

SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council III

The Council convened the afternoon of Thursday, December 8, and morning of Friday, December 9, 2022.

Update on US Coast Guard (USCG) activities

Lt. Cameron Box briefed the Council on USCG activities in the region. Council members had questions about temporary safety zones in re-entry sites off Jacksonville, Daytona, Cape Canaveral, Tampa, and Tallahassee, Florida. The safety zones have been established for the safe splashdown and recovery of reentry vehicles launched by Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) in support of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and privately chartered missions from January 1, 2023, through February 4, 2024. The Council submitted letter to the USCG during the open comment period citing concerns mainly over disruption to fishing activities and impacts to essential fish habitat as the frequency of recovery operations increases. Lt. Box indicated this activity is not within the Enforcement Division of the USCG but that he would pass along specific questions to the USCG Waterways Division. A Council member requested that a presentation be given to the Council at an upcoming meeting on this type of activity to ensure public awareness and for Council members to be able to have their questions answered.

Update on Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD)

Staff provided a summary the CMOD meeting that was held in November 2022. CMOD replaces the Fisheries Forum meetings that were held in the past to inform and educate Council members from around the nation on various topics related to fisheries management. The CMOD meeting convened a group of Council members and staff, and NMFS staff from all the US regions to discuss Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM). Staff summarized approaches and tools being used by other Council and take-ways from the various presentations given during the meeting, which are available at the following link: <http://www.fisherycouncils.org/cmmod-workshops/2022>

Habitat Protection & Ecosystem Advisory Panel Report

Cindy Cooksey, Habitat AP Chair, delivered a summary of the AP's discussion and recommendations to the Council, including:

- 5-year EFH review – AP recommends beginning planning in spring 2023 and starting with a review of EFH for penaeid shrimp.
- Policy statement on beach dredging and large-scale coastal engineering – AP provided revisions to the existing policy that will be considered by the Council's Habitat Committee in March 2023.
- Policy statement on energy – AP recommends initiating update to this policy considering rapidly developing renewable wind energy in the region.
- Mapping and characterization of deep-water ecosystems – AP recommends the Council consider expansion of Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC boundaries to encompass new regions.

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) Update

Charlie Phillips, Council liaison to the ALWTRT, provided a briefing to the Council on recent activities, including:

- Most issues being discussed are in the Northeast US. The level of risk to large whales stemming from fishing activity in the Southeast is very small.
- The ALWTRT is recommending that ropeless black sea bass pots be required in the closed area that has been imposed on that fishery in the South Atlantic. The Council will have to discuss the specifics of allowing ropeless gear in the area.
- NOAA is exploring geolocation technology to mark fishing gear.
- The ALWTRT did not discuss the proposed vessel speed rule reduction to protect right whales as that topic was not part of the team's deliberations. However, it is expected that NMFS will take action on this item soon (to address lawsuit, regulations need to be in place by 2024).

NMFS Southeast Regional Office Report

Andy Strelcheck, Regional Administrator, provided the following updates:

- Critical habitat for Nassau grouper is being proposed, mainly in the Florida Keys.
- NMFS will be requesting input on revisions to National Standards 4 (allocations), 8 (communities) and 9 (bycatch).
- SERO is reporting 37% compliance in the South Atlantic with for-hire reporting requirements implemented through the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program. There are a lot of No Fishing reports being submitted (disproportionate level relative to logbooks). Data derived from the SEFHIER program are not yet available to inform management discussions.

NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Staff delivered presentations on the Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation Stakeholder Meetings and an update on the South Atlantic Ecosystem Status Report and Climate Vulnerability Assessment.

Committee and Full Council Session Reports

The Council provided additional guidance and approved motions made during committees (see final committee reports).

FMP Workplan and 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 and the excessive commitments for March 2023:

- Delay consideration of the Dolphin Longline Amendment until the Dolphin MSE process is completed.
- Delay further discussion on Dolphin recreational measures until June 2023 and include a summary report on the Dolphin MSE stakeholder workshops.
- Delay presenting the SG Discard Mortality White Paper until a time TBD.
- Shift timing of SG Amendment 44 (Yellowtail Snapper) by one meeting to allow Snapper Grouper AP input in Spring 2023. This amendment will be reviewed by the Council at the June 2023 meeting.

- Add consideration of the Spawning SMZs evaluation to the June 2023 meeting.
- Add a discussion of the Snapper Grouper MSE to the March 2023 meeting.
- Add a planning discussion for Mackerel Port Meetings to the March 2023 meeting.