

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

Reports

Representatives of NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, the US Coast Guard, liaisons from the Gulf of Mexico and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils and state representatives provided reports to the Council.

Staff Report, Update on Stakeholder Engagement Meetings, Revised SSC Workgroup Approach

Council staff briefed the Council on activities since the June 2024 meeting, including planning for stakeholder engagement meetings scheduled in North Carolina and Georgia for early 2025, and revisions to the workgroup approach used by the SSC. The Council approved the following motion:

MOTION: APPROVE THE REVISED SSC WORKGROUP APPROACH.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Shrimp Advisory Panel Re-Structuring

Council staff provided the outcome of discussions during the Council's closed session regarding potential re-structuring of the advisory panel(s). The Council recommended retaining separate Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs due to the fundamental differences between the fisheries and anticipated future actions. The Council also discussed adding seats on the Shrimp AP to allow the participation of members of the emerging shrimp fishery in Maryland and Virginia. The Council recommended adding 2 liaison seats, one for Maryland and one for Virginia, to facilitate communication with fishery participants.

Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary Update

LeAnn Hogan, Eastern Region Operations Coordinator with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, will provide a status update on the proposed designation of a national marine sanctuary in Hudson Canyon including an update on the designation process, the draft designation documents, the Sanctuary Advisory Council and upcoming actions. Council staff clarified that the reason for the update was because the SAFMC manages the Dolphin Wahoo fishery along the entire U.S. East Coast. Therefore, designation of Hudson Canyon as a National Marine Sanctuary would potentially affect that fishery.

Update on the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning Initiative

Scenario planning is a tool that helps people and organizations prepare for uncertain futures. In late 2020, East Coast fishery management organizations initiated a scenario planning exercise to explore jurisdictional and governance issues related to climate change and shifting fishery stocks along the Atlantic Coast. The scenario planning work occurred through a structured, multi-step process over a two-year period (2021-2023), concluding with a Summit workshop in February

2023. Council staff provided a summary of progress since the Summit, addressing the creation of 2 standing groups to manage implementation activities and identification and prioritization of action items.

NMFS Reports

Andy Strelcheck, Regional Administrator, provided the SERO report noting:

- The Gag fishery closed with landings around 98% of the commercial ACL and 101% of the recreational ACL.
- The recreational Golden Tilefish fishery closed with 70% landed. NMFS is considering reopening the fishery to allow additional harvest. The Council asked whether the underage can be carried over into next year. It cannot, as carry-over provisions were only recently added to the ABC control rule and have not yet been addressed for Golden Tilefish.
- Work continues to resolve data issues in the permit system. SERO is working with a contractor to create a “snapshot” database to provide data to managers. This database is expected to be available soon.
- Dr. Jack McGovern, Dr. Mike Travis, and Ginny Croom will all be retiring over the next few months.

Dr. Clay Porch provided the update for the SEFSC noting:

- Dr. Trika Gerard was recently hired as Deputy Director for Science and Operations.
- The South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey (SADLS) will continue as planned despite a delay in funding.
- A new data application, SEAFiSh, has been developed to serve all fishery-independent survey data.

Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) Flyingfish and Dolphinfinh Workgroup Update

The [Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission \(WECAFC\)](#) is a regional fisheries body that acts in an advisory capacity to promote the effective conservation, management, and development of living marine resources in the Wider Caribbean. It has 34 members, including the United States. WECAFC’s Flyingfish-Dolphinfinh Working Group held its first meeting in San Juan, PR, on June 4-5, 2024, with representatives of Barbados, Colombia, Dominica, France, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, and Venezuela. Rachel O’Malley provided a summary of the meeting for the Council.

Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvement Amendment

At the June 2024 meeting, the Council received [feedback](#) from the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center that data being collected through the SEFHIER program and for-hire logbook cannot be used for management due to low compliance and lack of validation. The letter included a list of recommendations to render the data collected through SEFHIER useful for management. The Council directed staff to initiate work on an amendment to address these shortcomings focusing on

incorporating actions that can be taken in the near-term without an amendment, and considering actions and alternatives being explored by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Council staff provided background on for-hire reporting in the South Atlantic, a draft purpose and need for the amendment, and a list of potential actions and alternatives for the Council to consider. Council members offered the following questions and comments:

General discussion and questions

- It was noted that the agency cannot validate the logbook until reporting compliance is improved.
 - What level of reporting compliance would be needed to begin validation, start the comparison of logbook data with MRIP estimates, and use logbook data in management?
- Several Council members noted the need for increased effort towards education, outreach, and customer support. A “boots on the ground” approach will be needed to educate some fishermen.
- Are there one-stop-reporting guidelines the agency is using?

Purpose and Need

- The Council reviewed draft purpose and need statements and provided the following edit to the purpose statement:

The purpose of this amendment is to make modifications to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program to improve the accuracy, precision, and timeliness of landings, discard, and fishing effort data, AND ECONOMIC DATA for the for-hire component of the recreational sector of the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries.

Draft Action 1. Modify Reporting Frequency of Fishing Trips for For-Hire Vessels

- Add consideration of requiring reporting within one hour of completion of a trip.
- When the amendment goes for scoping, include a question that asks to input on the appropriate timeframe
- At a future meeting, provide information on the timing of reporting requirements for other relevant programs.

Draft Action 2. Require Trip Notification for For-Hire Vessels

- Task the IPT to clarify the intent of the action and that Alternatives 2 and 3 would apply to dually permitted vessels (commercial and for-hire).
 - Re-word and simplify the text of the alternatives.
 - Add sub-alternatives that would specify what activities other than for-hire fishing would require reporting and a trip notification.
- Provide information on what would happen if a for-hire trip changed to a commercial trip.

Draft Action 3. Establish Approved Landing Locations for For-Hire Vessels

- Provide information on the approval process for landing locations.

- How was it previously carried out in the Gulf of Mexico?
- How would private landing locations be approved?
- How would this approval process operate for permitted vessels in the GARFO region?
- How important is this action in relation to validation? Why are pre-approved landing locations necessary and how are they useful?

Draft Action 4. Require Participation in a Validation Survey

- For Alternative 2, clarify that all permit holders would be required to participate in a validation survey.
- Provide an example of how a validation survey would be administered, what percentage of permitted vessels would need to be sampled, and information on how validation was completed previously in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - Would a validation survey be the responsibility of the boat owner or the permit holder?

Other Items

- Did Not Fish (DNF) Reports
 - Provide additional information on the existing South Atlantic DNF reporting requirements and whether they need to be modified.
 - Gather information on why the NMFS Southeast Region feels that DNF reports are necessary, but the NMFS Greater Atlantic Region does not recommend DNF reports.
 - Examine what other DNF requirements are in place or are going in place so the requirements can be aligned.
- Economic Component
 - Further consider whether a sampling approach may be appropriate.
 - Noted that it could improve compliance since this has been a controversial aspect of the for-hire logbook.
 - Provide further information on what other relevant programs require or are considering and what would be the potential tradeoffs of moving from a census to sampling approach.
 - Would like to encourage consistency.
- Spatial data
 - It would be beneficial to improve spatial data for the for-hire fleet and collect it in higher resolution than is currently collected through the logbook.
- It was also noted that SERO is developing a new reporting platform that is intended to eventually allow one-stop reporting. The data collected through this application would continue to be funneled through ACCSP. SERO intends to beta test the application with fishermen and conduct outreach. Another project involves creation of a permit registry. Both projects intend to ease the burden on stakeholders as well as the agency. Council members requested to be kept informed regarding the agency's outreach and education plans for these new projects.

Review of allocations for species meeting the time-based criteria in the SAFMC Allocation Review Trigger Policy

At the December 2023 meeting, the Council approved their [Allocation Review Guidelines](#) and updated their [Allocation Review Trigger Policy](#). The guidelines specify how the Council's sector allocations will be reviewed and documented while the policy specifies when allocations reviews will occur. One of the criteria that the Council chose to trigger an allocation review is time-based, noting that each species will have its sector allocations reviewed at least once every seven years.

Several of the [allocations for species that the Council manages](#) currently meet the time-based criteria for review. As such, the Council will work to review allocations for these species over several meetings. For this meeting, the Council reviewed the current sector allocations and other relevant information for Atlantic Spadefish and the three species that make up the Jacks Complex (Almaco Jack, Lesser Amberjack, and Banded Rudderfish). The Council offered the following comments and guidance:

- Generally, the Council noted that the existing sector allocations for the four species are sufficient in relation to the current fishery
- Allocations should be re-examined when the annual catch limits are revised and Fishing Effort Survey (FES) is integrated into the catch level recommendations.
- The Council noted the desire to potentially modify accountability measures for Atlantic Spadefish and the Jacks Complex
- Task the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel to complete a fishery performance report for the Jacks Complex.

In accordance with the guidelines, a summary allocation review report will be developed based on the Council's discussion and presented to the Council for approval at the December 2024 meeting.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Request that SERO staff present to the Council at the December 2024 meeting on:
 - The level of reporting compliance that would be needed to begin validation, start the comparison of logbook data with MRIP estimates, and use logbook data in management.
 - The mechanics of how a "hail-in/hail-out" requirement would work for for-hire vessels.
 - The approval process for landing locations.
 - How was it previously carried out in the Gulf of Mexico?
 - How would private landing locations be approved?
 - How would this approval process operate for permitted vessels in the GARFO region?
 - How important are approved landing locations in relation to validation? Why are they necessary and how are they useful?

- An example of how a validation survey would be administered, what percentage of permitted vessels would need to be sampled, and information on how validation was completed previously in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Prepare a summary allocation review report for Atlantic Spadefish and the Jacks Complex for approval at the December 2024 meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL