SSC Report
March 2024 SAFMC Meeting
SSC_Feb2024_final_report

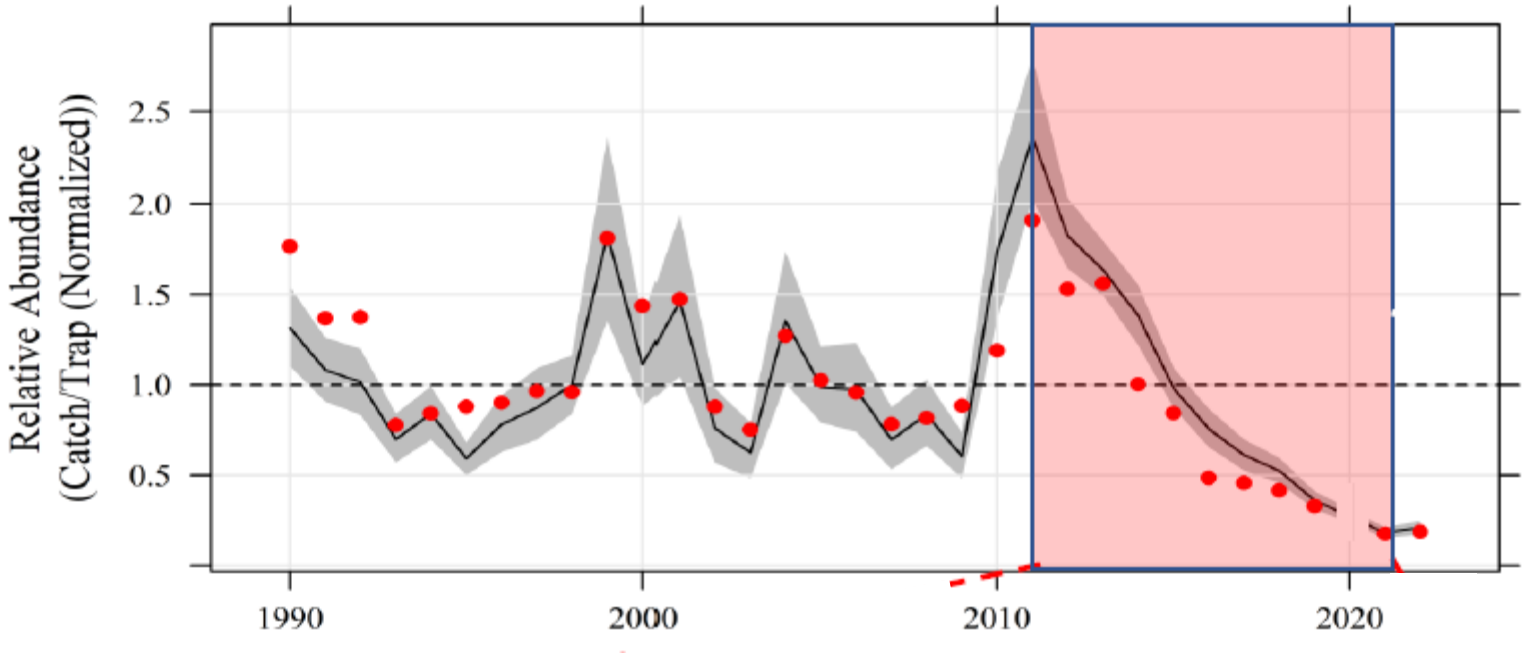
Report of SSC Meeting
February 9, 2024

Image from carolinasportsman.com

SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment – OFL & ABC

OFL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed (1000 lbs ww)	Discard (1000 lbs ww)	Landed (number, 1000s)	Discard (number, 1000s)
2025	39	1299	39	3174
2026	68	1430	66	3331
2027	109	1454	100	3354
2028	165	1456	140	3356
2029	211	1457	170	3356
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed (1000 lbs ww)	Discard (1000 lbs ww)	Landed (number, 1000s)	Discard (number, 1000s)
2025	35	503	32	1164
2026	54	506	46	1167
2027	-	-	-	-
2028	-	-	-	-
2029	-	-	-	-

Black Sea Bass



SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment

Review most recent projections and characterize uncertainties with the operational assessment.

- *First time the SEFSC is using Constant F discards as opposed to the landings:discards ratio.*
- *Recommend monitoring discards in the near future to determine if discard projections are tracking actual discards.*
- *Discard mortality rate for the recreational sector is based on a weighting of the depth of discards (inshore vs offshore) and discard condition. Research to determine if higher resolution data would improve this approach is needed.*

SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment

Review most recent projections and characterize uncertainties with the operational assessment.

