

FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT OVERVIEW

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council – March 2022

↔ The purpose of fishery performance reports (FPR) is to assemble information from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) fishery advisory panel members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data.

Council staff are currently developing an allocation decision tree tool to help the Council in examining allocations across all managed species. An important source of information is data on the needs of a fishery based on Council member knowledge and feedback from constituents. FPRs are one way to gather information from constituents that can help inform allocation discussions.

Example FPR for Blueline Tilefish: https://safmc.net/download/Blueline-Tilefish-FPR_April2019.pdf

FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT PROCESS

↔ Fishery Performance Reports are typically conducted for a given species during the relevant advisory panel meeting in advance of an upcoming stock assessment.

1. An overview of the fishery is prepared by Council staff and provided to advisory panel members two weeks prior to their scheduled meeting. The fishery overview is presented via an interactive web application (shinyapp). The fishery overview contains the following:
 - a. general biology,
 - b. stock status as determined by the most recent assessment,
 - c. management history,
 - d. commercial statistics (landings by year, area, month, and season, if applicable),
 - e. recreational statistics (landings by year, area, wave, and number of directed trips, if applicable),
 - f. economic performance (average ex-vessel price, ex-vessel value, and economic impacts by year).
2. Discussion questions (Appendix 1) are also prepared by Council staff and provided to the advisory panel members two weeks prior to the meeting. Questions address the following topics:
 - a. landing and discard level and trends over the last five years,
 - b. current management measure performance,
 - c. environmental conditions and ecology,
 - d. social and economic influences,
 - e. other concerns or data gaps.
3. During the advisory panel meeting, Council staff review the fishery overview and answer any questions advisory panel members may have before beginning the discussion. Using the list of discussion questions, advisory panel members discuss their thoughts and observations on the record.

4. Using notes and meeting minutes, Council staff prepares an FPR which summarizes the discussion that took place.

ALLOCATION DECISION TREE TOOL NEEDS

↔ During their February 2022 meeting, the Council reviewed the draft allocation decision tree tool and expressed interest in revising or expanding the discussion questions used for fishery performance reports to ensure they had adequate feedback from advisory panel members when discussing decision tree questions that require the use of informed judgement.

More information on the following topics was requested:

- Species distribution shifts that could affect allocations in the near-term (next five-years).
 - **Currently addressed by this question:** When/where are the fish available, and has this changed? For instance, has there been any shift in catch (annually/seasonally) inshore/offshore or north/south? If so, please describe.
 - **Proposed addition:** If there has been a shift in catch, does it have the potential to affect current sector (or regional) allocations?
- Whether there is an important catch and release aspect to the species (the importance of abundance to the recreational sector).
 - **Currently addressed by this question:** none.
 - **Proposed addition:** how common is the practice of catch and release in this fishery? Please describe.
- Cultural and historical significance of a species within communities.
 - **Currently addressed by this question:** What communities are dependent on this fishery?
 - **Proposed addition:** Have there been any festivals or events that highlight this species? Is this species an important driver of tourism? Please describe.

Gathering Additional Stakeholder Input

↔ In addition to conducting fishery performance reports, the Council could consider soliciting similar input from the public through an online form, similar to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council’s Fishermen Feedback (formerly ‘Something’s Fishy’) tool. This would be done at the same time a fishery performance report was conducted.

Pros:	Cons:
An online form would provide a wide range of stakeholders the opportunity to provide input relevant to allocation decisions.	May require some level of Paperwork Reduction Act approval, which would take time.
Data gathered through an online form could undergo text analysis (word clouds, word trees, sentiment and thematic coding).	Would be an additional ask of stakeholders, in addition to commenting during the amendment development process.

Questions for the Council



Provide input to staff on how to modify the fishery performance reports to solicit information for use in the allocation decision tree tool and whether or not to develop a means of gathering broader stakeholder input.

1. Are the proposed additional discussion questions for developing the Fishery Performance Reports sufficient to gather the information needed for future discussions of allocations?
2. What improvements could be made to the discussion questions to produce more valuable information? Are there topics important to allocations that are missing from the Fishery Performance Reports?
3. Fishery Performance Reports are time consuming to conduct with advisory panel members, are there any questions that seem redundant or unnecessary?
4. Should Council staff begin developing an online tool to collect broader public input on topics relevant to allocations, to be summarize in a separate report? Tool could be reviewed by the Council at a later date.

APPENDIX 1: FISHERY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUESTIONS

➡ Spring 2017 was when the first Fishery Performance Reports were conducted. The discussion questions have changed slightly over years. The questions below reflect the most recent version.

Have there been **substantial changes** in the shadow shark fishery? If so, when and what do you think caused the change?

Fishing Behavior/Catch Levels:

- Have there been effort shifts to/from shadow shark? If so, please describe, including the time frame for when these shifts occurred.
- Have there been considerable changes in fishing techniques and/or gears used to target shadow shark? If so, please describe, including the time frame for when these changes occurred.
- How much fishing for shadow shark typically occurs during the day versus at night? Has this changed?
- Do you actively avoid fishing for shadow shark in certain areas to avoid catching undersized fish or highly regulated fish to lessen bait loss?
- What do you see in terms of discards in the commercial sector? In the recreational sector?
 - How often are shadow shark discarded? What are the reasons they are discarded?
 - Do you encounter shadow shark as bycatch when fishing for other species? If so, what species are being targeted on these trips?
 - Do you think discard mortality is a significant factor for shadow shark? Has this changed? If so, please describe, including the time frame when the change occurred.

Social and Economic Influences:

- For the commercial sector, how has price and demand for shadow shark changed?
 - Is there increased demand for a specific size of shadow shark (e.g. plate sized)?
- How has demand for charter/headboat trips targeting shadow shark changed?
- Among the species you target, how important are shadow shark to your overall business (charter or commercial)?
- What communities are dependent on the shadow shark fishery?
- Have changes in infrastructure (docks, marinas, fish houses) affected fishing opportunities for shadow shark?
- How have fishermen and communities adapted to changes in the shadow shark fishery?

Management Measures:

- Are there new management measures that the Council should consider or are there existing management measures (such as size limit, trip limit, bag limit, season, etc.) that should be changed?
- Are the current annual catch limits and allocations appropriate for each sector?

Environmental, Ecological, and Habitat:

- Do you perceive that the abundance of shadow shark has changed over the past ten years? If so, how has it changed?
- When/where are the fish available, and has this changed? For instance, has there been any shift in catch (annually/seasonally) inshore/offshore or north/south? If so, please describe.
- Has the size of the fish that you typically encounter changed? If so, could you briefly describe the trend?
- Have you noticed any unique effects of environmental conditions on shadow shark? If so, please describe.
- What are your observations on the timing and length of the shadow shark spawning season in your area (time periods when fish are observed with large ovaries or eggs spilling out externally or while venting)?
- What do you see now in terms of recruitment? Where are the small fish? Are large and small fish found in the same locations?
- Have you observed changes in catch depth or apparent bottom type fished on?
- How have sea conditions (monthly/seasonally) affected fishable days?
- Have you noticed any change in the species caught with shadow shark over the years or seasonally?

Other:

- What else is important for the Council to know about shadow shark?