

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



### **Joint South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico SSC**

#### **Meeting Overview**

**August 04, 2022**

**Meeting via Webinar**

VERSION  
FINAL  
7/27/22

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\* Indicates documents not available for the Briefing Book. These will be distributed as they become available and added to Recent Documents section of the webpage.

## **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 9:00 a.m. August 4, 2022.

### 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.

### Meeting Format:

This meeting will be held as a webinar on August 4, 2022. Registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meeting/>

## 1. JOINT SSC INTRODUCTIONS

### 1.1 Documents

Attachment 1: SSC August 2022 Agenda

### 1.2 Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Meeting Procedures

## 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. SOUTHEASTERN U.S. YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER INTERIM ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a: Stock Assessment Report for Yellowtail Snapper

\*Attachment 3b: Presentation for Yellowtail Snapper

Attachment 3c: Terms of Reference for Yellowtail Snapper

Attachment 3d: October 2020 Joint SSC Report

Attachment 3e: South Atlantic ABC Control Rule for Yellowtail Snapper

### 3.2 Presentation

Shanae Allen and Chris Swanson, FWC-FWRI

### 3.3 Overview

An interim analysis was conducted for Yellowtail Snapper following the Benchmark SEDAR 64 (S64) stock assessment. This analysis applied updated landings and discards data for each fleet (commercial, headboat, and MRIP [a combination of charter, private, and shore modes]) to the S64 base model from 2018 – 2020. Adjusted projections of spawning stock biomass, recruitment, and retained yield to inform the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) account for the updated landings and discards. The interim analysis found that Yellowtail Snapper was not overfished nor undergoing overfishing in the terminal year 2020. The MFMT (defined as  $F_{30\%SPR}$ ) was estimated to be  $0.429 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  and  $F_{\text{current}}$  was estimated to be  $0.292 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ ; therefore, the F ratio ( $F_{\text{current}} / \text{MFMT}$ ) was equal to 0.68. The  $\text{SSB}_{F_{30\%SPR}}$  for this interim analysis was estimated at 1,915.86 metric tons (4,223,743 pounds) and the MSST (defined as  $0.75 * \text{SSB}_{F_{30\%SPR}}$ ) was therefore defined as 1,436.90 metric tons (3,167,807 pounds).  $\text{SSB}_{\text{current}}$

was estimated to be 2,810.33 metric tons (6,195,718 pounds); therefore, the SSB ratio ( $SSB_{\text{current}}/MSST$ ) was equal to 1.47.

Previous meetings of the Joint SSCs in July and October 2020 deemed the SEDAR 64: Southeastern Yellowtail Snapper is consistent with the best scientific information available and useful for management advice. The SSCs recommended using the calculated  $P^*$  value of 0.375 to produce ABCs using the South Atlantic Council's ABC Control Rule, and also recommended that the Council consider adjusting the ACL or ACT for management uncertainty (e.g.,  $0.75 * F_{30\%SPR}$ ; see Attachments 3d and 3e). Due to the length of time elapsed between the terminal year and management action, this interim analysis was conducted using updated data streams to inform projections. The SSCs are asked to review the interim analysis of Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper, discuss, and provide feedback on projections and uncertainties, and make catch level recommendations.

### 3.4 Public Comment

### 3.5 Action

#### ➤ **Review Interim Analysis**

- Does the interim analysis address the TORs to the SSCs satisfaction?
- Are there any issues with the interim analysis that would prevent it from providing fishing level recommendations?

#### ➤ **Provide fishing level recommendations**

- Complete the fishing level recommendations table.
- Comment on any difficulties encountered in applying the Control Rule, including any required information that is not available.

