

SSC Report
December 2023 SAFMC Meeting
SSC_Oct2023_final_report

Report of SSC Meeting
October 24-26, 2023

Review of Marine Recreational Information Program's-Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) pilot studies

Discuss the findings of the pilot studies that evaluated recall error

- *The order of the survey questions results in two different sets of estimates, neither of which have been validated.*
- *No conclusive evidence was presented as to which estimate better reflects true effort.*
- *Follow-up studies will be critical to providing further guidance.*

Review of MRIP-FES pilot studies

Discuss how pilot study results will impact timing of ongoing/future assessments and ABC determinations.

- *Close coordination between the Office of Science and Technology (OST) and the SEFSC is necessary prior to any future public communication of study results.*
- *Current roll out of study results does not provide the context managers and public need to understand the potential impacts on stock assessment and management.*
- *OST in coordination with the SEFSC should demonstrate the impacts to assessment and management for key stocks using any new recreational data streams when rollout of new MRIP estimates occurs.*

Review of MRIP-FES pilot studies

Discuss how pilot study results will impact timing of ongoing/future assessments and ABC determinations.

- *Stock assessments should continue with using current MRIP data streams. Application of recreational data streams in stocks should be consistent across assessments.*
- *The SSC does not endorse using the preliminary pilot study findings as a basis for ABC determination or impacting the timing of ABC determination.*



Image from carolinasportsman.com

SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment

Review workgroup recommendations and resulting base model and preliminary projections.

- *Justification for using weight of mature fish as spawning biomass was accepted*
- *SSC recommends that reference points be based on landings and discards, SPR metrics should be used in place of YPR, specifically SPR mature weight F40%*
- *The SSC will discuss other requested projections and set ABC and OFL for black sea bass at its February 2024 webinar.*

Modeling discards and ABC determination



Modeling discards and ABC determination

- *OFL and ABC are estimated in total removals for use in projections.*
- *In the past, the projection approach has assumed that landings to dead discards ratio remains constant.*
- *We now know that, under past management approaches, discards did not decline in situations where landings were reduced.*
- *A comprehensive retrospective analysis of fleet responses to a variety of management actions would help with predicting future responses of fleet. This analysis would be dependent on accurate estimates of discards and fishing effort.*

Modeling discards and ABC determination

- *Discards should be projected through a constant discard F with conversion of landings to dead discards, or other methods, depending on the species. Changes in management may reduce landings, but discards may not be reduced or may increase.*

Discuss the implications of Bohaboy et al.'s results towards this effect.

- *Managing by $ABC_{Landings}$ is current practice and recommended by SEFSC*
- *Bohaboy et al. recommends managing by explicit $ABC_{Landings}$ and $ABC_{Discards}$*
- *The problem with using $ABC_{Discards}$ is that monitoring of discards is difficult relative to landings.*



Image from FishRules.com

Vermilion snapper interim analysis

Discuss the modeling approach and data inputs for the vermilion snapper interim analysis.

- *Overall, the interim analysis modeling approach is reasonable; however, the SSC expressed concerns with its application to vermilion snapper.*
- *For vermilion snapper, the SSC does not recommend using the index-based approach given the assessment model could not fit the index (Figure 12 of VS-SAR).*
- *The SSC recommends not using the interim analysis to adjust catch levels for vermilion snapper*
- *The interim analysis approach should be considered for other species where the index tracks abundance.*

“BEST SCIENTIFIC
INFORMATION
AVAILABLE”
STANDARD
IN FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT

Image from National Research Council Report

BSIA National Standard 2 Regional Framework

Review the southeast regional framework for determining that fishery conservation and management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

- *The Southeast Regional Framework language does not align with National Standard 2 language (NS2 section c, “SSC scientific advice and recommendations to its Council are based on scientific information that the SSC determines to meet the guidelines for best scientific information available”.)*
- *NS2 provides BSIA determination authority to SSC while the southeast regional document specifies NOAA Fisheries as the authority*

