries in place and do not allow rock shrimp trawling any closer to the Oculina Coral Reef.

12/9/2025	First Name: Thomas Last Name: Newman Email: Thomasnewman@ncfish.org	City: Williamston State: North Carolina	Commercial, Non-Govt Org (NGO)	I want to briefly highlight two major concerns: the repeated recalibration of recreational data under MRIP, and the push for state management of red snapper through Exempted Fishing Permits. The Marine Recreational Information Program has been a growing concern for managers, scientists, and fishermen across both sectors for years. Now the Fishing Effort Survey appears to have significantly overestimated recreational effort, which directly translates into overestimated harvest. As a result, recreational catch and discard estimates will need to be revised once again. This is at least the third major revision to recreational data in just over a decade. And it's not just a correction going forward—each time, the entire time series all the way back to 1981 is erased and rewritten. It is impossible to manage fisheries effectively, much less fairly, when the sector responsible for the majority of removals is operating under a data system that changes every three or four years. These constant revisions undermine confidence in stock assessments, quota decisions, and allocations across the South Atlantic. Second, I want to address the pilot testing of state management of recreational red snapper harvest through EFPs. The Council has listed this effort as a high priority under Executive Order 14276, which focuses on restoring American seafood competitiveness. But reallocating quota and piloting a brand-new management system outside of the Fishery Management Plan is the opposite of what the executive order calls for—and it violates the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Equally troubling, none of the four EFP applications include the federally required information: no projected harvest, no total mortality modeling, no discard estimates, no quota-impact analysis, and no assessment of impacts on other fisheries. EFPs were never intended to circumvent the FMP process or create sector advantages. They are supposed to be a limited testing tool that must remain within the bounds of MSA. Before moving forward, I urge the Council and NOAA Fisheries to address these concerns openly and ensure that any future actions remain lawful, equitable, and grounded in sound science. Thank you.

12/9/2025	First Name: Amy Last Name: Quate Email: qu8music@gmail.com	City: Fort Pierce State: Florida	Private Recreational	Just say "NO!" to Coral and Shrimp Amendment 11-12! Our Atlantic deep sea Oculina coral reefs are precious and unique—there are no others like it on the entire planet. But they are also under a myriad of threats, the most immediate being the devastation of trawling and other destructive fishing practices. SAFMC must vote down Coral and Shrimp Amendments 11 and 12, and choose the No Action Alternative. The ever-diminishing number of coral reefs on this Earth are predominantly dying from causes SAFMC cannot control, including warming of the waters. However, allowing bottom trawlers to decimate the Oculina ecosystem is something SAFMC definitely can—and MUST—prevent. Please keep in mind that in addition to the Oculina corals, which are hundreds of years old, dozens of feet tall and occur nowhere else on Earth, many species of fish and other animals are stake here, too. It should come as no surprise that destructive actions, if allowed, will indeed destroy our living planet and cause yet more extinctions. The science is clear: 1. The proposed revised Amendment 11-12 would allow bottom trawling within the OHAPC, leaving little buffer between the trawl nets and the high relief coral mounds. NOAA Regional Bathymetric charts clearly show the proposed area abuts and in some areas even extends on top of high relief habitat, i.e., coral ecosystem habitat. 2. The current eastern border of the OHAPC of Amendment 8 was purposely drawn along the 100 m contour line and varies from a minimum of 500 m to about 1000 m away from the high relief bathymetry. This is a quite reasonable buffer. Per the Coast Guard, straight borders, and wide buffer zones allows easier enforcement to keep potential poachers and errant trawls far from the reef habitat. 3. SAFMC Coral Advisory Panel members supported establishing a substantial buffer of possibly 1,000 m from the known habitat as an approach that would address and account for uncertainty as directed by the Magnuson- Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. 