SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

SSC Meeting Overview

January 25, 2019

Meeting via Webinar

VERSION
FINAL
January 10, 2019

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WEBINAR ACCESS

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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 Friday, January 18, 2019. Submit written comments to:

SAFMC – SSC Comments
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
Kelly.klasnick@safmc.net

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

1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda

2. MRIP ASSESMENT REVISIONS

2.1. Documents

Attachment 1. MRIP Revision Assessments Presentation
Attachment 2. Oct 2018 Report MRIP Revisions Excerpt
Attachment 3. MRIP Data Comparisons and Decisions
Attachment 4. MRIP Revision Assessments Report

2.2. Presentation

Revision Assessments Overview: Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

2.3. Overview

At their October 2018 meeting, the Committee reviewed four assessments that had been revised using the newly calibrated MRIP data (Blueline Tilefish, Red Grouper, Vermilion Snapper, and Black Sea Bass). The consensus of the Committee was that there was not enough information available to adequately review these assessments and fully understand the impacts and ramifications of the use of this new dataset on the model outputs (Attachment 2). Therefore, the Committee requested a webinar be scheduled, prior to their Spring meeting, where the full model diagnostic outputs can be considered for each of the revisions. The Committee also asked that a list of all the data decisions made regarding the MRIP catches during the SEDAR Data Workshop be compiled for each species to evaluate if those decisions are still viable given the new data stream (Attachment 3). Some of the catch trends that resulted from the calibration, which the Committee had questions about, were also investigated. Below is a review of the four species whose recent SEDAR assessments were revised.

Blueline Tilefish

A benchmark assessment for Atlantic Blueline Tilefish (SEDAR 50) was completed in October 2017, with data through 2015. Due to a large spatio-temporal change in how the fishery operated in the latter part of the assessment and the fact that age determination was too uncertain to be used in the assessment, the Blueline Tilefish stock had to be assessed as two separate units and by different assessment methods for each unit. This unique approach to assessing this stock made it impossible to determine stock status at this time.

Some of the biggest concerns for this stock were the lack of data and the splitting of the recreational data at Cape Hatteras (where the 2 units were split). There were very few intercepts of Blueline Tilefish, resulting in odd landings and discard spikes in the data. One such data point,

charter discards from NC for 2007, was so out of line with the surrounding data that it was replaced with the average of the surrounding years.

The unit south of Cape Hatteras was assessed using an age aggregated Production Model and the ABC for that portion of the stock was determined using traditional projections with OFL recommended at $F=F_{MSY}$ and ABC at P*=0.3 through 2020.

A workgroup of both South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic SSC members was formed to develop a method for determining an ABC for the unit north of Cape Hatteras and developing a means of splitting that ABC between the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic jurisdictions. The OFL and consequently ABC was determined using Mean Length estimators from the DLMTool. A pilot trawl survey was used to allocate that ABC between the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic. The ABC was determined as being at P*=0.125 and the MAFMC:SAFMC split was determined to be 56%:44%. The SSC recommended this ABC for no longer than 3 years.

Table 1. OFL and ABC of Blueline Tilefish in South Atlantic waters from the original SEDAR 50 in pounds whole weight.

Year	South Hatteras		North Hatteras		Total South Atlantic	
	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC	OFL	ABC
2018	230,000	172,000	103,985	78,980	333,985	250,980
2019	227,000	175,000	103,985	78,980	330,985	253,980
2020	225,000	178,000	103,985	78,980	328,985	256,980

Red Grouper

A SEDAR standard stock assessment for South Atlantic Red Grouper (SEDAR 53) was completed in February 2017, with data through 2015, that indicated the stock was overfished and undergoing overfishing. The results of the assessment showed that rebuilding would not be possible by 2020, which is the terminal year of the current rebuilding plan, even with no fishery present (F=0) and the stock would likely take until at least 2030 to rebuild at F=0. The SSC reviewed SEDAR 53 at their April 2017 meeting and stated that the assessment is based on the best scientific information available.

In June 2017, after SEDAR 53 was reviewed by the SSC, the Council requested that the Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) produce rebuilding projections for Red Grouper based on SEDAR 53. The Council's SSC reviewed four rebuilding projections produced by the SEFSC at their October 2017 meeting. The projections were based on fishing mortality rates of F_{MSY} and $F_{Rebuild}$, each with long-term expected recruitment and low recruitment scenarios. Due to poor recruitment trends for the stock in recent years, the SSC recommended the projections at F_{MSY} and the low recruitment scenario for the overfishing limit, and projections for $F_{Rebuild}$ under the low recruitment scenario for the ABC, for the short term (next 5 years). The SSC noted that recruitment could increase in the future and become consistent with long-term levels that the stock is predicted to produce.

Table 2. Red Grouper OFL and ABC projections at low recruitment scenario from the original SEDAR 53 in pounds whole weight.

Year	OFL	ABC
2018	183,000	139,000
2019	191,000	150,000
2020	202,000	162,000
2021	212,000	176,000
2022	223,000	189,000

Vermilion Snapper

The SSC reviewed the Standard assessment for Vermilion Snapper prepared through SEDAR 55 at their May 2018 meeting. SEDAR 55 was completed in April 2018, with data through 2016, and found that the Vermilion Snapper stock in the South Atlantic was neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing. The SSC did comment on several uncertainties, such as the headboat index dropping dramatically in 1992, when there is a management change, and most likely not tracking the population abundance as it did prior to that time. Also, there was an issue fitting the CVID index, especially at the end of the time series, due to a disconnect between the age comps from the CVID index and those from the landings. The SSC recommended projections for the OFL at $F=F_{MSY}$ and for the ABC at $P^*=0.4$ for no more than 5 years.

