

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

April 9-11, 2019

Town & Country Inn

Charleston, SC

**VERSION
BRIEFING BOOK
March 25, 2019**

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Documents:

- Attachment 1. Minutes of the October 2018 meeting
- Attachment 2. Minutes of the February 25, 2019 MRIP Revision Assessments webinar
- Attachment 3. SEDAR Projects Update
- Attachment 4. Revised Scamp Research Track Schedule
- Attachment 5. SG Econ Overview Tech Memo
- Attachment 6. SG Econ Overview Presentation
- Attachment 7. SG Reg Am 29
- Attachment 8. South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model Completion
- Attachment 9. Ecopath to Analyses, Tools and Evaluation
- Attachment 10. Background Material on Use of Ecopath Model
- Attachment 11. Draft 2019 Research and Monitoring Plan
- Attachment 12. ABC Control Rule Options Paper
- Attachment 13. Risk Tolerance Method spreadsheet
- Attachment 14. Risk Tolerance Method Story Map (click here to go to Story Map)
- Attachment 15. Social Issues Risk Tolerance
- Attachment 16. Draft SEP Report* (distributed at meeting)
- Attachment 17. Background Materials
- Attachment 18. MRIP Calibration Effects
- Attachment 19. Landings Trends
- Attachment 20. MRIP Revision Assessments Report
- Attachment 21. Feb 2019 MRIP Revisions Webinar Report*
- Attachment 22. MRIP Revision Assessments Model Outputs
- Attachment 23. Agency letters concerning FES calibrated MRIP data issues*
- Attachment 24. SEDAR Committee Report, March 2019
- Attachment 25. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2018
- Attachment 26. SAFMC Amendments Overview, March 2019

*** Indicates documents not available for the Briefing Book. These will be distributed as they become available.**

SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is to be distributed to the Committee through the Council office, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment to be considered by the SSC shall be provided to the Council office no later than one week prior to an SSC meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment is 12:00 pm Tuesday, April 2, 2019. Submit written comments to:

SAFMC – SSC Comments
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Verbal comment:

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items will be provided at set times during SSC meetings. The first will be at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment.

An opportunity for comment on specific agenda items will also be provided as each item comes up for discussion. Comments will be taken after all the initial presentations are given and before the SSC starts the discussion of the agenda topic. As before, those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the October 2018 meeting

Attachment 2. Minutes of the February 25, 2019 MRIP Revision Assessments webinar

1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public will be provided an opportunity to comment on SSC agenda items as they are being discussed during the meeting. Comments will be taken after any initial presentations are given on a particular topic, but before the SSC begins their discussion of the topic. There will also be an opportunity for comment at the start and end of the meeting. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

3. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

3.1. Documents

Attachment 3. SEDAR Projects Update

Attachment 4. Revised Scamp Research Track Schedule

3.2. Overview

Updates on individual SEDAR projects can be found in Attachment 3. This version primarily addresses the impacts of the government shutdown. There will also be effects considered in the future from the ongoing efforts by this committee to address the revised MRIP data.

3.3. Public Comment

3.4. Action

- Can those who volunteered for the Scamp Research Track Data Workshop still attend given the revised schedule? If not, is there anyone else interested in participating?

4. SNAPPER GROUPEY FISHERY ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

4.1. Documents

Attachment 5. SG Econ Overview Tech Memo
Attachment 6. SG Econ Overview Presentation

4.2. Presentation

Economic Analysis Overview: Dr. Christopher Liese, NMFS

4.3. Overview

In the fall of 2018, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) released the technical memorandum *Economics of the U.S. South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Fishery – 2016* (Attachment 5). The tech memo provides summary information and economic estimates for the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and for specific Segments of Interest (SOI) that consist of species or groups of species within the snapper grouper management complex. Among the results are estimates of net revenue and net cash flow that are potentially useful for better analyzing the economic effects of fishery management actions on the commercial sector. The Committee will receive a summary presentation from the SEFSC on the methods and major findings from the tech memo (Attachment 6) as well as input from the Socio-Economic Panel's (SEP) review that will have occurred earlier in the week.

