

Summary Report

Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel Meeting

October 28, 2020

The South Atlantic Council's Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel (AP) convened via webinar on October 28, 2020.

After approval of the agenda and August 2019 AP meeting minutes, Anna Beckwith, the Dolphin Wahoo Committee Chair for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), addressed the AP to provide updates on Council actions.

1. Update on recent regulations and status of amendments

Council staff updated the AP on the status of the following:

- Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 (Revising Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures)
- Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 12 (Bullet Mackerel and Frigate Mackerel as Ecosystem Component Species)
- Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 13 (Changes to the Pelagic Longline Fishery)
- Snapper Grouper Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices Amendment)
- For-hire Electronic Reporting Amendment

2. Update on the SAFMC Citizen Science Program

Council staff updated the AP on the Council's Citizen Science Program and pilot projects. As part of this presentation, the AP was provided a demonstration of the FISHstory project. Additionally, the AP was briefed on efforts to plan for the development of a customizable citizen science mobile app.

3. Revising Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures: Amendment 10

Council staff provided an overview of the development and status of Amendment 10. The AP reviewed all actions in the amendment, providing the following comments, recommendations, and motions:

Comments:

- Some AP members expressed concern over population trends for dolphin noting that abundance is important for the recreational fishery. Dolphin tend to be relatively easy to catch when present, thus making them more susceptible to depletion and a more cautious approach is appropriate to management.
- Wahoo tend to be more difficult to target and thus may not be as susceptible to traditional fishing pressure. A less cautious approach to management may be appropriate but AP members stated that there is concern over increased fishing pressure, particularly from divers using spearfishing gear. It was noted that some divers seem to be targeting spawning aggregations and that divers were accounting for a notable number of wahoo harvested directly and through delayed mortality due to wahoo being speared but escaping when the spear pulls out of the fish.

Recommendations:

- In **Actions 3** and **4** (sector allocations and ACLs for dolphin and wahoo), the AP expressed support for **Alternatives 2** and **3** respectively, noting that these alternatives would not encourage increased harvest of dolphin or wahoo but maintain adequate harvest levels for both sectors.
- Avoid in-season closures to the recreational sector when possible.
- Regarding **Actions 5** and **7** (setting the trigger for recreational AMs), the AP did not choose a single alternative but noted that multi-year triggers that take into account variability in landings are preferred.
- In **Actions 6** and **8** (specifying recreational AMs), a vessel limit reduction would be slightly preferable compared to the other alternatives being considered, especially compared to a closed season. If vessel limits are reduced, try to maintain limits that are viable for the for-hire component of the fishery.
 - It was noted that 8 fish per vessel is recommended as a minimum limit for wahoo in an AM.
- In **Action 9** (possession of dolphin and wahoo when specified unauthorized gears are onboard), consider trip limits of no more than 500 pounds for dolphin. Limits above that tend to go beyond total landings of dolphin on typical rod and reel commercial trips.
- In **Action 10** (removal of the operator card requirement), the AP endorsed their previous motion to remove the operator card requirements for both the recreational and commercial sectors (**Alternatives 2** and **3**).
- In **Action 11** (reduce the recreational vessel limit for dolphin), there was support for **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, particularly in North Carolina or to take action just in Florida (**Alternative 3**). It was noted that the 60 fish limit is very important to the for-hire fishery in North Carolina, particularly when “slinger” dolphin are abundant. If limits are reduced, maintaining limits divisible by 6 is preferred.
- In **Action 12** (filleting of dolphin at sea on board for-hire vessels north of the NC/VA border), several AP members noted that allowing filleting of dolphin at sea would also be useful in the South Atlantic Region. It would help with minimizing turnaround time between half day charters in South Florida where dolphin can be targeted due to the short travel distance to deep water. It would also help with spare cold storage capacity and preserving the meat of harvested fish. Some AP members noted that they also have very long runs to and from fishing grounds when targeting dolphin that are similar to those in the Mid-Atlantic. If this were to be allowed, the racks of filleted fish could be required to aid in the enforcement of size limits.

Motions:

MOTION 1: ENDORSE ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTIONS 1 AND 2.

Action 1. Revise the total annual catch limit for dolphin to reflect the updated acceptable biological catch level

Preferred Alternative 2. The total annual catch limit for dolphin is equal to the updated acceptable biological catch level.

Action 2. Revise the total annual catch limit for wahoo to reflect the updated acceptable biological catch level.

Preferred Alternative 2. The total annual catch limit for wahoo is equal to the updated acceptable biological catch level.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 2: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED IN ACTION 3.

Action 3. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for dolphin

Alternative 2. Allocate 93.75% of the revised total annual catch limit for dolphin to the recreational sector. Allocate 6.25% of the revised total annual catch limit for dolphin to the commercial sector. This is based on approximately maintaining the current commercial annual catch limit and allocating the remaining revised total annual catch limit to the recreational sector.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 3: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 3 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE IN ACTION 4.

Action 4. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for wahoo

Alternative 3. Allocate 97.55% of the revised total annual catch limit for wahoo to the recreational sector. Allocate 2.45% of the revised total annual catch limit for wahoo to the commercial sector. This is based on approximately maintaining the current commercial annual catch limit and allocating the remaining revised total annual catch limit to the recreational sector.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 4: ALLOW VESSELS WITH POT, TRAP, OR BUOY GEAR ON BOARD TO POSSESS DOLPHIN OR WAHOO AS LONG AS THEY ARE A PERMITTED VESSEL AND FISH ARE CAUGHT BY ROD AND REEL.

APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 5: SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE 3B OR 3C AS PREFERRED IN ACTION 11.

Action 11. Reduce the recreational vessel limit for dolphin

Alternative 3. In Florida only, the recreational daily bag limit is 10 dolphin per person, not to exceed:

Sub-alternative 3b. 42 dolphin per vessel, whichever is less, except on board a headboat where the limit is 10 dolphin per paying passenger.

Sub-alternative 3c. 48 dolphin per vessel, whichever is less, except on board a headboat where the limit is 10 dolphin per paying passenger.

APPROVED BY AP

4. Update on recent Dolphin Wahoo Participatory Workshops

The AP was provided an update on a series of participatory workshops that took place with Dolphin Wahoo fishermen at locations in Beaufort, NC, Wanchese, NC, and Virginia Beach, VA in March 2020. These workshops sought to gather information on major factors affecting fisheries for dolphin and wahoo, risks to these fisheries, how changes in the ecosystem have affected fishing businesses and communities, and what targeted research is needed. The AP was also updated on preliminary findings of the related work using photos found on social

media to characterize the seasonality and make-up of the harvested catch onboard for-hire vessels participating in the Dolphin Wahoo fishery in North Carolina and Virginia.

5. Fishery Performance Report for Wahoo

With input from the APs, Fishery Performance Reports (FPRs) have been developed for several recreationally and commercially important species under the management of the Council. The intent of the FPRs is to assemble information from AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. The FPR for wahoo will be provided to the SSC, the Socio-Economic Panel, and the Council to inform future management. Council staff provided an overview of landings trends as well as other background information (see <http://data.safmc.net/FPRAll/>) and the AP focused their input based on a series of discussion questions from which the FPR for wahoo was developed.

6. Discussion on the economic effects of COVID-19 and potential responses including a discussion on bag limit sales of Dolphin

The AP was briefed on input received regarding the economic effects that have been experienced due to COVID-19 and recent Council actions. As part of this conversation it was pointed out that there were suggestions that the Council should reinstate bag limit sales of dolphin. Council staff reviewed past Council actions and rationale for precluding bag limit sales, input received from advisory panels on the topic, and where the topic currently stands. The AP discussed the noted potential challenges and benefits of reinstating bag limit sales, providing the following comments and motions:

Comments:

- In addition to the AP's previous comments on bag limit sales of dolphin (see the April 2017 Dolphin Wahoo AP report for the full list of comments), AP members noted the follow:
 - To address possible double counting of landings, the for-hire electronic logbook could potentially be used to identify dolphin caught on for-hire trips that were later sold.
 - Several participants in the for-hire fishery also fish commercially and should know how to properly handle fish to the appropriate HACCP/commercial safety standards. This also would address some of the concerns over unfair competition between commercial and recreational user groups as well as food safety concerns.
 - The need for vessels to be dually permitted would help with enforcement issues and identifying vessels that may legally sell dolphin.
 - In South Florida, fish caught on for-hire trips were historically an important source of local seafood and an important part of the fishing culture.
 - Local restaurants are buying imported dolphin that is not the same quality as freshly caught.
 - Allowing bag limit sales of dolphin would provide economic relief and better economic utilization of harvested fish.
 - Allowing bag limit sales of dolphin offers a major benefit to the crew.
 - Sale of fish caught on a for-hire trip should not be used as a way to discount charter fees.

Motions:

MOTION 6: IN FLORIDA ONLY, REINSTATE CHARTERBOAT FISH SALES FOR DUALY PERMITTED VESSELS TO BE ABLE TO SELL BAG LIMIT ONLY QUANTITIES OF DOLPHIN TO A LICENSED DEALER. SOLD LANDINGS WOULD COME FROM THE RECREATIONAL ACL.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 7: REINSTATE CHARTERBOAT FISH SALES FOR DUALY PERMITTED VESSELS TO BE ABLE TO SELL BAG LIMIT ONLY QUANTITIES OF DOLPHIN TO A LICENSED DEALER. SOLD LANDINGS WOULD COME FROM THE RECREATIONAL ACL.
APPROVED BY AP

7. Discussion on the potential for regional management and efforts to address climate change

At their September 2020 meeting, the Council requested that the APs be provided regular updates on efforts to address management challenges related to climate change. Council staff briefed the AP on potential upcoming initiatives. Additionally, within this context, the AP was asked about the potential need for regional management approaches in the Dolphin Wahoo fishery that could address current or future changes in the fishery. The AP had the following comment:

- There were no specific new regional management needs identified but the AP noted that some actions in Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 are appropriately considering regional management approaches.

8. Election of new Chair and Vice-Chair of the AP

The AP elected a new Chair and Vice Chair by passing the following motions:

MOTION 8: NOMINATE CHRIS BURROWS TO SERVE AS CHAIR OF THE DOLPHIN WAHOO ADVISORY PANEL.
APPROVED BY AP

MOTION 9: NOMINATE JON REYNOLDS TO SERVE AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE DOLPHIN WAHOO ADVISORY PANEL.
APPROVED BY AP

9. Other Business

Under other business the AP briefly discussed the potential development of a dolphin stamp or permit that could be added to a fishing license. Funds generated from this stamp or permit could be used to help with conservation and research of dolphin.