



# Updating Distributions & Essential Fish Habitat

## Resilient Fisheries Project Overview

### Description

Understanding and predicting environmentally driven shifts in species distribution is important for effective fisheries management. This project aims to improve our understanding of how ecosystem change affects where key fish species are found in the Southeastern United States. Using state-of-the-art spatiotemporal modeling techniques this project will explore indicators of environmental change in the spatial distribution and habitat associations for the fish and fisheries managed under the SAFMC's Snapper-Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Dolphin Wahoo FMPs. The updated species distributions and Essential Fish Habitat descriptions will inform Council decision-making for more resilient fisheries management and governance. Project outcomes will also inform evaluations of existing governance structures, including cooperative and interjurisdictional governance approaches.

### Progress Updates

- The project team are continuing development of the single-species and joint-species models.
- The Project Oversight Team (OT) met in February and received an update on multispecies-modeling efforts, which include Dolphin Wahoo species, and initial results from Snapper Grouper single-species modeling efforts, including successful integration of disparate data for some snapper grouper species.
- The teams efforts are continuing and, following a period of revision and continued development, the models will be reviewed at the October 2026 SSC meeting.

### Project Team

*Contractors:* Jie Cao, NCSU (Co-PI); Seungyeon Jade Hong, UNC IMS; Janet Nye, UNC IMS (Co-PI)

*Oversight Team:* Myra Brouwer, Chip Collier, Kathleen Howington, Simen Kaalstad (ASMFC), Tori Kentner (MAFMC), Lara Klibansky

### Project Timeline

**2024**

- ✓ **Oct.** - Request for proposals released.
- ✓ **Dec.** - Proposals reviewed and contractor selected.

**2025**

- ✓ **Jan.** - Project Oversight Team formed
- ✓ **Mar.** - Begin quarterly Project Oversight Team meetings with contractors
- ✓ **Apr.** - Begin data gathering, processing and model development

**2026**

- ✓ **Feb.** - Project Oversight Team review of initial models
- Oct.** - SSC review of spatiotemporal models

**2027**

- Feb.** - Presentation to Habitat and Ecosystem AP
- Mar.** - Presentation to Council; Submit final report

Implementation will begin with the Council reviewing and project outcomes and recommendations.