

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council II

Litigation Brief

Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC, briefed the Council on two recent lawsuits involving GMFMC actions (see Full Council 1 Closed Session Final Report).

Staff Report

The ED provided a summary of activities and other relevant topics, including the recent request for comments on the National Seafood Strategy. Council members provided input on the latter and requested that staff draft a letter to be submitted on behalf of the Council.

Shrimp Advisory Panel Report

The Shrimp Advisory Panel met on January 18, 2023 to discuss and provide comments on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's Restoration Blueprint. Additionally, the AP discussed concerns regarding impacts from space operations off the east coast of Florida. Staff presented a brief summary of the AP report.

Protocol for Cooperative Fisheries Management

Beth Dieveney, FKNMS staff, presented an overview of the agreement and where it stands regarding its revision as part of the FKNMS Restoration Blueprint. This is one of several agreements that directs how fisheries rules work inside the Sanctuary and identifies the authority of the various partner agencies within the boundaries of the Sanctuary. The agreement has not been updated since 1997. Among the revisions being made to the agreement is the definition of "traditional fishing", which is necessary to address proposed prohibitions (through the Restoration Blueprint) on activities that could have negative impacts on Sanctuary resources (e.g., activities that impact the bottom, fish feeding, etc.). An agreed-upon definition of traditional fishing is needed to exempt traditional fisheries from the proposed prohibitions. The current definition is essentially "frozen" to that established in 1996 and no longer accurately reflects current fishery practices or gear. Work to arrive at a definition that is acceptable to all partners will continue throughout 2023.

Another proposed change in the protocol is to remove NMFS as a "signatory" on behalf of the Councils, and to instead have each Council (GMFMC and SAFMC) sign the agreement. Revisions to the protocol and other agreements are being done collaboratively with all agencies involved (i.e., Councils, FWC, NOS, and NOAA General Counsel).

Additionally, clarification will be provided as to whether "traditional fishing" is used or defined in the other agreements.

NMFS Southeast Regional Office Report

Updates were provided on:

- SEFHIER – the agency is still determining how the lawsuit will impact the South Atlantic as it was directed to the Gulf's portion of the program.
- Geographic Strategic Plan – being done in coordination with the SEFSC. SERO will provide update to the Council later as the draft plan is due to NMFS HQ in April.
- Equity and Environmental Justice – focus groups are being planned along the coast. More details

will be shared with the Council in June.

- Gulf activities – ongoing efforts to refine goals and objectives of the Gulf’s IFQ program and launch a recreational fisheries initiative, the outcome of which is to find a better way to manage recreational fisheries.

In addition, clarification was sought from Council members on whether the file output on a FOIA request to the SERO Permits Office would be improved. Council members indicated the query output is currently a large .csv file that is difficult for stakeholders to work with. Additionally, the permit renewal process is not going smoothly and there is some stakeholder frustration.

The RA indicated there is a problem with the back end of the new electronic permits system (launched in August 2021). The system is functioning as expected on the front end (user interface) but the output the system is generating is problematic and the system is not communicating well with other systems in the region. The RA indicated the issue is actively being addressed in the Permits Office and is not expected to affect the Councils’ developing e-reporting amendments.

NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center Report

Updates were provided on:

- Beta-testing at GARFO on reporting for dually-permitted vessels – the SEFSC will look into what is planned or ongoing and provide feedback later.
- Dolphin MSE – update will be provided to the Council in June.
- Marine Mammal Survey – vessel issues in 2023 will result in a data gap.
- Marine Spatial Planning – is the Council interested in similar work that has been done to inform offshore wind activities in the Gulf?

FY2023 Spend Plan Priorities

SEFSC requested input on FY23 funds directed to improving information on the snapper grouper fishery. A similar request was made in June 2022, and the Council reviewed its prior response and provided further guidance on use of the funds. Recognizing the extensive research and monitoring needs of the snapper grouper fishery, the Council provided a prioritized recommendation, noting 3 top items that it considers appropriate for potential short-term funding of this magnitude that will also provide direct benefits to management and the fishery. Additional topics raised during the discussion were also included to more fully represent the range of needs. The Council’s recommendation is included below and will be forwarded to SEFSC.