4.4. Public Comment

4.5. Action

- Review the analysis, discuss the uncertainties, and determine if it is the best scientific information available.
- Does the SSC concur with the recommendations of the SEP?

5. REVIEW OF SNAPPER GROUPEY REGULATORY AMENDMENT 29

5.1. Documents

Attachment 7. SG Reg Am 29

5.2. Overview

Commercial and recreational fishermen have expressed concern about regulations that result in released fish that do not survive. To reduce the number of released fish and improve the survivorship of released fish, the Council is considering best fishing practices as either mandatory or voluntary options. Current preferred alternatives in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Attachment 7) would require a descending device be on board vessels fishing for or possessing snapper grouper species and would require the use of non-offset, non-stainless-steel circle hooks to fish for snapper grouper species north of 28 degrees North Latitude. The Council has requested input from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on how best

fishing practices might affect estimates of release and release mortality, and how that could be considered in future stock assessments. Chapter 9 of Attachment 7 is a list of all the references used in the amendment, many of which are studies on the effectiveness of circle hooks, venting tools, and descending devices on a variety of species in a variety of different circumstances. If anyone would like a copy of any of these references and is unable to access them, please contact Dr. Mike Errigo (mike.errigo@safmc.net) or Christina Wiegand (christina.wiegand@safmc.net) and we would be happy to provide you with a copy.

5.3. Public Comment

5.4. Action

- Does the SSC consider non-offset circle hooks and descending devices effective methods for reducing releases and release mortality?
- Are there any potential negatives to stocks or fisheries from these measures?
- Can the SSC provide any guidance on factors affecting effectiveness of these measures, or on species likely to benefit?
- If these methods are effective, will requiring non-offset circle hooks and descending devices allow the impacts to be applied in future stock assessments?
- How might these benefits be incorporated into a stock assessment framework?
- Is there any additional information needed in order to take advantage of these benefits in a stock assessment framework?

6. **UPDATE ON SEFSC RESEARCH EFFORTS**

6.1. Documents

None.

6.2. Overview

The Committee will be updated on research projects currently ongoing within the SEFSC, with a particular focus on those directly affecting stock assessments.

6.3. Public Comment

6.4. Action

- No specific actions required.

7. SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOSYSTEM MODEL USE IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

7.1. Documents

Attachment 8. South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model Completion

Attachment 9. Ecopath to Analyses, Tools and Evaluation

Attachment 10. Background Material on Use of Ecopath Model

7.2. Presentation

South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model Completion and Simulations: Dr. Tom Okey, UVIC

Ecopath to Conducting Analyses, Developing Tools and Evaluations: Luke McEachron, FWRI

7.3. Overview

As part of the FEP II development process a new generation South Atlantic ecosystem modeling effort funded by the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC), was conducted to engage a broader scope of regional partners. This effort drew on existing ecosystem and other supporting models to facilitate development of a new generation Ecopath with Ecosim (EWE) model, and ultimately providing evaluation tools for the SSC and Council. This new South Atlantic model was developed through regional partners to refine links between the SAFMC FEP II and other regional conservation planning efforts. At the October 2018 meeting, the SSC was provided a presentation on the development of the South Atlantic Ecopath Model and requested that prior to consideration of forming a Workgroup, the model be completed, and dynamic simulations be conducted for presentation at a next meeting.

Tom Okey (UVIC) will provide an overview of the completion of the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim model and examples of dynamic simulations. Luke McEachron will provide a focused view of the transition to conducting analyses and developing newly available spatio-temporal capabilities to support management in the Florida Keys. These presentations will provide the SSC with an overview of inputs and examples of the types of analyses/outputs of the model, and how those outputs could inform management. With the model complete and tuned to the available data, it can be used to address broad strategic issues, and explore “what if” scenarios that could then be used to address tactical decision-making questions such as provide ecosystem context for single species management, address species assemblage questions, and address spatial questions using Ecospace.

A path forward will involve establishing a modeling team comprised of FWRI, Council staff, and other technical experts as needed. This team will coordinate with members of the original Ecosystem Modeling Workgroup to maintain and further refine the South Atlantic Model. The SAFMC/FWRI Ecospecies online species information system will be a long-term repository for the inputs and outputs associated with the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim model. An Ecopath Model Subgroup comprised of selected members of the SSC and Modeling Workgroup will, provide an initial review of the model focusing on: the overall base model including the appropriateness of data and decisions made; providing input on what analyses/applications the model should/can be used for; and direction on the formulation of more focused dynamic

simulations or sub-models. Terms of Reference for the Workgroup will be developed, refined and focused.

7.4. Public Comment

7.5. Action

- Discuss identifying SSC members to serve on an Ecopath Model Subgroup who will provide an initial review of the model.

8. SOUTH ATLANTIC RESEARCH AND MONITORING PLAN REVIEW

8.1. Documents

Attachment 11. Draft 2019 Research and Monitoring Plan

8.2. Overview

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review the research and monitoring plan, as well as the source document. The Council will consider the research plan at its June 2017 meeting.

8.3. Public Comment

8.4. Action

- Review and provide comments and recommendations on the plan and source document.

9. COMPREHENSIVE ABC CONTROL RULE AMENDMENT

9.1. Documents

Attachment 12. ABC Control Rule Options Paper

Attachment 13. Risk Tolerance Method spreadsheet

Attachment 14. [Risk Tolerance Method Story Map \(click here to go to Story Map\)](#)

Attachment 15. Social Issues Risk Tolerance

9.2. Presentation

Overview: John Carmichael, SAFMC

Risk Tolerance Method Overview: Dr. Mike Errigo, SAFMC

9.3. Overview

The Council is developing a comprehensive amendment to revise the ABC Control Rule, to address flexibility allowed in the MSA and address issues raised over the last few years by the SSC with the existing rule. The purpose of the amendment is to revise the acceptable biological catch control rule; simplify incorporation of scientific uncertainty; modify the approach used to

determine the acceptable risk of overfishing, and address flexibility in specifying catch levels. The need for this amendment is to ensure catch level recommendations are based on the best scientific information available, prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield, and include flexibility in setting catch limits as allowed per recent changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act implementing regulations.

Changes made to the document since the last SSC review include edits to the actions and alternatives, additional discussion text, and examples of how the alternatives may impact ABC values. Significant additions and changes in actions are highlighted in the attachment (Attachment 12). Additionally, Council staff has developed a preliminary application of the risk tolerance determination process (Attachment 13). A Story Map has been created to help walk the Committee, and any future audience, through the process of how risk tolerance is determined ([Attachment 14](#)-click the link here or above to be taken to the Story Map, Attachment 15). The SSC is asked to provide comments on the actions at this meeting. SSC recommendations on the actions are provided in the discussion of each action and are highlighted in the document provided for review (Attachment 12). These recommendations help the Council decide the range of feasible alternatives and select appropriate preferred recommendations.

9.4. Public Comment

9.5. Action

- Review and discuss the approach for and results of initial risk tolerance recommendations.
- Provide any further recommendations regarding actions and alternatives as necessary.

10. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PANEL REPORT

10.1. Documents

Attachment 16. Draft SEP Report* (distributed at meeting)

10.2. Overview

The SEP met on April 8-9, 2019. A general report will be given on the meeting, while specific recommendations will be discussed under the appropriate SSC agenda item. Any additional items from the SEP report not previously covered under other agenda items will be discussed here.

10.3. Public Comment

10.4. Action

- No specific actions required.

