

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PANEL OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SEP Meeting Overview**

**April 14-15, 2025**

**Town and Country Inn  
2008 Savannah Highway  
Charleston, SC 29407**

## 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,
- Citizen Science Program Projects,
- Citizen Science Program Evaluation,
- Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee recommendations,
- Utilizing information gathered during outreach initiatives,
- Situation assessment on stakeholder perspectives of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation,
- Council climate-readiness projects updates,
- Council research and monitoring priorities.

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**Attachment 1a:** Social and Economic Panel Agenda Overview

**Attachment 1b:** Minutes from the October 2024 meeting

**Attachment 2:** Recent and developing South Atlantic Council amendments

**Attachment 3:** Citizen Science Program update presentation

**Attachment 4a:** Citizen Science Initial Program Evaluation Overview

**Attachment 4b:** Survey of Scientists and Managers Working in the Region Covered by SAFMC

**Attachment 4c:** Overview Presentation of Scientist and Managers Survey Findings Presentation

**Attachment 4d:** Decoding the Motivations of Fishers Considering Participation in Citizen Science Projects

**Attachment 4e:** Decoding the Motivations of Fishers Overview Presentation

**Attachment 4f:** Comparison of Research Findings, Citizen Science Program Efforts and Recommendations

**Attachment 5a:** Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee Report

**Attachment 5b:** Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee Presentation

**Attachment 6:** Utilizing Information Gathered During Outreach Initiatives Presentation

**Attachment 7:** Situation Assessment on Stakeholder Perspectives of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Presentation

**Attachment 8:** Climate Readiness Projects Update Presentation

**Attachment 9:** South Atlantic Council Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan Draft

## **1. Introduction**

### 1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1a.** Social and Economic Panel Agenda Overview
- **Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the October 2024 meeting

### 1.2. ACTIONS

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve October 2024 minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

## **2. Recent and Developing Council Actions**

### 2.1. Document

- **Attachment 2.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Council Amendments

### 2.2. Overview

Council staff will provide a briefing on recent and upcoming amendments and actions (**Attachment 2**). The following amendments may be of particular interest to SEP members:

*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:** Under review. Amendment submitted to NMFS on December 19, 2024.

*Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permit 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, considers establishing a required education component to encourage best fishing practices that help reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery.

**Action Summary:** This amendment considers establishing a permit and education requirement for anglers or vessels to participate in the private recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery.

**Development Level:** Scoping has been conducted and the amendment is being developed. Approval for public hearings is expected at the June 2025 meeting.

*Snapper Grouper Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass)*

**Staff Lead:** Mike Schmidtke

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

**Action Summary:** Revise catch levels and status determination criteria, consider revision of sector allocations, other black sea bass management measures.

**Development Level:** Post-scoping; draft amendment under development.

*Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/ Reef Fish Amendment 55 (Yellowtail Snapper)*

**Staff Lead:** Allie Iberle

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 64). Yellowtail snapper are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

**Action Summary:** adopt recommended ABC, adjust jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils, adjust ACLs, and sector allocations (SA only).

**Development Level:** Post-scoping. Development paused.

*Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation*

**Staff Lead:** Chip Collier, 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 amendment will follow the MSE project and consider implementation of management changes evaluated through the MSE.

**Action Summary:** This amendment will provide actions intended to incorporate recommendations from the MSE project. The MSE is currently undergoing additional work, including research to potentially capture some of the human behavior components of the recreational Snapper Grouper fishery.

*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.

*Comprehensive For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment*

**Staff Leads:** John Hadley & Myra Brouwer

**Purpose of Amendment:** To improve compliance with for-hire reporting requirements.

**Action Summary:** TBD

**Development Level:** Scoping.

2.3. Presentation and Discussion

John Hadley, SAFMC staff

2.4. ACTIONS

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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**3. Update on the Citizen Science Program**

3.1. Document

- **Attachment 3.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

3.2. Overview

Julia Byrd, SAFMC staff, will provide an update program activities and recent efforts of the [SAFMC's Citizen Science Program](#). Program activities currently underway include the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal, the SMILE Project, FISHstory, and SAFMC Release. Staff will also present new efforts to track relationship building to look for patterns in engagement with the Citizen Science Program.