4. There is uncertainty about the location of the shrimp trawl rig on the bottom. National Marine Fisheries Service data indicate that the ratio of scope to depth for shrimp trawlers is, typically somewhere between 3 to 4.3 ratio in these depths and these kinds of currents. So, taking a conservative estimate means that the horizontal distance between the boat and the rig can be anywhere from about 230 m to 510 m. 5. During ROV dives conducted with NOAA Fisheries at the sites in the northern OHAPC (Reed and Farrington, 2011), the dominant fish observed included scamp (common), gag grouper, snowy grouper, red porgy (common), amberjack (abundant), black seabass (abundant), tilefish, and red hogfish. Dominant invertebrates include Oculina varicosa coral (10-40 cm colonies), gorgonian corals, black coral (abundant), sponges, starfish, sea urchins, and mollusks. Unfortunately, the mounds appear to have been impacted by years of bottom shrimp trawling as documented within the Oculina HAPC. 6. Indirect effects to coral could result through influx of suspended benthic sediments created while trawling the bottom. Although surface currents are usually strong and northerly from the Gulf Stream, the bottom currents have strong E-W, north and south components. Bottom currents occur up to 75 cm sec-1 (Reed and Hoskin, 1987). During a deployment of a bottom current meter at the Oculina reefs for 289 days, bottom currents had 3 main paths of flow: East to west (tidal), North and South. Average near-bottom current speed was 8.6 cm sec^{-1} but equaled or exceeded 15 $cmsec^{-1}$ 11- 17% of the time. 7. Studies on larval transport of Oculina coral larvae indicate that the cross-shelf mechanism of transport is more robust from deep to shallow due to upwelling events, that bring the water across the shelf (Brooke 2002; Brooke and Young 2003, Brooke and Young 2005). These events would also bring any sediment ladened water across the reefs. Reed (1981) showed that these upwelling events occur at the shelf edge Oculina reefs throughout the year. 8. The sediments on shelf-edge Oculina reefs are relatively fine and have a higher composition of muds (14.4% mud) compared to sediments in shallow coral reef counterparts (Hoskin et al.1987). In addition, areas east of the high relief Oculina mounds have a higher (29%) average percentage of muds (Hoskin et al. 1987). Fine sediments tend to have greater negative effects on corals than coarse sediments. Depending on direction and magnitude of water currents in the affected area, shrimp trawls could create sediment plumes during fishing operations and the plumes could be transported to coral habitats. 9. Sedimentation is known to stress corals which do not need another stress factor. Increased sedimentation can cause smothering and burial of coral polyps, shading, tissue necrosis, and reduces recruitment, survival, and settlement of coral larvae (Erftemeijer et al. 2012). Sedimentation can affect coral physiology and reproductive health (Dr. Joshua Voss, FAU, pers. comm.). Sedimentation could affect the planula larvae of coral which are released into the water column where they live for weeks or more before they settle (Brooke 2002). Sediment plumes from trawling along the edge of the reef will impact the remaining corals nearby and prevent baby coral recruits from settling. Coral recruits are particularly susceptible (Fourney and Figueiredo 2017). Sediment plumes can also create enabling conditions for coral diseases to thrive. For example, researchers in the Great Barrier Reef found a significant, positive relationship between overall coral disease prevalence and the length of time that a reef was exposed to sediment plumes (Pollock et al. 2014). These corals and fish and sea urchins cannot beg for their lives at this SAFMC meeting, but you may rest assured that if they could, they would! Please do the right thing and say "NO!" to Coral and Shrimp Amendment 11-12!
12/10/2025	First Name: Dominic Last Name: Liberatore Email: dliberatore@bellsouth.net	City: Ft Pierce State: Florida	Private Recreational	I am against the proposed Coral and Shrimp Ammendment 11-12. This reef system is fragile and an important part of the ecosystem and should be protected.
12/10/2025	First Name: Marilyn Clement Last Name: Clement Email: mizzstyx@gmail.com	City: Fort Pierce State: Florida	Private Recreational	'I am against proposed Coral and Shrimp Amendment 11-12'. What are you thinking destroying one of the few reefs left???? Ever heard of Easter Island and their trees all gone on the island because of ignorance like this!

