

**SUMMARY REPORT
PROTECTED RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Cocoa Beach, Florida

June 16, 2016

The Protected Resources Committee was presented updates from National Marine Fisheries Service Protected Resources Division by Jennifer Lee regarding Green Sea Turtle distinct population segments, Atlantic Sturgeon critical habitat, Snapper Grouper FMP Biological Opinion, turtle excluder device requirement for the skimmer trawl fishery, and Nassau grouper and from United State Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) by Dr. Wilson Laney regarding Red Knot critical habitat and the Atlantic Sturgeon stock assessment being conducted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).

Eleven different distinct population segments (DPS) were designated for Green Sea Turtles and the North Atlantic and South Atlantic DPS were listed as threatened. Critical habitat for Green Sea Turtle has not been described.

Atlantic Sturgeon critical habitat included 14 rivers in the South Atlantic region and included habitats important for spawning and migration. Habitat in the ocean was not designated for Atlantic Sturgeon due to a lack of information needed to identify specific critical habitat features. Public hearings for Atlantic Sturgeon critical habitat will be held in Brunswick, GA, Charleston, SC, and Morehead City, NC. After discussion, the committee declined to ask staff to prepare any comments on the Proposed Rule for consideration by the Council.

The Biological Opinion for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan started in early February and will be focusing on adverse effects to Northern Right Whale, Smalltooth Sawfish, sea turtles, and Atlantic Sturgeon. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for turtle excluder devices in the skimmer trawl fishery will be released in late summer followed by the Proposed Rule. The Nassau Grouper 12-month Determination is not completed but should be completed soon.

Red Knot critical habitat is still in preparation by the USFWS. The USFWS is also assisting ASMFC with the Atlantic Sturgeon stock assessment. ASMFC staff (Max Appelman) advised via e-mail that the Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment Subcommittee will be meeting July 12-15, 2016, in Hanover, MD, and most data are in hand, which includes the data collected from the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruises by USFWS and collaborators. The assessment is on track for completion in 2017.

The Committee did not vote on any motions as recommendations to the Council:

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

There were no directions to staff.

DRAFT Timing and Task Motion: