

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL I
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 2025

The Council met on Monday, June 9, 2025, and Tuesday, June 10, 2025, in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The Council adopted the agenda for the week and approved minutes from the March 2025 meeting.

1. Reports

Representatives and staff provided reports to the Council.

- The Council directed staff to send a letter to the National Sea Grant office and South Atlantic State Sea Grant directors expressing how valuable the reef fish fellowship collaboration has been for the Council.
- The South Atlantic Council will be hosting the Council Coordination Committee meeting in May 2027.
- Southeast Regional Office (SERO) is working on reinitiating an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation on the shrimp fishery to evaluate impacts to smalltooth sawfish and manta rays and will bring information to the Council at a future meeting.
- Staffing changes and early retirement reduced the number of staff at the SERO by 20 since the beginning of the year.
- SERO is reviewing priorities for each Council (South Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean) in light of reduced capacity and the recent EOs.
- The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) lost 58 staff across divisions, many in key positions. Discussions are ongoing with NMFS leadership to triage the situation.
- The Council requested that a summary of recent journal articles on dolphin be brought to the September 2025 meeting to inform discussions on possible changes to the management of dolphin.

2. Executive Orders Discussion

On April 17, 2025, the President signed Executive Order (EO) 14276 *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*. This order requests that the Regional Fishery Management Councils provide updates to their 2020 responses to EO 13921 to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and increase production. **NMFS has established a deadline of September 30, 2025, for Councils to respond.** The Council briefly discussed items to include in the response to the EO (see bullets below). Additionally, the Council directed staff to produce informational material (document and recorded presentation) to make available on the Council's website for the public to provide input. Also, the Council requested that advisory panels be convened (via webinar) to gather their recommendations. Staff will prepare a draft response for the Council to review and finalize at the September meeting. Include the following in the response to EO 14276:

- Remove the commercial snapper grouper "2 for 1" provision.
- Remove species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan that are not in need of federal management.
- Consider actions Council can take to address shark depredation.

- Consider shifting management of spiny lobster to the state of Florida.
- Explore use of Exempted Fishing Permits to manage Red Snapper and Black Sea Bass.
- Continue to develop an amendment to allow access to a portion of the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern to the rock shrimp fishery.
- Explore how the Council can support improvements to habitat for managed species in Florida.

3. SAFMC Research and Monitoring Plan Recommendations

The Council revises their research and monitoring plan every two years. The research and monitoring plan is used by the Council and NOAA Fisheries staff to identify and prioritize research needs for fisheries in the South Atlantic.

Council staff provided an overview of state research and monitoring projects addressing needs that were included in the Council's 2023-2027 Research and Monitoring Plan. Council staff also briefed the Council on how the Southeast Fisheries Science Center has been addressing needs specified in that plan. Staff then introduced a revised Research and Monitoring Plan covering needs from 2025 through 2029, which has been organized by FMP and includes recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Social and Economic Panel, and the Dolphin Wahoo, Habitat Protection and Ecosystem, Mackerel Cobia, and Snapper Grouper Advisory Panels.

Staff suggested that Council members review the draft research and monitoring needs for their committees and prioritize them so the plan can be finalized at the September 2025 meeting.

4. For-Hire Electronic Reporting Improvements Amendment

Council staff introduced a decision document intended to facilitate the Council's discussion on this amendment. However, the Council recognized the need to spend time on a preliminary prioritization of items on the current workplan given ongoing issues with staff capacity and the recent mandates under various EOs. As a result the Council chose to move this amendment down on their priority list.

