

SUMMARY REPORT - PROTECTED RESOURCES COMMITTEE
December 1, 2014
New Bern, NC

Members

Wilson Laney, Chair
Anna Beckwith
Michelle Duval

LT Morgan Fowler
Ben Hartig
Jessica McCawley

The Committee adopted the agenda and approved the minutes of the September 2014 meeting.

Update from SERO Protected Resources Division

Jennifer Lee of the Protected Resources Division briefed the Committee on protected resources-related topics in the South Atlantic, including an update on the status of the Section 7 Consultation underway for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) fishery. The consultation is expected to be finished prior to the March 2015 meeting.

American Eel

Wilson Laney, Committee Chair, notified the Committee that American Eel has been added to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List as Endangered. He was uncertain as to how this may affect the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service status review for American Eel currently in progress. Information about the IUCN decision is available at: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/191108/0>. This will not affect import/export of the species because that is covered under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), although American Eel may be listed under CITES in the future.

Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment

Wilson Laney briefed the Committee on the stock assessment of Atlantic Sturgeon by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Current focus of the assessment per notification from ASMFC staff is on gathering additional data, especially genetic information.

Proposed Threatened Listing for Nassau Grouper

In September 2014, the Committee received a briefing on the proposal to list Nassau grouper as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Council staff reviewed a draft comment letter, and Committee members will provide suggestions and edits to Council staff. When the letter is finalized, Council staff will submit the comments on behalf of the Council.

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Requirements

Barb Zoodsma of SERO PRD provided a presentation on current requirements of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) for pot and gillnet fishermen in the South Atlantic region, in addition to new requirements under the recently implemented Vertical Line rule. The presentation was followed by questions and discussion about the ALWTRP in the context of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16, and the Committee continued the discussion during Snapper Grouper Committee.

ESA Working Group Recommendations/ MOU between Council and SERO PRD

In March 2014, the Committee received a presentation on the report and recommendations from the ESA Working Group. The Working Group included members of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) and Council Coordination Committee (CCC). The Working Group identified problem areas in all regions and provided recommendations on how to address these issues, including development of an MOU between Councils and Regional Offices on the involvement of the Council in the consultation process.

The Committee approved the following motion in regards to the MOU:

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO WORK WITH PRD TO DEVELOP A DRAFT MOU PER THE CCC REPORT REGARDING THE COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IN MARCH 2015.

Approved by Committee. APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

South Atlantic Council representative on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

Michelle Duval noted the vacancy on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) that had been filled by David Cupka as the South Atlantic Council representative. The Council can select a representative and notify NMFS, and he/she will be added to the ALWTRT.