



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Resilient Fisheries Update

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Resilient Fisheries Initiatives

A screenshot of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council website. The page has a blue header with the council's name and social media icons. A dark blue sidebar on the left contains a navigation menu with the council's logo at the top and various menu items. The main content area features a large heading "Resilient Fisheries" and a paragraph of text. To the right of the text is a large image of the ocean under a blue sky. A red arrow points to the "Resilient Fisheries" menu item in the sidebar.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

GET INVOLVED

Home / Resilient Fisheries

Resilient Fisheries

Resilient Fisheries Initiative and Projects support the development of more nimble and adaptive fisheries management processes and advice in the Southeast region by reviewing available information, identifying impactful change, and supporting the Council's implementation.

- Home
- Regulations
- Meetings
- Fishery Management
- News & Updates
- About the Council
- Habitat and Ecosystem
- Best Fishing Practices
- Citizen Science Program
- Science & SEDAR
- Resilient Fisheries

<https://safmc.net/resilient-fisheries/>



Resilient Fisheries Initiatives

- 1** SAFMC Governance Projects: SAFMC Fishery Management Process Review and Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development
- 2** Stakeholder-Driven Adaptable Implementable Management (AIM) for Wreckfish Fishery
- 3** Updating Distributions & Essential Fish Habitat for Snapper Groupers, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo FMUs
- 4** Multiphase Communities Project: Community Identification, Communication Plan Development, Ecosystem Change Impacts on Fishing Communities



Project 1a: SAFMC Management Process Review

In Progress

Project Objectives:

1. Assess current SAFMC management processes and recommend improvements to address inefficiencies.
2. Analyze SAFMC committee structure and compare it with other regional councils.
3. Explore options for integrating risk policies to manage growing uncertainties.

Progress Updates:

- The initial Project Oversight Team meeting took place in September 2025, involving federal fisheries management representatives from the East and Gulf coasts.
- Contractors have made progress reviewing Council processes, conducting interviews and developing project deliverables.
- The first project report, focusing on Process Mapping and a Case Study was submitted in December and is currently under review.

[Full Project Overview](#)



Project 1b: Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development

In Progress

Project Objectives:

- Evaluate current ecosystem data, tools, and reports utilized by regional management councils and their impact on decision-making.
- Investigate methods to incorporate ecosystem information into SAFMC and inter-jurisdictional management with attention to practical application.
- Identify ways to strengthen collaborative and community-driven data collection and research to advance ecosystem understanding in the South Atlantic region.

Progress Updates:

- An interim report on data products and methods from all Councils was submitted to the OT for review.
- Upcoming actions include finalizing the all Councils data report by January's end and beginning data gathering to create prototype ecosystem indicators.
- The project contractor is working with the Ecosystem Data Gaps Workshop steering committee on preparing tools and presentations.

[Full Project Overview](#)

Project 2: Stakeholder-Driven AIM for Wreckfish Fishery



In Progress

Project Objectives:

1. Complete a data-limited stock assessment
2. Develop stakeholder-driven management decision
3. Recommend catch-level management strategies



Progress Updates:

- The project is on track and progressing as expected. The Project Oversight Team (OT) met in September and received a project update and provided feedback.
- The contractors gave the first of two presentations to the SSC during their Oct. meeting, updating and receiving feedback on identified data sources and modeling approaches.
- AIM Stakeholder Workshop was held Nov. 12-14 and introduced stakeholders to the AIM process.
- Using the workshop outcomes, the contractors will continue development and customization of the AIM Harvest Control Rule Design Tool.

[Full Project Overview](#)

Project 3: Updating Spatial Distribution and Essential Fish Habitat

In Progress

Project Objectives:

1. Updated information on species and fishery spatial distributions
2. Comparisons between existing EFH designations to updated species distributions
3. Recommendations for potential future EFH change
4. Improved display of EFH information on the Council website

Progress Updates:

- The project remains on schedule following the September meeting of the Project Oversight Team, which reviewed progress and provided feedback.
- Contractors presented initial findings and received input from the SSC during their October meeting.
- The AIM Stakeholder Workshop in November introduced participants to the AIM process.
- Contractors will use workshop feedback to further develop the AIM Harvest Control Rule Design Tool.

[Full Project Overview](#)





Project 4: Multi-phase Communities Project

Proposal Selection Underway

Phase I Objective: (Proposals under Review)

- Gathering and analyzing data to characterize South Atlantic fishing communities, their economic dependencies, and vulnerabilities to environmental.
- The deliverables include a comprehensive report, outreach products, and a database to support further stakeholder assessment and communication planning in Phase II.

Phase II Objective:(Proposals under Review)

- Builds on the findings of Phase I, conducting a stakeholder outreach and communication assessment.
- Focuses on developing a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan that promotes the incorporation of community perspectives into Council management decisions.
- Involves close collaboration with stakeholders to identify effective engagement methods and create tools such as an online communication hub and interactive stakeholder maps.