Alternative Discussion on Preliminary Workload Prioritization

The Council reviewed amendment items on the workplan and discussed their importance and scheduling given recent changes in agency resources and direction. The Council considered potential costs, whether actions were discretionary or statutory, regulatory or de-regulatory, or consistent with recent Executive Orders. The Council directed staff to make the following changes to the workplan:

(Note: refer to the Council's [revised workplan](#) for updated information)

Priority Amendments (not in priority order):

- Long-term Red Snapper and Snapper Grouper MSE
- Black Sea Bass Assessment Response (SG Amendment 56)
- Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper Assessment Response (SG Amendment 44)
- Dolphin Size Limit and Recreational Retention Limits (DW Regulatory Amendment 3)
- Spanish Mackerel Assessment and Port Meetings Response

- SFAA in the Oculina HAPC Northern Extension (Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12)
- Golden Tilefish Assessment Response
- Blueline Tilefish Assessment Response
- Evaluation of Species Within the FMU (note: this would replace the planned amendment to update catch levels for unassessed species)
- Hogfish Assessment Response
- Black Grouper Assessment or MSE Response
- Snapper Grouper Commercial Fishery Amendment (SG Amendment 60)
- Sunsetting of Special Management Zones

Lower Priority and Delayed Amendments

- For-Hire Reporting Improvements
- For-Hire Limited Entry
- Private Recreational Permitting and Education
- Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper Management Changes

Direction to staff

- Generally, prioritize deregulatory amendments and move these amendments up in the workplan.
- In December 2025, add a half day agenda item (or longer if required) that will focus on recreational fishing data. Include an update on Gulf Council, Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office, and Highly Migratory Species actions related to for-hire reporting; preliminary results from Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permits; information on MRIP FES revisions; an update on state efforts related to potential state management of Red Snapper and other Snapper Grouper species; and discuss relevant measures that respond to recent Executive Orders and directives to increase state involvement in recreational data collection.
- Convene a Recreational State-Federal Data Subcommittee to help coordinate Council and state efforts to improve recreational data. The goal of the Committee is to ensure data collection across the South Atlantic states is as consistent and compatible across states as possible.

5. Terms of Reference for the Gag Assessment

Staff presented the terms of reference and changes suggested by the Scientific and Statistical Committee during the May 2025 meeting. The Council requested this item be discussed during Snapper Grouper Committee (see Snapper Grouper Committee report), following discussion of the MSY proxies agenda item.

6. South Atlantic Headboats Report

In June 2024, the Council requested a report be prepared to examine headboat vessel limits for South Atlantic managed species for discussion at the December 2024 meeting. The Council requested additional information to begin discussing potential management changes that better reflect the needs of the headboat fishery. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center developed a detailed report in response to the Council's request. Council staff presented highlights from the report. The Council requested that the Snapper Grouper Committee continue the discussion

regarding the headboat sector and next steps. The Snapper Grouper Committee will continue the discussion on this topic at a future meeting.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 1: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- SEND A LETTER TO THE NATIONAL SEA GRANT OFFICE AND SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE SEA GRANT DIRECTORS EXPRESSING HOW VALUABLE THE REEF FISH FELLOWSHIP COLLABORATION HAS BEEN FOR THE COUNCIL.
- PREPARE A SUMMARY OF RECENT JOURNAL ARTICLES ON DOLPHIN FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING.
- PREPARE A DRAFT RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 14276 TO BE FINALIZED AT THE SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING INCLUDING THE INITIAL LIST OF ITEMS ABOVE, AND:
 - PRODUCE INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL (DOCUMENT AND RECORDED PRESENTATION) TO POST ON THE COUNCIL’S WEBSITE AND SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT
 - SOLICIT FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY PANELS
- FOR THE DECEMBER 2025 AGENDA:
 - ADD FORMATION AND CHARGE OF THE RECREATIONAL STATE-FEDERAL DATA SUBCOMMITTEE AND PLAN TO CONVENE THE SUBCOMMITTEE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MARCH 2026 COUNCIL MEETING (IF IN PERSON) OR SOONER (IF REMOTE).
 - ADD A HALF DAY AGENDA ITEM (OR LONGER IF REQUIRED) THAT WILL FOCUS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING DATA AND INITIAL LIST OF TOPICS ABOVE.
- PAUSE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOR-HIRE REPORTING IMPROVEMENTS AMENDMENT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL