

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council II

Awards

Council Chair Dr. Carolyn Belcher presented the *2022 Law Enforcement of the Year* award to Private First-Class Jason Dozier with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Game Warden First Class Matt Tsiklistas with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The annual award is presented to individuals or teams that have exceeded their duty requirements and demonstrated a distinct pattern of service to enforcing fisheries regulations in the South Atlantic region.

The Council also acknowledged staff member Roger Pugliese with the *SAFMC 2023 Award of Excellence*, which was presented during a social held at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Litigation Brief

Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC, updated the Council on recent legal activities in the region. She thanked Council staff for their support in compiling the administrative record for the recent lawsuit challenging the temporary rule to allow harvest of red snapper. The plaintiffs allege violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. Their claims include allegations about failing to prevent overfishing and failing to account for discards, resulting in a de facto reallocation to the recreational sector. The complaint was filed on June 16th in the D.C. District Court.

Staff Report

John Carmichael presented the Council staff report and highlighted recent staff changes. There was discussion on the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding allocated to the 8 Regional Councils. Each Council will initially receive \$375,000 and an additional \$17 million will be available on a competitive basis. These funds will be provided through a separate grant to support new climate related activities from 2024 – 2026. Although process details for these funds are not yet available from NMFS, prior discussions with the CCC indicate NMFS desires to disburse the funds before the end of CY 2023 and may only give Councils a short window to submit the necessary grant documents. Proposed uses for the initial SAFMC funds include hiring a temporary, contract employee to coordinate work on the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning priorities and develop grants for additional IRA funds; supporting a climate and ecosystem response data workshop; and evaluating dynamic reference points for use in Council FMPs. The Executive Committee will further discuss IRA funding plans at its October 24th meeting.

Fall Advisory Panel Meetings

The Council reviewed lists of agenda items for the fall 2023 meeting of the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel and the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel.

Southeast Regional Office Report

Andy Strelcheck, Southeast Regional Administrator, briefed the Council on ongoing issues with the Southeast Region Online Permit System. The new system has streamlined the process of submitting applications to obtain (new permit), renew (current permit), or transfer (limited access) permits. NMFS migrated permits information to modernize the old permit system to a new platform to meet modern security standards and be supported within a Cloud environment. However, after the migration, NMFS discovered connection and data access issues. A project team is now working on resolving the system problems. The two amendments that may be directly impacted are the amendment to implement electronic logbooks for commercial vessels and Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (wreckfish).

Jennifer Lee, NMFS SERO Protected Resources Division, provided the Council with an update on protected resources activities. The primary topic addressed was the 2021 Shrimp Biological Opinion and re-initiation of the ESA Section 7 consultation due to mortalities of Giant Manta Rays. Information on fishery takes and Giant Manta Ray biology was provided. Recent information suggesting increased risk to smalltooth sawfish by trawling activity was also provided.

Southeast Fisheries Science Center Report

Dr. Clay Porch provided an update on Southeast Fisheries Science Center activities. He noted that four new positions were recently created to improve the Center's ability to respond to the climate crisis. One of these positions will be responsible for Ecosystem Status Reports. Dr. Porch also noted that despite additional funding for specific projects such as recently made available through the IRA, the Center remains level funded overall and will be required to downscale some activities in response to inflation in personnel and operational expenses.