- *The SSC strongly recommends an interim analysis be conducted in 2026 and recommends that an operational assessment be conducted in 2028-2029.*
- *The index for BSB tracks well with the model and makes it an ideal candidate for interim analysis.*
- *Recruitment trends through 2025 would be valuable to evaluate progress and accuracy of projections used in management.*

SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment

Review most recent projections and characterize uncertainties with the operational assessment.

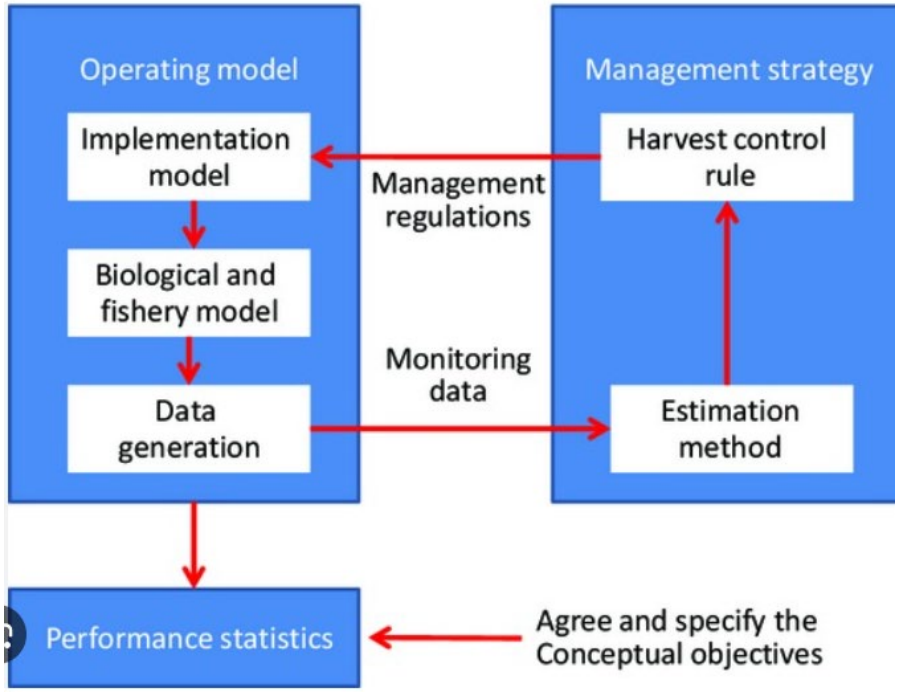
- *ABC projections extend through 2026.*
  - *Follows the recommendation of 5 years post terminal from SSC's Catch Level Projections Workgroup report*
  - *If no new estimates of ABC are available prior to 2027, the ABC value for 2026 would be used for 2027 and onward until new ABC estimates are available.*
  - *This underscores the importance of an interim analysis in 2026.*

SEDAR 76: Black sea bass operational assessment

Review most recent projections and characterize uncertainties with the operational assessment.

- *The magnitude of BSB discards relative to landings is a huge problem. The high levels of bycatch for BSB are severely hindering rebuilding and substantial reductions in effort are needed to reduce overall F for the BSB stock.*
- *Strategies to control effort more broadly will be essential to the recovery and sustainable harvest of SAFMC fishery resources.*

Management strategy evaluation



Blue Matter Science – Management Strategy Evaluation

- **Provide feedback on the methods and potential uncertainties.**
  - *Overall, the SSC applauded the approach and results to date.*
  - ***Recommendations were provided on the following**:*
    - *Spatial extent of offshore distribution of reef fish*
    - *Abundance of red snapper in areas 5 & 6*
    - *Distribution of age-0 gag*

Blue Matter Science – Management Strategy Evaluation

- **Provide feedback on the methods and potential uncertainties.**
  - ***Recommendations were provided on the following****:*
  - *Additional operating models:*
    - *Low and High Recruitment scenarios*
    - *Simulation testing to look at different SSB0 starting points.*
  - *Additional management strategies:*
    - *Required retention (zero discards) and Total F would be adjusted.*
    - *Explore separate reduction in effort by fleet. For example, reduction of effort for recreational fleet only.*
    - *The SSC applauds the effort of the scientists to define additional management scenarios with the stakeholders.*