



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair  
John Carmichael, Executive Director

September 30, 2025

Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler  
Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Springs, MD 20910

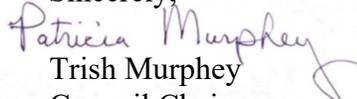
Dear Mr. Piñeiro-Soler,

Enclosed is the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) response to Executive Order 14276 on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness and an update on recommendations made in October 2020 in response to Executive Order 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth.

The Council reviewed the order and guidance provided by NOAA Fisheries on topics to consider. Over several meetings, the Council evaluated and prioritized a wide range of concerns and issues raised by members, staff, fishermen and advisors. The Council also solicited input from advisors and the public. Our response addresses data, policy and fishery management topics that would stabilize markets, improve access to fishing opportunities, enhance economic profitability and prevent closures for fisheries that are managed by the Council. In addition to our response to Section 4(a)(i) of the Executive Order, included are recommendations on what the National Marine Fisheries Service should prioritize in their response to the Executive Order Sections 4(a); 4(a)(ii); 4(a)(iii); and 4(c)) based on Council needs and stakeholder feedback.

We appreciate the opportunity to elaborate on the fishery management challenges within our region and look forward to working with NOAA Fisheries to address the topics identified in response to this Executive Order. Please do not hesitate to contact me or John Carmichael if you have any questions regarding our submitted materials.

Sincerely,

  
Trish Murphey  
Council Chair

LN: 202530

cc: SAFMC Members & Staff  
Kelly Denit and Sam Rauch, NOAA Fisheries  
Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC  
Andy Strelchek and Rick DeVictor, NMFS SE

Council identified actions pursuant to Section 4(a)(i) of Executive Order 14276				
Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50	Priority	Description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) reduces burdens on domestic fishing and increases production within sustainable fisheries	Proposal for initiating each recommended action(s)
50 CFR Part 622 Subpart I	1	Remove or consider ecosystem component designation for species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.	The agency, through the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Southeast Regional Office, lacks the resources necessary to adequately assess and monitor all of the species now included in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. Over half of the species in the FMP are unassessed with catch levels based on average landings. Removing species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan will allow more focused scientific and management effort, ensure those species in the FMP are adequately assessed and monitored, and relieve regulatory burdens created by attempting to manage species that may not be in need of federal conservation and management.	The Council is developing Snapper Grouper Amendment 61 to consider removal or ecosystem component designation for seventeen species currently included in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. The amendment is scheduled for approval in December 2026.
50 CFR Part 622 Subpart I	2	Revise policies and requirements for the snapper grouper unlimited (SG1) permit and increase commercial trip efficiency.	The Council initiated discussions that led to this amendment in response to comments from the commercial fishery stakeholders and the Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel. The Council believes these actions would improve the productivity and effectiveness of commercial snapper grouper harvest in the South Atlantic, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards and Executive Order 14276.	The Council is developing Snapper Grouper Amendment 60 to consider: revisions to the 2-for-1 snapper grouper SG1 permit policy; establishing a framework for dynamic trip limits; establishing a non-target or out-of-season allowance for commercial harvest; and revising gear onboard restrictions. The amendment is scheduled for approval in September 2026.
50 CFR Part 622 Subpart I	3	Support the development of state agency-led exempted fishing permits to test state management of the recreational red snapper fishery.	Managing red snapper has been a challenge for the Council with consistently low annual catch levels resulting in short regional recreational fishing seasons. Many recreational constituents lack confidence in the estimates of their catch. Delegating management to the state agencies may be an innovative way to manage red snapper and improve data collection.	The Council held informational sessions on joint state-federal management of Council-managed species at its June and September 2025 meetings and anticipates receiving state EFP applications to discuss in December 2025. The Council has also prioritized developing an amendment to support state management of red snapper.

**Council identified actions pursuant to Section 4(a)(i) of Executive Order 14276**

<b>Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Description of recommended action(s)</b>	<b>Rationale of how the recommended action(s) reduces burdens on domestic fishing and increases production within sustainable fisheries</b>	<b>Proposal for initiating each recommended action(s)</b>
<i>Not Applicable</i>	4	Increase knowledge of and engagement with the science and management process.	Stakeholder input has always been a fundamental component of the MSA and Council system. However, fisheries constituents increasingly express declining confidence in management institutions and often state that they feel their concerns are not heard or addressed. While citizen science and localized ecological knowledge are important ways of ensuring management measures are improving the competitiveness of fisheries, stakeholders must be willing to get involved for these techniques to succeed. New ways of interacting with constituents are needed to address declining confidence and improve the ability of the Council to address developing challenges.	The Council has developed a new engagement initiative called Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council (Lines). Lines aims to build relationships with fisheries stakeholders and provide an opportunity for mutual sharing of information. Different from other engagement efforts, Lines will provide attendees with the opportunity to actively discuss their perspectives with local Council members, Council staff, and other fishery participants. Lines will be held in-person throughout the South Atlantic, meeting fishermen in their communities. The first set of Lines meetings are scheduled in November 2025 (Georgia) and February 2026 (North Carolina). Meetings will be held in South Carolina and Florida in 2026 and 2027.

