

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
DOLPHIN WAHOO COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 11, 2026

The Committee approved the minutes from the December 2024 meeting and the agenda for the June 2026 meeting.

Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation update

The NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) is conducting a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the Atlantic dolphin fishery. The goal of this project is to develop an index-based management procedure that may provide catch level and management advice that best achieves the multiple management objectives of the fishery.

The outgoing Chair of the Council's SSC provided a summary of that group's discussion of the Dolphin MSE at their recent meeting. Afterward, SEFSC staff updated the Committee on progress of the Dolphin MSE and the results of recent modeling efforts. The Committee had an in-depth discussion on the MSE and provided the following direction:

- In future modeling efforts, capture regulations applicable in Florida state waters in the Atlantic and apply them off Florida only and to the entire Atlantic EEZ.
- Updates on catch level recommendations and associated annual catch limits should occur every 3 years.
- The Committee is interested in the ability of the MSE to show localized changes to the dolphin fishery and model potential regional management changes.
 - There are varying regional management needs and viewpoints on the dolphin fishery.
- The Committee wanted to include static tactical management measures (vessel limits and size limits) in the management procedure and was in agreement with the proposed performance metrics for the management objectives.
- There was interest in exploring a $P^*=45\%$.

Modifications to the minimum size limit, recreational retention limits, and reducing for-hire captain and crew bag limits for dolphin (Regulatory Amendment 3)

Regulatory Amendment 3 includes measures that would extend the applicable range of the 20-inch fork length minimum size limit for dolphin, modify recreational retention limits for dolphin, and remove captain and crew bag limits for dolphin. Development of the amendment has been paused pending initial results of the Dolphin MSE.

Council staff reviewed the Committee's previous guidance on draft actions and requested guidance on the timeline for developing Regulatory Amendment 3. The Committee discussed how to proceed with the amendment, offering the following guidance and motion:

- Committee members discussed the need to pursue development of Regulatory Amendment 3 at this time. While there were varying opinions, it was noted that the Dolphin MSE modeling results showed a sufficient biomass level and management measures were shown to have little anticipated impact on the spawning stock biomass.

MOTION 1: NOT CONTINUE WORK ON REGULATORY AMENDMENT 3 AT THIS TIME.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Other Business

There were no items under other business.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 2: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- REQUEST THAT SEFSC STAFF CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOLPHIN MSE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL