



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# Resilient Fisheries Update

## March 2026

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# Resilient Fisheries Initiatives

A screenshot of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council website. The page has a blue header with the council's name and social media icons. A dark blue sidebar on the left contains a navigation menu with the council's logo at the top and various menu items. The main content area features a large heading for "Resilient Fisheries" and a paragraph of text. A large image of the ocean is on the right side of the page. A red arrow points to the "Resilient Fisheries" menu item in the sidebar.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

GET INVOLVED

Home / Resilient Fisheries

## Resilient Fisheries

Resilient Fisheries Initiative and Projects support the development of more nimble and adaptive fisheries management processes and advice in the Southeast region by reviewing available information, identifying impactful change, and supporting the Council's implementation.

- Home
- Regulations
- Meetings
- Fishery Management
- News & Updates
- About the Council
- Habitat and Ecosystem
- Best Fishing Practices
- Citizen Science Program
- Science & SEDAR
- Resilient Fisheries

<https://safmc.net/resilient-fisheries/>



## Resilient Fisheries Initiatives

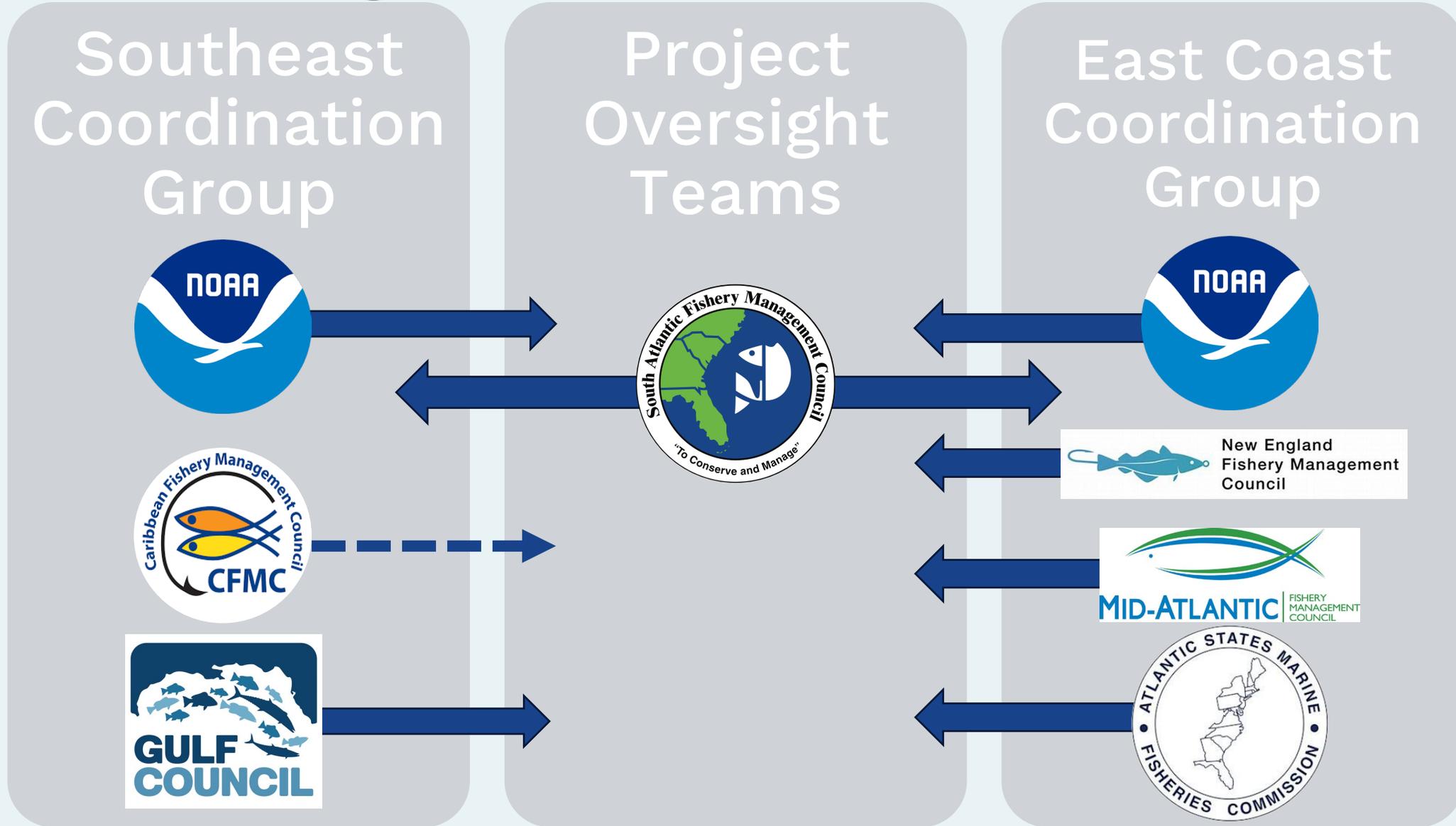
- 1** SAFMC Governance Projects: SAFMC Fishery Management Process Review and Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development
- 2** Stakeholder-Driven Adaptable Implementable Management (AIM) for Wreckfish Fishery
- 3** Updating Distributions & Essential Fish Habitat for Snapper Groupers, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs
- 4** Multiphase Communities Project: Community Identification, Communication Plan Development, Ecosystem Change Impacts on Fishing Communities

