THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SG Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel Meeting Summary Report, November 2022

Overview of the AP Meeting

- Met via webinar on November 21, 2022.

- Covered the following topics:

  1) Election of Chair and Vice Chair
     - Elected Luiz Barbieri to serve as Chair and Amy Dukes to serve as Vice-Chair

  2) Comments and recommendations on Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting)
     - Provided feedback and recommendations in response to the questions that the Council offered at their September 2022 meeting.

AP Comments and Recommendations

1) **Permitting**
   - Improving catch and effort estimates
   - Vessel vs. individual permit
   - Regional utility
   - Renewal terms and frequency
   - Charging a fee
   - Education certification

2) **Reporting**
   - Necessity of reporting
   - Validation of reporting
   - Mandatory vs. voluntary reporting

Implementing a Permit: Improving Estimates

- **Council Question**: How can a permit without a reporting requirement potentially be integrated into the existing MRIP sampling framework and the Florida State Reef Fish Survey to improve the accuracy of landings and discards estimates?

- **Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP):**
  - A permit can be incorporated into existing sampling framework.
  - Gain in precision for private catch and effort estimates.
    - Magnitude of the improvement in estimates is difficult to quantify.
    - Added benefits would be future opportunities for improvement.
      - **Like "putting the foundation in place."**
  - Value in the longer-term.
    - Regardless of whether staying within existing surveying and sampling designs or developing a specialized program.

Implementing a Permit: Improving Estimates (continued)

- **Florida State Reef Fish Survey**
  - Current survey is angler based.
    - Stratified based on state vessel registration information.

  - If the vessel registration number is tied to a vessel-based permit, it could be readily integrated into the existing FL state-based survey.

  - Could use vessel registration number in field to identify an angler party that is or is not in the existing database.
    - Could be used to help generate an improved effort estimate.

Implementing a Permit: Vessel vs. Individual

- **<u>Council Guidance</u>**: Discuss the pros and cons of a vessel permit versus an individual permit.

- **Previous Recommendation:** *It was noted that a vessel-based permit is recommended by the AP.*
  - Helps with validation and survey design.
  - Consistent with existing permits issued by SERO.
  - Lower administrative burden (fewer permits issued).
  - Vessel permit doesn't create impediment to integrate with existing programs.

Implementing a Permit: Vessel vs. Individual (continued)

- **Potential cons of a vessel permit**
  - Vessel registration number needs to be tied to permit to incorporate into existing FL State Reef Fish Survey.
    - In limited circumstances U.S. Coast Guard documented vessels could be challenging to integrate.

  - The Gulf of Mexico Region has been focused on individual state-based efforts.

  - The shore-based component will be left out.

Implementing a Permit: Regional Utility

- **<u>Council Question</u>**: How can a permit be developed for potential use in other regions (Gulf of Mexico or Mid-Atlantic) to ensure consistency and standardizations?

- *There is a need for coordination and ongoing communication with SERO, GARFO, and the State of Florida on the permit requirements, timelines, and information sharing.*
  - Sharing with the states, other regions, MRIP implementation teams, and other programs is important to ensure regional utility of a permit.
  - Need to share information in an ongoing fashion.

Implementing a Permit: Renewal Terms and Frequency

- **Council Question**: What are the desirable terms and frequency of permit renewal?

- *Annual renewal is recommended by the AP to purge inaccurate or inactive vessel information.*

- Timing: *There is general support for renewal on a calendar year basis (i.e. all permits expire on the same date rather than 365 days after being issued). The intent is to target integration with the Fishing Effort Survey (FES).*
    - Annual expiration helps see who is getting the permit in a timely manner.
        - Is the population stable? Changing?
    - From a constituent standpoint, an annual renewal date could be helpful.
        - Know and remember when a permit expires.

Implementing a Permit: Renewal Terms and Frequency (Continued)

- *Need a robust quality control mechanism at the time of renewal to keep vessel and permit holder information up to date. This process needs to be mandatory and cannot be skipped over during permit renewal.*
  - If vessel-based, then need to build mechanism to recognize vessels that leave the fishery.

Implementing a Permit: Charging a Fee

- **Council Question**: Does charging a nominal fee effectively reduce oversubscription? What sort of information may be available on the topic?

- **Pros**
  - A nominal fee would not eliminate oversubscription. But the extent to which it does make a difference could still be valuable.
  - A fee helps prompt vendors in Florida to ask customer if they want a given permit.
- **Cons**
  - Other barriers such as reporting could reduce oversubscription.
  - Fees collected from a federal permit do not come back to support a permit program, fisheries management, or the region.
  - There is an existing association of permit or stamp fees with supporting conservation.
    - Florida snook stamp or federal duck stamp.
    - May encourage oversubscription in some circumstances.

Implementing a Permit: Education

- **Council Question**: Weigh in on efficacy of an education certification as a proxy for a permit. Discuss mandatory versus voluntary measures.

- <mark>*An education requirement or certification may not be necessary or required on an annual basis, thus such a requirement would not be an adequate substitute for a permit.*</mark>

- <mark>*An education requirement would pair well with a permit, potentially in the initial issuance or renewal process.*</mark>
  - Opportunity to educate anglers on best fishing practices, species in the SG complex, species ID, descending devices, etc.
  - Could help deter oversubscription.
  - If a vessel-based permit, would need to specify who needs to obtain a certificate
    - Vessel owner? Operator? At least one person onboard?

Implementing Reporting: Necessity

- **Council Question**: Would there be utility in implementing a permit without a reporting requirement?

- *Yes, there would be considerable utility in implementing a permit without a reporting requirement. For details, see comments under the AP's earlier discussion under "Improving Estimates."*
    - Notable concern over the resources necessary.
    - Potentially greater benefits from implementing reporting in the future rather than immediately.
    - Permit builds the foundation for reporting.

- *When developing a permit, there should be some sort of understanding that reporting requirements may be required in the future.*
    - Leave the door open to reporting and make this clear to constituents.
    - If reporting will be implemented, then permit needs to be designed around that intention.

Implementing Reporting: Validation

- **Council Question**: What are the considerations for implementing a reporting requirement that can be validated?

- If reporting is implemented, it requires a great deal of resources to validate.
  - Compliance tracking is expensive (both funding and labor).
  - Survey may be a better route than a census.
  - Implementing reporting at the same time as a permit requirement could compromise full utility of permit.
    - Need data that is useful in management.

Implementing Reporting: Mandatory vs. Voluntary

- **Council Guidance**: Discuss the pros and cons of a mandatory versus a voluntary reporting requirement.

- *Recommend some level of mandatory measures or framework to provide structure to reporting if implemented.*
    - Different levels of what can be considered "voluntary" reporting.
        - Purely voluntary reporting will likely get limited uptake.
        - May not be useful for the purpose of estimating catches.
        - Voluntary reporting under a survey could be useful, whereas self-selected reporting would not.

    - Whether reporting is a logbook or survey- Mandatory requirement would help maintain higher compliance.
        - If mandatory, will need robust enforcement or requirement becomes de facto voluntary over time due to poor compliance.

Questions?