BSIA National Standard 2 Regional Framework

Review the southeast regional framework for determining that fishery conservation and management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

- *The SSC expressed concern that Section-1g specifically provides justification for NOAA fisheries to override SSC recommendations. In the majority of cases, the iterative process in building a consensus between the SSC and SEFSC is constructive and provides useful management advice.*
- *However, when the SSC is asked to reconsider their recommendation (see section 1g), it is not forcible upon the SSC to do so.*

BSIA National Standard 2 Regional Framework

Review the southeast regional framework for determining that fishery conservation and management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

- *Section-3d of the southeast regional framework is at odds with the traditional scientific process: here, the final review of data products is being reviewed by the entity that has produced them.*
- *This has the potential to degrade the integrity of the Center's science and could impact Council/stakeholder perception of the science used to inform management.*

BSIA National Standard 2 Regional Framework

What are the implications for scientific based management and the peer review process if the SSC's determination of BSIA is overridden by the SEFSC for stock assessments used to set ABCs?

- *Should SSC decisions be repeatedly overridden, this would demonstrate failure of the scientific peer-review process.*
- *The SSC should be one of the most independent and objective peer review bodies, which is critical when management actions could have political motivation.*

South Atlantic deepwater longline survey (SADL) review



South Atlantic deepwater longline survey (SADL) review

Review presentation on the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey (SADL), the final report and recommendations of the SSC SADL workgroup.

- *The SSC agrees with the findings and recommendations of the SADL review WG.*
- *The current stratified simple random sampling design, gear, deployment, collected data and biological samples are suitable for the survey.*
- *The focal species should be Golden Tilefish, Blueline Tilefish, and Snowy Grouper, with Yellowedge and Warsaw Grouper and Speckled Hind as secondary focal species.*

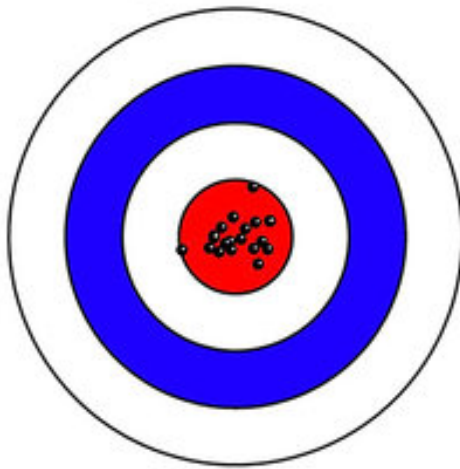
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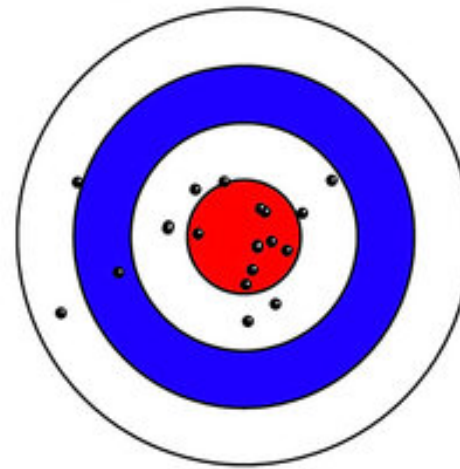
- *At least 5 years of survey data should be available before an index of relative abundance should be considered for use in a stock assessment.*
- *However, index development and monitoring of a possible index for contrast, variance. etc. can start earlier (e.g., after 2023 data are available).*
- *Other information, such as length at age and reproductive information can be used at any time.*

Precision threshold workgroup update

High Precision



Low Precision



Precision threshold workgroup update

Joint workgroup of SEFSC and OST to develop appropriate methods to estimate catch for unassessed stocks where the current PSEs on catch are above 50%

- *Workgroup currently looking at assessed stocks and will examine alternative estimation methods and resulting precision – SA and GOM species*
- *Using precision threshold of 50% in line with MRIP.*
- *Workgroup had meetings planned for October and November 2023.*
- *The SSC requested update from workgroup at the April 2024 meeting*