

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council II
December 8, 2023

Staff Report

The Council received a summary of activities since the September meeting from the Executive Director.

Council Coordination Committee Report

John Carmichael provided an overview of the October 2023 Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Meeting. The CCC is working on various national issues, including the NMFS governance directive, NEPA updates, Equity and Environmental Justice, Inflation Reduction Act funding and climate preparedness. The Caribbean Council will host the CCC in 2024 with meetings held in May and October.

Allocations Review Guidelines

The Council has developed allocation review guidelines to formally document the Council’s approach to allocations and respond to various federal policy directives and reports on allocations. The Council approved a revised draft of the allocation review guidelines and updated allocation review trigger policy. The revision was to remove reference to annual optimum yield in one of the indicator-based triggers.

MOTION: APPROVE THE ALLOCATION REVIEW GUIDELINES AND UPDATED ALLOCATION REVIEW TRIGGER POLICY.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Stakeholder Meetings

Council staff presented a plan for holding stakeholder engagement meetings along the south Atlantic coast to meet fishermen in their communities with a goal to build relationships with stakeholders and momentum for participation in the management process. The Council reviewed draft goals and objectives for stakeholder meetings and a tentative timeline that has meetings scheduled to begin in 2025. Additionally, to allow Council members to be closely involved in the development process, a planning team was created with the following Council members participating:

South Atlantic State	Council Members (Primary (Secondary))
North Carolina	Tom Roller (<i>Trish Murphey</i>)
South Carolina	Kerry Marhefka (<i>Gary Borland</i>)
Georgia	Judy Helmey
Florida	Jessica McCawley (<i>Laurilee Thompson</i>)

Offshore Wind Energy Projects

Representatives from TotalEnergies, Duke Energy, and Avangrid provided a briefing to the Council on offshore wind energy development in the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic regions. Council members had the opportunity to ask questions and request clarification. The following are salient points of the ensuing discussion:

- There is expected to be minor disruption to waters surrounding the area of a monopile installation. Installation for each one is expected to be one day.
- The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) currently requires that when towers are decommissioned, the material is removed to 15 feet below the mud line. It is not clear at this point what plans for decommissioning wind towers will look like 30 years from now, however. There could be an argument for leaving the structures in place once they have become habitat. A decommissioning plan will not be put in place until after the structures have been in place for some time.
- The Council can provide input to BOEM along the way at any point.
- Council members requested clarification regarding hot water discharges and whether they are associated with offshore wind energy. It was clarified that cooling water discharges are associated with High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) systems and not required for other types of projects.
- Council members asked whether there were any data deficiencies that would allow wind developers to better understand or address issues in the region. For the Kitty Hawk project, the fishery representatives have been very helpful and having additional historical data would be informative for all projects. For Carolina Long Bay, which is much earlier in its development, representatives have been engaging directly with fishermen. They are producing fact sheets, local notices to mariners, and utilizing media channels and a website to inform stakeholders and allow opportunity for input
- Council members asked whether there would be opportunity for commercial dockage as part of the supporting infrastructure. It is anticipated that will be the case, along with other community partnerships.
- Regarding potential impacts to long-term fisheries surveys, the developers are aware and in communication with the SEFSC to make sure any issues are identified. They have also engaged with state agencies and expect the communication to continue.
- The SEFSC representative indicated the agency will soon publish a survey mitigation strategy that will assist in maintaining survey integrity.

Topics for Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LEAP)

The Council reviewed a list of topics for the January 29-30, 2024, meeting of the LEAP and provided guidance to staff.

NMFS Reports

- Equity and Environmental Justice – agency to report to the Council in March.
- The SEFSC received funds for the Climate, Ecosystems, and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) and expect to hire four new positions to assist with the effort under that initiative

- Offshore wind energy development is garnering a lot of attention in terms of laying the foundation for the science needed to mitigate survey issues.
- John Walter, SEFSC, is the regional representative for the National Seafood Strategy work. The focus in the South Atlantic will be the shrimp industry. The SEFSC is also conducting a management strategy evaluation in the Gulf for the shrimp fishery. The agency plans to conduct listening sessions for the project (“Shrimp Futures”) in the Gulf that may extend to the South Atlantic. A one-page document outlining the plan will be presented to the Gulf Council at their January 2024 meeting and could also be presented to the South Atlantic Council in March.
- The SEFSC received funds to purchase a new vessel to conduct reef fish surveys in the southeast. The vessel will likely be based in Pascagoula, MS (deepest water access).
- Dr. Todd Kellison gave a presentation summarizing the outcome of the Atlantic Coast Science Coordination Workshop that was conducted in 2021. A [technical memo](#) was published with recommendations.
- Additionally, the presentation highlighted coordination efforts to address cross-jurisdictional fisheries management issues, including:
 - bathymetric mapping north of Cape Hatteras to inform distribution of hardbottom habitats.
 - potential expansion to expand the trap survey south of Port St. Lucie, FL
 - potential expansion of the NEFSC trap video survey into Mid and South Atlantic waters.
 - South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey (SADLS) – cooperative survey with industry (Dewey). The distribution of the survey aligns with the Council’s area of jurisdiction. In late 2022 the Mid-Atlantic Council asked to extend survey into their waters. In 2023 the survey will be expanded north to Delaware Bay. Expansion was to cover the core range of blueline tilefish and to reach the southern end of the golden tilefish survey.
 - fishery-dependent work – coordinate closely with GARFO and HMS regarding vessel and dealer data collection.
 - participatory workshops (dolphin)
 - species distribution modeling focusing on Snapper grouper species dolphin
 - connectivity between the Gulf and the South Atlantic (dispersal modeling of red snapper, scamp, black sea bass).
 - Distribution Mapping and Analysis Portal (DisMAP) – online database that provides access to info. SEAMAP coastal trawl survey data are currently included for the SA region. Anticipate adding SERFS data.
 - Climate Vulnerability Analysis (CVA) – broad look at vulnerability of suite of species (managed and non-managed) to changing climate. Published as a NOAA Tech Memo and there is an online portal to quickly generate products.

Council Workplan

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:

- Stop work on CMP Framework Amendment 3 until port meetings have been completed.
- Move discussion of Coral Amendment 10 and potential changes to Habitat Areas of Particular Concern to the June 2024 meeting.
- Replace the vermilion snapper assessment response amendment with a discussion of commercial snapper grouper permits.
- Move the potential approval of Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 for public hearings to the June 2024 meeting.
- Drop the snapper grouper white paper from the workplan since this item will be incorporated into future discussions of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 and the planned long-term amendment.
- Add a discussion of SEFHEIR improvements to the March 2024 meeting.