11. USE OF THE FES CALIBRATED MRIP DATA

11.1. Documents

- Attachment 17. Background Materials
- Attachment 18. MRIP Calibration Effects
- Attachment 19. Landings Trends
- Attachment 20. MRIP Revision Assessments Report
- Attachment 21. Feb 2019 MRIP Revisions Webinar Report*
- Attachment 22. MRIP Revision Assessments Model Outputs
- Attachment 23. Agency letters concerning FES calibrated MRIP data issues*
- Attachment 24. SEDAR Committee Report, March 2019

11.2. Presentation

Overview: Dr. Mike Errigo, SAFMC

11.3. Overview

At their October 2018 meeting, the Committee was presented with four revision assessments (Blueline Tilefish, Red Grouper, Vermilion Snapper, and Black Sea Bass) that replaced the original MRIP catch data with the newly calibrated FES data. At that time, the Committee felt there was not enough information provided them to evaluate if the new FES estimates might warrant data decisions that differed from those made in the previous SEDAR assessments or if estimates of key parameters and model inputs were affected by the change. Therefore, the Committee requested a webinar be scheduled where they could review the full output diagnostics of each model to evaluate the effect that the use of the new FES data had on the model estimates.

During the February 25, 2019 webinar, the Committee further discussed the revision assessments and the use of the FES calibrated MRIP estimates. The Committee stated that an in-depth review of the calibrated estimates was necessary before estimates could be used in assessments and to make catch level recommendations. The SSC recommended that the new FES calibrated MRIP data be incorporated in a formal SEDAR process for assessed stocks, and the TORs be developed for future assessments to provide guidance on how this should be accomplished. However, consensus was not reached on specifically how this review should be done. Staff also points out that these issues are not limited to the assessed species, and the SSC needs to address use of the current MRIP data for developing fishing level recommendation for unassessed stocks and monitoring fishery performance for all stocks.

Concerns with the FES estimates arose during a SEDAR webinar devoted to Greater Amberjack the day following the SSC webinar. There was discussion of the FES estimates in general, the calibration process, and the possibility that certain points could be outliers.

The Council was briefed on the concerns from both webinars at the March 2019 meeting. Given concerns with costs in time and money and the potential for inconsistencies from a species by species approach, and the inability to address SSC MRIP concerns in the SEDAR process applied to Greater Amberjack, the Council supported convening a workshop devoted to the MRIP data concerns of the SSC. The Council also asked that each state agency provide the SSC a letter detailing their concerns with the MRIP estimates (Attachment 23) The charge to the SSC

for this workshop is to identify specific concerns and develop an approach forward (Attachment 24). Guidance from the Council is provided by the following motion:

MOVE TO DIRECT STAFF TO ORGANIZE AN SSC WORKSHOP TO IDENTIFY MRIP DATA CONCERNS ACROSS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, IDENTIFY SPECIFIC UNCERTAINTIES OR POTENTIAL BIAS, AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO PROCEED IN THE SHORT TERM FOR USING THE DATA IN STOCK ASSESSMENTS, IN DEVELOPING ABC RECOMMENDATIONS, AND EVALUATING ACLS. INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH STATE, MRIP/S&T, AND SEFSC.

At this meeting the committee is asked to provide guidance for the SAFMC workshop to address MRIP concerns, and to discuss how the issues of outliers can be addressed in both stock assessment and other uses of MRIP data including developing catch recommendations for unassessed stocks.

11.4. Public Comment

11.5. Action

- Are the revision assessments best scientific information available and useful for making catch level recommendations?
- The SSC noted it would develop TORs that specify the uncertainties associated with these data that should be addressed in the assessment.
 - What is the SSC's intent with regard to approved TORs for assessments now underway?
 - The SSC should review the process being used for assessments now underway and provide recommendations for any changes in the process that are necessary to address SSC concerns.
 - How will the SSC identify the specific uncertainties for each assessment, both those underway and those that will incorporate the revised data in the future?
 - What guidance, in the form of specific TORS, can the SSC provide on approaches to addressing the uncertainties, to ensure that the final product will not fail to meet SSC approval due to these issues?
- Provide direction for the workshop supported by the Council
 - Develop Terms of Reference for the workshop to address the Council's charge the SSC concerns.
 - Identify key presenters and participants (such as MRIP, State agency, or SEFSC representatives)
 - Identify briefing materials required to address the TORs.
 - Develop an approach to identify specific uncertainties prior to the workshop, so that they may be analyzed and prepared ahead of time.
 - Are there any differences in the way assessed and unassessed stocks should be treated when reviewing the FES calibrated MRIP data?

