

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

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



**SEP Meeting Overview and Summary Report**

**April 13-14, 2026**

**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,
- Improving Communication with and Increasing Resilience of Fishing Communities in the South Atlantic Region project,
- Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation,
- Economic value and social value analyses for the Risk Value Matrix tool,
- Understanding citizen scientists’ experience with the SMILE Project (Size Matters: Innovative Length Estimates) project,
- Fishery Performance Report text analysis,
- Introduction to social science and economics for fishermen.

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

**Attachment 1b:** Minutes from the April 2025 meeting

**Attachment 1c:** Minutes from the February 2026 meeting

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

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

**Attachment 4:** Increasing Resilience of Fishing Communities introduction presentation

**Attachment 5:** Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Economics presentation

**Attachment 6a:** Risk Value Matrix Introduction Presentation to SAFMC (March 2026)

**Attachment 6b:** CCC Response to NMFS Risk Value Matrix (February 2026)

**Attachment 6c:** Risk Value Matrix Economic Value Presentation

**Attachment 7a:** Understanding citizen scientists' experience with the SMILE Project report

**Attachment 7b:** Understanding citizen scientists' experience with the SMILE Project presentation

**Attachment 8:** Risk Value Matrix Social Value Presentation

**Attachment 9a:** FPR Text Analysis Internal Documentation

**Attachment 9b:** FPR Text Analysis External Documentation

**Attachment 9c:** FPR Text Analysis Presentation

**Attachment 10:** Introduction to Social Science and Economics for Fishermen Outline

## **1. Introduction**

### 1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1a.** Social and Economic Panel Agenda Overview
- **Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2025 meeting
- **Attachment 1c.** Minutes from the February 2026 meeting

### 1.2. ACTIONS

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve April 2025 and February 2026 minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP approved the April 2025 and February 2026 meeting minutes and the April 2026 meeting agenda.

## **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 61 (Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Evaluate whether 14 species currently in the FMU should remain, be removed, or be designated as ecosystem component species. Note: this amendment supersedes an earlier proposed amendment to specify ABCs for unassessed snapper grouper species.

**Action Summary:** To determine the need for conservation and management of 14 snapper grouper species.

**Development level:** Scoping completed. In March 2026, the Council reviewed draft purpose and need statements. Narrowed down the scope of species considered in the amendment to 14 species.

*Amendment 60 (Commercial management measures)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** The amendment has two main objectives: 1) address issues related to the commercial Snapper Grouper Unlimited (SG 1) permit, and 2) increase commercial trip efficiency.

**Action Summary:** Revise the 2-for-1 snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy; establish dynamic (step-down) trip limits; and revise existing stowage requirements for gear on board.

**Development level:** Scoping has been conducted and the amendment is being developed. Approval for public hearings is expected at the June 2026 meeting.

*Amendment 62 (Joint State-Federal Management of Recreational Red Snapper)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** To establish a mechanism for joint federal-state management of the recreational red snapper fishery in the South Atlantic.

**Development level:** The Council expects to begin development once the states' EFPs have been approved and are underway.

*Regulatory Amendment 37 (Black Sea Bass Management Measures)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Address depleted status of black sea bass in the South Atlantic immediately with management measures aimed at reducing regulatory discards and protecting the spawning stock.

**Action Summary:** Establish recreational and commercial annual catch targets that reduce harvest by 50% and revise accountability measures, reduce the recreational bag limit, and implement an annual spawning season closure in February and March for both commercial and recreational sectors.

**Development level:** Approved for submission

*Headboat Vessel Limits*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Consider developing vessel limits for gag, black grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth grouper that account for the higher number of passengers on headboats compared to charter vessels.

**Action Summary:** Establish vessel limits that may be based on the number of paying passengers to allow for vessel limits that exceed those established for gag, black grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth grouper onboard private or charter vessels.

**Development level:** Scoping has been conducted and the amendment is being developed. Approval for public hearings is expected at the December 2026 meeting.

### *Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation*

**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.

#### 2.3. Presentation and Discussion

John Hadley and Christina Curtis, 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:**

- The SEP appreciated the updates but had no questions.

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

#### 3.1. Document

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

#### 3.2. Overview

SAFMC staff will provide an update on program activities and recent efforts within the [SAFMC's Citizen Science Program](#). This will include updates on current projects such as SMILE, FISHstory, and SAFMC Release. Staff will also share information on key indicators developed under each of the Program's goal to help evaluate progress, identify opportunities for improvement, and measure the Program's ongoing impact.

#### Presentation and Discussion

Julia Byrd and Meg Withers, SAFMC staff

#### 3.3. ACTIONS

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

#### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- SAFMC Release

- SEP understands that the participation and submissions have increased over time, with last year being the strongest yet (with seasonal peaks in fall due to inshore juvenile grouper and May due to shallow water grouper season. If possible, SEP is interested to know the number of participants and submissions in SAFMC Release over time, and more detail about the scale of participation, as well as participant retention outside the Sea Grant competition window.
  - As submissions are open to all sectors; location can be reported by state with optional detail and GPS locations are grouped for confidentiality. SEP suggests it could be useful to see release data broken down by location, area, and mode.
  - The SEP notes that demographic data is limited to how users heard about the project, sector, and city/state; but suggests collaborating with an outside partner to formally assess user experience would be helpful.
  - SEP is curious about whether data previously recommended for use has been utilized, but this information is not available.
- FISHstory, SMILE Project, Planning and Evaluation
    - The SEP appreciate the continuing good work on this project, and wondered if possible to determine whether indicators identified in this project are actually used, and understand that the CitSci program has to prioritize them eligible to be considered for use, since actual use is out of the scope of control for the Cit Sci Program.
    - The SEP notes potential upward bias in weight or size of fish in FISHstory photos, but the presentation slide for SEDAR 90 addresses some of that concern since there is not a shift upward. It is important to try to capture the range of what was caught on a trip rather than a single fish photo, and the mix of sizes cumulatively across photos should help address that concern.
    - It was noted that researchers at NC State are examining whether photos and HB logbooks can be used to develop an index of abundance.

## **4. Improving Communication with and Increasing Resilience of Fishing Communities in the South Atlantic Region**

### **4.1. Document**

- **Attachment 4.** Increasing Resilience of Fishing Communities introduction presentation

### **4.2. Overview**

Part of the Council’s Resilient Fisheries Initiative, this project would operationalize recommendations from East Coast scenario planning efforts by identifying communities that interact with Council-managed species in the South Atlantic region and beyond. The purpose is to identify and engage communities where outreach has been lacking in the past. This will improve the Council’s understanding of constituent preferences for engagement and provide an opportunity to inform constituents about the Council process and improve their ability to become engaged. The proposed work would also describe community impacts from increasing environmental uncertainty. The SEP will receive an introduction to the project and a description of the work to be completed.

### 4.3. Presentation

Ed Camp, University of Florida  
Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, Georgia Southern University

### 4.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to brief the SEP on a project that will be scheduled for detailed review at a future SEP meeting.

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- This is a very SEP-focused project, with several SEP members on the research team and several others on the project oversight team. As such, informal SEP feedback will be solicited and incorporated throughout the research process.
- SEP members recommended reaching out to the Federal and State staff to minimize duplicative work, as NMFS has various efforts that may overlap with this project, such as social indicators and identifying fishing infrastructure.

## **5. Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation Economics**

### 5.1. Documents

- **Attachment 5:** Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation economics presentation

### 5.2. Overview

The Council is in the process of developing a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the recreational snapper grouper fishery focusing on strategies to reduce the number of released fish to improve yield throughout the fishery. The management strategy will also consider the need for fishery access and resource use while preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks.

The MSE is focusing on red snapper, gag, black sea bass, and potentially other species to provide projections of landed and discarded fish under various scenarios modeling management changes to the recreational sector. As such, it is possible to add an economic component to these landings and discards streams that would allow the Council to make a comparison of estimated net economic benefits between various management scenarios to evaluate tradeoffs. Council direction to this point has been to evaluate the theoretical implementation of aggregate bag limits, mandatory stopping, seasonal management, and spatial management (closed and open areas) in the recreational snapper grouper fishery.

