

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting**

**Final Report**

**October 22-24, 2013**

**Crowne Plaza  
North Charleston, SC**

**VERSION  
SSC Report Final**

### PURPOSE

Topics to address during this meeting:

- SEDAR planning and update
- Consider the basis of fishing level recommendations
- Review Spanish mackerel projections and recommendations
- Update on the SEFIS program
- ACCSP biological sampling targets
- Assessments of blueline tilefish and snowy grouper
- Data poor assessment techniques
- ABC control rule productivity and susceptibility ratings
- Current FMP Amendments

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## Documents:

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- Attachment 2. SEDAR Assessment List
- Attachment 3. 2014 SEDAR Projects Summary
- Attachment 4. SEDAR 41 TORs and schedule
- Attachment 5. Gag Update TORs
- Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Draft Report
- Attachment 7. SAFMC Assessment Planning
- Attachment 8. Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations
- Attachment 9. MSST Alternatives, SEFSC 2011
- Attachment 10. Council Conclusions on MSST, Amendment 24
- Attachment 11. Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment Report
- Attachment 12. Revised Spanish Mackerel Projections
- Attachment 13. June 2013 Mackerel Committee Excerpt
- Attachment 14. ACCSP BioSampling Prioritization Matrix
- Attachment 15. ACCSP BioSampling Priorities Keys
- Attachment 16. SEFSC Presentation on Biosampling targets
- Attachment 17. SEDAR 32 Assessment Report, Blueline Tilefish
- Attachment 18. SEDAR 36, Snowy Grouper Assessment Report
- Attachment 19. Data Poor Assessment Approaches
- Attachment 20. ABC Control Rule
- Attachment 21. MRAG PSA Reports
- Attachment 22. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 22 Draft
- Attachment 23. SAFMC Work Plan, March 2013
- Attachment 24. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2013

**\* Indicates documents not available for the first Briefing Book.**

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## **SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

### Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is to be distributed to the Committee through the Council office, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment to be considered by the SSC shall be provided to the Council office no later than one week prior to an SSC meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment is 12:00 pm Tuesday, October 15, 2013.

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### Oral comment:

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items will be provided during SSC meetings. The first will be at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion, when the SSC reviews its recommendations. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, which may be through a show of hands or a written list if the number of interested parties is extensive, who will then recognize individuals to come forward and provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2013 meeting

### 1.2. Action

Introductions

Review and Approve Agenda

Approve Minutes

*The SSC meeting was called to order at 9:00 am, as scheduled.*

*The agenda was adopted without change and the minutes of the April 2013 meeting were adopted without further comment or changes. Member introductions were made. The Chair reviewed the agenda and outlined the general format and conduct of the meeting as discussed in the overview document.*

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public will be provided two opportunities to comment on SSC agenda items during this meeting. The first at the start of the meeting, and the final will be provided at the end during the review of recommendations. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

*Accordingly, at this point in the meeting the Chair opened the floor for the first opportunity for public comment. Public comments were provided by Mr. Russell "Rusty" Hudson (Directed Sustainable Fisheries).*

## 3. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

### 3.1. Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Assessment List

Attachment 3. 2014 SEDAR Projects Summary

Attachment 4. SEDAR 41 TORs and schedule

Attachment 5. Gag Update TORs

Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Draft Report

Attachment 7. SAFMC Assessment Planning

### 3.2. Overview

(Attachment 3, Attachment 4) SEDAR 41 will assess South Atlantic red snapper and gray triggerfish. Gray triggerfish is replacing red porgy in this benchmark project, to address delays in triggerfish that led to its removal from SEDAR 32. Additionally, SEFSC requested additional analytical time for this assessment, to be provided by delaying the Review Workshop until June 2015. Given scheduled June activities, it is possible that it may fall back to July. The Committee is asked to review and approve the TORs and Schedule, and identify participants for Council consideration in December.

Two versions of the TORs are provided for consideration. The first is based on the approved SEDAR template TORs, intended to provide a consistent starting point. It includes an additional TOR in the DW section, requesting discussion of data uncertainties, included in response to the recent publication of NS2 guidelines. The second version has more extensive changes. As part of the TOR development process, the SEFSC analysts are asked to comment, so that any specific analytical items or issues of concern for the stock can be identified early in the process. In this instance, the analytical team provided extensive comment on the wording of TORs for the Review Workshop. As these suggested changes go beyond the identification of specific analytical needs and could impact how the RW approaches its tasks, the SSC is provided both TOR versions.

(Attachment 3, Attachment 5) A gag update assessment will be conducted during 2014 and provided to the SSC in October 2015. Terms of Reference are provided for review and comment.

(Attachment 6 ) The SEDAR Steering Committee met October 1-2, 2013 to address assessment priorities and discuss the SEDAR process.