## WORKSHOPS

- SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop
- ECCG Governance Workshops



# Cross-Regional Coordination



# Project 1: Climate Response Readiness Review (Governance Projects)



In Progress

## Objectives

1. Evaluate climate information use and availability.
2. Review how other regions and Councils use NEPA tools.
3. Identify opportunities to further use study fleets, cooperative research, citizen science.
4. Evaluate committee structure and use.
5. Evaluate opportunities for considering climate impacts through SAFMC risk policies.

Project 1a: Management Process Review

Project 1b: Ecosystem Information Review

## Shared Oversight Team





# Project 1a: Management Process Review

**Contractors:** Aaron Kornbluth, Akorn Environmental Consulting LLC; Stephen Poland, Cynoscion Environmental Consulting, LLC; Purcie Bennet-Nickerson, Bennet Nickerson Environmental Consulting

In Progress

## Objectives

- 1 Review and analyze current SAFMC management processes
- 2 Assess the structure and functioning of SAFMC committees
- 3 Explore ways for SAFMC to incorporate risk policies

## Project Timeline



## Progress Updates:

- The Project Oversight Team continues to meet and receive progress and reports
- Project interviews ongoing
- Draft Products under review by Oversight Team: Process mapping, Case studies, Bottleneck, analysis, NEPA efficiencies report, FMP Tracking Tool

# Project 1b: Ecosystem Information Review

**Contractors:** Sarah Gaichas, Hydra Scientific, LLC



In Progress

## Objectives

**1** Review available ecosystem data and information

**2** Identify ways to incorporate relevant ecosystem information

**3** Explore opportunities to expand cooperative and stakeholder-engaged data collection and research

## Project Timeline



## Progress Updates:

- Contractor presented at the SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop
- Revised All Councils Ecosystem Data report
- Starting data acquisition for prototype indicators
- Draft indicators and integration report to SSC in April

# Project 2: Management Strategies for Data-Limited Wreckfish Fishery



**Contractors:** Josh Nowlis, Thomas Remington, Jeremy Collie, Mateja Nenadovic, and Brian Snouffer (Lynker)

In Progress

## Objectives

1

Wreckfish selected as a data-limited and climate-vulnerable fisheries species

2

Develop and apply stakeholder driven process for catch levels and management recommendations

## Project Timeline



## Progress Updates:

- First of two presentation given to the SSC in October on stock assessment modeling approaches
- SSC will review the completed assessment at their April 2026
- AIM Stakeholder Workshop was held Nov. 12-14 and introduced stakeholders to the AIM process
- Continuing development and customization of the AIM Harvest Control Rule Design Tool

# Project 3: Updating Spatial Distribution and Essential Fish Habitat



**Contractors:** Jie Cao, North Carolina State University; Janet Nye, UNC Institute of Marine Science; Seungyeon Jade Hong, UNC IMS

In Progress

## Objectives

- 1 Updated species and fishery spatial distributions
- 2 Comparisons between existing EFH designations to updated species distributions
- 3 Recommendations for potential future EFH change
- 4 Improved display of EFH information on the Council website

## Project Timeline



## Progress Updates:

- The project team are continuing development of the single-species and joint-species models
- The Project Oversight Team received update on multispecies-modeling efforts, which include dolphinfish and wahoo, and initial results from Snapper Grouper single-species modeling efforts
- Models will be reviewed by SSC in October 2026 SSC

# Project 4: Communities Project



## Phase I and II Underway

### Objectives

1. Gather and analyze data to characterize South Atlantic fishing communities, their economic dependencies, and vulnerabilities to environmental change
2. Develop a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan that promotes incorporation of community perspectives into Council management decisions
3. Ecosystem model development to improve understanding of impact of environmental change on communities.



