

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC PANEL OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



SEP Meeting Overview

April 15-16, 2024

**Crowne Plaza
4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd
North Charleston, SC 29418**

PURPOSE

This meeting is convened to discuss and provide input to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) on:

- Recent and developing Council actions and amendments,
- The National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries, Management Benefits,
- Council stakeholder engagement meetings,
- Council best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop,
- Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports,
- The Citizen Science Program,
- Equity and environmental justice discussion based on the Council’s identified items from their March 2024 meeting, and
- Potential renaming of the Socio-Economic Panel

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Attachment 1a. Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview

Attachment 1b. Minutes from the April 2023 meeting

Attachment 2a. Presentation slides for National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

Attachment 2b. Summary of National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

Attachment 3. Recent and Developing South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Amendments

Attachment 4. Stakeholder engagement meetings discussion document

Attachment 5. Best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop discussion document

Attachment 6. Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports

Attachment 7. Citizen Science Program update presentation

Attachment 8. Equity and environmental justice discussion document based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting

Attachment 9a. Renaming the Socio-Economic Panel discussion document

Attachment 9b. United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision: Mexican Gulf Fishing Company versus The United States Department of Commerce

1. Introduction

1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1a.** Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview
- **Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2023 meeting

1.2. Actions

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve April 2023 minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

2. National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

2.1. Documents

- **Attachment 2a.** Presentation slides for National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits (*Recent Documents*)
- **Attachment 2b.** Summary of National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

2.2. Overview

In 2023, an ad hoc committee of the National Academies was assembled to draft a consensus report assessing equity in the distribution of fisheries management benefits. Specifically, the Committee was tasked with determining the categories of information required to adequately assess where and to whom the primary benefits of commercial and for-hire fishery management accrue; determining what information currently exists within those categories and what additional information, if any, NOAA Fisheries would need to collect; identifying potential obstacles to collecting this additional data; and identify methodologies the agency could use to assess the relative distribution of benefits from federal commercial and for-hire fishery management based on available information. Committee member, Steven Scyphers, will present the Committee’s final report and recommendations.

2.3. Presentation

Steven Scyphers, University of South Alabama

2.4. Action

Provide feedback on how Council staff can implement the recommendations presented in the Committee’s final report.

Discussion Questions:

1. The report recommends “...further developing products that are not geographically constrained or limited by the spatial resolution of census data, which may not always align with a holistic definition of equity.” What data sources that fit this criterion are available to aid in understanding community dependence on fisheries?
2. The report recommends analyses “...move beyond a focus on distributional outcomes associated with permit and quota holdings to a more multidimensional assessment of equity.” What other regulatory measures might be important for the Council to consider in equity assessments?
3. In what ways can Council staff take a participatory approach to identify and integrate equity considerations into the decision-making process?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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3. Recent and Developing Council Actions

3.1. Document

- **Attachment 3.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Council Amendments

3.2. Overview

Council staff will provide a briefing on recent and upcoming amendments and actions (*Attachment 3*). The following amendments may be of particular interest to SEP members.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Program Modernization)

Staff Lead: Christina Wiegand

Purpose of Amendment: The Council finished its second review of the Wreckfish ITQ program in September of 2019. As part of the review there were several recommendations made to modernize the program, which will be addressed in this amendment.

Action Summary: moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; fishing season; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and monitoring requirements.

Development Level: public hearings and final action at the June 2024 Council meeting.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 (Discard Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper Catch Levels)

Staff Leads: Mike Schmidtke

Purpose of the Amendment: Respond to the latest stock assessment for Red Snapper (SEDAR 73). Red Snapper are overfished and overfishing is occurring, mainly due to the large number of Red Snapper that die after catch and release. Dead discards are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex.

Action Summary: Modify the Red Snapper ABC and ACLs and reduce dead releases in the snapper grouper fishery through prohibiting use of multiple, separate hooks per line by the recreational sector, as well as expansion of best fishing practices outreach and education efforts. These actions are designed to implement Red Snapper catch levels based on the best scientific information available, reduce widespread discarding of snapper grouper species, and address overfishing of red snapper.

Development Level: Council approved the amendment in March 2023 but rescinded approval in December 2023. Final re-approval is pending.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement)

Staff Lead: John Hadley

Purpose of the Amendment: Address deficiencies in recreational data through the creation of a permit requirement for private recreational vessels or anglers. Additionally, consider establishing an education component to encourage best fishing practices and reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery.

Action Summary: This amendment will investigate establishing a permit and education requirement for anglers to participate in the recreational snapper grouper fishery.

