

# Summary Report of the SSC's November Meeting – Charleston, SC



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SSC Chair  
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# Synopsis

- Review SEDAR 24 – South Atlantic red snapper
- Provide fishing level recommendations for red snapper
- Review rebuilding projections and alternatives for red grouper
- Review and provide comments for several amendments that are under development

# SEDAR 24 Assessment Recommendations

- Overall, the SSC felt the assessment was well done
  - Assessment was very comprehensive given the data limitations and was judged sound for management purposes
  - Major uncertainties will continue to affect this assessment unless investments are made in:
    - A fishery-independent survey
    - At-sea observing
    - Discard sampling
- General conclusions
  - Conclusions about stock status (i.e., overfishing and overfished) are robust under the given set of sensitivities
  - Management advice is also robust
    - Substantial reduction in  $F$  is still needed

# SEDAR 24 Assessment Recommendations –cont'd.

- Assessment indicated:
  - Previous management actions were effective for delaying fishery selectivity
  - Management was not effective for limiting fully-recruited fishing mortality

# Red Snapper Fishing Level Recommendations

- Three approaches
  - Long-term stochastic projections that allow for rebuild
    - Because of a strong retrospective pattern with the re-weighting and model sensitivities, this approach was not recommended
  - Reductions in incidental bycatch
    - Reduction in incidental catch could be based on the estimates of discards resulting from recent management measures

# Red Snapper Fishing Level Recommendations – cont'd.

- Short-term, deterministic projections from a range of viable assessment configurations
  - SSC recommended this approach
  - Recommended three viable assessment configurations involving the weight associated with the headboat landings
  - The issue of retrospective bias pattern associated with the iterative reweighting approach was not known at the end of the review
  - At the Nov. meeting Dr. Shertzer and a subgroup of SSC members looked at model diagnostics for the headboat weighting sensitivities and suggested three alternative weights
    - $hb=0.20$ ,  $hb=0.25$ ,  $hb=0.30$

# Red Snapper Fishing Level Recommendations – cont'd.

Weights	F <sub>msy</sub>	SSB <sub>msy</sub>	MSY	F/F <sub>msy</sub>	SSB/MSST	steep	RO(1000)
base hb=0.11	0.178	156.01	1842	4.12	0.09	0.85	535
all 1	0.203	214.17	2835	3.7	0.06	0.85	748
hb=0.2	0.188	162.39	1891	3.27	0.11	0.85	547
hb=0.25	0.196	165.37	1908	2.98	0.12	0.85	552
hb=0.3	0.206	167.73	1926	2.76	0.14	0.85	554

Assumed the fishing mortality associated with the current rebuilding plan from 17A (98% of  $F_{30\%SPR}$ )

# Comprehensive ACL Amendment

- General Comments
  - Need for consistent wording of alternatives across actions
  - Do not set ABCs equal to some % of OFL when OFL cannot be defined (e.g., unassessed species tier three and four)
  - ACTs may better serve the Council to help avoid triggering AMs
  - Values proposed by Council should be considered “interim” until the final control rule is approved.
  - Cautioned about the use of overly prescriptive AMs – could limit management options and rule out more appropriate approaches in the future



# Comprehensive ACL Amendment – cont'd.

- Specific actions
  - Outlined in the SSC report
- Species Groupings Discussion
  - Dr. Nick Farmer presented his cluster analysis for the snapper grouper complex
  - Need to get a better understanding of the uncertainty of using species groupings
  - Would like to know how the use of groupings compares with the current SSC draft control rule for unassessed stocks
  - It is probable that the unassessed stock control rule will allow for ease of regulation and allows fishers to continue to fish for other species

# Comprehensive ACL Amendment – cont'd.

- Species Groupings Discussion
  - Critical Weakness: It is unknown if the groupings defined by this method will contain species that respond similarly to management
  - General “Cons”
    - Difficult to achieve OY while preventing overfishing
    - Fishermen will likely have to forgo catch on some species and likely overfish others
    - Additional uncertainty will have to be built into both the scientific and implementation buffers
    - Uncertainty of groupings is unknown; how will we detect when groupings should be changed?
    - Could complicate our understanding of the socio-economic impacts of management actions
    - Issues with temporal correlation and seasonal impacts

# Comprehensive ACL Amendment – cont'd.

- Species Groupings Discussion
  - General “Pros”
    - Provides a better understanding of how catches are correlated across species; may help understand how the management of one species can affect the catch of another
    - Results as easily comprehended by laypeople
  - Overall Comments
    - SSC recommended against using this method for defining ACLs, as well as recommending against use of complexes in general unless used to aid with species identification issues
    - SSC recommended a single-species approach; specifically the approach outlined in the draft ABC control rule

# Snapper Grouper Amendment 18A

- General Comments on Tilefish
  - Expressed concern over tilefish trip limits for those without endorsements being not low enough to prevent targeting
  - Expressed concern about latent effort causing future management problems and the potential of a negative impact on the market or trading of endorsements
  - SSC supported the Socio-economic subcommittee being involved in the design of the endorsement trading program
- Comments on Bycatch in Black Sea Bass
  - MARMAP and UNC have pot studies that could provide information in bycatch
  - Indicated that no data exists for ghost pot impacts

# Snapper Grouper Amendment 24 – Red Grouper Rebuilding

- Potential Problems with Projections
  - Assumption that current fishery sectors will continue to fish in the same proportions of total effort and under the same selectivity patterns
    - It is likely the proposed area closure will impact the red grouper projections through both direct and indirect means
  - Use of  $F_{current}$  (2006-2008) for projection years 2009 and 2010
    - SSC felt the four month closure might cause a large reduction in landings and if so, then using the  $F_{current}$  value could be overly pessimistic
    - In the future, actual landings and projected landings should be compared as a means to quantify the effects of the regulations
  - Overall, the SSC felt the projections were based on best available science

# Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 10

- SSC recommended updating the values used in the area closure model to reflect the estimates generated through SEDAR 24. Estimates include:
  - Bycatch mortality
  - Percent reduction in F generated for each projection recommended during discussion of SEDAR 24

# Comprehensive Ecosystem Based Amendment 2

- The new proposed alternative to modify the existing octocorals ACL in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic to 50,000 colonies for state and EEZ waters was considered consistent with the SSC's recommendation for octocorals