

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council II

Reports

John Carmichael, Executive Director, presented a summary of staff activities since the March 2023 meeting and highlighted the numerous amendments that Council and SERO staffs completed during the second quarter. A proposed approach to better define the Council's allocation review process was also presented. A summary of the May 2023 Council Coordinating Committee meeting was also provided.

The US Coast Guard representative briefed the Council on safety-at-sea issues related to the red snapper recreational seasons. The USCG recommends a change to the current approach to prevent further issues and stated the agency cannot accommodate the current situation.

Space Operations off Florida

Dale Ketcham, vice-president of government and community relations for Space Florida, delivered a presentation on space-related activities off the east coast of Florida. Space Florida is a state agency whose goal is to help Florida grow in the new space economy. Mr. Ketcham clarified the roles of the various entities and responsibilities related to space debris that may impact fishing as well as temporary closures of coastal waters related to launches and recovery. The agency is becoming more aware of fishing impacts. The number of launches is anticipated to increase in the future. Council concerns with space operations include loss of revenue and disruption of activities due to launch restrictions, damage to gear due to interactions with debris, environmental impact from launches and debris, and timely communication of restrictions being imposed and removed. Salient points of the discussion are below:

- Commercial aviation is the industry most impacted by DoD and NASA activities.
- To validate which entity is responsible for space debris in the ocean, each agency insurance department would need to be involved.
- Space debris is most likely a responsibility of the FAA because that is the agency that issues licenses to fly. Hence, it is likely a federal issue.
- There has probably not been an effort to clean up space debris or quantify how much has ended up in the ocean.
- There may be potential to establish a mitigation fund, like what is being done to offset impacts from wind energy development (e.g., Offshore Wind Initiative)
- There has been improved communication with the travel industry to lessen impacts on cruise ship and airport operations. So far there have not been any problems, but the number of space launches is expected to increase.
- The Council requested statistics regarding closures to navigation/fishing that have occurred due to space activities. Which agency keeps track of this information and the cumulative impacts?
- The Council requested that staff communicate with the USCG to start quantifying impacts to fishing activities.

National Standards Presentation

Mike Ruccio, Division Chief of the OSF's Domestic Fisheries Division, briefed the Council on an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to potentially update National Standards 4 (allocations), 8 (communities) and 9 (bycatch). The ANPR process, similar to scoping, focuses on soliciting feedback on climate related impacts on fisheries and promoting equity and environmental justice. The presentation (Attachment 3 in the Full Council Session II briefing materials) included requests for specific input. The ANPR published on May 15, 2023, and the agency is soliciting public comment by September 12, 2023.

A comment letter will be prepared on behalf of the Council. Council members are asked to send input to John Carmichael by July 15, so a draft letter can be prepared and routed for revision ahead of the September deadline.

Equity and Environmental Justice Presentation

Andy Strelcheck, NMFS Regional Administrator, presented a summary of public feedback on the NOAA Fisheries EEJ Strategy and details on implementation of the EEJ strategy in the southeast region. Over the next few months, SERO and SEFSC staff will be conducting in-person scoping sessions to gather information on needs within the region and broad EEJ strategies that could be incorporated into the regional implementation plan. The Council reviewed the tentative locations for scoping work in the South Atlantic and provided suggestions for engaging with communities. It was reiterated that NMFS would like to continue collaborating with the Council throughout development of regional implementation plan.

NMFS Southeast Regional Office Report

Andy Strelcheck, NMFS Regional Administrator, provided the following updates:

- Geographic Strategic Plan is still in preparation.
- NMFS is working on a Notice of Funding Opportunity/Exempted Fishing Permit for red snapper. This would be a grant award to test innovative ideas to reduce discards in the snapper grouper fishery. It is anticipated that the funding opportunity would be announced in late July/August.
- NMFS is reinitiating ESA Section 7 Consultation for the 2021 Shrimp Bi-Op. Consultation will be limited to addressing giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish. NMFS anticipates completing the consultation by the end of 2024 or early 2025.
- NMFS completed an amendment to the CMP Biological Opinion addressing oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta rays. It was concluded that the CMP fishery was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of these species and an incidental take statement was issued. The amendment does not contain any requirements for Council action.

NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center Report

John Walter, Deputy Director for Science and Council Services, provided the following updates:

- The Center is working on contracts for fishery-independent cruises.
- A spending plan for \$1.8M for south Atlantic reef fish projects was presented. Funding has been allocated to the SA Red Snapper Research Project (SARSRP) in previous years, but now it can be allocated to similar items and to incorporating the project's results into

the red snapper stock assessment. Included in the spend plan (Attachment 7 in the Full Council Session II briefing materials) are:

- Support for and implementation of a simulation study of the efficacy of conventional tagging vs genetic tagging.
- Support for SERO to pilot study fleets that would fish under various scenarios that might reduce discard mortality and generate better catch and effort data. Study fleets are used in the Northeast to provide more precise information on fishing activities and may be useful in the Southeast.
- Support to SAFMC for expanding BFP efforts and the Citizen Science Release project.
- Support to SAFMC for an expanded phase of the SG MSE, to incorporate findings of the SARSRP and socio-economic factors.
- Support to SEFSC for a dedicated scientist to focus on developing modeling methods to incorporate SARSRP findings into the stock assessment and management advice framework.
- Support to SEDAR to conduct a workshop prior to the next South Atlantic Red Snapper assessment to develop a plan for integrating the findings of the SARSRP into the assessment.

Council Workplan & Upcoming Meetings

The Council reviewed the revised workplan based on actions taken during the meeting week.

The Council was generally supportive of the revisions and directed staff to also incorporate the following:

- Schedule a presentation on plans for upcoming wind energy development at the December 2023 or March 2024 Council meeting.