(Attachment 7) The Council discussed a long term assessment planning process at its September 2013 meeting. Support was offered for the overall process, a 5 year assessment interval and proposed priority stocks. The SSC is asked to further review and comment on the approach and priority stocks. Following SSC review, staff will prepare a schedule for 2016-2026 for consideration at the December Council meeting.

Gray triggerfish were included with SEDAR 32, then delayed due to ageing issues. At first a desk review was planned for early 2014, but the problems proved more difficult and the delay extended. The Committee will be provided a status report.

The Steering Committee supports holding a SEDAR procedures workshop to address South Atlantic Shrimp Data, as discussed at the SSC meeting of October 2012. At this time the Committee is asked to provide guidance on workshop objectives, TORs, participants, and organizing committee membership.

Table 1. SEDAR Assessment Projects for the South Atlantic, 2013-2016.

Year	SEDAR #	Stocks	Type	Terminal Data	Assessment Complete
2013	U	Black Sea Bass	Update	2012	April 2013
	36	Snowy Grouper	Standard	2012	October 2013
	32	Blueline tilefish	Benchmark	2012	October 2013
	U	Mutton snapper	Update	2012	April 2014

2014	U	Gag	Update	2012	April 15, 2014
	37	Hogfish	Benchmark	2013	June 2014
2015	41	Red snapper Gray triggerfish	Benchmark start 8/2014	2013	August 1, 2015
	U	Tilefish	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Red grouper	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Vermilion snapper	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Black grouper	Update	2014	April 2015
2016		Scamp Gray snapper	Benchmark start ~7/2015	2015	April 2016
		red porgy	Benchmark	2014	October 1, 2016

### 3.3. Action

- Approve SEDAR 41 TORs, schedule, and participants
- Approve gag grouper update TORs
- Provide guidance on future assessment priority stocks and the planning approach.
- Provide guidance on the shrimp data procedures workshop objectives, TORs, participants, and organizing committee.

### **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Approve SEDAR 41 TORs, schedule, and participants:  
*The SSC reviewed the SEDAR 41 TORs. Regarding the modifications suggested by the SEFSC for the RW TORs the committee provided the following comments:*
  1. *The suggested edits could represent a fundamental change in the way Review Panels provide comments on assessment reviews. Therefore, the SSC recommends that suggested changes be reviewed and approved by the SEDAR Steering Committee before they are adopted for SEDAR 41 or subsequent assessments.*
  2. *Instead of being incorporated into the RW TORs the SEFSC suggestions could be included in the SEDAR Review Panel instructions as a way to provide general guidance to Review Panel members.*
  3. *Language be added to SEDAR Review Panel instructions to highlight the fact that the newly approved NS2 guidelines explicitly identify the peer review process as responsible for determining what represents best available science.*

*The schedule for SEDAR 41 was reviewed by the Committee and approved without modifications.*

*The following SSC members have volunteered to participate in SEDAR 41:*

- George Sedberry: DW

- *Chip Collier: DW*
- *Marcel Reichert: DW*
- *Doug Vaughan: AW*
- *Luiz Barbieri: AW, RW Chair*
- *Jim Berkson: RW*
- *Churchill Grimes: RW*
- *Yan Jiao: RW*
  
- Approve gag grouper update TORs:  
*SSC finds the gag update TORs acceptable and approved them without modification.*
  
- Provide guidance on future assessment priority stocks and the planning approach:  
*The SSC reviewed the long-term assessment document (briefing book attachment 7). In general, the committee found the document to be well-done and very helpful. More specific comments and suggestions are provided below:*
  - *The idea of having a 5-year schedule for benchmark assessments may be problematic for assessments that can only provide short- and medium-term projections (i.e., having catch level recommendations to cover the full period in between assessments).*
  - *Consider different time frames for assessing different stocks based on the stock's life history (i.e., longer intervals for long-lived species that have more stable population dynamics);*
  - *Consider the potential impact of management changes that might make it difficult to differentiate between changes in selectivity vs. changes in recruitment or other population parameters. In some cases it might be necessary to wait 3-4 years after a change in regulations before having an assessment.*
  - *Consider taking into account input provided by the SEDAR RW and SSC regarding the type and timing for the next assessment.*
  - *Consider assigning higher assessment priority for 'choke species' that may be requiring area closures or impacting harvest of other stocks.*
  - *The SSC suggests that a workshop be held in conjunction with the April 2014 SSC meeting to discuss the use of alternative analytical methods for data-poor stocks or stocks that are difficult to assess using conventional assessment methods (e.g., Warsaw grouper, speckled hind, shrimp, dolphin). An outcome of this workshop would be identification of types of analyses that would allow some kind of rapid assessment without requiring a full SEDAR slot (i.e., faster throughput, higher efficiency, lower cost).*
  
