

Overview

Protected Resources Committee

December 5, 2016

Double Tree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront

2717 W. Fort Macon Rd.

Atlantic Beach, NC

The Protected Resources Committee will meet to discuss South Atlantic protected species and receive updates on associated regulatory/management actions that the Council should be knowledgeable of when managing South Atlantic fisheries. SERO Protected Resource Division (PRD) staff will report on (1) protected resources-related updates for the South Atlantic region, and (2) Snapper Grouper Fishery Biological Opinion. The group will nominate a member to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (3). Following, the Council will be briefed by US Fish and Wildlife Service staff on the status updates for (4) Atlantic Sturgeon and Red Knot. The Committee will discuss potential action for each item, provide guidance to staff, and address issues under Other Business as needed.

1. South Atlantic Protected Resource-Related Updates (Attachment 1)

Staff from the SERO Protected Resources Division (PRD) will provide the Committee with an update on protected resources issues in the South Atlantic region.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide input on the updates, discuss, and take action as necessary.

2. Snapper Grouper Fishery Biological Opinion (Attachment 2)

Due to the SAFMC recommended action of reducing the spatial and temporal scope of the black sea bass pot fishery closure through Regulatory Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, the snapper grouper fishery is being reviewed to determine its effects on protected species. The biological opinion, when completed, will include anticipated effects of reducing the black sea bass pot fishery closure, an incidental take statement, reasonable and prudent measures to reduce takes/interactions of protected resources, and terms and conditions. The biological opinion is expected to be completed so that the black sea bass pot fishery can open November 2016.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Review the Biological Opinion and provide input as necessary.

3. Appoint Council Member to Large Whale Take Reduction Team (Attachment 3)

The Large Whale Take Reduction Team helps to develop plans with the National Marine Fisheries Service to mitigate risk to marine mammals and was established under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The team addresses changes to regulations for fishing gear that cause

serious injury or mortality to large whales through the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. David Cupka was the Council's previous member on the Large Whale Take Reduction Team. The team rarely meets more than one time per year with some meetings being a conference call. Attached are the meeting notes from the November 2015 webinar.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Nominate a Council Member to serve on the Large Whale Take Reduction Team.

4. Updates from US Fish and Wildlife Service and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Dr. Wilson Laney, US Fish and Wildlife Service, will give an update on the Atlantic Sturgeon stock assessment under preparation by ASMFC and the status of Red Knot Critical Habitat being prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Two recent publications provide background information on Atlantic sturgeon in the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions (**Attachments 4 and 5**).

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.