Staff have begun to develop methods that would allow this comparison, utilizing willingness to pay (WTP) estimates for harvesting and discarding the three original species identified for the MSE, which are red snapper, gag, and black sea bass. Specifically, staff are considering applying WTP estimates for harvested or discarded red snapper and gag provided in [Carter and](#)

[Liese \(2012\)](#)<sup>1</sup> and WTP estimates for harvested black sea bass provided in [Haab et al \(2010\)](#)<sup>2</sup>. Council staff will provide an overview of the initial methodology that is being developed for application within the MSE and ask for feedback from the SEP on these methods as well as for improvements that could potentially be implemented.

### 5.3. Presentation

John Hadley, SAMFC staff

### 5.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. The MSE can provide projected catches over several decades, thus discounting future benefits and costs will be necessary. Current federal guidance is to utilize a discount rate of 3% and 7% when conducting benefit-cost analysis. Does the SEP suggest an additional discount rate outside of this range that should be explored when examining the net present value of benefits and costs for the management scenarios in the MSE? If so, what discount rate and why?
2. Does the SEP know of alternative estimates of consumer surplus for harvested or discarded fish that should be used instead of those initially identified?
  - a. Does the SEP know of consumer surplus estimates for released black sea bass?
  - b. Could consumer surplus for non-groupers or red snapper be set a fraction of the consumer surplus for other species?
3. How would the SEP recommend determining that the conclusions are robust to the assumptions?
  - a. It is important to note that we do not need a “perfect number” since we are examining which management scenario is performing better compared to the others based on a certain set of assumptions. Those assumptions can include a range to provide a sensitivity analysis.
4. Does the SEP have any comments on the general methods and assumptions that are being proposed to add an economic component to the MSE?
  - c. Assumption 1: For discarded red snapper or gag, utilize a WTP estimate that is the average value between a bag limit and minimum size limit release value since it is unknown whether discards in the MSE model are due to minimum size, bag limit, or other reasons.
    - i. Also utilize the fourth fish estimate for red snapper and gag since it is unknown how many fish may be discarded on a hypothetical trip in the MSE.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Carter-40/publication/233843864\\_The\\_Economic\\_Value\\_of\\_Catching\\_and\\_Keeping\\_or\\_Releasing\\_Saltwater\\_Sport\\_Fish\\_in\\_the\\_Southeast\\_USA/links/56d0641108aeb52500cd7536/The-Economic-Value-of-Catching-and-Keeping-or-Releasing-Saltwater-Sport-Fish-in-the-Southeast-USA.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Carter-40/publication/233843864_The_Economic_Value_of_Catching_and_Keeping_or_Releasing_Saltwater_Sport_Fish_in_the_Southeast_USA/links/56d0641108aeb52500cd7536/The-Economic-Value-of-Catching-and-Keeping-or-Releasing-Saltwater-Sport-Fish-in-the-Southeast-USA.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46448189\\_Angler\\_Heterogeneity\\_and\\_the\\_Species-Specific\\_Demand\\_for\\_Marine\\_Recreational\\_Fishing](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46448189_Angler_Heterogeneity_and_the_Species-Specific_Demand_for_Marine_Recreational_Fishing)

- d. Assumption 2: Harvest and discards of these fish are considered a benefit and dead discards a cost.
  - i. Since the size and disposition (harvest vs discard) of a dead discard that hypothetically could have otherwise survived to be caught in the fishery again is unknown, the average of the WTP estimates for harvest and discards may be utilized to apply a value to the dead discards.

## SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Discussion Question:** The MSE can provide projected catches over several decades, thus discounting future benefits and costs will be necessary. Current federal guidance is to utilize a discount rate of 3% and 7% when conducting benefit-cost analysis. Does the SEP suggest an additional discount rate outside of this range that should be explored when examining the net present value of benefits and costs for the management scenarios in the MSE? If so, what discount rate and why?
  - The SEP recommended 2%-3% based on the market yield of 10-year Treasury Inflation Protected Securities.
- **Discussion Question:** Does the SEP know of alternative estimates of consumer surplus for harvested or discarded fish that should be used instead of those initially identified?
  - The SEP suggested conducting a meta-analysis of different studies currently available.
- **Discussion Question:** Does the SEP know of consumer surplus estimates for released black sea bass?
  - There has been recent research at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute that looks at angler WTP for harvested and discarded fish. Among the species being explored is Black Sea Bass. The SEP shared a recent publication with Council staff and encouraged staff to explore the applicability and use of that study in the South Atlantic.
- **Discussion Question:** Could consumer surplus for non-groupers or red snapper be set a fraction of the consumer surplus for other species?
  - SEP suggested this decision would require the use of informed judgement based on the literature review suggested.
  - The SEP expressed concern that using WTP estimates to inform management strategy evaluation (MSE) can be problematic given that changes in fish population down the road could affect WTP estimates, which is assumed to be static.
  - For less popular fishes that have no WTP estimates available, the SEP agreed that some fraction of the WTP for more popular species would be prudent, and understands this would be a subjective process. As such, modeling ranges of WTP was suggested but noted that the process of determining WTP should be done in a fashion that can be consistent over time and replicable for future researchers.
- **Discussion Question:** How would the SEP recommend determining that the conclusions are robust to the assumptions? *(It is important to note that we do not need a “perfect number” since we are examining which management scenario is performing better compared to the others based on a certain set of assumptions. Those assumptions can include a range to provide a sensitivity analysis.)*

- The SEP suggested conducting a meta-analysis of studies currently available.
- **Discussion Question:** Does the SEP have any comments on the general methods and assumptions that are being proposed to add an economic component to the MSE?
  - The SEP expressed some concerns about estimating the value of discarded deaths outside of the year the death occurred. It was suggested that modelers could consider a fish a loss in the current year and cautioned trying to predict a future value for dead fish if they had survived. The SEP did not come to a consensus on whether to include current catch in future costs.
- **Assumption 1:** For discarded red snapper or gag, utilize a WTP estimate that is the average value between a bag limit and minimum size limit release value since it is unknown whether discards in the MSE model are due to minimum size, bag limit, or other reasons.
  - The SEP suggested to utilize the fourth fish estimate for red snapper and gag since it is unknown how many fish may be discarded on a hypothetical trip in the MSE.
  - SEP members suggested using historical MRIP data to look at discard data when biomass was at an equivalent level to try and determine where the estimate should be placed. This suggestion could potentially ground truth assumptions.
- **Assumption 2:** Harvest and discards of these fish are considered a benefit and dead discards a cost.
  - The SEP discussed that the size and disposition (harvest vs discard) of a dead discard that hypothetically could have otherwise survived to be caught in the fishery again is unknown (repeated catch in the catch and release fishery), the average of the WTP estimates for harvest and discards may be utilized to apply a value to the dead discards.
- Other Comments
  - The SEP expressed concern that static WTP estimates provided are now dated.
  - The SEP referenced a study that suggested WTP may not follow inflation and recommended Council staff to explore WTP estimates over time.
  - The dated estimates may be currently the best available science, and the SEP recognized updating WTP estimates can be expensive and time consuming.
  - SEP members suggested including a sensitivity analysis to help determine whether changes in WTP result in significant changes to the relative outcome (tie in with population size and biological parameters).
  - The SEP suggested looking at more recent revealed vs. stated preference literature (WTP is not always based on a rational economic choice).

## 6. Risk Value Matrix Introduction and Economic Value Analysis

### 6.1. Document

- **Attachment 6a.** Risk Value Matrix Introduction Presentation to SAFMC (March 2026)
- **Attachment 6b.** CCC Response to NMFS Risk Value Matrix (February 2026)
- **Attachment 6c.** Risk Value Matrix Economic Value Presentation

## 6.2. Overview

At the May 2025 CCC meeting NMFS discussed the need to “narrow the scope of NMFS management and science” to accommodate future agency resources and capabilities. In March 2026 the Council was provided with an update on progress by the SEFSC to further develop tools to assist decision making related to narrowing the scope of management. Additional information on management alternatives that could be considered for the risk/value categories was provided, along with progress on compiling the value and risk information necessary to assign stocks to risk/value categories. A national approach has been developed to support comparisons across regions. SEFSC staff will provide an overview of the risk value effort and details on the analyses being used to populate the economic data component of the priority matrix.