Table 3. Vermilion Snapper OFL and ABC projections from the original SEDAR 55 in pounds whole weight.

Year	OFL	ABC
2019	1,810,000	1,579,000
2020	1,614,000	1,478,000
2021	1,486,000	1,408,000
2022	1,412,000	1,362,000
2023	1,371,000	1,336,000

Black Sea Bass

The SSC reviewed the Standard assessment for Black Sea Bass prepared through SEDAR 56 at their May 2018 meeting. SEDAR 56 was completed in April 2018, with data through 2016, and found that the Black Sea Bass stock in the South Atlantic was neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing. However, the SSC noted that the terminal Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) was only slightly above Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) and trending downward. Recruitment (R) was also trending downward in the last few years.

The SSC commented on several uncertainties for Black Sea Bass. In the terminal year of the assessment, the total fishing mortality of all fleets had a selectivity pattern that differed from all other years in the time series with apical F at age 3, which was significantly lower than all other years in the time series. Looking at a different F metric, other than apical F, may give a very different picture of what is happening in this fishery. Apical F changes to different ages as selectivity changes through time. An F metric that is insensitive to changes in selectivity may

show a different pattern in the exploitation history of this fishery than what is seen by using apical F.

The SSC also mentioned the lack of all fishery-dependent indices at the end of the time series, where the fishery-independent index indicated the largest changes have occurred in population size. Also, that the selectivity of the Chevron trap vs. the video index may differ, especially under situations of high R.

The SSC did have concern over which R was to be used for projections. The R estimated from the Stock-Recruitment relationship was significantly higher than the realized R in the latter part of the assessment, especially since the terminal SSB was so close to the MSST. Ultimately, the SSC recommended using the average R from 1991 to the terminal year for projections to determine the ABC. The OFL was recommended as standard projections at $F=F_{MSY}$. The ABC was recommended as projections using the R pattern from 1991 to the terminal year with a P*=0.375. These values should be in place for no longer than 3 years.

Table 4. Black Sea Bass OFL and ABC projections from the original SEDAR 56 in pounds whole weight.

Year	OFL	ABC
2019	818,000	760,000
2020	718,000	669,000
2021	703,000	643,000

2.4. Action

Blueline Tilefish

- Is the revised assessment recommended as Best Scientific Information Available?
- What impact did the revised data have on measures of assessment uncertainty?
- Recommend projections or further information necessary to make fishing level recommendations at the Spring 2019 meeting.

Table 5. Revised Blueline Tilefish Recommendations (South of Hatteras only)

Criteria	Original	Revised
Overfished evaluation (SSB/MSST)	1.41	
SSB/SSB_{MSY}	1.06	
Overfishing evaluation ($F_{Current}$/MFMT)	0.92	
MFMT (F_{MSY})	0.146	
B_{MSY} (1,000 lbs. total biomass)	1,467	
MSST (1,000 lbs. total biomass, 75% B_{MSY})	1,100	
MSY (1,000 lbs.)	212	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	20%	
P-Star	30%	
M (scalar for age-specific M)	0.17	

Red Grouper

- Is the revised assessment recommended as Best Scientific Information Available?
- What impact did the revised data have on measures of assessment uncertainty?
- Recommend projections or further information necessary to make fishing level recommendations at the Spring 2019 meeting.

Table 6. Revised Red Grouper Recommendations

Criteria	Original	Revised
Overfished evaluation (SSB/MSST)	0.38	
SSB/SSB_{MSY}	0.29	
Overfishing evaluation ($F_{Current}$/MFMT)	1.54	
MFMT (F_{MSY})	0.12	
SSB_{MSY} (mt, total mature biomass)	3,183.3	
MSST (mt, 75% SSB_{MSY})	2,387.6	
MSY (1,000 lbs.)	794.3	
Y at 75% F_{MSY} (1,000 lbs.)	772	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	22.5%	
P-Star	27.5%	
P-Rebuild	72.5%	
M (scalar for age-specific M)	0.14	

Vermilion Snapper

- Is the revised assessment recommended as Best Scientific Information Available?
- What impact did the revised data have on measures of assessment uncertainty?
- Recommend projections or further information necessary to make fishing level recommendations at the Spring 2019 meeting.

Table 7. Revised Vermilion Snapper Recommendations

Criteria	Original	Revised
Overfished evaluation (SSB/MSST)	1.51	
SSB/SSB_{MSY}	1.13	
Overfishing evaluation ($F_{Current}$/MFMT)	0.609	
MFMT (F_{MSY})	0.41	
SSB_{MSY} (1e12 eggs)	18.3	
MSST (1e12 eggs)	13.7	
MSY (1,000 lbs.)	1,305.5	
Y at 75% F_{MSY} (1,000 lbs.)	1,288.2	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	10%	
P-Star	40%	
M (scalar for age-specific M)	0.22	

Black Sea Bass

- Is the revised assessment recommended as Best Scientific Information Available?
- What impact did the revised data have on measures of assessment uncertainty?
- Recommend projections or further information necessary to make fishing level recommendations at the Spring 2019 meeting.

Table 8. Revised Black Sea Bass Recommendations

Criteria	Original	Revised
Overfished evaluation (SSB/MSST)	1.15	
SSB/SSB_{MSY}	0.71	
Overfishing evaluation ($F_{Current}$/MFMT)	0.64	
MFMT (F_{MSY})	0.31	
SSB_{MSY} (1e10 eggs)	300	
MSST (1e10 eggs)	186	
MSY (1,000 lbs.)	935	
Y at 75% F_{MSY} (1,000 lbs.)	701.25	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	12.5%	
P-Star	37.5%	
M (scalar for age-specific M)	0.38	

3. OTHER BUSINESS

4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

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

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, February 12, 2019 (approximately 2 ½ weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the first briefing book for the March Council meeting.

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