**Council recommended actions for NMFS pursuant to Sections 4(a); 4(a)(ii); 4(a)(iii); and 4(c) of Executive Order 14276**

<b>Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50</b>	<b>Description of recommended action(s)</b>	<b>Rationale of how the recommended action(s) reduces burdens on domestic fishing and increases production within sustainable fisheries</b>	<b>Proposal for initiating each recommended action(s)</b>
<i>Not Applicable</i>	Maintaining capacity for data collection (ex. dockside sampling) and conducting stock assessments in the South Atlantic region.	Accurate data collection is a critical component of fisheries management. It allows the Council to set science-based regulations and ensures long-term sustainability of the resource. For fishing businesses, reliable data means stability and predictability to help them plan, maintain access to markets, and stay competitive. Without sufficient data collection, fish stocks and fishing business opportunities are put at risk.	Prioritize funding for data collection efforts and stock assessments in the South Atlantic region.
<i>Not Applicable</i>	Support the funding of citizen science and cooperative research initiatives.	Existing data collection programs do not provide all of the necessary data to make informed management decisions. Citizen science and other non-traditional methods can be used to help fill data gaps more efficiently and at a lower cost. Additionally, citizen science provides a mechanism for turning fishermen’s on-the-water knowledge and experience into data that can be used to inform science and management positions.	The Council has a Citizen Science Program to develop and support projects that help fill identified South Atlantic data gaps. However, the Program relies upon Council funds and limited grant programs that are available to councils for support. NMFS and other agencies should prioritize funding opportunities for citizen science programs and cooperative research initiatives that are available to Council’s and support smarter science, stronger stakeholder engagement, and more resilient fisheries management in the South Atlantic and beyond.
	Eliminate the prohibition of shark fin sales, which is detrimental to fishing business and may contribute to shark depredation that has become problematic	Stakeholders have expressed concerns about the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act, indicating that it has caused undue burden on domestic shark fisheries. The sale of legally harvested shark fins incentivizes sustainable commercial shark harvest, reduces waste that is created by mandating fins to be disposed of or destroyed, and improves economic returns in the fishery. Marketing for shark meat needs to be improved to support this sustainable industry. Additionally, harvest of sharks may help to alleviate	NMFS should develop a report evaluating and quantifying the impact of the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act and shark depredation. The report should recommend management changes to the appropriate entities.

**Council recommended actions for NMFS pursuant to Sections 4(a); 4(a)(ii); 4(a)(iii); and 4(c) of Executive Order 14276**

<b>Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50</b>	<b>Description of recommended action(s)</b>	<b>Rationale of how the recommended action(s) reduces burdens on domestic fishing and increases production within sustainable fisheries</b>	<b>Proposal for initiating each recommended action(s)</b>
	in South Atlantic fisheries.	shark depredation that has become problematic in multiple other fisheries in the southeast.	
	Removing the requirement to report discards in the commercial fishery or develop and fund a discard reporting program that will meet best scientific information available standards.	NOAA Fisheries has stated that the current discard logbooks are not considered best scientific information available and has declined to provide the Council discard estimates from the program. Removing the requirement to submit discard information when selected through the Coastal Fisheries Logbook Program would reduce regulatory burden for commercial fishermen in the southeast.	The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) Director should no longer select anyone to report discard information through the current logbook program. Additionally, the SEFSC should develop, and NMFS fund, a discard reporting program that will meet best scientific information available standards.
<i>Not Applicable</i>	Support funding for the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program, especially the promotion and marketing and development, infrastructure, and capacity building priorities.	Imported seafood has substantial negative economic effects on the domestic seafood industry, especially the shrimp industry. Imported seafood lacks the regulatory requirements of domestic seafood and is often sold at a lower price, undercutting the domestic market. Mislabeling of imported seafood as locally caught exacerbates this problem and makes it challenging for consumers to know when they are purchasing a domestic vs. foreign product.	Prioritize funding for Saltonstall Kennedy Grant Program applications that would assist with overall marketing and promotion of domestic seafood including consumer education.