- Provide guidance on the shrimp data procedures workshop objectives, TORs, participants, and organizing committee.  
*The SSC discussed the proposed shrimp data procedures workshop. An Organizing Committee (including Carolyn Belcher, Chip Collier, Eric Johnson, Marcel Reichert,*



*and Luiz Barbieri from the SSC) will develop workshop objectives, TOR's, list of invited participants, etc. The workshop is scheduled to be held by May 2014.*

## 4. STOCK ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Documents

- Attachment 8. Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations
- Attachment 9. MSST Alternatives, SEFSC 2011
- Attachment 10. Council Conclusions on MSST, Amendment 24

### 4.2. Overview

The Committee is asked to consider two topics related to the development of fishing level recommendations from stock assessments. The first is the basis of MSST, last discussed in 2011 during deliberations on red grouper and Snapper-Grouper FMP Amendment 24. The other is a follow-up to discussions at the previous meeting, and the incorporation of probabilistic results in the recommendations.

#### *MSST Basis*

The Committee planned to discuss MSST alternatives in April 2011, in response to a document provided by SEFSC (Attachment 9). No detailed presentation on the method was provided at that time, leading the SSC to develop the following recommendation:

*With regard to the new MSST method derived by SEFSC, the SSC did not feel it could evaluate the technique at this time. The SSC also indicated the technique should be considered in the future, but at present did not recommend using it in a generic sense or specifically in the case of red grouper. The SSC recommended delaying the application of the new approach until the SEFSC could provide further information.*

No further information is available for consideration at this meeting, and staff is not aware of any additional evaluations conducted since this was discussed in 2011. However, the Council is faced with determining MSST for several stocks during this meeting. Both  $1-M(SSB_{MSY})$  and other percentages, such as  $75\%SSB_{MSY}$ , are in use in current FMPs. As shown in the Council Conclusions on Amendment 24 (Attachment 10), the Council supports using the  $75\%SSB_{MSY}$  level.

#### *Probabilistic Approach*

The SSC reviewed the update assessment for black sea bass during their April 2013 meeting in Charleston, SC. The projections showed an ABC value that was higher than the base run point estimate of MSY, which was traditionally used as the value of OFL. This apparent conflict in MSA mandates and assessment results brought to light the possible discrepancies of mixing deterministic base run point estimates with probabilistic projections from an MCB analysis. The SSC decided to use the base run in order to determine stock status, but to use the probabilistic projections to provide catch level recommendations to the Council. However, the SSC noted that the probabilistic stock

status results provide the Council with a better idea of the uncertainty associated with the point estimates and that further discussion was warranted at their next meeting. Attachment 8: 'Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations' addresses this issue in detail and suggests several methods of using probabilistic MCB runs to determine BRPs and stock status for the SSC to consider.

#### 4.3. Presentation

Probabilistic Approach -- Mike Errigo

#### 4.4. Action

- Provide guidance on the basis for MSST
- Provide guidance on the probabilistic approach to developing fishing level recommendations
- Modify the base assessment recommendations table, if needed
- If necessary, modify assessment TORs

### **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

- Provide guidance on the basis for MSST

*The SSC reviewed the document provided by SEFSC (Attachment 9) and the earlier Council conclusions (Attachment 10) on alternative definitions of MSST. The Committee felt that the alternative definitions of MSST described in the document are reasonable. However, without a full evaluation of the long-term performance of each alternative (perhaps through management strategy evaluation) it is impossible to make an objective, science-based recommendation on the Committee's preferred option. Nevertheless, the SSC acknowledges that the 75% SSB<sub>MSY</sub> approach being currently considered by the Council is an acceptable choice for MSST and voiced no concern regarding the adoption of this management reference point for SAFMC-managed stocks.*

- Provide guidance on the probabilistic approach to developing fishing level recommendations

*After review and discussion of the summary document developed by Council staff (Attachment 8) the SSC expressed no concern on the use of both deterministic and probabilistic approaches for presenting stock assessment results. The Committee felt that since the 'base run' represents the best recommendation on model configuration and parameter choices from the SEDAR Assessment Panel (or analytical team in the case of updates or standard assessments) it carries more weight than most of the recombined runs obtained by the MCB analysis. Therefore, the deterministic base run should be used for stock status determination. MCB analysis is structured in such a way that infeasible combinations of M, steepness, likelihoods, etc. can occur. Probabilistic results obtained through the MCB analysis should be used to characterize uncertainty in assessment estimates as well as to generate projections for OFL and ABC catch level recommendations. The SSC recommended that SEDAR Data Workshop*

*reports be explicit in identifying ranges for uncertain parameters, and clearly distinguish between likely alternative values to be used in MCB evaluations, and extremes that may be appropriate for sensitivities used to evaluate model performance and identify critical parameters.*

## 5. SPANISH MACKEREL ASSESSMENT PROJECTIONS

### 5.1. Documents

Attachment 11. Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment Report

Attachment 12. Revised Spanish Mackerel Projections

Attachment 13. June 2013 Mackerel Committee Excerpt

### 5.2. Overview

Complete stock projections were not available when the SSC reviewed the SEDAR 28 assessment of Spanish Mackerel in April 2013. When provided to the Council in June 2013 there was significant discussion. The Council noted that, despite the stock never being overfished or experiencing overfishing, and biomass and exploitation levels well removed from their limits, decreased yield was indicated in the P\* projections. Because the SSC was not able to review the projections provided to the Council and the Council advised that it can accept a higher risk level for Spanish mackerel over the short-term, based on current conditions and status trends, Council requests that the SSC review the projections and reconsider the ABC recommendations for Spanish Mackerel, including consideration of basing recommendations on 75% Fmsy levels.

The following text is taken from the SAFMC Mackerel Committee Report, June 2013:

**MOTION: REQUEST THAT THE SSC REVIEW THE SPANISH MACKEREL PROJECTIONS AND REVISIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFL AND ABC. THE SSC IS ASKED TO CONSIDER BASING OFL AND ABC ON EQUILIBRIUM PROJECTIONS OF MSY, IN LIGHT OF EFFECTS OF SELECTIVITY AND RECRUITMENT PATTERNS ON SHORT-TERM YIELD ESTIMATES.**

**Approved by Committee. Approved by Council.**

**Additional language was added to provide guidance and clarification to the SSC:**

Considering the high degree of confidence that the stock is not only not-overfished nor undergoing overfishing, but that current biomass is high (SSB/MSST = 2.29) and exploitation is low (F/Fmsy = 0.53) and that the stock has not experienced overfishing over the assessment period, the Council believes that use of a less risk-averse reference point such as the equilibrium MSY, ( 6.063 mp) as OFL for 2013-2015 is justified. Due to the exploitation history and stock status, the Council believes such a reference point does not significantly increase the probability of overfishing during these years.

The Council recommends that the SSC consider whether OFL recommendations could be based on equilibrium conditions for stocks which are neither overfished nor overfishing. Such an approach would provide

stable landings and enable the Council to implement constant regulations that will provide stability to the fishery. In addition, the Council is willing to accept the risk associated with small buffers between OFL and ABC for stocks well above reference limits, and requests that the SSC provide guidance on OFL-ABC buffers in such situations.

In addition, SEFSC staff reported that a revision of the projections was necessary following the June Council meetings, and indicated that revised projections will be available at this meeting.

### 5.3. Presentation

Updated projections: SEFSC

### 5.4. Action

- Review revised Spanish mackerel projections
- Address Council motion to reconsider ABC recommendations and basis.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

- Review revised Spanish mackerel projections:  
*The SSC reviewed the revised Spanish mackerel projections (Attachment 12) and accepted them as presented.*
- Address Council motion to reconsider ABC recommendations and basis:  
*The SSC reviewed the Council motion requesting reconsideration of ABC recommendations for Spanish mackerel (Attachment 13). After much discussion the Committee felt that using the MSY-based catch level recommendations in lieu of the P\* approach does comply with NS1 guidelines for setting an uncertainty buffer between OFL and ABC. Therefore, the SSC recommends setting the OFL at the projected yield at  $F_{MSY}$  for 2014-2016 (Table 3) and that the ABC be set at the long-term equilibrium MSY value from the base run (6.063 mp of landings).  
*Criteria used to support this decision included:*
  - *The Spanish mackerel stock is not just meeting but greatly exceeding management benchmarks for both stock biomass (well above  $SSB_{MSY}$ ) and exploitation level ( $F$  well below MFMT). This outcome was consistent in every sensitivity run. Therefore, there is very little risk of overfishing or of the stock becoming overfished within the timeframe considered for catch level recommendations.*
  - *Historically, Spanish mackerel has been harvested at a level higher than the MSY estimated by the base run (6.063 mp of landings). However, overfishing has not occurred and the stock has never been overfished.*
  - *The Spanish mackerel fishery is focused on medium-sized fish (dome-shaped selectivity). This suggests the existence of an unexploited biomass of larger,**

*older fish not available to the fishery (i.e., serves as a repository of spawning biomass).*

- *Based on this fishery's landings history, there is a low likelihood of the landings even reaching this new recommended ABC value (i.e., fleet capacity and markets are not likely to expand in the next few years).*

Table 2. Spanish mackerel OFL recommendations

Year	Landed (1,000 lbs)	Discard (1,000 lbs)	Landed Number (1,000s of fish)	Discard Number (1,000s of fish)
2014	7,030	554	4,766	1,386
2015	6,620	550	4,711	1,376
2016	6,519	535	4,705	1,338

Table 3. Spanish mackerel ABC recommendations

Year	Landed (1,000 lbs)	Discard (1,000 lbs)	Landed Number (1,000s of fish)	Discard Number (1,000s of fish)
2014	6,063			509
2015	6,063			509
2016	6,063			509

## 6. SEFIS UPDATE

### 6.1. Documents

### 6.2. Presentation

SEFIS Update: TBD, SEFSC.

### 6.3. Overview

The SSC requested an update of the SEFIS monitoring program, to obtain information on coverage, sampling levels, and data evaluation. The committee is interested in the video survey data in particular, including how they are used in developing abundance indices.

### 6.4. Action

- No specific actions required.

## SSC RECOMMENDATION:

*The SSC recommends that a workshop be held in the next 6 months to review methods of developing abundance indices from the SERFS video monitoring. The workshop should review technical issues and methods of calculating indices, and possibly*

*consider other issues such as trap selectivity. Further, the Committee suggests that participation in this workshop include SEFSC staff, SEDAR staff, SSC members as well as scientists involved in the Gulf of Mexico video survey. Ideally, this workshop would recommend appropriate methods of developing abundance indices for consideration in the SEDAR 41 red snapper assessment, as well as future SEDAR assessments which will use the SERFS video data.*

## **7. ACCSP BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING TARGETS**

### 7.1. Documents

Attachment 14. ACCSP BioSampling Prioritization Matrix

Attachment 15. ACCSP BioSampling Priorities Keys

Attachment 16. SEFSC Presentation on Biosampling targets

### 7.2. Overview

At their September 2013 meeting in Charleston, SC, the Council was given a presentation by Dr. Bonnie Ponwith on how well the science center has been meeting the BioSampling targets. The Council has been concerned about the data going into assessments and the amount of uncertainty in the assessments attributed to lack of adequate sampling. This presentation from the science center highlighted the fact that many of the species sampled in the South Atlantic are under sampled, some achieving less than 10% of the BioSampling targets. It became apparent that one of the problems is the appropriateness of the targets relative to the landings, number of trips, and number of samplers. Other issues include the year of the landings data used to set current targets, the fact that targets are set during periods when fisheries are not open. The number of trips sampled, and the small number of samplers available in the South Atlantic. The Biological Review Panel (BRP) at ACCSP has been discussing this matrix and the matrix itself has been evolving, however the concerns of the Council have prompted more action on how these sampling targets are determined. The Council would like the input of the SSC as we move forward with modifications to the BioSampling matrix and protocols for setting targets. Some specific areas the Council and the BRP would like input on include the basis of sampling targets, particularly if developing them by species is appropriate in the South Atlantic and whether the range of strata variables is appropriate. Also, the overall sampling intensity for lengths and ages is a concern, especially for the age samples. Finally, thoughts on the appropriateness of per trip sampling in the multi-species snapper grouper fishery, rather than by species, would be very helpful.

### 7.3. Action

- Review the sampling prioritization approach
- Provide guidance on appropriate methods of allocating sampling effort for SA fisheries

- Discuss species versus trip-based sample allocation, as it pertains to multi-species fisheries such as the snapper-grouper complex
- Discuss length versus age sampling intensity, with emphasis on allocation of effort when typical age-length key approaches are not appropriate.

### **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

*The SSC had difficulty understanding the different programs and protocols providing bio-samples in support of stock assessments for SAFMC-managed stocks. The Committee requests a presentation by the SEFSC, at the April 2014 meeting, explaining their different bio-sampling data collection programs. Example of questions to be addressed in this presentation include:*

- *What are the bio-sampling programs being conducted by the SEFSC and how are these programs coordinated with the states?*
- *Are the states collecting bio-samples in collaboration with SEFSC using sampling targets to obtain funds for bio-sampling? If so, how do the state agencies and SEFSC coordinate their effort, and what type of oversight is involved to ensure the appropriate samples are taken?*
- *What role do the various organizations and agencies play in collecting bio-samples for federally managed species?*
- *What are the issues or problems associated with bio-sampling (e.g., fishermen not willing to give up fish, the need to buy fish for sampling)?*
- *One possible alternative to setting sampling targets in numbers of fish is to set them as a proportion of landings, perhaps with a minimum sampling number (and maximum number of samples?). Are these types of issues being currently discussed and what are the options being considered?*

*The SSC is supportive of the long-term goal of obtaining a better sampling protocol for the snapper-grouper fishery in South Atlantic waters.*

## **8. MUTTON SNAPPER ASSESSMENT**

### 8.1. Documents

None

### 8.2. Overview

The mutton snapper assessment is not complete, and will be reviewed at a later meeting.

