

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Dolphin Wahoo Committee
June 13, 2023

The Committee approved the minutes from the June 2022 meeting and the agenda.

Summary of Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation stakeholder workshops

The 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 operational management objectives of the fishery. As part of the MSE process, SEFSC and Council staff conducted stakeholder workshops along the U.S. east coast to gather feedback on dolphin management and regional aspects of the dolphin fishery. SEFSC staff briefed the Committee on summary feedback gathered during the stakeholder workshops and provided an update on progress of the MSE.

Dolphin related management actions in the Caribbean

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council has recently developed management actions for the commercial and recreational dolphin fishery for the U.S. EEZ in that region. National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office (NMFS SERO) staff provided an update on the Caribbean Council's recent actions, including the specifications of the management measures, catch levels, and effective dates of the associated regulations.

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

Per guidance received at the June 2022 Council meeting, this amendment 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. Council staff reviewed the Committee's previous guidance on draft actions and facilitated a discussion of the Committee's plans for developing Regulatory Amendment 3. The Committee had a comprehensive discussion on the timing of moving forward with Regulatory Amendment 3 and potentially integrating the findings of the MSE into management. Upon completion of this discussion, the Committee made the following motion:

MOTION#1: DELAY DEVELOPMENT OF REGULATORY AMENDMENT 3 UNTIL THE DOLPHIN MSE REPORT IS AVAILABLE OR TO THE DECEMBER 2024 COUNCIL MEETING, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER. REQUEST AN UPDATE ON THE MSE AT THE DECEMBER 2023 AND JUNE 2024 COUNCIL MEETINGS.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

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Other Business

The Committee noted numerous public comments that they have received on regional declines in dolphin availability and the quality of dolphin fishery. Given the extensive migratory range of

the species, the Committee provided the following direction to staff to gather information on potential sources of declines in the availability of dolphin and efforts to collectively manage dolphin regionally and internationally.

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

- Reach out to the appropriate management agencies to identify potential sources of declines in the availability of dolphin. Report back to the Council on findings of these efforts as well as efforts to collectively manage the dolphin fishery in the western Atlantic Ocean, including the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION #2: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

- 1) Request that the SEFSC provide an update on the progress of the Dolphin MSE at the December 2023 and June 2024 meeting.
- 2) Prepare Regulatory Amendment 3 for review at the December 2024 meeting, or an earlier meeting if the Dolphin MSE report is available.
- 3) Report back to the Council on findings of efforts to collectively manage the dolphin fishery in the western Atlantic Ocean, including the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, as well as potential sources of declines in the availability of dolphin.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL