

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting Overview**  
**April 16-18, 2024**

**The Crowne Plaza**  
**4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd.**  
**North Charleston, SC**

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\*Indicates materials not available for briefing book at time of posting. These materials will be added to the recent materials section when available.

## **SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

### Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is provided to the Committee through an online form, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment can be submitted at [this link](#). For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment is 10:00 a.m., April 18, 2023.

### 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 questions from the SSC are answered, but before the SSC starts making recommendations to address the action items. 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.

### Meeting Format:

This meeting will be held in-person at The Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, SC. Online registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meeting/>

## 1. INTRODUCTIONS

### 1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. SSC April 2024 Agenda

Attachment 1b. Transcript from the February 2024 meeting

### 1.2 Action

- Introductions
- Review and approve agenda.
- Approve minutes from February meeting.

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided this comment period for any general comments pertaining to any items on the agenda. There will also be time provided for public comment during each specific agenda item as they are discussed. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

## 3. SEFSC MINIMIZING RED SNAPPER DISCARDS PUBLICATION

### 3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a. Shertzer et al. 2024 red snapper discards publication

\*Attachment 3b. SEFSC red snapper discards presentation

### 3.2 Presentation

Dr. Scott Crosson and Dr. Kyle Shertzer, SEFSC

### 3.3 Overview

South Atlantic Red Snapper are considered overfished and undergoing overfishing per the latest stock assessment (SEDAR73). A significant proportion of the total fishing mortality is from discarded fish and efforts to reduce total dead discards has been a focal point of the SAFMC. Several strategies to achieve this objective are presented in the Shertzer et al. 2024 publication and fall broadly into the categories of gear modification, discard mortality mitigation, size limits, spatial approaches, or temporal approaches. Criteria for comparison address the management goals of decreasing dead discards, rebuilding the age structure, and increasing landings and spawning biomass.

The SAFMC is concurrently developing a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the snapper-grouper fishery and several of the strategies presented by Shertzer et al. may be considered in the MSE. The SSC should discuss the potential effectiveness of these strategies for achieving management goals and make recommendations on which management strategies should be explored for the Snapper-Grouper MSE.

### 3.4 Public Comment

### 3.5 Action

- Discuss what strategies could meet goals for reducing discards and rebuilding the red snapper stock.
- What potential strategies should be explored for the Snapper-Grouper MSE?

## 4. **SEFSC LOW RECRUITMENT WORKGROUP UPDATE**

### 4.1 Documents

\*Attachment 4. SEFSC Low Recruitment Workgroup Presentation

### 4.2 Presentation

Dr. Kyle Shertzer, SEFSC

### 4.3 Overview

Several species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit managed by the SAFMC have been experiencing historically low recruitment over the past decade. A number of these species are in an overfished status and have a scheduled rebuilding plan, though the low biomass of these stocks are not necessarily the result of high fishing mortality over this time period but rather a failure in recruitment. The SEFSC has formed a workgroup to investigate the potential causes of this low recruitment trend and the SSC will receive a presentation on the progress of this workgroup.

### 4.4 Public Comment

### 4.5 Action

- Receive presentation on the progress of the SEFSC's Low Recruitment Workgroup.

## 5. **FLORIDA STATE REEF FISH SURVEY**

### 5.1 Documents

Attachment 5a. Introduction to Florida SRFS  
Attachment 5b. Florida SRFS Presentation

### 5.2 Presentation

Dr. Luiz Barbieri and Beverly Sauls, FL-FWCC

### 5.3 Overview

The Florida State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) was developed to be a specialized, supplemental survey to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), and it is being considered into the stock assessment process for Florida centric species (e.g., yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, hogfish). These presentations will provide an opportunity to update the SSC on (1) the need for our national-level recreational fisheries data collection enterprise to evolve given the assessment and management demands brought up by the last reauthorization of MSA (i.e., implementation of ACL's, AM's, etc.); (2) provide a deep dive into SRFS so they can see how a specialized, supplemental survey can help address some of MRIP's current limitations; and (3) get a better understanding of the careful planning and technical complexity of SRFS design and estimation procedures.

Several key points related to the FL-SRFS to consider are that:

1. SRFS was developed to be a specialized, supplemental survey to MRIP. The MRIP program helped develop the survey and provide continued assistance in survey implementation.
2. SRFS has been peer-reviewed, is MRIP-certified, and conforms to MRIP's data standards to make it consistent with BSIA.
3. SRFS is conducted just in Florida so at this stage only applicable to Florida-centric assessments where the vast majority of landings happen in Florida.
4. The SRFS-MRIP calibration for YTS and Mutton is ongoing but with the assistance of the NMFS OS&T-MRIP program it will be peer-reviewed by a panel of professional survey statisticians following pre-established TORs.

The S79 and S96 assessments have a TOR that asks the panels to consider the use of SRFS in place of MRIP for the private boat segment of the recreational fisheries. The decision to use one survey vs. the other for these assessments will be made by the SEDAR panels (as it is usually the case with any other SEDAR assessment) but since the SSC will review these assessments this is a good opportunity for the SSC to ask questions or voice any concerns on the integration of the Florida SRFS into the stock assessment process.

#### 5.4 Public Comment

#### 5.5 Action

- No action needed.