- The SSC recommended that assessment analysts explore how the FES calibrated MRIP data relates to individual species assessments.
 - Provide a detailed listing of the analysis and information the SSC desires in response to this request.
 - Provide guidance on how the SSC will review and respond to this information, including clear guidance on the extent to which this information can be reviewed by the SEDAR processes noted above versus being addressed by the SSC directly.
- There was considerable discussion of outliers during both the SSC webinar and the SEDAR Greater Amberjack Webinar on the following day. There appears to be some disagreement among participants of these webinars on what constitutes an outlier and what to do if a data point is considered unusual.
 - Identifying Outliers
 - ❖ How does the SSC define an outlier in the MRIP data?
 - ❖ How should outliers be identified in current MRIP data, considering that there is a need to address both the data for current stock assessments as well as the data for all species that will be used in future assessments and ABC recommendations?
 - ❖ How should outliers be identified for future estimates?
 - Addressing Outliers
 - ❖ What should be done within assessment models to address accepted outliers?
 - ❖ What should be done to address accepted outliers in data used by the Council to develop allocation values and by the SSC to develop ABC recommendations for both assessed and unassessed stocks?

12. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE

12.1. Documents

Attachment 25. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2018

Attachment 26. SAFMC Amendments Overview, March 2019

12.2. Overview

These documents are provided at each meeting to keep the Committee informed of Council activities. Regular detailed reviews of each amendment are no longer requested of the SSC as amendments are developed; instead the Committee is asked to comment on specific technical items that may arise. However, members are welcome to review any ongoing amendments and to provide comments and suggestions directly to staff. Current versions of each amendment are included in the Council Briefing Books distributed to SSC members. Questions or comments about specific items should be addressed to the staff assigned to each FMP, as summarized below.

- Corals Amendment 10/Golden Crab Amendment 10/Shrimp Amendment 11 (Access Areas) – Chip Collier
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan – Roger Pugliese
- SG Amendments 43 & 46 (Red Snapper & Recreational Reporting) – Chip Collier
- SG Commercial and Recreational Visioning Amendments – Myra Brouwer
- SG Regulatory Amendment 32 (Yellowtail Snapper) – Myra Brouwer
- SG Amendment 38 (Blueline Tilefish) – Roger Pugliese
- SG Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices) – Christina Wiegand
- SG Amendment 42 (Sea Turtle Release Gear) – Christina Wiegand
- SG Regulatory Amendment 30 (Red Grouper Rebuilding) – John Hadley
- SG Amendment 47 (For-Hire Permit Modifications) – John Hadley
- DW Amendment 10 (Adaptive Management for Dolphin) – John Hadley
- Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment – John Carmichael
- Bycatch Reporting Amendment – Chip Collier
- Recreational AMs (SG Reg 31/CMP Framework 7/DW Reg 2) – Brian Chevront
- Abbreviated Framework 2 (Fishing levels for Black Sea Bass and Vermilion Snapper) – Brian Chevront

12.3. Public Comment

12.4. Action

- No specific actions required

13. OTHER BUSINESS

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided an additional opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items.

15. CONSENSUS STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review its report, final consensus statements, and final recommendations.

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, May 19, 2019 (approximately 5 ½ weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the June Council meeting.

16. NEXT MEETINGS

16.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2019 Meeting Dates

October 15-17, 2019 in Charleston, SC

16.2. SAFMC Meetings

2019 Council Meetings

June 10-14, 2019 in Stuart, FL

September 16-20, 2019 in Charleston, SC

December 2-6, 2019 in Wilmington, NC

ADJOURN