Table 1. Joint SSC catch level recommendations for Southeastern Yellowtail Snapper

Year	$F_{30\%SPR}$	$P^* = 0.375$	$0.75 * F_{30\%SPR}$	$F_{\text{current}}$

## 4. **OTHER JOINT COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

- Update on the Joint South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico SSC Workgroup for Unassessed Stocks

## 5. JOINT CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

### --- LUNCH BREAK ---

(Following agenda items addressed by South Atlantic SSC only)

## 6. INTRODUCTION

### 6.1 Documents

Attachment 6: Minutes from April 2022 SSC Meeting

### 6.2 Action

➤ Approve Minutes

## 7. SEDAR 78: SOUTH ATLANTIC SPANISH MACKEREL OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

### 7.1 Documents

Attachment 7a: Stock Assessment Report for Spanish Mackerel

Attachment 7b: Presentation for Spanish Mackerel

Attachment 7c: Terms of Reference for Spanish Mackerel

Attachment 7d: S78 WP03, General Recreational Catch

Attachment 7e: South Atlantic ABC Control Rule

### 7.2 Presentation

Dr. Erik Williams, Southeast Fishery Science Center (Beaufort)

### 7.3 Overview

Spanish Mackerel was last assessed during the 2012 SEDAR 28 Benchmark, which indicated the stock was not overfished and not undergoing overfishing. For this SEDAR 78 assessment, data compilation and assessment methods were guided by methodology of SEDAR 28, as well as by current SEDAR practices and recommendations by the SEDAR 28 review panel. The assessment period is 1986–2020. The base-run estimate of terminal (2020) spawning stock was above the MSST ( $SSB_{2020}/MSST = 1.40$ ), as was the median estimate from the MCBE ( $SSB_{2020}/MSST = 1.42$ ), indicating this stock is not overfished. The estimated fishing rate has been at or below the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), represented by  $F_{MSY}$  with the exception of the terminal year (2020). The terminal estimate, which is based on a three-year geometric mean, was below  $F_{MSY}$  in the base run ( $F_{2018-2020}/F_{MSY} = 0.77$ ) and in the median of the MCBE ( $F_{2018-2020}/$

$F_{MSY} = 0.74$ ). Thus, this assessment indicated that the stock is not experiencing overfishing. However, this result requires caution: if the overfishing rate of 2020 continued in 2021, the geometric mean would indicate overfishing. The SSC is asked to review the SEDAR 78: South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Operational Assessment, comment and discuss projections and uncertainties, apply the South Atlantic Council's ABC Control Rule, and make catch level recommendations.

#### 7.4 Public Comment

#### 7.5 Breakout Groups

#### 7.6 Action

##### ➤ **Review Assessment:**

- Does the assessment address the ToRs to the SSCs satisfaction?
  - Growth models shifted by one year between SEDAR 28 and SEDAR 78. Explain the cause of the shift and discuss the implications (status, productivity).
  - Steepness was fixed at 0.75 (same as in SEDAR 28). Is this appropriate for Spanish mackerel? Describe the impact of fixed steepness in general, and this fixed value in particular on Spanish Mackerel productivity estimates, reference points, and recruitment estimation in projections.
  - Assess uncertainties within the recreational data sources:
    - Are PSEs for the recreational catch estimates acceptable?
    - Does the model fully incorporate the reported recreational catch estimation uncertainty?
    - What is the impact of recreational catch uncertainty on stock status and productivity estimates?
    - Recreational catch data from 2020 appears highly influential to model results. Does the 2020 data suggest a shift in fishing pressure or patterns, or is it an artifact of estimation uncertainty? Discuss the implications, to status and projected yield, of the sudden increase in recreational catch in the terminal year.
    - Describe the impact of the revised MRIP estimates on stock productivity measures.
- Are there any issues with the assessment configuration or uncertainties in the input data that limit the use of this assessment for providing stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations?
  - Discuss the predictive ability of the stock-recruit relationship for estimating MSY and  $F_{msy}$  and supporting stock projections.
- Does the assessment represent Best Scientific Information Available?