## **9. BLUELINE TILEFISH ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

### 9.1. Documents

Attachment 17. SEDAR 32 Assessment Report, Blueline Tilefish

## 9.2. Presentation

Assessment Overview: SEFSC, TBD

## 9.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the blueline tilefish assessment prepared through SEDAR 32. This is the first assessment prepared of this stock, so there are no existing recommendations to consider. The Review Workshop was held in August 2013. The version of the assessment report provided here is not the final SAR. Additional projections are required to address a RW request to use actual 2012 landings, and to meet the Terms of Reference and management specifications. See the document cover page for details. Since this work was not completed as of the Federal Government shut-down on October 1, it will not likely be available for SSC consideration.

An ABC recommendation of 592,602 pounds, provided in April 2011, was based on twice the highest landings observed prior to 2006. The Committee reached this decision primarily on constituent testimony that this was a developing fishery, of limited scope and few participants, with considerable room for increased landings. Given the impending assessment, the SSC felt the risk to the resource was minimal, and supported the anecdotal comments of a developing fishery with ample ability to support increased harvest.

## 9.4. Action

- Consider whether the assessment is adequate for providing management advice.
- Provide fishing level recommendations consistent with the ABC control rule, considering items included in the fishing level recommendations table
- Consider alternatives for MSST and provide a recommended value and basis.
- Comment on assessment uncertainties and their impact on risk determinations
- Provide guidance on the next assessment - type and timing.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*Note: Although no presentation was provided by the SEFSC the SSC was able to review this assessment given the fact that Dr. Steve Cadrin (Chair of the SEDAR 32 Review Panel) graciously agreed to present a summary of assessment results and Review Panel recommendations.*

*The SSC accepts this benchmark assessment as representing the best available scientific information on the current status of blueline tilefish in South Atlantic waters and considers it appropriate for SAFMC management decisions.*



*Since this assessment falls under Tier 1 of our ABC control rule, ABC was obtained according to a P-star value. A summary of results from applying the ABC control rule is presented below. Since the Council has not formally accepted the new definition of MSST (75%  $SSB_{MSY}$ ) as recommended by the SSC (see discussion and recommendations under agenda item 4 above) the Committee provided results using both definitions of MSST.*

- *P\* Analysis for  $MSST = (1-M)SSB_{MSY}$* 
  1. *Assessment Information: Tier 2 (-2.5%) since steepness parameter was fixed (instead of estimated by the model)*
  2. *Uncertainty: High (-2.5%)*
  3. *Stock Status: Both Overfished and Overfishing Occurring (-7.5%)*
  4. *Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis: High Risk (-10%)*

*In total, these results provide for an adjustment score of 22.5. This results in a probability of overfishing ( $P^*$ ) recommendation of 27.5% and a  $P_{rebuild} = 72.5\%$ . Under the existing MSST, the stock is overfished. The stock is experiencing overfishing. The SSC recommends ABC based on the rebuilding plan to be chosen by the Council.*

- *P\* Analysis for  $MSST = 75\% SSB_{MSY}$* 
  1. *Assessment Information: Tier 2 (-2.5%) since  $h$  is fixed and yields estimates of benchmarks that are actually proxies and  $h$  was unable to estimated*
  2. *Uncertainty: High (-2.5%)*
  3. *Stock Status: Not Overfished but Overfishing Occurring (-5%)*
  4. *Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis: High Risk (-10%)*

*In total these results provide for an adjustment score of 20%. This results in a probability of overfishing ( $P^*$ ) of 30%, and a  $P_{REBUILD} = 70\%$ . Under this alternative MSST, the stock is not overfished and a rebuilding plan is not needed. The stock is experiencing overfishing. The SSC recommends basing ABC on the projected yield with a 30% chance of overfishing occurring. Additional projections are required, based on a 30% chance of overfishing occurring, to provide the specific ABC values. These projections should include the actual 2012 landings as recommended by the SEDAR 32 Review Panel.*

*The SSC accepted the RW recommendation of using the deterministic model base run for stock status determination and the probabilistic MCB projections for catch level recommendations.*

*The SSC requests updated projections with the  $P^*$  values presented above and actual 2012 landings so the Committee can complete Table 4 below.*

Table 4. Blueline tilefish fishing level recommendations. Note: This table has MSST calculated as  $75\%SSB_{MSY}$ . Note that projections of ABC and OFL were not available at the time this report was completed.

Criteria	Deterministic	Probabilistic
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Overfished evaluation	1.09			
Overfishing evaluation	2.37			
MFMT	0.302			
SSB <sub>MSY</sub> (mt)	246.6			
MSST (mt) = 75% SSB <sub>MSY</sub>	184.95			
MSY (1000 lb)	226.5			
Y at 75% F <sub>MSY</sub> (1000 lb)	224.1			
ABC Control Rule Adjustment		0.2		
P-Star		0.3		
OFL (1000 lb)				
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number

*Regarding the next assessment of blueline tilefish the SSC recommends:*

- 1. An evaluation of the stock structure along the South Atlantic (multiple stocks? and if so, what are the geographic boundaries?) that might affect the assessment process for this species.*
- 2. Given the high uncertainty in selectivity estimates it might make sense to evaluate the potential use of a simpler biomass dynamics or data poor assessment model for this species (i.e., instead of an age-structured model). However, since the BAM is already built for this species, it may be more efficient to use it in the future.*
- 3. Timing would be provided through the SEDAR scheduling document recently prepared by Council staff. The determination of update/standard/benchmark would depend on results of the stock structure analysis.*

## **10. SNOWY GROUPER ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

### 10.1. Documents

Attachment 18. SEDAR 36, Snowy Grouper Assessment Report

### 10.2. Presentation

Assessment Overview: SEFSC, TBD

### 10.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the snowy grouper assessment prepared through SEDAR 36 and provide fishing level recommendations. Snowy grouper was last assessed in SEDAR 4, and was determined to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. This

led to the Council developing a rebuilding plan in Amendment 15A. Rebuilding began in 2006 and ends in 2039. Commercial accountability measures specified in Amendment 17B include in-season closure ability and payback of overages. The recreational season will be reduced if the average landings over the prior 2 years exceeds the recreational ACL. During initial reviews of assessed stocks, the SSC calculated a P\* of 30% for snowy grouper, and a probability of rebuild of 70%. However, since rebuilding of snowy grouper began prior to existence of the P\* approach, the rebuilding plan was based on a 50% chance of reaching SSB<sub>msy</sub> by the end of the rebuilding period. This is the first assessment of snowy grouper under both the Reauthorized MSA and the P\* methodology.

#### 10.4. Action

- Consider whether the assessment is adequate for providing management advice.
- Provide fishing level recommendations consistent with the ABC control rule, considering items included in the fishing level recommendations table
- Consider alternatives for MSST and provide a recommended value and basis.
- Comment on assessment uncertainties and their impact on risk determinations
- Provide guidance on the next assessment - type and timing.

### **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*The SSC decided not to proceed with the snowy grouper assessment review since an assessment presentation was not available at this meeting. The Committee felt that a detailed presentation and discussion was necessary considering this was a 'standard assessment' with no CIE or other peer review prior to the SSC meeting (as was the case with blueline tilefish). Therefore, the Committee requests this review be postponed until the April 2014 SSC meeting.*

## **11. DATA POOR ASSESSMENT APPROACHES**

### 11.1. Documents

Attachment 19. Data Poor Assessment Approaches

### 11.2. Presentation

Presentation on Methods: Dr. Tom Carruthers

### 11.3. Overview

The Committee will receive a presentation on new approaches to assessing, and providing fishing level recommendations for, data limited stocks.

#### 11.4. Action

Information topic; none required.

### **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

*The SSC thanks Drs. Carruthers and MacCall for taking the time to attend the SSC meeting and present results from their evaluation of the performance of different data-poor assessment approaches. The Committee found their presentation and subsequent discussions to be helpful and informative.*

## **12. ABC CONTROL RULE PSA COMPONENTS**

### 12.1. Documents

Attachment 20. ABC Control Rule  
Attachment 21. MRAG PSA Reports

### 12.2. Overview

The Committee requested time on this agenda to discuss the PSA basis in the ABC control rule. During initial ABC control rule development the SSC recommended using the MRAG PSA evaluation in the tier scores. During more recent discussion of the ORCS approach the Committee noted some dissatisfaction with that approach, and offered that additional research may be available to revise and update some of the values.