SAFMC Guidance in Response to the PL117-103 Budget Directive

“NMFS shall follow prior year direction adopted by Public Law 117–103 regarding ‘South Atlantic Reef Fish,’ and the agreement provides \$1,800,000 for this purpose. NOAA is directed to follow the guidance of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in identifying the best research and data collection necessary to better understand discard rates and mortality in the fishery. Further, the agreement supports full integration of the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count data into the next stock assessment so that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council can appropriately use this new abundance data when making management decisions regarding red snapper.

- I. Recommended Priority Research and Data Collection Projects
 1. Recreational fishery catch characterization and estimation
 - a. Expand for-hire observer coverage

- i. Provide biological information on released fish, epigenetics sample source
 - ii. Provide catch rate information
 - iii. Validate landings and release estimates in SEFHIER
 - iv. Improve spatial resolution of effort and catch information
 - b. Pilot “study fleets” in all sectors: charter, head, private, comm
 - i. Study fleets may be used to provide additional resolution on fishing areas, fishing practices, CPUE, and discarded fish.
 - c. Estimate descender device and Best Fishing Practices (BFP) effectiveness and adoption rates
 - i. Consider both for-hire and private recreational fisheries
 - 1. Consider using observers and surveys
 - ii. Support for SAFMC BFP expansion and RELEASE projects
 - 1. BFP: Support for a planned evaluation workshop to examine the effectiveness of outreach and education efforts
 - 2. RELEASE: increase efforts to collect voluntary information from fishermen on descender usage, the size of released fish, and other data that are not obtained from existing monitoring programs.
 - iii. Support for a regional Symposium on the ‘state of science’ regarding descenders and other release mortality reduction efforts.
- 2. SAFMC Snapper Grouper MSE Project
 - a. Support for SAFMC to further develop and expand the ongoing MSE project.
- 3. Incorporate SARSRP findings into the pending SEDAR Red Snapper stock assessment
 - a. Support a Pre-assessment workshop of SARSRP and SEDAR participants to develop a process for incorporating the new data and information

II. Additional Red Snapper and Snapper Grouper Fishery Research Needs

The Council noted the following additional research needs. Topics designated with (2022) were identified in 2022, in response to a similar request for guidance, and may have been addressed with the 2022 funding. The Council also recognizes that some of these items may be under consideration through other research funding, such as CRP, SK, and MARFIN.

1. (2022) Support for FWC to expand coverage of their hook and line survey.
 - a. Increased effort, dockside and vessel counts, in core RS area (Canaveral to Jax)
 - b. Increased geographic range (into GA at least.)
 - c. Observers, for hire
 - d. Video monitoring
2. Red Snapper Assessment Uncertainties Research
 - a. Direct estimation of Red Snapper Natural Mortality
 - b. Evaluate the impacts of recruits sourced from the Gulf of Mexico
 - c. Evaluate size-dependence in discard mortality
3. (2022) Support MARMAP resolving an otolith and histology backlog for species beyond Red Snapper (funding for Red Snapper provided in 2022).
4. (2022) Support for Sea Grant to expand the outreach component of the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project.
5. Evaluate the impact of climate impacts and species distribution shifts on Snapper Grouper species.

6. Evaluate the impacts and costs of changing from otolith-based age estimates to epigenetic aging techniques for assessed species and additional Tier 1 assessments species as specified in the research and monitoring plan.

Council Workplan & Upcoming Meetings

The Council reviewed the revised workplan based on actions taken during the meeting week and directed staff to incorporate the following additional changes to the version reviewed to address topics discussed during the Committees:

- Incorporate a discussion of how regime shifts might affect the snapper grouper fishery where appropriate.
- Regarding a presentation on space launch related closures and debris, contact either NASA or Space Florida.