

DRAFT
SUMMARY REPORT
SECAD COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Sept 15, 2026

The Committee approved the agenda for the September 2026 meeting and minutes from the March 2026 meeting.

1. SEDAR Steering Committee July Meeting Updates

The SEDAR Steering Committee convened via webinar on July 20, 2026. Agenda topics for this meeting included updates on current and future SEDAR projects, reviewing various SEDAR processes and operating procedures, and other administrative items. Council staff provided a summary of the pertinent topics from the steering committee meeting and relevant outcomes, including the discussion on the independence of cooperator appointees for the SEDAR peer review process and the CIE review prioritization process.

2. Assessment Updates and SEDAR Schedule

Council staff presented the SEDAR schedule for the South Atlantic stocks and provided status updates on current and upcoming stock assessments and management strategy evaluation projects:

- SEDAR 90: South Atlantic Red Snapper – The S90 assessment panel recommended that the revised MRIP-FES and calibrated Florida State Reef Fish Survey recreational data timeseries both be finalized before submission to the CIE review workshop. This would result in postponing the review workshop from its originally scheduled date in December 2026. The Council supported the assessment panel’s recommendation to delay the review workshop to ensure the inclusion of completed and finalized recreational catch timeseries in the assessment. The SSC is scheduled to review the stock assessment in April and provide catch level recommendations to the Council for June 2027.
- SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish (EFL/FLK) – A review workshop was completed in July 2026. The assessment will be reviewed by the SSC in Oct 2026 during which they will provide catch level recommendations for the Council to review in December 2026.
- SEDAR 104: Dolphin MSE – A CIE review workshop was completed in July 2026. The MSE will be presented to the SSC in October and to the Council in December 2026.
- SEDAR 108: South Atlantic Black Sea Bass – Assessment development is ongoing but awaiting revisions to the MRIP-FES recreational data timeseries. A review workshop is anticipated for early 2027 followed by SSC review in April that will provide catch level recommendations to the Council in June.
- Black Grouper MSE – A joint subgroup of South Atlantic and Gulf SSC members is scheduled to review the first iteration of the operating model for the Black Grouper management strategy evaluation at their October 2026 meeting. SSC recommendations on model development and next steps for the MSE process will be presented to the Council at the December 2026 meeting. The Council stressed the importance that candidate management procedures for the MSE be developed in consultation with stakeholders and Council members.

The Council also approved the list of future requests for stock assessments for 2028 and 2029 – Red Porgy and Greater Amberjack are scheduled for 2028, and Tilefishes and Scamp are scheduled for 2029. The Council discussed future requests to the SEDAR schedule for 2030 and proposed Gray Triggerfish and Red Snapper be considered for assessment by the SEFSC, and Yellowtail Snapper and Mutton Snapper be considered for assessment by FL-FWC for 2030.

3. ABC Control Rule Stock Risk Ratings

Council staff presented a summary of the ABC Control Rule stock risk ratings and reviewed the preliminary score recommendations and feedback from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and SSC for Florida Hogfish, Gag, and Black Grouper. The Council discussed and finalized the stock risk rating scores (see Appendix), which resulted in the final stock risk ratings:

- Gag Grouper: High
- Black Grouper: High
- Florida Hogfish: High

4. Terms of Reference for Upcoming Assessments

Council staff presented the terms of reference for the upcoming assessments of South Atlantic Red Grouper, South Atlantic Snowy Grouper, and South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper. The Committee made the following minor revisions to the terms of reference for these assessments:

- Explicitly add the Florida State Reef Fish Survey to recreational data collection in terms of reference for Red Grouper and Vermilion Snapper.
- Include RELEASE data length compositions in the terms of reference for Red Grouper

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SOUTH ATLANTIC RED GROUPE, SOUTH ATLANTIC SNOWY GROUPE, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC VERMILION SNAPPER. ALLOW THE COMMITTEE CHAIR TO APPROVE ANY SUBSEQUENT EDITS RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE.

5. Standardized Bycatch Reduction Methodology

Council Staff provided a presentation on the planning, objectives and timeline for the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Review. The SBRM document will be reviewed by the SSC during their October 2026 meeting and presented to the Council for review during the December 2026 Council meeting. The Council provided guidance on the development of this document and approved the plan, objectives and timeline.

6. Southeast Reef Fish Survey Update

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Staff presented the annual trends report through 2025 on the regional fishery-independent surveys conducted in the South Atlantic. These surveys include the MARMAP/SERFS Chevron-Video Trap Survey, Coastal Trawl Survey, and South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey and provide information on the distribution, abundance and length of selected South Atlantic species managed by the Council. The Council discussed the annual trends report and commended SCDNR and their partners on the extensive work accomplished.

