



Habitat and Ecosystem
Advisory Panel
Summer 2026

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THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Integration of Revised Food Webs and Connectivity Policy Information into EFH Designations and Policy Update Issues



Integrating Prey Information into EFH Definitions

- 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 are different from the current definition
 - Draft a prey dependency paragraph for each
- Develop best practices/lessons learned

Test Species for Integrating Prey Information

- 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

Complications

- Food Web working group met Fall 2025 and January 2026
- Working group expressed concerns about standardizing the process of combining prey data across stomach content records with different units, levels of taxonomic identification, and sample sizes.
 - Level of taxonomic grouping in Ecopath/Ecosim model is too broad to capture specialist predators potentially targeting specific prey
- SAFMC and FWC staff are working on data processing
- Process may become more time-intensive and subjective than originally planned.
- Lauren Gentry Is developing a worksheet that will allow working group members to help identify and rank prey habitat use



2018 and 2025 Food Policy Integration plan

The group met and determined that the 2018 policy contained information that was worth integration

The 2018 verbiage was added in as an appendix

The relevant sections were then linked to the appropriate policies

The wording was then streamlined and updated



2018 and 2025 Food Policy Integration plan

**Review the changes and approve for council review in
September 2026?**

Timeline



Currently Working on:

- Data processing with FWC staff
- How to handle the 2018 policy

In the next 6 months to a year:

- Identify Information of importance for each test species
- Develop best practices

By December 2029

- Integrate EFH identified via predator-prey analysis into the relevant FMPs
- Update all User Guide EFH definitions with predator prey information

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The top half of the image shows deep blue ocean water. A white sandy beach runs diagonally from the middle left towards the top right. Below the beach is a shallow lagoon with light green and turquoise water, showing some darker patches of coral or rocks. The bottom half of the image is a dark, almost black, gradient area where the text is placed.

**Work
Completion Goal:
December 2029**