- **Identify, summarize, and discuss assessment uncertainties**
  - Review, summarize, and discuss the factors of this assessment that affect the reliability of estimates of stock status and fishing level recommendations.
    - Characterize these factors in terms of their influence on assessment uncertainty and fishing level recommendations.
  - Address potential impacts of COVID events on input data series. For example:
    - How might the missing 2020 SEAMAP survey value affect abundance or mortality estimates?
    - How did the interruptions in MRIP sampling impact 2020 estimates and their uncertainty?
  - List the risks and describe potential consequences of assessment uncertainties with regard to status, fishing level recommendations, and future yield predictions.
  - Are methods of addressing uncertainty consistent with SSC expectations and the available information?
  
- **Review the assessment projections and provide fishing level recommendations**
  - Apply the ABC control rule and complete the fishing level recommendations table.
  - Review the projection methods and the assumptions applied for the interim period (between the terminal year and the first year of management)
    - Do the projections and interim assumptions adequately capture uncertainty in the model and data? Uncertainty in recruitment?
  - Concerns have been expressed about the declining stock abundance and yield in the projection years, particularly since catch has been held below the current ABC and ACL and overfishing has not occurred.
    - Are the projected F rates in 2021-2022 reflective of the fishery?
    - How do the projected catch levels compare to catch levels observed in recent years in the model?
    - Comment on the implications of the expected spawning stock biomass in the projections falling outside the range of observed values.
  - Comment on any difficulties encountered in applying the Control Rule, including any required information that is not available.

- **Provide guidance for information to include in the Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) SAFE report.**
  - OFL/ACL monitoring: Discuss any potential issues in monitoring the commercial and recreational Spanish mackerel fishery.
  - Catch level reports: What threshold of change in landings/discards should be used for the SSC to receive additional analyses to describe the estimate?
  - Population trends: Discuss which index of abundance is most suitable for monitoring the stock for inclusion in future SAFE report.
  
- **Provide research recommendations and guidance on the next assessment:**
  - Review the included research recommendations and indicate those most likely to reduce risk and uncertainty in the next assessment.
  - Provide any additional research recommendations the SSC believes will improve future stock assessments.
  - Provide guidance on the next assessment, addressing its timing, need for topical working groups, and assessment type.
    - Reminder: More than 2-3 topical working groups indicates that the assessment should be considered for a research track.
  - Provide comments for the development of the scope of work for the next assessment (if operational assessment recommended)

Table 2. SSC catch level recommendations for South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel

Criteria		Deterministic		Probabilistic	
Overfished evaluation (SSB/SSB <sub>MSY</sub> )					
Overfishing evaluation					
MFMT (F <sub>MSY</sub> )					
SSB <sub>MSY</sub> (Units)					
MSST (Units)					
MSY (1000 lbs.)					
Y at 75% F <sub>MSY</sub> (1000 lbs.)					
ABC Control Rule Adjustment					
P-Star					
SSC recommended P <sub>Rebuild</sub>					
M					
OFL RECOMMENDATIONS					
Year	Landed (lbs gw)	Discard (lbs gw)	Landed (number)	Discard (number)	
2023					
2024					
2025					
2026					
2027					
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS					
Year	Landed (lbs gw)	Discard (lbs gw)	Landed (number)	Discard (number)	
2023					
2024					
2025					
2026					
2027					

## 8. OTHER BUSINESS

## 9. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

## **10. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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 9:00 a.m. on Friday, August 26, 2022 (approximately 3 weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the September Council meeting.

## **11. NEXT MEETINGS**

### **11.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings**

- October 25-27, 2022 in Charleston, SC
- February (TBD webinar as needed)
- April 18-20, 2023 in Charleston, SC
- October 24-26, 2023 in Charleston, SC

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

- September 12-16, 2022 in Charleston, SC
- December 5-9, 2022 in Wrightsville Beach, NC
- March 6-10, 2023 in Jekyll Island, GA
- June 12-16, 2023 in PonteVedra, FL

**ADJOURN**