## 6.3. Presentation

David Carter, SEFSC staff

## 6.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Envisioning this effort as a pilot to potentially further refine to help the Council prioritize species for ongoing management (annual catch limits, accountability measures, size limits, etc.) versus removing from federal management (removal from FMP or designated an ecosystem component species), are there ways that the economic component of the Risk-Value matrix could be improved?
  - a. Are value added economic impacts a good metric to use as a proxy for economic importance of a species? If not, what readily available economic data or metric should be used instead?
  - b. Are there other readily available economic data or metrics that should be used in addition to value added impacts?
- 2) Will results of the economic component of this effort, as designed, be useful in helping to guide decisions on the scope of science and management, such as revisiting or prioritizing species and complexes in need of assessments and federal management and resources allocated across fisheries and regions?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Discussion Question:** Envisioning this effort as a pilot to potentially further refine to help the Council prioritize species for ongoing management (annual catch limits, accountability measures, size limits, etc.) versus removing from federal management (removal from FMP or designated an ecosystem component species), are there ways that the economic component of the Risk-Value matrix could be improved?
  - **Discussion Question:** Are value added economic impacts a good metric to use as a proxy for economic importance of a species? If not, what readily available economic data or metric should be used instead?

- The SEP agreed that this could be a good indicator of the economic contribution to GDP, but need to think about what goes into that calculation, as a species heavily pursued by the charter industry is going to be elevated (species with more trips could have a lower value added, depending on the mode). Also, just using value added does not address substitutability between species. The economic impact is still there, but they may just be targeting other species.
- The SEP emphasizes there is also a need to consider angler welfare, which is somewhat captured in the social survey but only given a 20% weighting in the social score (and similar concerns with commercial).
  - The SEP notes that careful consideration needs to be given to weighting on economic contribution estimates vs social aspects, and consider how to interpret outcomes.
- **Discussion Questions:** Are there other readily available economic data or metrics that should be used in addition to value added impacts?
  - The SEP suggests consumer surplus or WTP but there are large gaps in that information, particularly on a species-basis, and noted movement away from surplus measures because of data limitations. Value added impacts were widely available nationwide.
  - SEP expressed concern about using value added given distribution of trips and ex vessel value, and that economic contribution analyses, estimated from input/output softwares, may be missing essential fishery context.
- The SEP requested to be involved in future discussions about and assignment of weights associated with social scores and economic value.

## 7. Understanding citizen scientists' experience with the SMILE Project (Size Matters: Innovative Length Estimates)

### 7.1. Document

- **Attachment 7a.** Understanding citizen scientists' experience with the SMILE Project report.
- **Attachment 7b.** Understanding citizen scientists' experience with the SMILE Project presentation.

### 7.2. Overview

Size matters – especially for fisheries! The SMILE Project (Size Matters: Innovative Length Estimates) is a citizen science project, led by the REEF Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) with support from SAFMC's Citizen Science Program. As part of this project, citizen scientists use innovative technology designed to obtain fish lengths, which ultimately contributes data for management and conservation of reef fishes. Snorkelers and divers are equipped with a low-cost, laser-mounted waterproof camera to obtain images of 12 target species (e.g., grouper, hogfish, parrotfish, snapper) that are then used to estimate fish length in post-analyses through AI and depth of field technologies.

A key component of citizen science projects is understanding who is likely to participate, what motivates their involvement, and the skills and knowledge they bring. This information is

essential for recruiting and retaining participants, particularly for specialized tasks that are critical to a project's success. In 2025, REEF collaborated with social scientists to develop a structured survey designed to identify the factors that may interest and motivate snorkelers and divers to engage with SMILE. The SEP will receive a presentation of survey results highlighting key findings and progress on this project.