## **6. EVALUATION OF COMMERCIAL DISCARD LOGBOOK DATA**

### 6.1 Documents

\*Attachment 6. SEFSC presentation commercial discard logbook

### 6.2 Presentation

Dave Gloeckner, SEFSC

### 6.3 Overview

Following the June 2023 meeting, the Council requested that the SEFSC provide an evaluation of the commercial discard logbook with an emphasis on the reliability of annual discard estimates. This request was prompted by concerns that an increasing percentage of trips reporting no discards would affect the reliability of the logbook data over time. The SEFSC provided a general update on the status of that request to the Council in December 2023 and plans to continue the work in 2024. The SSC will receive an update on the progress of this evaluation.

### 6.4 Public Comment

### 6.5 Action

- Evaluate the findings of the Commercial Discard Logbook data and discuss the implications for commercial data streams in stock assessments.

## 7. **SEFSC PRECISION THRESHOLD WORKGROUP**

### 7.1 Documents

Attachment 7. SEFSC Precision Threshold Workgroup Presentation

### 7.2 Presentation

Dr. Vivian Matter, SEFSC

### 7.3 Overview

A joint NOAA Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) and NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) workgroup was formed last year to analyze highly imprecise estimate scenarios that are impacting assessments and how to address these concerns. The SSC will receive an update on the progress of this workgroup.

### 7.4 Public Comment

### 7.5 Action

- No action needed.

## 8. **SERFS 2023 TRENDS REPORT**

### 8.1 Documents

Attachment 8. SERFS 2023 Trends Report

### 8.2 Presentation

Dr. Tracey Smart, SCDNR



### 8.3 Overview

The SSC will receive an update on the 2023 trends report from the Southeast Reef Fish Survey.

### 8.4 Public Comment

### 8.5 Action

- No action needed.

## 9. **SEDAR: RED SNAPPER BENCHMARK TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### 9.1 Documents

Attachment 9. South Atlantic Red Snapper Benchmark Terms of Reference

### 9.2 Presentation

Dr. Julie Neer, SEDAR Staff

### 9.3 Overview

At its March 2024 meeting, the SAFMC elected to change the next assessment type of Red Snapper from a coupled Research Track and Operational Assessment to a Benchmark Assessment. The SSC reviewed the terms of reference for the Red Snapper Research Track Assessment at its February 2024 meeting, but due to the nature of the Research Track assessment type not providing management advice, terms of reference related to stock status determinations and projections were not described. The terms of reference for the Benchmark Assessment include these additions and the SSC should review these modifications and make recommendations where necessary.

### 9.4 Public Comment

### 9.5 Action

- Review the Terms of Reference for the South Atlantic Red Snapper Benchmark Assessment.
- Receive update on ongoing SEDAR process revisions.

## 10. **SEDAR: REVIEW SCOPE OF WORK FOR BLACK SEA BASS**

### 10.1 Documents

\*Attachment 10. Scope of Work for Black Sea Bass

### 10.2 Presentation

SAFMC/SEDAR Staff

### 10.3 Overview

The SSC finalized its review of SEDAR 76: South Atlantic Black Sea Bass and made catch level recommendations for 2025-2026 to the Council during its February 2024 meeting.

Recommendations for the timing of the next assessment were also given and included conducting an interim analysis for providing 2027+ catch levels followed by another assessment. The SSC should review the scope of work for the next Black Sea Bass stock assessment.

### 10.4 Public Comment

### 10.5 Action

- Review scope of work for the next Black Sea Bass stock assessment.

## **11. SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE**

### 11.1 Documents

- \*Attachment 11. SARSRP Update Presentation

### 11.2 Presentation

Dr. Will Patterson, UF

### 11.3 Overview

The SSC will receive an update on the progress of the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project project that is using a variety of techniques to estimate the abundance of Red Snapper in the U.S. South Atlantic. Methods being utilized include the combined use of ROV visual surveys and genetic close-kin mark and recapture techniques using fin clip tissue analyses. The results from this project will be integrated into the next benchmark stock assessment for Red Snapper.

### 11.4 Public Comment

### 11.5 Action

- No action needed.

## **12. SEP MEETING SUMMARY**

### 12.1 Documents

- \*Attachment 12. SEP Preliminary Report

### 12.2 Presentation

Dr. Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, SEP/SSC

### 12.3 Overview

The Social and Economic Panel met prior to the SSC this week. An SEP/SSC member will provide a brief summary of the topics discussed.

### 12.4 Public Comment

### 12.5 Action

- No action needed.

## **13. SCS8 MEETING UPDATE**

### 13.1 Documents

Attachment 13. Preliminary Agenda for SCS8

### 13.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis, SAFMC Staff

### 13.3 Overview

The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee will convene its 8th workshop (SCS8) in Boston, MA from August 26-28, 2024. The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) will host this three-day workshop. The meeting format will feature a keynote speaker in each sub-theme area and several regional case studies from SSC members and NOAA staff followed by break-out groups and synthesis of ideas. Expectations for participating members following the meeting will be to assist the implementation of actionable outcomes and pathways forward to their respective regional SSCs.

### 13.4 Public Comment

### 13.5 Action

- Review preliminary agenda and sub-theme topics for SCS8.
- Enlist SSC members to represent the SA-SSC at the meeting.

## **14. OTHER BUSINESS**

## **15. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The public is provided one final opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items.

## **16. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by noon on Friday, May 10, 2024 (approximately 3 weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the December Council meeting.

## **17. NEXT MEETINGS**

### **17.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings**

- Jun/July Webinar (TBD)
- October 22-24, 2024 in Charleston, SC

### **17.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings**

- June 10-14, 2024 in Daytona, FL
- September 16-20, 2024 in Charleston, SC
- December 2-6, 2024 in Wrightsville Beach, NC

**ADJOURN**