Development Level: Scoping conducted and amendment being developed.

Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation

Staff Lead: Chip Collier and Judd Curtis

Purpose of the Amendment: Dead releases are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex. The Council has directed a management strategy evaluation (MSE) project that would consider multispecies effects of potential management changes and be used to develop a more holistic approach to management of the snapper grouper fishery. The recreational fishery for red snapper, gag, and black sea bass are the main focus of the MSE effort. An amendment will follow the MSE project and consider implementation of management changes evaluated through the MSE.

Action Summary: A future amendment will provide actions intended to incorporate recommendations from the MSE project.

Development Level: MSE in progress, amendment to follow.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 (Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper)

Staff Lead: Allie Iberle

Purpose of Amendment: Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 68).

Action Summary: Establish a scamp/yellowmouth grouper complex, remove yellowmouth grouper from the shallow water grouper (SWG) complex, establish catch levels and sector allocations for the new complex, adjust catch levels and sector allocations for the SWG complex.

Development Level: Scoping completed.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass)

Staff Lead: Mike Schmidtke

Purpose of Amendment: Respond to most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 76).

Action Summary: Establish a rebuilding plan, revise catch levels, consider revision of sector allocations, other black sea bass management measures.

Development Level: Pre-scoping.

Comprehensive Recreational For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment

Staff Leads: John Hadley & Myra Brouwer

Purpose of Amendment: To establish limited entry for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries.

Action Summary: TBD

Development Level: Pre-scoping. In December 2023, the Council initiated amendment development and created additional control dates of December 8, 2023, for for-hire permits and December 5, 2023, for reporting to SEFHIER established.

Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment

Staff Leads: Mike Schmidtke and Judd Curtis

Purpose of Amendment: To modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the MSA and revise how uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs.

Action Summary: Modify the ABC Control Rule, including specification of scientific uncertainty and management risk components, application of the Control Rule to rebuilding stocks, criteria and procedures for phase-in of ABC changes, criteria and procedures for carry-

over of unused portions of the annual catch limit, and establishment a framework procedure to allow carry-overs.

Development Level: Implemented February 2, 2024

Allocation Review Guidelines

Staff Leads: Christina Wiegand, John Hadley, Mike Schmidtke, and Myra Brouwer

Purpose of Project: Better document the Council’s efforts to address the Government Accountability Office’s allocation-related recommendations over the past couple of years including the allocation review trigger policy, developing an allocation decision tool, allocation discussions when developing amendments, updating Fishery Management Plan goals and objectives, and providing research recommendations. [The guidelines](#) outline the Council’s process for allocation reviews, including the [allocation decision tool process](#), the updated [allocation review trigger policy](#), and the types of information that will be documented following an allocation trigger and subsequent review. This document will present a record of the basis for the Council's decisions and will be made accessible to the public on the [Council's website](#).

Development Level: Council staff prepared a draft of this document for review at the September 2023 Council meeting and a revised draft for Council approval at the December 2023 meeting.

3.3. Presentation and Discussion

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

3.4. Action

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to brief the SEP on potential Council actions that may be presented to the group for review later in the meeting or at a future SEP meeting.

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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4. The Socio-Economic Panel feedback on upcoming South Atlantic Fishery Management Council stakeholder engagement meetings

4.1. Document

- **Attachment 4.** Stakeholder engagement meetings discussion document

4.2. Overview

Council staff has begun work to develop a plan for holding stakeholder engagement meetings along the south Atlantic coast, meeting fishermen in their communities. The traditional public comment format does not always allow for two-way discourse between Council members and fisheries stakeholders. These stakeholder engagement meetings will provide an opportunity for Council members to have productive dialogues with fisheries participants. By engaging stakeholders in this more informal setting, Council members will be able to build relationships and increase engagement in the management process. Building relationships and momentum for

participation in the management process requires consistent interaction with stakeholders over time, so staff intend for these types of meetings to become a regular part of the Council's engagement efforts. Council staff will present a discussion document with information on the goals and objectives and proposed format for stakeholder engagement meetings.

4.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

4.4. Action

Provide feedback on the proposed structure for stakeholder engagement meetings and whether it matches the goals and objectives outlined by the Council.