Phase I: Place-Based Identification and Characterization of SA Fishing Communities



Phase II: Stakeholder Outreach and Communication Assessment and Strategic Plan



Phase III: Ecosystem Modeling to Explore and Describe Changes Affecting Fishing Communities

**COMING  
SOON!**

# Project 4: Communities Project



Proposal Selection Underway Phase I and II

Phase I: Place-Based Identification and Characterization of SA Fishing Communities

Phase II: Stakeholder Outreach and Communication Assessment and Strategic Plan

## Anticipated Project Timelines



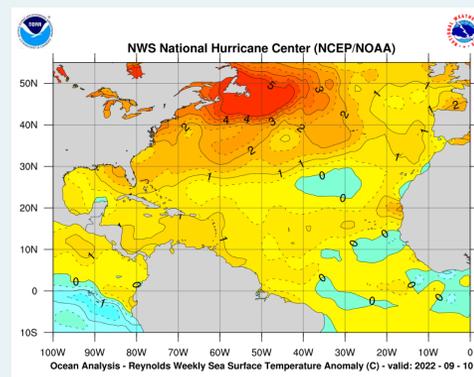
## Progress Updates:

- Request for proposals for Phase I and Phase II opened Dec. 5, 2025 and closed Jan. 16
- Proposals Selected: Edward Camp, University of Florida (PI)\*, Jennifer Sweeney Tookes (Co-PI), Bryan Fluech (Co-PI), Tracy Yandle (Co-PI), Michael Jepson (Co-PI), Kai Lorenzen (Co-PI), Chelsey Crandall (Co-PI), Angela Collins (Co-PI), Andrew Ropicki (Co-PI), & Joy Hazell

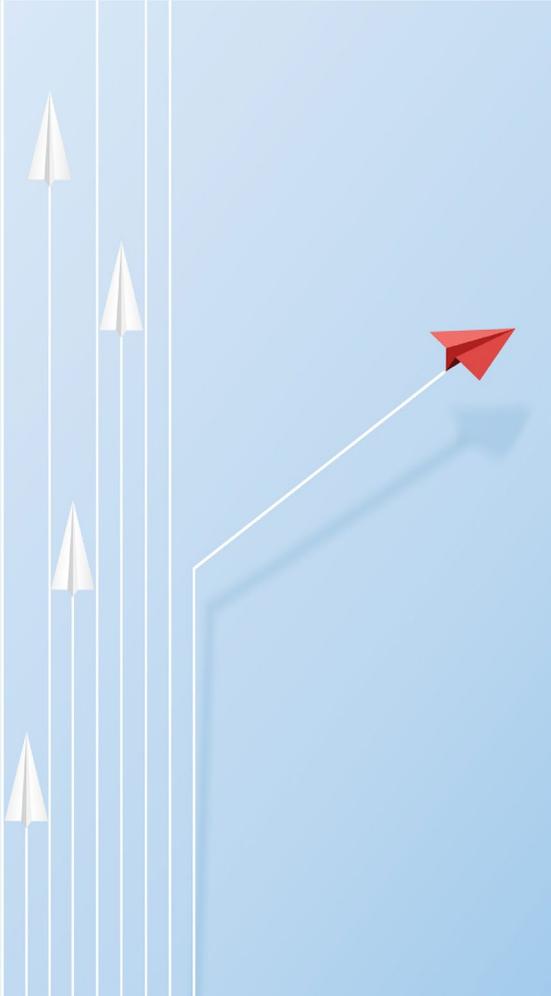
# Ecosystem Data Workshop

## Overview

- NOAA-funded, SAFMC-led regional workshop to address ecosystem data and collaboration recommendations.
- Organized to address recommendations from Atlantic Coast Science Coordination Workshop (NOAA, 2021) and the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning (East Coast Management Organizations, 2021-2023)
- Guidance will address other IRA projects including the Ecosystem Information Review, and Council implementation of outcomes.



