

# Evaluating Best Fishing Practices Outreach and Applications for Meeting Snapper Grouper Management Targets

DRAFT Workshop Plan  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Socioeconomic Panel  
April 2024

Regulatory measures combined with growing fishing effort in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery, particularly from the recreational sector, have led to a drastic increase in the number of non-target snapper and grouper that must be released. Due to the multispecies nature of the snapper grouper fishery, it is common for non-target species to be caught and released due to regulatory or other reasons, while fishing for other species. The increase in releases has led to an increase in the number of fish that do not survive after being caught and released. While there are management and fishermen efforts in place aimed at improving survival after release through best fishing practices (BFP) and the use of descending devices, more outreach and education are needed to ensure these practices become ubiquitous throughout the fishery.

The South Atlantic Council's Best Fishing Practices 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. Yet, it can be challenging for Council staff to complete this work due to time and funding constraints as well as policy constraints due to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). 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.

## **Workshop Goals:**

1. Synthesize and summarize existing stakeholder knowledge on the use of best fishing practices in reducing discard mortality to better understand both prevalence of use and current knowledge gaps.
2. Examine the effectiveness of best fishing practices outreach and education efforts including evaluation needs and areas for improvement.
3. Understand the relationship between social norms and the use of best practices and how norms can be leveraged to encourage the use of descending devices and other best fishing practices.
4. Review the role best fishing practices play in discard mortality estimates included in the stock assessment process including inputs and model specifications affected by discard

mortality (F, time blocks, etc.), and the data needed to meet management targets (e.g. reduction of 60% discards to prevent overfishing).

**Workshop Outcome:** A final report that details currently available information related to the goals above, summarizes workshop discussions, and provides research recommendations that can be incorporated into the Council’s research and monitoring priorities.

**Workshop Timing:**

One full day and one-half day, occurring in mid-September (Tentatively September 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>).

**Main Discussion Topics:**

1. Social norms in natural resources management.
2. Current descending device data collection efforts in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions.
3. Incorporating regulatory knowledge and compliance rates into stock assessments.

**Participants:**

- Approximately 25 participants (one moderator, seven to eight presenters, fifteen additional participants). Including:
  - Outreach professionals from state agencies and Sea Grants.
  - Staff for other organizations conducting descending device specific outreach (Return ‘Em Right, FishSmart)
  - Social scientists that are familiar with survey techniques and social norms research.
  - Stock assessment scientists familiar with the available data in the southeast region.

**Proposed Workshop Structure:**

*Two Weeks Prior to the Meeting*

- Presentations and background material available online for all participants to review.
- Pre-workshop survey asking participants their thoughts on what is needed to improve our understanding of descending device compliance rates, outreach effort effectiveness, and how that information can inform stock assessment discard mortality rates.
- Shared google document that allows participants to provide links to information that they feel may be helpful for other participants to read or have available.

**DAY ONE**

*Room set up: U-shaped table large enough to fit all participants for introductions, presentations, etc. Smaller tables around the outside used for breakout groups, additional small room booked to provide space (similar to SEDAR meetings).*

**Introduction (9:00a – 9:30a)**

- Staff introduces the meeting including goals and objectives and agenda.
- Participant introductions.
- Review pre-workshop survey results.

### **Morning Session: Social Norms (9:30a – 12:00p)**

- Presentations on social norms (9:30a-10:30a):  
*(Possible presentations)*
  1. Social norms in an industry outside of fisheries.
  2. Social norms related to descending devices or fisheries in general.*Each presentation lasts for 20 minutes with 10 minutes for questions.*

### **BREAK (10:30a-10:45a)**

- Breakout Groups (10:45a-11:30a)
  1. Participants meet in their assigned breakout groups (three groups of approximately eight people) to discuss research applications, gaps, and future needs.
  2. Breakout groups will be created in advance so that they have a mix of expertise and geographic knowledge.
- Report Out and Discussion (11:30a-12:00p)

### **LUNCH (12:00p-1:30p)**

### **Afternoon Session: Survey Work (1:30p – 5:00p)**

- Presentations on current descending device data collection efforts in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions (1:30p-2:45p):  
*(Possible presentations)*
  1. SAFMC Release
  2. Southeast Florida and South Carolina Angler Release Practices Survey
  3. Gulf of Mexico Recreational Survey Report

*Each presentation lasts for 15 minutes with 10 minutes for questions.*

### **BREAK (2:45p-3:00p)**

- Breakout Groups (3:00p-4:00p)
  1. Participants meet in their assigned breakout groups to discuss research applications, gaps, and future needs.
- Report Out (4:00p-5:00p)

## **DAY TWO**

### **Introduction (9:00a – 9:05a)**

- Staff recaps the first day of the workshops and plan for the remainder.

### **Morning Session: Stock Assessments (9:05a – 10:05p)**

- Presentations Incorporating regulatory knowledge and compliance rates into stock assessments (9:05a-10:05a):  
*(Possible presentations)*

1. Inputs and model specifications affected by discard mortality.
  2. Incorporating descending device usage into stock assessments for rockfish.
- Each presentation lasts for 20 minutes with 10 minutes for questions.*

**BREAK (10:05a-10:15a)**

- Breakout Groups (10:15a-11:00a)
  1. Participants meet in their assigned breakout groups to discuss research applications, gaps, and future needs.
- Report Out (11:00a-12:00p)

**Conclusion (12:00p – 12:30p)**

- Thank participants and discuss next steps.

**Discussion Questions for the Socioeconomic Panel:**

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