Presentation and Discussion

Julia Byrd and Meg Withers, SAFMC staff

### 3.3. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What modes of contact do you think would be most beneficial to track to document relationship building?
2. What details (without logging any personal information) would be useful to us illustrating the path to relationship-building?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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## **4. Citizen Science Program Evaluation**

### 4.1. Document

- **Attachment 4a.** Citizen Science Initial Program Evaluation Overview
- **Attachment 4b.** Survey of Scientists and Managers Working in the Region Covered by SAFMC
- **Attachment 4c:** Overview Presentation of Scientist and Managers Survey Findings Presentation
- **Attachment 4d:** Decoding the Motivations of Fishers Considering Participation in Citizen Science Projects
- **Attachment 4e:** Decoding the Motivations of Fishers Overview Presentation
- **Attachment 4f:** Comparison of Research Findings, Citizen Science Program Efforts and Recommendations

### 4.2. Overview

At their December 2020 meeting, the Council supported working with Rick Bonney on an initial evaluation plan for the SAFMC's Citizen Science Program (Program). The plan focuses on gathering baseline data on knowledge, attitudes, collaborations, engagement, and trust from various stakeholder groups to help evaluate the Program's fourth goal to 'foster mutual learning, collaboration, and program engagement'.

In the original evaluation plan, baseline data was proposed to be collected in three phases: 1) interviews, 2) the development and piloting of an online survey, and 3) the implementation of the online survey. Rick Bonney presented findings from the phase one interviews to the Operations Committee in May 2023 and to the SAFMC in June 2023. Conclusions from the interviews noted the fisherman audience needed to be studied in much more detail and that research into the needs, desires, and motivations of fishermen and how best to reach fishermen will be critical to the Program. Bonney also noted that deploying an online survey to scientists and managers should not be too challenging, but deploying an online survey to fishermen could be challenging.

During summer 2022, additional funding was obtained for this project through NOAA Fisheries and the SAFMC. Staff consulted with Rick Bonney on how best to apply the

funds for these evaluation efforts. The decision was made to have Rick Bonney lead the research to gather information from a broader group of scientists and managers through an online survey and to put out a request for proposals in December 2022 to gather information from a broader group of fishermen. Jennifer Sweeney Tookes and Tracy Yandle’s proposal was selected for funding. They collected information from a broader group of fishermen via interviews. **Attachment 4a** provides background information on the Citizen Science Program’s initial evaluation.

Bonney conducted the online survey with scientists and managers from approximately March through September 2024. The final report summarizing survey findings is **Attachment 4b**. Julia Byrd, Citizen Science Program Manager, will present an overview of survey findings highlighting recommendations on how the Program can respond to this research (**Attachment 4c**).

The Sweeney Tookes’ et al. research team conducted interviews with fishermen from approximately July 2023 to February 2024. The final report summarizing survey findings is **Attachment 4d**. Sweeney Tookes will present an overview of survey findings highlighting recommendations on how the Program can respond to this research (**Attachment 4e**).

Julia Byrd will provide an overview comparing key findings from the Bonney and Sweeney Tookes et al. research; share efforts the Citizen Science Program is currently undertaking that help address report recommendations; and provide recommendations for additional strategies and activities the Program can implement to further respond to this research effort (**Attachment 4f**). The recommendations presented were developed and reviewed by the Citizen Science Operations Committee at their October 2024 meeting.

#### 4.3. Presentation

Julia Byrd, SAFMC Staff  
Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, Georgia Southern University

#### 4.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

##### Discussion Questions

1. Does the SEP support the recommendations developed by the Citizen Science Operations Committee? Are there additional ways the Citizen Science Program should adapt or be refined based on these research efforts?
2. What issues, challenges, and recommendations should the Program prioritize addressing in the short term (1-3 years)? In the long term (> 3 years)?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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## 5. Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee Report

### 5.1. Documents

- **Attachment 5a:** Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee Report
- **Attachment 5b:** Eighth National Meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee of the Council Coordination Committee Presentation

### 5.2. Overview

The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee convened its 8th workshop (SCS8) in Boston, MA on August 26-28, 2024, hosted by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). The SCS8 meeting theme was Applying ABC Control Rules in a Changing Environment and featured three sub-themes: (1) Advances in ecosystem science and assessment to inform ABC control rules in a dynamic environment, (2) Application of social science to achieve management goals under dynamic conditions, and (3) Adaptation of reference points, control rules, and rebuilding plans to a changing environment. The meeting included several keynote speakers in sub-theme areas and regional case studies from SSC members and NOAA staff followed by break-out groups and synthesis of ideas. On the final day, participants broke out into regional SSC groups and brainstormed several ideas for actionable outcomes, implementation, and pathways forward for their respective regional SSCs. Staff will present a summary of the discussions relative to sub-theme two (application of social science), including challenges and recommendations.