Discussion Questions

1. Stakeholder engagement meetings are different from traditional opportunities for public input because they are not tied to a specific management action. The Council will need to communicate to stakeholders how the input gathered will be used, the benefits of attending these meetings, and the opportunities they provide that traditional meeting processes may not provide. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to help the Council have these discussions?
2. Is two hours an appropriate amount of time to ask stakeholders to attend a meeting? Should staff prioritize time for the structured breakout groups or the unstructured breakout groups session?
3. Should staff change structured and unstructured topics by city and state or try to maintain some consistency each year.
4. Considering staff workload, does the SEP have suggestions on how information could be presented during the unstructured session (looping PowerPoint, informational flyers, etc.)
5. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to adjust the proposed structure for low or high attendance scenarios?
6. Are there other methods that staff should consider for facilitating the meeting to better meet the objective of providing an opportunity for an open dialogue and mutual learning between Council members and stakeholders?
7. Are there novel or creative ways to summarize the information gathered during these meetings for Council members and the public?
8. Discussion questions will be developed to help begin conversation during the structured breakout groups. Are there best practices for developing discussion questions? Would any SEP members be willing to volunteer to review discussion questions developed by staff?
9. Staff has not begun development of evaluation methods yet, but does the SEP have any ideas for how the success of these stakeholder engagement meetings could be measured?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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5. The Socio-Economic Panel feedback on upcoming South Atlantic Fishery Management Council best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop

5.1. Document

- **Attachment 5.** Best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop discussion document

5.2. Overview

The South Atlantic Council’s Best Fishing Practices (BFP) Outreach Initiative was expanded in December 2022. Evaluation of the outreach efforts conducted is key in ensuring that the goal of increasing the use of BFP in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery is achieved. Fortunately, in recent years, there has become increased interest in exploring stakeholder perception and usage of BFP, namely barotrauma mitigation tools like descending devices. Several survey-based studies have been completed throughout the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico region. However, they all ask slightly different questions, focus on different areas, or are not longitudinal in nature, making it challenging to determine changes in fishing behavior throughout the South Atlantic region. To help aid the Council, researchers conducting work on BFP perceptions, outreach, and usage would be invited to a workshop to present their work and discuss how it may benefit the Council’s BFP program. Council staff will present a plan for the workshop, including tentative discussion topics and meeting structure, or SEP discussion.

5.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, Judd Curtis, and Ashley Oliver, SAFMC Staff

5.4. Action

Provide feedback on the proposed topics and structure for the best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the goals and objectives for the workshop reasonable for the subject matter and achievable?
2. Does the SEP have any recommendations for topics to cover during the pre-workshop survey?
3. Do the presentations cover the topics necessary to meet the goals and objectives of the workshop or are there additional topics that could be beneficial for attendees to discuss?
4. Any recommendations for presenters that have conducted research within the key subject areas?
5. Does the SEP have any suggestions for how to make breakout groups successful? In your experience are their discussion methods more effective than others?
6. Is there a way to make the report outs sessions more interactive and engaging for attendees (ex. sticky wall, flip chart notes)?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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6. Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports

6.1. Document

- **Attachment 6.** SAFE Report background document and discussion questions

6.2. Overview

Council staff have started to develop Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports. These reports are required through National Standard 2 of the Magnuson Stevens Act. The report should contain the best scientific information available on the condition of the stock, essential fish habitat, marine ecosystems, and the fishery. These reports can serve as regular updates to the AP, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Council to aid in discussing the condition of the stock and potential need for adjusting management measures. The SSC has provided feedback on information that is crucial for a SAFE report and information that would be good to include based on draft SAFE reports for Dolphin Wahoo and Snapper Grouper fishery management plans (FMPs). SAFE reports will be developed and updated every two years for each FMP and provided at the spring SSC meeting and June Council meeting. These reports will also be provided to any interested constituents on the Council's website.

Chip Collier, SAFMC staff, will brief the SEP on the draft SAFE reports for dolphin and wahoo and solicit input on changes that the SEP would like to see in the reports before they are finalized.

6.3. Presentation

Chip Collier, Christina Wiegand, and John Hadley, SAFMC Staff

6.4. Action

Provide feedback on the social and economic components of the draft SAFE reports and input on any additional information that may be useful.

Discussion Questions

1. Out of the social and economic information provided, which items do think are most useful for managers or constituents?
 - a. Specifically for managers?
 - b. Specifically for constituents?
2. Are there additional pieces of readily available social or economic information that should be added to the SAFE reports?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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7. Citizen Science Program update

7.1. Document

- **Attachment 7.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

7.2. Overview

Julia Byrd, SAFMC staff, will provide an update on program activities and recent efforts of the [SAFMC's Citizen Science Program](#). The presentation will include updates on the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal, SMILE, SAFMC Release, and FISHstory projects. SEP members will be asked to provide feedback on topics to include in a SAFMC Release participant survey and ways to gather photos for the FISHstory project.

