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THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Integration of Revised Food Webs and Connectivity Policy Information into EFH designations



Food Web and Connectivity Policy Revisions



- The HEAP received a presentation on the revised policy in October 2024 and agreed to the changes:
 - Update the food web map
 - Update diet information
 - Define prey abundance
 - Update references
 - Integrate a new appendix identifying the top 5 prey items per FMP
- Presented to Council at the March 2025 meeting



New information added to the Policy

- Updated food web
- Top ten prey items by FMP
 - All prey
 - Fish prey
 - % importance of each
- Due to the variety of data sources the only species with available adult and juvenile specific diet information are Red Snapper, King Mackerel, and Spanish Mackerel.

How do we integrate food web information into EFH designations?

The working group looked at other councils' methods for integrating prey information into EFH designations.

- Ecosystem component species?
- Identifying top prey and designating them as EFH?
- Identifying the habitat of top prey and identifying that as EFH?
- Describing it in the FMP as part of the life history summary?



Potential Concerns



Add a prey dependence definition in the user guide (ex. Gulf EFH amendment)

- **Concerns:**

- If we do species-specific analyses, it may be lengthy, but guild-level analyses may miss specialists.
- Add in life history stages?
- When to separate specialists?
- Need to determine prey habitat use.
- How many top prey to include?
- Identifying prey habitats that are outside of where the predator resides.

Next steps

- Identify very different (life history wise) species
- Identify information of importance
 - Top prey by species
 - Habitat use of prey by life stage
 - Habitat use by predator by life stage
 - Identify areas that don't overlap
 - Draft a prey dependency paragraph for each
- Develop best practices/lessons learned
- Bring those to the next HEAP meeting

Example Species



- Gray Triggerfish – nest builder, pelagic larval stage, hard bottom adult stage
- Red Snapper – Lots of information, general predator, not a specialist
- Dolphinfish – Large pelagic predator
- Golden Crab – Benthic predator
- Tomtate – low trophic level, hard bottom juvenile and adult stage
- Gag Grouper – estuarine larval stage, hard bottom adult stage, lots of juvenile data available



**Feedback on Chosen Species?
Volunteers by species?**

Work completion goal December 2029