### 5.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, SAMFC staff

### 5.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What are the most significant data gaps in our understanding of the South Atlantic social and economic environment.
  - a. Are there available data sources or ongoing research that has not been explored to-date that would help fill these gaps?
2. How can the Council better illustrate the ways in which they utilize public testimony and LEK in the management process?
  - a. How can the Council improve the public testimony process?
3. How can the Council encourage participation in the public participation processes that already exist (public comment, advisory panels, Citizen Science, Lines, etc.)?
4. Are there opportunities for Council staff to better coordinate with external entities to leverage resources that have not been explored to-date?
5. Given limited staff resources, how can Council staff capitalize on nontraditional sources of social and economic data (foreshadowing, for a presentation later in the meeting)?



6. How can Council staff better illustrate the role of social and economic data in the analysis of management actions to the Council?
  - a. How can the decision-making process more explicitly incorporate social science?
7. Does the Social and Economic Panel feel they need more information on how Council members understand social science and what they are looking to receive from the Panel?
8. SCS9 will be hosted by the Gulf Fishery Management Council in 2026. Does the SEP have suggestions for a social science sub-theme(s) to include?

## SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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## 6. Utilization of Information Gathered During Outreach Initiatives

### 6.1. Document

- **Attachment 6.** Utilizing Information Gathered During Outreach Initiatives Presentation

### 6.2. Overview

The Council has an extensive Outreach and Communication Program allowing outreach staff to engage with fishery stakeholders throughout the Council’s jurisdiction. Through these activities outreach staff passively collects a significant amount of qualitative information on Council managed fisheries. While not collected using any formal social science methodology, it is important to consider the value of these activities and how to better utilize the information to inform the Council decision making process. Staff will review the in-person outreach initiatives conducted by Council staff and the information they collect both explicitly and passively. Additionally, staff will cover how the value of these outreach programs is tracked and presented to the Council.

### 6.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

### 6.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How can the information gathered through these various efforts be captured, if not already?
  - a. How can we track qualitative information consistently and comparably across different outreach events?
2. How can the information captured be analyzed to better understand trends in South Atlantic fisheries?
3. How can Council staff effectively present and communicate the qualitative insights to the Council?
  - a. Present this information as more than purely anecdotal evidence.
4. How can Council staff better track the development of relationships over time?

5. How can the Council effectively present and communicate the value of outreach efforts to achieve Council goals and objectives?

#### SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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## 7. Situation Assessment on Stakeholder Perspectives of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Presentation

### 7.1. Document

- **Attachment 7.** Situation Assessment on Stakeholder Perspectives of the Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Presentation

### 7.2. Overview

As part of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) a situation assessment of stakeholder perspectives on the snapper grouper fishery, the discard mortality issues, management process and role of snapper grouper MSE developed by Blue Matter Science was conducted. A key part of MSE is gathering information on stakeholder perspectives. This situation assessment will be used to improve the next iteration for the snapper grouper MSE. Outcomes include identification of key stakeholders to engage, main concerns of stakeholders, areas where public input could shape the discussion, and issues or constraints that could impact participation.

### 7.3. Presentation

Kai Lorenzen, University of Florida

### 7.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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## 8. Climate Readiness Projects Update

### 8.1. Documents

- **Attachment 8.** Climate Readiness Projects Update Presentation

### 8.2. Overview

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has provided funding to support Council efforts to develop and advance climate ready fisheries management. This presentation will provide background information and updates on the Council's Climate Readiness Projects including various Resilient Fisheries Initiatives, and ongoing collaborations

with East Coast and Southeast Regional management partners and an update on the four Council Climate Readiness Projects.

### 8.3. Presentation

Lara Klibansky, SAFMC Staff

### 8.4. ACTIONS

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

## SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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## 9. South Atlantic Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan

### 9.1. Documents

- **Attachment 9.** South Atlantic Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan Draft

### 9.2. Overview

The Council revises their research and monitoring plan every two years. The research and monitoring plan is used by Council and NOAA Fisheries staff to develop research concepts that are intended for use in management, provided to NOAA Fisheries for potential inclusion in research grants as priorities, and used by other researchers during development of research proposals. The Panel is provided with an opportunity to review the 2025-2029 South Atlantic Research and Monitoring plan. The Council will consider the plan at its June 2025 meeting.

### 9.3. Presentation

Chip Collier, SAFMC staff

### 9.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Do the social and economic priorities in the South Atlantic Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan accurately reflect the needs in this region?
2. Are there any additional priorities that should be added to the current list? Consider general needs as well as recent nationwide initiatives.

## SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

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**10. Other Business**

**11. Report and Recommendations Review**

**12. Next SEP Meeting**