



# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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## Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup February 17, 2021 Summary Report

### 1. Workgroup Goals and Objectives

The workgroup reviewed and modified proposed goals and objectives, and consented to the following:

#### Goal

*Develop recommendations, for consideration by the Council, for coordinated state-federal data collection and permitting programs to improve estimates of catch and effort for private recreational snapper grouper fishing activities.*

#### Objectives

- *Review state data collection and permitting programs such as the FL Reef Fish Survey*
- *Review progress of the MRIP rare event estimation working group*
- *Review the legal and logistical differences between state vs federal fishing permits, including implementation, financing, and enforcement in federal and state waters*
- *Evaluate the feasibility of state permitting and data collection programs for collecting information on recreational fisheries in federal waters*
- *Develop clear goals for data usage*
- *Outline the steps necessary for state-collected data to be:*
  - *Certified as acceptable by MRIP*
  - *Considered in the SEDAR stock assessment process*
  - *Used to develop Council management plans*

### 2. FL Reef Fish Survey

The fishery for snapper grouper or reef fish species is specialized and relatively small relative to total saltwater recreational effort as monitored by MRIP. As a result, estimates of catch and effort for this fishery component are typically not as precise as estimates for other components. This has led to consideration of specialized and dedicated sampling efforts to improve estimates.

Bev Sauls of the FL FWCC-FWRI reviewed the Florida Reef Fish Survey from its inception in the Gulf waters to its current expansion statewide. Key components of the program are angler identification through a designation on the state fishing license and a dedicated survey of the designated anglers. The program currently applies to 13 species and includes a mail survey for

effort and dockside interviews for catch. The program is independent of, but conducted in cooperation with, MRIP. The program has shown that it can provide more precise and timely estimates than MRIP for the focus species. Additional improvements may be needed for monitoring very short seasons such as currently exist for Red Snapper.

Key messages:

- Identifying the universe of anglers is critical. Identification can be more effective if it is mandatory.
- Outreach is important to establishing angler confidence and buy-in.
- Oversubscription (anglers selecting the reef fish option who do not actually intend to participate in the fishery) should be minimized.
  - Because there is no cost to select the option on the license, some anglers are signed up by sales agents without their knowledge.
  - An avidity survey showed that 60% of people identified on the license option were unlikely to participate in a reef fish trip.
  - To reduce oversubscription a nominal fee could be charged, but that creates other obstacles in a state regulatory framework. One option used in LA is to make the permit to fish offshore a separate transaction that anglers have to do even though it is free.
- The benefits of a specialized survey are greatly improved if the survey is designed to supplement existing monitoring programs such as MRIP.
- Success of a regional survey of this type will require:
  - Clearly defined goals for regional survey development
  - Strong state to state and state-federal coordination
  - Compatible survey methods that allow data to be used regionally

### 3. MRIP Rare Event Estimation Working Group

Richard Cody presented on the current status of MRIP's efforts to address rare event species catch and effort estimation. This work was initiated in response to a SAFMC letter to NOAA in 2015. To address the SAFMC request, MRIP initiated an internal working group that is evaluating various alternative estimation methods that were presented to the SAFMC SSC in October 2015. The workgroup has not completed its tasks; the information presented here is one potential approach to addressing the challenge of rare event species.

The main information presented was based on a consultant's report on improving rare event estimates that explored various time-series and moving average approaches. The report concluded:

*The results indicate that combining more years appears preferable (comparing 3 and 5 year combinations), and that estimators that use data from both past and future years (MA) are preferable to those that only use past years (TS).  
(ed.: MA-Moving Average; TS – Time Series)*

The working group is continuing to explore other alternatives. During discussion, alternatives as presented to the SSC in 2015, were displayed (**Table 1**). It was also noted that there will not

likely be one method that will best address all situations and that managers may need to evaluate various alternatives and provide rationale for their selections. It is unlikely that NMFS would endorse specific alternatives over the current official estimates.

Table 1. Methods to address rare event estimation challenges presented to the SAFMC SSC in October 2015.

## Method Comparisons

Approach	Precision Gain	Cost (\$)	Time to Implement	Species Specificity	Limitations
Increase sample sizes	Associated with cost	Variable	Short	Low-Moderate	Source(s) of additional funds
Optimize existing sample allocation	Variable	None	Moderate	Variable-Moderate	Precision trade-offs among species
Modify existing survey designs	Variable	None	Moderate	Variable-Moderate	Precision trade-offs among species
Design specialized program	High	Moderate-High	Long	High	Increased cost and reporting burden
Custom Estimation	Variable	None	Short-Long	High	Estimation domain changes, model use, method selection/justification



### 4. Requests for the Next Meeting

The workgroup agreed that its initial focus should be on the “what”, to describe the problem to solve, and then consider the “how” of solving the problem. The following topics were suggested for consideration at future meetings:

- Consider the possibility for target or focus species within the snapper grouper complex.
- Clarify how data from such a survey could be used.
- Request reports and presentations from different segments of this workgroup on the issues and problems with current estimates for rare event species. Consider perspectives of the Council, States, ACCSP, NMFS, stock assessment teams, and MRIP to help guide discussion on solutions.
- Identify the barriers to state implementation of improvements or new approaches (permits, reporting, sampling), including an overview of each state’s process.

- Identify the barriers to NMFS and MRIP using information from state survey and permitting activities.
- Explore the possibility of increased MRIP samples, and determine how much of an increase is needed to provide a reliable estimate for the target species
- Receive a presentation on the LPS (large pelagic survey), its redesign, and opportunities for extension into South Atlantic.
- Receive presentations on other mandatory federal private recreational angler permitting programs (MAFMC tilefish, HMS tunas), addressing the program details and requirements, their benefits and usage, and the limitations of the data provided.
- Suggested the MRIP, SEFSC, or the Rare Event Estimation Working group conduct a modeling exercise in which data and estimates for a well-estimated species (i.e., one with acceptable PSE levels) are degraded to mimic rare event circumstances to more thoroughly evaluate the range of alternative estimation methods.
- Keep up to date on the GMFMC progress and experiences with developing assessments and regulations incorporating multiple state surveys and MRIP

The workgroup requested scheduling the next meeting for a half-day in April or May 2021. Future meetings will be scheduled approximately every other month.