Presentation and Discussion

Julia Byrd and Meg Withers, SAFMC staff

7.3. Action

Provide feedback and guidance on topics to include in the SAFMC Release participant survey and on strategies to gather additional photos for the FISHstory project based on the discussion questions below.

Discussion Questions:

SAFMC Release

A SAFMC Release participant survey is being developed. The following topics are being considered for inclusion in the survey: avidity, years fishing/experience, demographics, motivations and barriers to participation, participants' sources of information, efficacy of project's communication, and perception of the project and its role in fisheries science/management.

1. Are the proposed topics appropriate for the participant survey?
2. Is the number of topics appropriate? Are there topics you would recommend eliminating or adding?
3. Is there any additional feedback or guidance regarding the survey?

FISHstory

The FISHstory project is working to gather more photos from across the South Atlantic region from the 1940s-1980s. Scanning events were held in conjunction with Council related meetings last fall.

1. What avenues should the Council explore to gather additional historic photos?
2. Are there any organizations or individuals in your area that may be good contacts to gather historic fishing photos?
3. When FISHstory re-launches in Zooniverse – we'll be looking for volunteers to help analyze photos. Do you have suggestions on where we could share information to recruit new volunteers?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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8. Equity and environmental justice discussion based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting

8.1. Document

- **Attachment 8.** Equity and environmental justice discussion presentation based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting

8.2. Overview

In May 2023, NMFS approved their Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy. Subsequently, the NMFS Southeast Regional Office began development of a Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan. Through a series of engagement efforts, including focus groups, scoping trips, online comment opportunities, and virtual multilingual listening stations SERO developed a list of action items that would guide strategy implementation. Many of those action items will require collaboration with the regional fishery management councils. Staff will present some of the action items identified as important during the March 2024 Council meeting for discussion.

8.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

8.4. Action

Provide feedback on how Council staff can better incorporate equity and environmental justice considerations into Council activities.

Discussion Questions

1. Is the SEP aware of any southeast-region specific equity and environmental justice training or other general diversity training that may be beneficial for Council members and staff?
2. Does the SEP have any recommendations on how Council staff can better incorporate EEJ principles into daily activities?
3. Does the SEP know of any studies that have been conducted looking at the success or failure of management measures in the South Atlantic region, specifically?
4. Given funding and regulatory constraints (Paperwork Reduction Act), does the SEP have suggestions for how Council staff can better identify marginalized social groups?
5. Incorporating processes that ensure stakeholder input is actively considered and communicated is becoming increasingly important as the Council undertakes more stakeholder driven initiatives, such as Stakeholder Engagement Meetings. How can the Council effectively communicate that they are listening and value stakeholder input?
6. How can the Council improve access to Council meetings for constituents in rural areas?
7. Does the SEP know of information, readily available, that would help the Council better understand how allocation decisions are affecting underserved communities?
8. Would the SEP recommend establishing an EEJ Advisory Panel or better incorporating members from underserved communities into existing advisory panels?

9. What other issues related to council activities might an EEJ Advisory Panel provide comment on for the Council?
10. How might the Council better ensure that Council meetings (including advisory panel meetings) are comfortable for members of communities that are underserved?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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9. Consider revising the name of the Socio-Economic Panel?

9.1. Documents

- **Attachment 9a.** Discussion document to consider revising the name of the Socio-Economic Panel
- **Attachment 9b.** United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision: Mexican Gulf Fishing Company versus The United States Department of Commerce

9.2. Overview

The term “socio-economic” has recently faced scrutiny in the U.S. Federal court system due to its non-specific nature and association with demographics or societal status rather than purely economic or social topics. Additionally, there is also the notion that the term “socio-economic” may not encompass or properly categorize all economic and social topics that often come before the SEP as well as the Council. In light of recent scrutiny of the term, the SEP will be asked to discuss whether it would be appropriate to consider revising the name of the Panel.

9.3. Presentation

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

9.4. Actions

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

Discussion Questions:

1. Given recent legal scrutiny of the term “socio-economic” and the potential narrow association of the term with demographic information, does the SEP think that the name of the Panel should be revised?
 - a. If so, what should be the new name? Social and Economic Panel?

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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10. Election of new Chair and Vice-Chair

11. Other Business

12. Report and Recommendations Review

13. Next SEP Meeting

14. Adjourn