

**FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL II
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 2026**

The Council met in open session on Thursday, March 5, and Friday, March 6, 2026.

1. Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation Update

The Council did not receive the presentation until Monday of the meeting week. Council members expressed frustration at not having had enough time to prepare to provide input, as the analysts requested. Additionally, Council members felt the discussion on this topic should have occurred during a meeting of the Dolphin Wahoo Committee, if it was not intended as simply an update on progress of the MSE.

The Dolphin Wahoo Committee representative from New England stated that stakeholder input is critical to development of an MSE and efforts to obtain it must extend to areas north of North Carolina (the Council manages dolphin along the entire Atlantic coast under the Dolphin Wahoo FMP) as there is a lot of variability in where dolphin are found in the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions. Other Council members noted that sectors being treated differently needs to be considered and discussed further in the context of the MSE.

Some Council members expressed trouble understanding the nexus of the Council process and the MSE. Council needs to come up with “guardrails” and have enough time to do so. The Council will convene Dolphin Wahoo Committee in June 2026 to further discuss input need for the MSE.

2. Review SAFMC plan submitted in response to Executive Order 14276 (Seafood Competitiveness)

The Council reviewed the items submitted in response to Executive Order 14276 and the additional comments provided by NOAA Fisheries. Items noted in the additional comments that are appropriate for Council consideration support actions the Council is developing or has recently addressed. Therefore, no revision to the EO response was recommended. The Council’s progress on addressing items in the EO response is summarized below.

1. Remove or consider ecosystem component designation for species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. (SG Amendment 61)
2. Revise policies and requirements for the snapper grouper unlimited (SG1) permit and increase commercial trip efficiency. (SG Amendment 60)
3. Support the development of state agency-led exempted fishing permits to test state management of the recreational red snapper fishery. (EFPs submitted)
4. Increase knowledge of and engagement with the science and management process. (Lines Meetings; MREP)

3. Topics for Outreach and Communication Advisory Panel

Council members reviewed a draft list of topics to develop the agenda for the May 5-6, 2026, meeting of the AP. The Council made the following suggestions:

- Include presentations on state outreach efforts for the South Atlantic Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permits.
- Discuss how to increase public attendance and accessibility to Council hosted meetings.

For the full list of agenda topics, click [HERE](#).

4. SAFMC Workplan

Staff presented a revised workplan, including SERO’s priorities for rulemaking. The Council gave staff direction to:

- Schedule a meeting of the Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee outside the Council meeting week in June to allow more time on the Council’s agenda. The sub-committee will meet in person in Charleston, SC, ahead of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting scheduled for April 21-23, 2026.
- Change the public comment process to allow time for Council members to ask questions of those who provide public comment. Rather than changing the start time of the session, the Council opted to make adjustments (i.e., extend into the evening hours) based on the number of commenters at a given meeting or the complexity of topics.
- Allocate 2 to 4 hours on the June agenda for the Dolphin Wahoo Committee.

Wreckfish ITQ Review

The Council reviewed a proposed timeline to complete the review of the Wreckfish Individual Transferrable Quota (ITQ) program in 2026. Staff presented a recommended approach, including utilizing a contractor, to have a draft for the Council to review in December 2026. The Council approved the following motion:

**MOTION 1: DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN WORK ON THE NEXT REVIEW OF THE WRECKFISH ITQ PROGRAM.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

ASMFC Coastal Pelagics Board Update

Council staff updated the Council on discussions at ASMFC’s Coastal Pelagics Board in Winter 2026 (Bob Beal was not available to deliver the update). The Board has been waiting for the Council to begin any action on Spanish mackerel and there is some frustration that the Council hasn’t initiated action on any management changes. The Spanish mackerel stock assessment results would come to the Council in December 2027; hence, the urgency to not wait on catch level adjustments to act on other items. The Council directed staff to schedule a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia Committee in March 2027 and to bring the Advisory Panel together in Fall 2026.