BLACK GROUPER

FINAL - Sept. 2026

Risk of Overexploitation				Southeastern Black Grouper				
Biological Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Estimated natural mortality (M)	M ≤ 0.20	0.20-0.40	M ≥ 0.4	M: 0.16 - 0.20 (SEDAR 48)	1	1	1	1
Age at maturity	≥ 4 years	2-4 years	≤ 2 years	Age at 50% maturity : 6.5 years - protogynous hermaphroditism; Age at transition A50 = 16 years (SEDAR 48)	1	1	1	1
Final Biological Score					1	1	1	1
Human Dimension Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ability to regulate fishery	fishery consistently exceeds Total ACL (ex. 3+ out of 5 years) and/or exceeds Total ACL by more than 15%	fishery mostly kept below Total ACL (ex. Exceeds ACL 1-2 out of 5 years) and/or does not exceed ACL by more than 15%	fishery consistently kept below Total ACL	Commercial Sector 2020-2025: never exceeded Recreational Sector 2020-2025: never exceeded (source: SERO ACL monitoring page)	3	3	3	3
Potential for discard losses	Dead discards are a significant proportion of the total catch (over 40%)	Dead discards are a moderate proportion of the total catch (20%-40%)	Dead discards very small component of total catch (< 20%)	Commercial: discard logbook data not available Recreational: 2020-2024 MRIP-FES landings and discards: 10.7% DMR = 13.9% (derived from Gag stock assessment) AP Comments: -Shark depredation contributing to dead discards; some commercial operators have stopped targeting BG because of shark depredation	3	3	3	3
Annual Commercial value	> 10% total annual revenue	Between 1% and 10% of total annual revenue	< 1% total annual revenue	Average Annual Revenue (2019-2023) = 4.0%	2	2	2	2
	> 40% of total trip revenue, on average	Between 10% and 40% of total trip revenue, on average	< 10% total trip revenue, on average	Average Total Trip Revenue (2019-2023) = 9.1%	3	3	3	
Recreational desirability	> 5% trips report targeting this species	Between 1% and 5% of trips report targeting this species	< 1% trips report targeting this species	Average percent of all trips (2019-2024) = < 0.1% Average percent of all SG trips (2019-2024) = < 1.0%	3	3	3	3
Social concerns	>13 communities highly reliant on this species	7-13 communities highly reliant on this species	<7 communities highly reliant on this species	Social communities analysis unavailable: Use fishery performance report information AP Comments: - BG not specifically sought after, part of 'grouper' fishing trip; - regional targeting/encounter rates different depending on season - regionally and seasonally specific	n/a	3	3	3
Final Human Dimension Score					2.80	2.83	2.83	2.80
Environmental Attributes	High (1)			Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ecosystem importance	Does this species significantly affect other species, e.g. as a keystone predator, primary prey, habitat builder etc.?							
Climate change	Is this species likely to experience/be experiencing negative stock impacts due to climate change?							
Other Environmental Variables	Are other environmental variables causing negative effects on this stock, e.g. in the form of regime shifts, recruitment failure, etc.?			- habitat degradation concerns: water quality issues in south FL, impervious soil runoff - coral reef habitat reductions and changes in food availability - loss of seagrass habitat, nursery ground for BG (recruitment issues)		1	1	1
Final Environmental Score					0	1	1	1
Final Risk Score					1.900	1.611	1.611	1.600
					High	High	High	High

Risk of Overexploitation				Gag				
Biological Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Estimated natural mortality (M)	M ≤ 0.20	0.20-0.40	M ≥ 0.4	SEDAR 71 (2021): M = 0.150 SEDAR 10 (2006) M = 0.14-0.160	1	1	1	1
Age at maturity	≥ 4 years	2-4 years	≤ 2 years	SEDAR 71 (2021) Female age at maturity = 4.6 yrs SEDAR 10 (2006) provided a single estimate for size and age at transition: 1,025 mm TL and 10.5 yrs for 50% transition	1	1	1	1
Final Biological Score					1	1	1	1
Human Dimension Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ability to regulate fishery	fishery consistently exceeds Total ACL (ex. 3+ out of 5 years) and/or exceeds Total ACL by more than 15%	fishery mostly kept below Total ACL (ex. Exceeds ACL 1-2 out of 5 years) and/or does not exceed ACL by more than 15%	fishery consistently kept below Total ACL	Total ACL: exceeded by >15% in 2023* and 2024. Commercial ACL: exceeded by >15% in 2023* Recreational ACL: exceeded by >15% in 2023* and 2024 *Note: 2023 was when implementation of new ACL occurred mid-season and switched from MRIP-CHTS to MRIP-FES	1	1	1	1
Potential for discard losses	Dead discards are a significant proportion of the total catch (over 40%)	Dead discards are a moderate proportion of the total catch (20%-40%)	Dead discards very small component of total catch (<15%-20%)	Recreational Discards: from SEDAR 71 (avg: 2015-2019), DMR: 25% Proportion of Dead Discards to Total Removals = 21.0% Commercial Discards: from SEDAR 71 (avg: 2015-2019), DMR: 40% Proportion of Dead Discards to Total Removals = 2.51% Total Discards: from SEDAR 71 (avg: 2015-2019), Proportion of Dead Discards to Total Removals = 12.52%	3	3	3	3
Annual Commercial value	> 10% total annual revenue	Between 1% and 10% of total annual revenue	< 1% total annual revenue	Average Annual Revenue (2019-2023) = 12.5%	1	1	1	1
	> 40% of total trip revenue, on average	Between 10% and 40% of total trip revenue, on average	< 10% total trip revenue, on average	Average Total Trip Revenue (2019-2023) = 28.4%	2	2	2	1
Recreational desirability	> 5% trips report targeting this species	Between 1% and 5% of trips report targeting this species	< 1% trips report targeting this species	Average percent of all trips (2019-2024) = 0.7% Average percent of all SG trips (not including Gray Snapper) = 3.9% COUNCIL: Highly desirable species for recreational trips	3	3	3	1
Social concerns	>13 communities highly reliant on this species	7-13 communities highly reliant on this species	<7 communities highly reliant on this species	Of the communities with the highest gag landings, 2 were highly reliant on commercial and/or recreational fishing. (Sneads Ferry and Nags Head, NC) COUNCIL: Highly desirable species for recreational trips; fishing communities along the coastline highly reliant on Gag	3	3	3	1
Final Human Dimension Score					2.17	2.17	2.17	1.33
Environmental Attributes	High (1)			Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ecosystem importance	Does this species significantly affect other species, e.g. as a keystone predator, primary prey, habitat builder etc.?			AP: nearshore water quality concerns, predation by RS at vulnerable life stages, shark depredation		1	1	1
Climate change	Is this species likely to experience/be experiencing negative stock impacts due to climate change?							
Other Environmental Variables	Are other environmental variables causing negative effects on this stock, e.g. in the form of regime shifts, recruitment failure, etc.?			reliant on in-shore seagrass beds for juvenile life stages; degradation of these habitats affecting recruitment?		1	1	1
Final Environmental Score					0	1	1	1
Final Risk Score					1.583	1.389	1.389	1.111
					High	High	High	High

