

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL II
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
September 2025

The Council met on Friday, September 19, 2025, in North Charleston, South Carolina to conduct elections for chair and vice-chair, announce the recipient of the Council’s Award of Excellence, finalize committee reports, discuss results of the survey on the Best Fishing Practices Campaign, and provide direction on the workplan.

Elections

Elections for Council Chair and Vice Chair are held annually, and appointees can serve up to two terms. Trish Murphey, NC, and Jessica McCawley, FL, were elected to serve another term as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively.

Award of Excellence

The Council bestows this award each year to individuals who have made lasting contributions to the management of South Atlantic fisheries. This year’s award was presented to Dr. John “Jack” McGovern. Dr. McGovern was recognized for a career spent in the South Atlantic spanning both science, through the MARMAP program, and management, with the Southeast Regional Office. Jack’s leadership, steady demeanor, and kindness is appreciated by all who know and worked with him over the last 30-plus years.

Recognition

The Southeast Regional Office and the Council recognized Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA General Counsel, for her many years of assisting the Council in managing the marine resources under its jurisdiction. Monica is retiring after 35 years of working for the US government, during which time she attended well over 100 Council meetings.

Best Fishing Practices Survey

Due to the limited time on the Council’s September meeting agenda, Best Fishing Practices staff prepared a recorded presentation along with a questionnaire to gather Council members’ feedback on the Best Fishing Practices Campaign. Council staff provided an overview of the results during the Council’s second session. Results were overwhelmingly positive with Council members emphasizing the need to continue the program’s momentum. The Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program (BFP MVP) and tackle shop outreach were generally considered the most valuable aspects of the campaign. Staff also noted that the overall results indicate the Best Fishing Practices Campaign is not only successfully meeting its objectives but also helping the Council achieve its broader goals. The Council encouraged staff to continue conducting seminars, visiting tackle shops, collaborating with state partners, expanding the BFP MVP program into new communities, and increasing outreach by exploring podcasts and expanding the campaign’s social media and digital presence.

Workplan

Council staff reviewed changes to the Council’s workplan based on committee and Council actions during the week. The Council made the following recommendations to address the workload for upcoming meetings:

- The RA notified the Council that the closure notice for commercial red snapper harvest would publish that day.
- The Council discussed Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), which has been underway for many months, and whether the Council should continue to wait for the results or begin to move forward with management changes for the dolphin fishery.
 - The Council requested that staff reach out to the MSE team and obtain details on timing and the type of input that is still needed from the Council.
 - In regard to the requested analysis for actions in Dolphin Wahoo Regulatory Amendment 3, the Council asked whether the outcome of the MSE could be presented similarly to the Decision Tools that the Southeast Regional Office staff have been preparing to help the Council select among management alternatives.
 - The SEFSC Director assured the Council there would be tangible results from the MSE (i.e., refinement of the model) to be discussed at the March 2026 meeting.
 - The Council concluded that the Dolphin MSE would not be reviewed at the December 2025 meeting and would next be presented at the March 2026 meeting.
- The timeline of completion for the amendment addressing yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper will be adjusted to reflect development of a single amendment with the Gulf Council as administrative lead. Staff clarified that time would need to be spent at the December meeting exploring sector allocations alternatives using the Allocation Decision Tool. Hence, the amendment will not be ready for public hearings until early or mid-2026.
- The amendment to addressing sunseting of Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs) can be done via framework if no new areas are added or existing areas modified. Work on this amendment will begin in June 2026.
- The Council confirmed their intent to not consider any changes to management for king or Spanish mackerel until after the assessments for those species are completed near the end of 2027. However, information that came out of the port meetings can continue to be explored “in the background” and be brought to the Council in advance of the results of the stock assessments so the Council will have all the information at the ready to make modifications to management soon thereafter.