



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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David Cupka, Chairman  
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Gregg Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

June 15, 2011

Mr. Rick Devoe  
South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium  
287 Meeting Street  
Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Rick:

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council supports the research grant proposal "Development of Fishery Management Tools for Predicting Impacts of Low Winter Temperatures on White Shrimp and Spotted Sea Trout Populations" being submitted to SC Sea Grant by Dr. Mike Denson from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Marine Resources Research Institute. As we understand, the predictive models developed would allow SCDNR to better estimate the magnitude of cold weather events on two major South Carolina fisheries prior to or as they are occurring. Earlier predication would allow the state to take science-based regulatory actions and institute conservation measures in a timelier manner. SCDNR could close the shrimp fishery in state waters earlier to maximize escapement of surviving over-wintering shrimp. Also, the state could request the SAFMC and NOAA Fisheries to close federal waters off the state sooner, if necessary. Further, development of this predictive model may have application in other Council managed fisheries such as snapper/grouper, which has experienced detrimental cold water events in recent years.

SCDNRs estimate that this past winter's cold weather resulted in mortality of 99% of over-wintering white shrimp and state spotted sea trout populations highlights the susceptibility of these species to cold water events. The state and Council concur that a significant loss of overwintering shrimp in one year can have tremendous impacts on the next and possibly even subsequent fishing seasons.

The Council, through our collaboration with the Southeast Coastal and Ocean Observation Regional Association (SECOORA) is actively pursuing characterization of environmental parameters and modeling to understanding variability in fish stocks and how that may affect fishery production. The specific case of being able to monitor and better react to cold events has been identified as an important and immediate need for our State partners in South Carolina. The proposal will move toward that goal and provide an invaluable management tool to SCDNR.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and indicate our support for this proposal. The products developed from this work could have significant benefits to the long term health of these very important state and federal fisheries. If you have any additional questions please feel free to contact Roger Pugliese ([roger.pugliese@safmc.net](mailto:roger.pugliese@safmc.net)) at the Council office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David".

David Cupka  
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Council Members and Staff