### 12.3. Action

- Consider modifications to the ABC Control Rule

### **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

*The SSC discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the MRAG and NMFS PSA approaches as well as their suitability for our ABC control rule. Some of the main points of discussion included:*

- *Possibly have SEDAR DW panels (specially the Life History Working Groups) evaluate each component of the MRAG PSA to see whether new information on life history attributes might allow an update of PSA scores.*
- *PSA may not be appropriate for data-rich stocks (Tier 1 assessments) since the productivity of stocks is already taken into account by stock assessment parameters such as natural mortality, longevity, growth, reproduction, etc.*
- *The use of PSA might be more appropriate for setting ABC for data-limited stocks (i.e., Tiers 4 and 5 of our ABC control rule) that do not have quantitative*

*assessments. In these situations the PSA score would be used to provide an adjustment factor down from OFL for stocks within Tiers that are not suitable for a P\* analysis.*

*Further, the SSC noted that an evaluation of the performance of the ABC control rule (P\*) would be extremely helpful in assessing how the method has worked. To look into this and other issues related to the ABC control rule the Committee recommends that a subcommittee be established to evaluate:*

- *Use of PSA (keep, remove, modify?).*
- *Revamping of the scoring system to be more Tier specific, allowing more refinement of the dimensions used to provide the adjustment in ABC for each tier.*
- *Weighting of each of the factors within control rule dimensions.*
- *Any other issues that might be deemed relevant for evaluation and improvement of the ABC control rule.*

*Timeline for detailed discussion of this topic would be October 2014. The subcommittee (Steve Cadrin, Luiz Barbieri, and Marcel Reichert) will draft an outline of ideas and suggestions to be discussed by the full SSC at its April 2014 meeting. It is suggested that similar to what's been done in the NE region input on this process be inclusive of scientists from SEFSC, SERO, SSC, outside scientists, etc.*

## **13. SNAPPER-GROUPER AMENDMENT 22**

### 13.1. Documents

Attachment 22. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 22 Draft

### 13.2. Overview

Staff Contact: Myra Brouwer

The purpose of Amendment 22 is to create a recreational tag program for the South Atlantic region that could be applied to any snapper grouper species with a small Annual Catch Limit (ACL) as determined by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Regional Administrator (RA).

Proposed actions include: establish a recreational tag program to track harvest of snapper grouper species with low ACLs, establish eligibility criteria for individuals or entities to participate in the program, establish an annual issuance progress for recreational tags, and establish a cost-recovery plan.

### 13.3. Action

- Provide guidance on data collection aspects of recreational tag programs. Can such programs provide data for use in assessment or other status evaluations?
- Provide guidance on the use of a tag program to track harvest or evaluate AMs.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*The SSC provided a number of comments and recommendations for how Amendment 22 may proceed:*

- *The Committee encourages the gathering of any data or information possible without unnecessarily complicating the tag program or adding to the program's expense. Data could be gathered during the application process, or after tags are distributed using the applicant database.*
- *The Committee notes the potential for controversy over not having a for-hire allocation of tags.*
- *The Committee recommends replacing 'cost recovery' with 'administrative fee' to distinguish between the nature of the program and intent of the charge. 'Cost recovery' programs are used in the management of for-profit commercial fisheries.*
- *Eligibility restrictions may be unnecessary if tags are non-transferable, as anglers are less likely to apply for tags they cannot use, trade, or give away. Such restrictions make a program designed to measure landings appear as one designed for (re)allocation purposes.*

## **14. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE**

### 14.1. Documents

Attachment 23. SAFMC Work Plan, March 2013

Attachment 24. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2013

### 14.2. Overview

The Committee is provided these documents at each meeting to stay informed of Council activities. Regular detailed reviews of each amendment are no longer requested of the SSC as amendments are developed, instead the Committee is asked to comment on specific technical items that may arise. However, members are welcome to review any ongoing amendments and to provide comments and suggestions directly to staff. Current versions of each amendment are included in the Council Briefing Books distributed to SSC members. Questions or comments about specific items should be addressed to the staff assigned to each FMP, as summarized below.

- Coastal Migratory Pelagic - Kari MacLauchlin

- Corals - Anna Martin
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan - Roger Pugliese
- Snapper Grouper - Myra Brouwer
- Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 17 (MPAs) - Gregg Waugh
- Spiny Lobster - Kari MacLauchlin
- Golden Crab - Brian Chevront

## 15. OTHER BUSINESS

*The SSC did not discuss any other business at this meeting.*

## 16. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW, PUBLIC COMMENT

- The public is provided an additional opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items.

*Public comments were provided by Mr. Russell Hudson (Directed Sustainable Fisheries).*

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review its report and final recommendations.

The Final SSC report should be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, November 12, 2013, for inclusion in the first briefing book.

## 17. NEXT MEETINGS

### 17.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2014 Tentative Dates

April 28 - May 1  
October 28 - 30, 2014

### 17.2. SAFMC Meetings

2013 Council Meetings  
December 2-6, 2013: Wilmington, NC

2014 Council Meetings  
March 3- 7, Savannah GA  
June 9 - 13, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

September 15 - 19, Charleston SC  
December 1 - 5, New Bern, NC

## **18. ADJOURN**

*The meeting was adjourned ahead of schedule given that two agenda items were not ready for SSC review and discussion (mutton snapper and snowy grouper assessments).*