Risk of Overexploitation				Hogfish (FLK/EFL)				
Biological Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Estimated natural mortality (M)	M ≤ 0.20	0.20-0.40	M ≥ 0.4	(SEDAR 94 DW) Natural mortality-at-age scaled to age 3 with max age of 23 years, M = 0.235	2	2	2	2
Age at maturity	≥ 4 years	2-4 years	≤ 2 years	(SEDAR 94 DW) Age at 50% maturity: 1.09 - 2.08 years - protogynous hermaphroditism; age at transition ranges from 1-11 years and is socially mediated	3	3	3	3
Final Biological Score					2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Human Dimension Attributes	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ability to regulate fishery	fishery consistently exceeds Total ACL (ex. 3+ out of 5 years) and/or exceeds Total ACL by more than 15%	fishery mostly kept below Total ACL (ex. Exceeds ACL 1-2 out of 5 years) and/or does not exceed ACL by more than 15%	fishery consistently kept below Total ACL	Neither sector ACL exceeded from 2020-2025 (source: SERO ACL monitoring page)	3	3	3	3
Potential for discard losses	Dead discards are a significant proportion of the total catch (> 40%)	Dead discards are a moderate proportion of the total catch (20%-40%)	Dead discards very small component of total catch (< 20%)	Commercial: exclusion of commercial discard data due to high uncertainty and low sample size, and industry input about low levels of discards (SEDAR 94 DW) Recreational: Hook-and-line: 28.4% Spear: 5.4% FL-SRFS estimates of landings + discards (SEDAR 94 DW)	2	2	2	2
Annual Commercial value	> 10% total annual revenue	Between 1% and 10% of total annual revenue	< 1% total annual revenue	(SEFSC Logbook Data 2018-2022) Avg % Annual Revenue: 3% Avg % Trip Revenue: 13%	2	2	2	2
	> 40% of total trip revenue, on average	Between 10% and 40% of total trip revenue, on average	< 10% total trip revenue, on average		2	2	2	
Recreational desirability	> 5% trips report targeting this species	Between 1% and 5% of trips report targeting this species	< 1% trips report targeting this species	Hook & Line: 0.37% Spear: 23% Total: 0.76% COUNCIL: Regionally highly desirable in FL.	3	3	3	2
Social concerns	>13 communities highly reliant on this species	7-13 communities highly reliant on this species	<7 communities highly reliant on this species	Use fishery performance report information - Not a heavy reliance, but can be an easy/reliable spear target; Not necessarily a market driver; Off Brouard/Palm Beach, can easily become susceptible to overfishing due to ease of targeting; Not a strong social concern due to the low trip limit	3	3	3	3
Final Human Dimension Score					2.50	2.50	2.50	2.40
Environmental Attributes	High (1)			Notes	Default Score	AP Score	SSC Score	Council Score
Ecosystem importance	Does this species significantly affect other species, e.g. as a keystone predator, primary prey, habitat builder etc.?			Potentially vulnerable due to ease of targeting; Habitat degradation; Preference for live bottom; big hogfish north, few central, some south, not seeing much change over; more habitat degradation in south Florida but the effects aren't as		1	1	1
Climate change	Is this species likely to experience/be experiencing negative stock impacts due to climate change?							
Other Environmental Variables	Are other environmental variables causing negative effects on this stock, e.g. in the form of regime shifts, recruitment failure, etc.?							
Final Environmental Score					0	1	1	1
Final Risk Score					2.500	2.000	2.000	1.967
					Low	High	High	High