### 7.3. Presentation

Jennifer Loch, Allison Candelmo, Reef Environmental Education Foundation  
Jessie Mader, Kaylin Clements, Jennifer Solomon, Colorado State University

### 7.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Does the panel know of other projects, particularly marine-based citizen science initiatives using innovative and non-app-based technologies, that have reported similar findings?
  - a. While we have perused peer-reviewed and widely available gray literature, we are especially interested in reports or materials that may be difficult to access.
- 2) Does the panel have recommendations on ways to help citizen scientists feel that their data are meaningful and actively informing management decisions?
- 3) What kinds of future social science research should REEF prioritize in relation to this project?
  - a. Would it be preferable to conduct another user survey in the future, when we will have more citizen scientists who have engaged with the camera?
    - i. Does the SEP have a suggested time interval between surveys?
  - b. In your opinion, is informal user survey data collected internally by REEF (with no IRB approval) valuable? If so, for what use (participant engagement? Program review? Etc.)?

#### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Discussion Question:** Does the panel know of other projects, particularly marine-based citizen science initiatives using innovative and non-app-based technologies, that have reported similar findings?
  - **Discussion Question:** While we have perused peer-reviewed and widely available gray literature, we are especially interested in reports or materials that may be difficult to access.
    - Open-source digital libraries of similar work that has been completed for the tech industry. Contextualize findings from other studies and apply to marine-based work.
    - Study by R. Bratton looking at freshwater water quality monitoring.
    - Lionfish rodeo results in the Gulf.

- **Discussion Question:** Does the panel have recommendations on ways to help citizen scientists feel that their data are meaningful and actively informing management decisions?
  - Explain the management process and the Council in the training materials.
- **Discussion Question:** What kinds of future social science research should REEF prioritize in relation to this project? Would it be preferable to conduct another user survey in the future, when we will have more citizen scientists who have engaged with the camera? Does the SEP have a suggested time interval between surveys?
  - Good opportunity to test out how recruitment may change based on how data is shared and recruitment methods evolve.
  - It would be good to see an updated survey.
    - Need to worry about surveying the same people. Dependent upon the researchers and how much data they can gather.
    - Seeing challenges in survey fatigue in FL.
- **Discussion Question:** In your opinion, is informal user survey data collected internally by REEF (with no IRB approval) valuable? If so, for what use (participant engagement? Program review? Etc.)?
  - Concern in fishing communities on sharing data. Whether IRB or not, needs to be clear how data are used and that there is informed consent from those willing to share information.
  - Informal survey may be good with getting general feedback

## 8. Risk Value Matrix Recap and Social Value Analysis

### 8.1. Documents

- **Attachment 8.** Risk Value Matrix Social Value Presentation

### 8.2. Overview

At the May 2025 CCC meeting NMFS discussed the need to “narrow the scope of NMFS management and science” to accommodate future agency resources and capabilities. In March 2026 the Council was provided with an update on progress by the SEFSC to further develop tools to assist decision making related to narrowing the scope of management. Additional information on management alternatives that could be considered for the risk/value categories was provided, along with progress on compiling the value and risk information necessary to assign stocks to risk/value categories. A national approach has been developed to support comparisons across regions. SEFSC staff will provide details on the analyses being used to populate the social data component of the priority matrix.

