

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

August 15, 2024

Via Webinar

VERSION
FINAL
8/1/2024

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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 comments on SSC agenda topics are 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 5:00 p.m., August 14, 2024.

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 via webinar. Online registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/meeting-type/scientific-and-statistical-committee/>

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. SSC August 2024 Agenda

Attachment 1b. Minutes from the April 2024 meeting

1.2 Action

- Introductions
- Review and approve agenda.
- Approve minutes from April 2024 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 comments should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

3. SEDAR 76: BLACK SEA BASS OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROJECTIONS

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a. Black Sea Bass Projections Presentation

*Attachment 3b. Black Sea Bass Report

Attachment 3c. Red Snapper Forecasts: New Methodology and Additional Scenarios

3.2 Presentation

Dr. Matthew Vincent, SEFSC

3.3 Overview

The SAFMC reviewed the catch level recommendations from the SSC at their March and June Council meetings and begun working on an amendment to address the status of the stock. Based on the results of SEDAR 76 (2023), the stock is overfished and subject to a rebuilding plan. Several management options were discussed to address the rebuilding of the stock including changing the minimum size limit for the recreational and commercial sectors. This management action would change selectivity inputs into assessment projections, necessitating alternate projections runs inclusive of the proposed size limit changes. Additionally, the SAFMC requested the SEFSC develop scenarios where the discard F is reallocated to landings F. This is similar to the approach used in SEDAR73: Red Snapper (see Attachment 3c) that was reviewed by the SSC during their July 2021 meeting ([July 2021 meeting report](#)). These two requests are presented by the SEFSC. The SSC should review these alternate projection runs and make

recommendations to the analyst. Additional requests to the SEFSC are currently being worked on and will be presented at the October SSC meeting.

3.4 Public Comment

3.5 Action

- Review alternate projections runs and characterize uncertainties.
- Discuss questions and make recommendations to the analyst:
 - Is using the discard to landings selectivity weighting from 2019-2021 for all minimum size limit scenarios the best assumption?
 - Is using the discard F from 2019-2021 for all minimum size limit scenarios the appropriate assumption?
 - Are fish caught during closed season more likely to be additional discards or will all fishing cease?
 - How to perform the subtract out discards from quota scenario:
 - Is it sufficient to show that recreational discards exceeds proportion in ABC?

4. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS UPDATE

4.1 Documents

Attachment 4a. Active Amendments June 2024 for SSC

Attachment 4b. Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36 Presentation

4.2 Presentation

SAFMC Staff

4.3 Overview

The SSC will receive updates on several ongoing fishery management plan amendments, including Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36 (Gag and Black Grouper; On-Demand Gear), Coral Amendment 10 (Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern), the Comprehensive Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Improvement Amendment, and the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model Application. The entire list of ongoing amendments is provided in attachment 4a, but the focus for this update will be on the four mentioned above and located at the top of the attachment document. The goal for this agenda topic is to update the SSC on the current status of these amendments and potential future involvement in the development of these fishery management plan amendments with scientific input and recommendations.

4.4 Public Comment

4.5 Action

- Receive updates on fishery management plan amendments.
- Comment on amendment development, potential scientific inputs, and make recommendations.

5. BLACK GROUPER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (MSE)

5.1 Documents

Attachment 5a. Black Grouper MSE Presentation to SSC

Attachment 5b. Design of Alternative MPs for Black Grouper – Final Report

Attachment 5c. Infographic Booklet for Black Grouper MSE

Attachment 5d. SEDAR 48 Data Workshop Report

5.2 Presentation

Vania Henriquez, Peyton Moore, and Bill Harford; Nature Analytics

5.3 Overview

Nature Analytics will present a proposed foundation for designing management procedure options for Black Grouper fisheries in the U.S. Southeast Region. The need for a stock assessment alternative occurred as a result of the termination of the last stock assessment for Black Grouper (SEDAR 48, 2017), due to a variety of issues that were raised in the data workshop, particularly with regard to the misidentification of Black Grouper and Gag leading to uncertain landings time series data (see executive summary in SEDAR 48 data workshop report, attachment 5d). With this unresolvable issue, the SEDAR steering committee supported the decision to halt the SEDAR 48 assessment and seek alternative solutions that would be investigated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. The presentation and supporting materials provided by Nature Analytics aims to provide such a solution by illuminating a pathway to designing and testing management procedures to ultimately provide management advice for Southeastern Black Grouper.

5.4 Public Comment

5.5 Action

- Review Black Grouper MSE data inputs and modeling approach.
- Make recommendations to the analytical team.
 - Any suggestions or recommendations on how to proceed?
 - Any concern with any of the options presented?

6. SSC WORKGROUP AND SEDAR PANELS

6.1 Documents

Attachment 6a. SSC Workgroup Approach
Attachment 6b. SSC Member SEDAR and WG Appointments

6.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis, SAFMC Staff

6.3 Overview

The SSC has utilized workgroups comprised of a smaller panel of SSC members, staff, SEFSC representatives, and others for providing efficient and effective input and evaluation on specific tasks requiring technical analyses before reporting to the entire SSC body and finalizing recommendations. The SAFMC approved the SSC workgroup approach (Attachment 6a) in December 2016 and since then the document and general approach has remained unchanged. The SSC should review 'Attachment 6a' and suggest any revisions to improve the overall workgroup approach, if necessary.

Staff will then present the current rosters of SSC members appointed to SEDAR panels and extant workgroups and give an update on the status of each of the workgroups (Attachment 6b). The SSC should consider whether several workgroups that have never convened should be disbanded and/or if new ones should be formed based on planned fishery management plan amendment needs.

6.4 Public Comment

6.5 Action

- Review and revise SSC workgroup approach, if necessary.
- Receive summary of workgroups and SEDAR membership.
- Restructure workgroups, if necessary.

7. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- Upcoming SCS8 Meeting Update
- SciFish Update

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The public is provided one final opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items. Electronically submitted comments can be viewed [here](#).

9. **CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

The draft SSC report will be provided to the Council at their September Council meeting. The final SSC report will be posted on the Council website two weeks following the end of this meeting (approximately August 30th).

10. NEXT MEETINGS

10.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings

- October 22-24, 2024 in Charleston, SC (*8:30 am start Tue*)
- January/February 2025 Webinar (TBD)
- April 14-15, 2025 in Charleston, SC (SEP)
- April 15-17, 2025 in Charleston, SC (SSC)

10.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings

- September 16-20, 2024 in Charleston, SC
- December 2-6, 2024 in Wrightsville Beach, NC
- March 3-7, 2025 in TBD

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