# Ecosystem Data Workshop



## Objectives

- Develop strategies to use ecosystem data to support management decisions
- Identify existing ecosystem data sources across the South Atlantic, Gulf, and Mid-Atlantic regions
- Identify decision-relevant ecosystem data gaps
- Improve collaboration and consistency across regions



# SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

## *A Collaborative Approach*

### Steering Committee Members:

Chip Collier, SAFMC

Julia Byrd, SAFMC

Kathleen Howington, SAFMC

Lara Klibansky, SAFMC

Myra Brouwer, SAFMC

Mandy Karnauskas, NOAA

SEFSC

Roldan Muñoz, NOAA SEFSC

Verena Wang, Gulf Council

Brandon Muffley, MAFMC

### Participants:

*Approximately 30 experts in the following areas:*

- Regional ecosystem data
- Federal fishery assessment
- Social and economic sciences
- Climate data
- Climate policy
- Federal fishery management councils
- State fisheries agency data
- Cooperative data sharing
- Coastal community resilience
- Non-traditional data
- Ecosystem Information products
- Federal Council Ecosystem Information
- Ecosystem Indicators



### SWCA Facilitation Team:

Meg Perry, Lead

Jose Rodriguez

Sarah Ensor

Sarah Lupis



# SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

## Session 1 Management Decisions (Jan. 12)

- Review SAFMC management decisions and existing ecosystem information support
- Identify priority decisions to help guide discussion in following workshop sessions

## Session 2 Ecosystem Information Tools (Jan. 15)

- Understand regional differences in ecosystem data and tool development
- Alignment of tools with management decision and needs discussed in previous session.

## Session 3 Indicators and Data (Jan. 22)

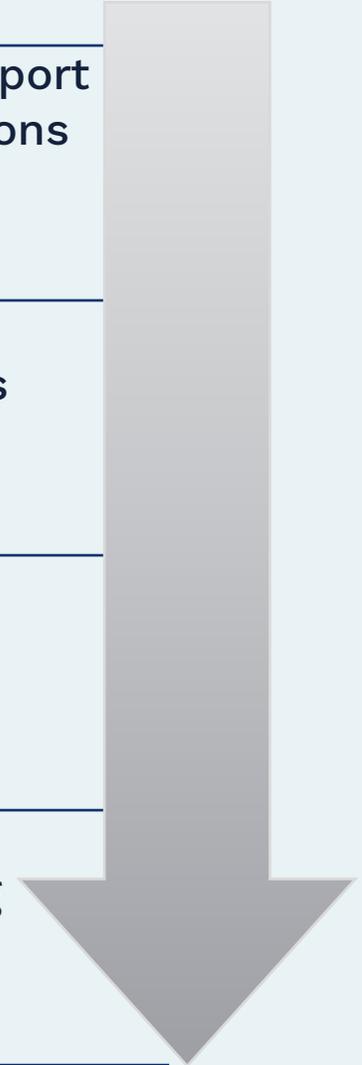
- Understanding existing indicators and data sources in the Southeast
- Identify data gaps and opportunities to fill them

## Session 4 Guidance Development (Feb. 4)

- Connecting management decisions with ecosystem information
- Build consensus on practices for using indicators and tools in decision-making
- Define actionable strategies to overcome data and tool challenges

## Session 5 Guidance and Report Review (Feb. 18)

- Review draft summary workshop report and finalize guidance





# Joint Governance Workshops Overview

- ECCG organized-workshops in support of continuing governance project collaboration by the NEFMC, MAFMC, and SAFMC, and with support of ASMFC and NOAA Fisheries.
- Organized to address potential action items from the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning (East Coast Management Organizations, 2021-2023).
- Foster implementation of joint or cooperative management changes by each Council.

## Relevant IRA Projects

NEFMC	MAFMC	SAFMC
IRA 4: Operationalizing the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative	IRA 3: Operationalizing outcomes of MAFMC program review	IRA 1a: Fishery Management Process Review: Enhancing Responsiveness for Dynamic Ecosystems
IRA 5: Holistic Strategic Plan for Climate Resilient Management	Connection to IRA 7: Developing a process and indicators to evaluate stock distribution changes and governance issues	IRA 1b: Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development



# Joint Governance Workshops Timeline

**2025/Early  
2026**

- Councils work in parallel to document existing advisory body and joint management processes

**February 2026**

- Staff-to-staff workshop to discuss staff perspectives on current structures and processes; brainstorm improvements

**Fall 2026**

- Broader governance workshop with additional Council/Commission/NOAA Participants → develop recommendations

**Late 2026-  
2027**

- Implementation:
  - Bodies consider recommendations
  - Leadership planning exercise with ECCG+
  - Regional Operating Agreements Workshop



# Resilient Fisheries Implementation Planning

## Planning Team

- Meetings will begin soon
- Membership of SAFMC staff, but may change as planning progresses
- Monitor project recommendations
- Begin development of potential implementation pathways for Council consideration

## Potential Pathways

- Fishery Management Plans
- Standard Operating Procedures and Processes
- Essential Fish Habitat Five-Year Review
- Cross-Regional Management Agreements
- Regional Operating Agreements
- Others?

# Questions?

