

**SUMMARY REPORT  
PROTECTED RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Atlantic Beach, NC**

**December 5, 2016**

The Protected Resources Committee was presented updates by Jennifer Lee, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Protected Resources Division, and Dr. Wilson Laney, United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

*NMFS Updates and Agenda Items*

NMFS is working on a proposed rule/Draft Environmental Impact Statement to require turtle excluder devices in skimmer trawls. The proposed rule is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register in mid-December 2016. NMFS is working on an Annual Determination for Sea Turtle Observers. This regulation would require fisheries to take observers if the fishery is listed in the Annual Determination. The fishery would remain on the list for five years. NMFS has reinitiated Section 7 consultation for several fishery management plans in the South Atlantic Region due to the newly listed green sea turtle North Atlantic and South Atlantic distinct population segments and Nassau grouper. The spiny lobster trap/pot fishery was listed as a Category III fishery in Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries due to potential interactions with bottlenose dolphins. A proposed rule is in development through the Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan.

*Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan Biological Opinion*

The Biological Opinion for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan was completed on December 2, 2016. The biological opinion did not identify the proposed changes to the black sea bass pot fishery in Regulatory Amendment 16 as causing jeopardy to the North Atlantic Right Whale population or other listed species. The biological opinion also considered additional measures to reduce lethal takes or interactions with Nassau grouper in the hook and line fishery.

*Nominate a South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Representative to the Large Whale Take Reduction Plan*

Charlie Philips was nominated as the representative for the Large Whale Take Reduction Team.

*Atlantic Sturgeon Update*

The Atlantic sturgeon benchmark assessment is moving along smoothly, and is on schedule for review in late 2017. Models and analyses are being applied at the coastwide, distinct population segment, and river-system level depending on the available data. The terminal year of the assessment was extended through 2015. The modeling results will be evaluated February 8-10<sup>th</sup> to ensure appropriate use of the data in the models, and determine stock status where possible.

Dr. Tim King was working on the genetic analysis for Atlantic sturgeon prior to his passing. He sent the first round of distinct population segment and river assignment results from the tissue samples. Jared Flowers (NC DMF) has plugged that information into the custom tagging model, and has developed some promising, although very-preliminary results. David Kazyak, new point of contact for sturgeon genetics work at the USGS Leetown Science Center, is working to track

down a number of samples that were not located in the repository. Although still very overwhelming, David has done a great job responding to the needs of the ASMFC during this difficult time.

*Red Knot Critical Habitat*

Red knot critical habitat is currently scheduled to be completed in 2017 although the schedule may change.

**The Committee voted on the following motions as recommendations to the Council:**

**MOTION #1:** Nominate Charlie Philips to the Large Whale Take Reduction Team.

**MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

**MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**DIRECTION TO STAFF:**

There were no directions to staff.

**DRAFT Timing and Task Motion:**