### 8.3. Presentation

Matt McPherson, SEFSC Staff

### 8.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do the scoring criteria adequately capture the range of social values for species in the South Atlantic region? Are the definitions of each criterion sufficient to capture the intended information?
  - a. Does the survey adequately and fairly represent all relevant fishing sectors or are there any groups that are underrepresented or overlooked?
- 2) Are the species groupings used in the survey appropriate for a social value analysis or should other groupings be considered?
- 3) Are survey concepts distinct so that results are easy to interpret accurately or does the survey attempt to capture too many concepts at once?
- 4) After the pilot phase, what audience/sample frame does the SEP recommend for the survey?
- 5) Will results of the survey, as designed, be useful in helping to guide decisions on the scope of science and management, such as revisiting or prioritizing species and complexes in need of assessments and federal management and resources allocated across fisheries and regions?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP strongly recommends that the development of this tool continue regardless of other developments on the economic and environmental components of the framework for narrowing scope.
- The SEP reinforces the need for a tool like this one that is being rapidly developed. They would like to see sufficient time and resources allowed to the Science Center to continue to work in this direction, as it holds great promise. Understanding that the criteria and pilot survey was developed and quickly developed under directive, the SEP offered some feedback to help shape future revisions, discussed below:
- SEP agrees that the groupings of the species are appropriate and the concepts are distinct. They, however, feel the design of the survey question regarding species group adds to the complexity of evaluating and responding appropriately to the survey. The SEP questioned if respondents have partial knowledge of some species in a particular group how you would parse out that species social value from the overall group out.
- The SEP had concerns on placing weights on the SVA categories and the potential implication of public facing documents having these weights. Additionally, the ranking/scale for social value of species is confusing as it could suggest that survey participants need to weigh one species against the other. It was cautioned by the SEP the presence of weights on the SVA categories might influence public opinion itself and/or have unintended consequences.
- The SEP noted the potential difficulty with respondents feeling they lack the expertise or knowledge to answer specific questions of the SVA. SEP recommends including a question about how confident respondents are in their responses to the survey to also account for respondents' knowledge about the species.

- The SEP confirmed the SVA survey instrument has a "don't know" space for questions respondents are unfamiliar with the social values of certain fisheries
- The SEP had reservations on the terminology used in the Social Value Approach (SVA ) questionnaire, and noted that this survey metric is not qualitative, but rather ordinal since this is a quantitative survey from non-probability sampling of experts. The presenters/researchers acknowledged this terminology issue and will correct the presentation. However, because they still are qualitatively evaluating a fisheries importance from the survey results, they were regarding it as "qualitative".
- The SEP had concerns with species groupings presented in the SVA. Like the categories in thinking about fishing communities and what they mean. Worth keeping and working through the challenges because the information can eventually be very valuable.

## 9. Fishery Performance Report Text Analysis

### 9.1. Documents

- **Attachment 9a:** FPR Text Analysis Internal Documentation
- **Attachment 9b:** FPR Text Analysis External Documentation
- **Attachment 9c:** FPR Text Analysis Presentation

### 9.2. Overview

The purpose of fishery performance reports (FPR) is to assemble information from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) fishery advisory panel members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. The FPRs are provided to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Socioeconomic Panel (SEP) to complement stock assessment reports and aid in developing stock status recommendations. Fishery performance reports are currently summarized as a narrative. In addition to the narrative, Council and SEDAR staff have developed a complementary report that utilizes automated text analysis to summarize key trends and themes found in the meeting minutes.

### 9.3. Presentation

Emily Ott, SEDAR staff  
Christina Curtis, SAFMC staff

### 9.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Who should determine the lexicon? (ex. Council? SEP? Advisory Panels?)
- 2) What additional text analyses should be explored?
- 3) Where should these results be presented? SSC? SEP? Council?

- 4) When should these results be presented during the SEDAR process? Data scoping? Data Workshop?
- 5) What are some future uses for these text analyses? Public comment?
- 6) What are some solutions to obstacles mentioned (AI algorithm bias, FPR standardized questions)?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- In viewing the text analysis that had been completed, the SEP had questions about how correlations were calculated in R-Studio and how negative correlations were determined, i.e., if the calculations were based on how many times another theme was mentioned they would range from 0-1. For the analysis to find a negative, the program is obviously using something other than counts.
- The SEP expressed concern about the lexicon and sentiment analyses, particularly in how each analysis handles terms that could be both positive or negative depending on context. Developing a “lexicon” is tricky because a lot of words are value neutral until you consider the words around them (for example, “catching” doesn’t necessarily mean anything negative or positive); they warned against words being coded as neutral and suggested defining some words as uncoded instead.
- The SEP notes that human-conducted qualitative data analysis is most preferable, but acknowledges that it is very time-costly and not possible with limited Council staff time. If using AI support, they recommend:
  - Consider breaking out comments on different topics when cleaning the data.
  - Explore how modifying the guardrails of the queries affects the analysis.
  - Looking into negative correlations seen in the matrices and the R code utilized.
  - Continuing to review and confirm themes using human analysis will be important, especially with possible value bias in an AI thematic analysis.
- Some members of the SEP suggested using Claude for thematic analysis, or to see what text analysis softwares are creating their own AI, and see what has been learned from initiatives at the SEFSC.
  - One member suggested investigating NotebookLM (free), can have up to 400 documents and has been used to do thematic analysis (private and does not pull information from elsewhere on the internet).
- The SEP noted that this analysis could be a great help for public comment and reporting back to help participants feel heard, similar to the ways that the Gulf Council seems to use their sentiment analysis. Additionally, AI could possibly summarize verbal public comments quickly after they are provided, which could also contribute to participants feeling heard.

## 10. Introduction to Social Science and Economics for Fishermen

### 10.1. Documents

- **Attachment 10:** Introduction to Social Science and Economics for Fishermen Outline

### 10.2. Overview

Council staff are developing an introductory presentation on the role of social science and economics in the fisheries management process. The presentation is intended for use during MREP workshops, Lines of Communication, and other outreach opportunities. The SEP is asked to review and provide feedback on the presentation outline, considering what core topics should be included, and how complex concepts can be communicated in a clear and practical way.

### 10.3. Presentation

Christina Curtis and John Hadley, SAFMC staff

### 10.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Given the intended lay audience and limited presentation time, does the SEP suggest any additional topics or concepts that should be included in the presentation?
- 2) Is the material appropriate and accessible for fishermen? Does it properly convey why understanding social and economic analyses is important for fishermen? Does the SEP have any pointers on how to present complex topics?
- 3) Does it properly convey the value of social and economic information to the process and motivate participation in data collection efforts?
- 4) Are there any management examples or visuals that could strengthen this presentation?

#### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Discussion Question:** Given the intended lay audience and limited presentation time, does the SEP suggest any additional topics or concepts that should be included in the presentation?
  - Drive home that their opinions matter and it filters into the management process.
  - Tie in that social science is not effectively voting. It shows how communities will be impacted and experience changes in management.
    - Weave in short stories, metaphors, and examples to help make information tangible.
    - Also visuals and videos
  - Compassionate humor
- **Discussion Question:** Is the material appropriate and accessible for fishermen? Does it properly convey why understanding social and economic analyses is important for fishermen? Does the SEP have any pointers on how to present complex topics?

- Get information in front of fishermen or focus group before using in MREP.
- The more interactive the better.
  - Minimize slides and maximize interaction.
- **Discussion Question:** Does it properly convey the value of social and economic information to the process and motivate participation in data collection efforts?
  - Convey that this is an opportunity for fishermen to provide information directly. Without their participation, data collection falls apart.
    - For biological information, can use fishery independent data. No equivalent social or economic information. Must be collected from fishermen and the fishery.
    - Highlight importance in gaps in data and that fishermen are integral in developing this information.
    - Lack of information impacts what is available to managers
  - In the long-run show that information (or lack thereof) can notably impact management decisions.
    - Troubleshooting reasons that management decisions can go wrong.
    - Acknowledge that fishermen have concerns with providing social and economic data.
      - Contextualize the information.
  - Have seen declines in fisherman participation over time in social sciences.
    - Tough to explain to the public that social and economic information is not on equal footing as the biology.
      - In MSA biology comes first.
        - Make clear that the MSA affects what social and economic information is shown to federal fishery managers.
  - Highlight how many mechanisms are in place to protect data and privacy (confidentiality)
  - Also explain that econ data can be used to show how to mitigate monetary or social effects of actions such as harvest cuts.
    - Biology is the “why” but social and econ and impact the “how”
- **Discussion Question:** Are there any management examples or visuals that could strengthen this presentation?
  - Go to the NOAA Voices page
  - Short clip of the audio to pull real-world examples from the Council discussion.

## 11. Other Business

Members discussed current open seats on the SEP and were encouraged to reach out to individuals who may be interested in being considered for appointment by the Council.

## 12. Report and Recommendations Review

## 13. Next SEP Meeting