12/10/2025	First Name: Stephen Last Name: Melz Email: fsh2lv@sbcglobal.net	City: Half Moon Bay State: California	Commercial, Other	Submitting in place of my verbal comment that disconnected twice. My name is Steve Melz, and I'm a commercial Dungeness crab fisherman in California. I'm here because I want to share with the Council how our fleet has directly benefitted from the work that was done in the South Atlantic under the last Sustainable Seas Technology EFP. I want to start by thanking the Council for your continued support of the Black Sea Bass on-demand gear EFP. Your support has made a real difference for fishermen across the country who are trying to keep working through whale-related closures. The Sustainable Seas EFP, along with the work and feedback from the fishers participating in it, was responsible for developing, testing, and refining the first version of the on-demand gear configuration that our Dungeness crab fleet has now used safely for the last three years during our spring whale closures. Without that combined effort in the South Atlantic, California's Dungeness on-demand fleet likely wouldn't be looking toward permanent legal authorization for this gear across our whole fishery this coming spring. I also want to highlight how important the trainings and outreach from the Black Sea Bass pot fishers have been. The trainings that started in the South Atlantic, and continued later in California , opened doors for a lot of fisheries out West. Every one of our Box Crab fishers was trained on the water in North Carolina and Georgia, and every one of our Dungeness crab fishers was trained by a Black Sea Bass fisherman in California. Supporting this new EFP means those Black Sea Bass fishers can continue offering that kind of help, both inside and outside the region, so more fisheries can learn to use the gear safely and correctly. It also allows them to keep trialing new gear updates and improvements that benefit all fishermen facing whale closures. To the Council members, NOAA staff, and black sea bass pot fishers who participated or supported this work, I want to personally thank you for your part in saving my fishing business and giving me a huge part of my yearly income back. I know the rest of our On-Demand fishers out in California feel the same. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for the support you've shown this work. I'd urge you to continue that support moving forward.
12/11/2025	First Name: Robert Last Name: Johnson Email: Jlfishing@bellsouth.net	City: St. Augustine State: Florida	Commercial, For-Hire	I strongly support the State of Florida's EFP. My involvement as a past AP chair/member and SEDAR workshop participant has shown that a change in management strategy for Red Snapper is needed. Simply put, what we have been doing isn't working—at least not for the fishermen. Red Snapper stocks are at an all-time high, which has resulted in large numbers of dead discards and the waste of a valuable resource. The goal of fisheries management is to rebuild a stock to MSY and allow for harvest, not waste through excessive discards. This EFP will promote fishing practices that allow retention of target species while reducing overall discards. It will also support continued research and encourage better cooperation from the fishing public, which has largely become disengaged from the process. I encourage the Council to fully support this EFP. Captain Robert Johnson Owner/Operator, Jodie Lynn Charters St. Augustine, FL
12/11/2025	First Name: Alana Last Name: Harrison Email:	City: Hatteras State: North Carolina	Wholesale/Dealer /Retail	"The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) is committed to enhancing its understanding and communication with fishing communities throughout the South Atlantic region. The effects of changing ecosystems have necessitated a deeper exploration into the vulnerabilities and challenges facing these communities." I want to tell y'all that I have never felt more disrespected and tossed aside as I do with the South Atlantic Council. It took me over 12 hours to prepare for a 3 minute public comment and that was just gathering data from ACCSP and tuning it into charts. It over 3 months to gather commercial and tournament landing data from NC DMF. I stayed up until 2 AM, put in 6 hours of work after a full days of work, just to present this data to you in the hope you would FINALLY hear me. My own state commercial representative did not even ask to see the data. Then today, for this public body to spend hours talking about how they are going to improve their communications between the council and fishing communities is sickening. Better luck next meeting.