Phase III Objective:(RFP in Development)

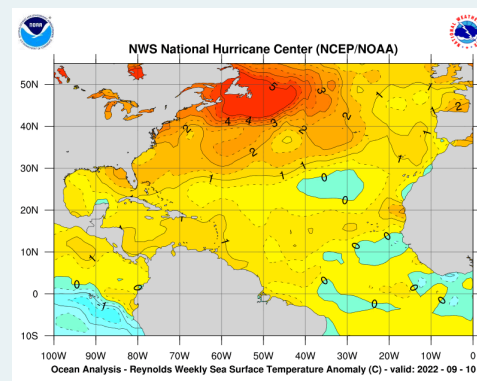
PROJECT OVERVIEW COMING SOON

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Ecosystem Data Workshop

Overview

- NOAA-funded, SAFMC-led regional workshop to address ecosystem data and collaboration recommendations.
- Organized to address recommendations from Atlantic Coast Science Coordination Workshop (NOAA, 2021) and the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning (East Coast Management Organizations, 2021-2023)
- Guidance will address other IRA projects including the Ecosystem Information Review, and Council implementation of outcomes.





SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

A Collaborative Approach

Steering Committee Members:

Chip Collier, SAFMC
Julia Byrd, SAFMC
Kathleen Howington, SAFMC
Lara Klibansky, SAFMC
Myra Brouwer, SAFMC

Mandy Karnauskas, NOAA SEFSC
Roldan Muñoz, NOAA SEFSC
Verena Wang, Gulf Council
Brandon Muffley, MAFMC

Participants:

Workshop participants have been selected because you are an expert in one of the key areas needed for successful outcomes:

- Regional ecosystem data
- Federal fishery assessment
- Social and economic sciences
- Climate data
- Climate policy
- Federal fishery management councils
- State fisheries agency data
- Cooperative data sharing
- Coastal community resilience
- Non-traditional data
- Ecosystem Information products
- Federal Council Ecosystem Information Use
- Ecosystem Indicators



SWCA Facilitation Team:

Meg Perry, Lead
Jose Rodriguez
Sarah Ensor
Sarah Lupis

SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

Session 1 Management Decisions (Jan. 12) ✓

- Review SAFMC management decisions and existing ecosystem information support
- Identify priority decisions to help guide discussion in following workshop sessions

Session 2 Ecosystem Information Tools (Jan. 15) ✓

- Presentation by Sarah Gaichas on Ecosystem Information Tools Across Councils
- Understand regional differences in ecosystem data and tool development
- Alignment of tools with management decision and needs discussed in previous session.

Session 3 Indicators and Data (Jan. 22) ✓

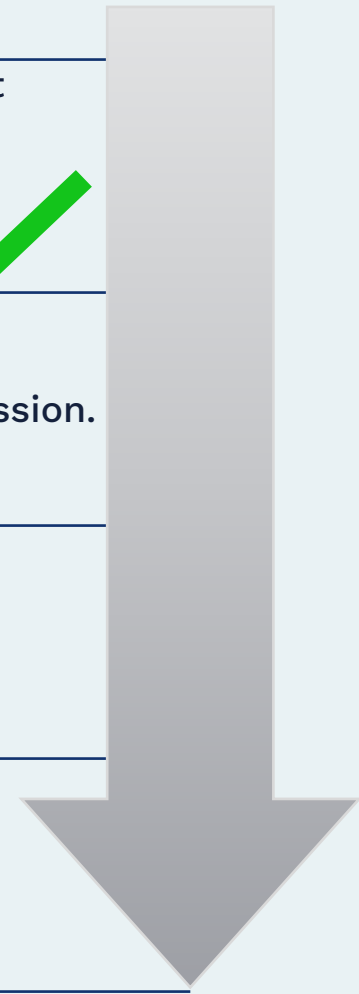
- Presentation by Mandy Karnauskas on Development of ESR's for the SE Region
- Understanding existing indicators and data sources in the Southeast
- Identify data gaps and opportunities to fill them

Session 4 Guidance Development (Feb. 4)

- Connecting management decisions with ecosystem information
- Build consensus on practices for using indicators and tools in decision-making
- Define actionable strategies to overcome data and tool challenges

Session 5 Guidance and Report Review (Feb. 18)

- Review draft summary workshop report and finalize guidance





SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

Discussion Highlights and Questions

Highlights

- Decision Type Categorized by Timing and Scope
 - Routine vs Occasional
 - Tactical vs Strategic
- Overall ecosystem information is not well integrated in SAFMC council decisions processes, especially not routine tactical decisions
- There are many tools, including ESR, CVA, FEPs, etc, but it's not clear how to integrate the information they contain
- Timing of information is not well matched with timing of Council decisions
- Mid-Atlantic Council has developed a Risk Assessment tool as part of their Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management to incorporate ecosystem information into decision processes.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/5bd0833b71c10b8d31af4f0c/1540391743297/MAB_RiskAssess_08_18.pdf
- Gulf Council are developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan that includes Fishery Ecosystem Issues as an implementation pathway (https://gulf-council-media.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2025/10/Q-4a-Gulf_FEP_2025.pdf)



SAFMC Ecosystem Data Workshop

Discussion Highlights and Questions

Questions

- What are the barriers in the South Atlantic to using Ecosystem Information?
- There are a lot of indicators being developed but are they useful in predicting management decision success?
- If the Council uses ecosystem information the implementation pathway needs to be legally defensible. How do we formalize it?
- Are there types of information or data that may not be appropriate for long-term trend analysis, but that could be used to inform more routine tactical decisions?

Questions?



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