

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL II
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
September 2024

1. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Activities Update

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has been working with its Sanctuary Advisory Council, state and federal agency partners, including the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils, and the community for over a decade to comprehensively review and update the sanctuary management plan and regulations including the sanctuary boundary and marine zones. This review and associated documents is referred to as the Restoration Blueprint.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) has been involved in this process since the beginning, however formal engagement began with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2019. At this time, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries initiated the 304(a)(5) process, outlined in the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

Pursuant to NMSA Section 304(a)(5), NOAA sent letters on August 22, 2019, to initiate consultation with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) and the SAFMC on potential regulatory changes that affect Federal fisheries. NOAA also provided multiple updates at the respective Council meetings and various advisory and technical committees over the course of the development of the draft EIS and throughout the public comment period following its release. The SAFMC submitted comment letters on the draft EIS on March 13, 2020. NOAA continued to engage with and provide briefings for the SAFMC and individual advisory panels during the proposed rule public comment period. The SAFMC submitted a comment letter on the proposed rule on February 22, 2023.

Informed by extensive public and agency comment, including from the SAFMC, NOAA has developed a final environmental impact statement and proposed final rule that will be released later this year. FKNMS leadership and staff provided an update on the status of the Restoration Blueprint and relevant components of interest to the SAFMC.

2. Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey research update and listening session to inform initiative to re-envision the recreational data collection partnership

NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology (OST) has been conducting a large-scale study to determine differences in respondent recall and resulting recreational fishing effort estimates (for shore and private modes) between the current Fishing Effort Survey design and a revised design. The Council received an update on this effort. Additionally, OST is re-evaluating recreational fishing data collection partnership approaches with the intent to transition to a new, collaboratively developed vision for the state-federal partnership in 2026. To that effect, OST has hosted discussions with key partners via webinars and listening sessions during fishery management council meetings. NOAA OST plans to designate and/or reformulate working groups in early 2025 and host a series of regional workshops during summer 2025 to develop a shared vision and action plan for public release by the end of 2025. Council members provided feedback to OST guided by a series of questions designed to inform the re-envisioning process, including discussion points for the workshops in 2025.