**Update on Actions Submitted by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Response to Executive Order 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (2020).**

Description of Action	Responsible Entities	Status	Additional Notes
Adequate monitoring for deepwater species.	NMFS	In Progress	South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey is now online and awaiting enough years of information to be applied in stock assessments of deepwater species.
Restore longline surveying for tilefish to reduce stock assessment uncertainty.	NMFS	Complete	
Provide increased funding for SEFIS to fully support the SERFS and MARMAP components.	NMFS	Unknown	
Address the priorities of the Fishery Independent Monitoring Workshop.	NMFS	Not Addressed	
Fully support SEAMAP priorities.	NMFS	Unknown	
Develop juvenile surveys for the priority stocks identified in the Prioritization Plan for the South Atlantic.	NMFS	Not Addressed	
Change tag and permit fee policies so that fees are provided to the Region where collected and allow funds from tags or fees to be directed to fishery and data improvement projects to benefit the fishery that provides the funds.	NMFS	Not Addressed	
Provide SAFE Reports to the SAFMC as required under National Standard 2 guidelines.	NMFS	Not Addressed	SAFE Reports for some FMPs have been prepared by Council staff.
Request that NMFS create a regional working group across the Gulf and Atlantic to evaluate, characterize, and quantify the impact of shark depredation and trends over time by shark species. The working group should recommend management changes to the appropriate entities.	NMFS	Not Addressed	
Evaluate the National Standard 1 guidelines relative to the Modern Fish Act and provide clarification on the flexibility available to the GFMC and SAFMC to implement alternative approaches for managing recreational fisheries.	NMFS	Not Addressed	No changes have been made to National Standard 1 or the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

**Update on Actions Submitted by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Response to Executive Order 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (2020).**

Description of Action	Responsible Entities	Status	Additional Notes
Complete the work of the Rare Event Species Estimation Working Group and provide the Council recommendations on management actions it can take to improve data collection and estimation precision.	NMFS	In Progress	
Develop protocols to incorporate supplemental and voluntarily submitted data from recreational anglers.	NMFS	Not Addressed	
Develop methods to provide more timely MRIP estimates of harvest for the stocks requiring in-season accountability measures.	NMFS	In progress	Plans have been developed but are currently on hold due to staff and funding limitations
Provide funding to ensure the success of the for-hire electronic reporting in the South Atlantic.	NMFS	Not Addressed	Participation in SEFHIER is low in the South Atlantic region leading NMFS to consider the data unreliable. The Council began discussion of new regulations, however, in June 2025 the Council postponed work on the amendment. In September 2025, NMFS SERO noted that due to budget constraints there has been a reduction in the SEFHIER contract, so real-time services have been curtailed. NMFS SERO will look to reinstate contract if funding is available in the future.
Provide financial support to the SAFMC, MAFMC, and NEFMC to pursue the Scenario Planning process initiated through the Northeast Region Coordinating Council.	NMFS	In Progress	Scenario planning was completed by the councils and implementation was recognized as an allowable activity under IRA grants. All three Councils are conducting implementation activities and planning for future joint workshops to coordinate efforts.
Request that NMFS implement an order to improve the disaster relief process and develop efficient methods of distributing allocated relief funds. Relief funds should be distributed within six months of disaster allocation by Congress.	NMFS	In Progress	Meeting held with the states. Unknown progress since that time.

**Update on Actions Submitted by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Response to Executive Order 13921 on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (2020).**

Description of Action	Responsible Entities	Status	Additional Notes
Evaluate the Wreckfish ITQ program and consider changes.	Council	In Progress; Council portion complete	Amendment submitted to the NMFS by the Council in December 2024.
Establish a shrimp fishery access area along with the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank closed area.	Council	In Progress	The Council submitted Coral Amendment 10 in December 2021; however, it was rejected by NMFS. The Council is currently developing a joint Coral and Shrimp amendment to address concerns with plans to resubmit the amendment in December 2025.
Implement commercial electronic logbooks.	Council	In Progress; Council portion complete	Amendment submitted to the NMFS by the Council in February 2024.
Evaluate performance of the snapper group commercial permit two for one provision and consider if changes will provide social and economic benefits to the fishery.	Council	In Progress	The Council has initiated work on Snapper Grouper Amendment 60, which includes consideration of the two-for-one provision.
Modify the Atlantic king mackerel management actions through an FMP amendment to address optimum yield.	Council	Complete	New catch levels effective on June 8, 2023.
Evaluate stock determination criteria and biological reference point alternatives for Spiny Lobster.	Council	Not Started	
Evaluate reasons for early commercial closures in the Atlantic Spanish mackerel fishery.	Council	Delayed	Management action on Atlantic Spanish mackerel delayed until results from the MRIP pilot study are available.