

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting Overview**

**October 22-24, 2013**

**Crowne Plaza  
North Charleston, SC**

**VERSION  
Briefing Book**

### PURPOSE

Topics to address during this meeting:

- SEDAR planning and update
- Consider the basis of fishing level recommendations
- Review Spanish mackerel projections and recommendations
- Update on the SEFIS program
- ACCSP biological sampling targets
- Assessments of blueline tilefish and snowy grouper
- Data poor assessment techniques
- ABC control rule productivity and susceptibility ratings
- Current FMP Amendments

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## Documents:

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- Attachment 2. SEDAR Assessment List
- Attachment 3. 2014 SEDAR Projects Summary
- Attachment 4. SEDAR 41 TORs and schedule
- Attachment 5. Gag Update TORs
- Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Draft Report
- Attachment 7. SAFMC Assessment Planning
- Attachment 8. Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations
- Attachment 9. MSST Alternatives, SEFSC 2011
- Attachment 10. Council Conclusions on MSST, Amendment 24
- Attachment 11. Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment Report
- Attachment 12. Revised Spanish Mackerel Projections
- Attachment 13. June 2013 Mackerel Committee Excerpt
- Attachment 14. ACCSP BioSampling Prioritization Matrix
- Attachment 15. ACCSP BioSampling Priorities Keys
- Attachment 16. SEFSC Presentation on Biosampling targets
- Attachment 17. SEDAR 32 Assessment Report, Blueline Tilefish
- Attachment 18. SEDAR 36, Snowy Grouper Assessment Report
- Attachment 19. Data Poor Assessment Approaches
- Attachment 20. ABC Control Rule
- Attachment 21. MRAG PSA Reports
- Attachment 22. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 22 Draft
- Attachment 23. SAFMC Work Plan, March 2013
- Attachment 24. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2013

**\* Indicates documents not available for the first Briefing Book.**

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## **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, October 15, 2013.

SAFMC  
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### Verbal comment:

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items will be provided during SSC meetings. The first will be at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion, when the SSC reviews its recommendations. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, which may be through a show of hands or a written list if the number of interested parties is extensive, who will then recognize individuals to come forward and provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2013 meeting

### 1.2. Action

Introductions

Review and Approve Agenda

Approve Minutes

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public will be provided two opportunities to comment on SSC agenda items during this meeting. The first at the start of the meeting, and the final will be provided at the end during the review of recommendations. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

## 3. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

### 3.1. Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Assessment List

Attachment 3. 2014 SEDAR Projects Summary

Attachment 4. SEDAR 41 TORs and schedule

Attachment 5. Gag Update TORs

Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Draft Report

Attachment 7. SAFMC Assessment Planning

### 3.2. Overview

(Attachment 3, Attachment 4) SEDAR 41 will assess South Atlantic red snapper and gray triggerfish. Gray triggerfish is replacing red porgy in this benchmark project, to address delays in triggerfish that led to its removal from SEDAR 32. Additionally, SEFSC requested additional analytical time for this assessment, to be provided by delaying the Review Workshop until June 2015. Given scheduled June activities, it is possible that it may fall back to July. The Committee is asked to review and approve the TORs and Schedule, and identify participants for Council consideration in December.

Two versions of the TORs are provided for consideration. The first is based on the approved SEDAR template TORs, intended to provide a consistent starting point. It includes an additional TOR in the DW section, requesting discussion of data uncertainties, included in response to the recent publication of NS2 guidelines. The second version has more extensive changes. As part of the TOR development process, the SEFSC analysts are asked to comment, so that any specific analytical items or issues of

concern for the stock can be identified early in the process. In this instance, the analytical team provided extensive comment on the wording of TORs for the Review Workshop. As these suggested changes go beyond the identification of specific analytical needs and could impact how the RW approaches its tasks, the SSC is provided both TOR versions.

(Attachment 3, Attachment 5) A gag update assessment will be conducted during 2014 and provided to the SSC in October 2015. Terms of Reference are provided for review and comment.

(Attachment 6 ) The SEDAR Steering Committee met October 1-2, 2013 to address assessment priorities and discuss the SEDAR process.

(Attachment 7) The Council discussed a long term assessment planning process at its September 2013 meeting. Support was offered for the overall process, a 5 year assessment interval and proposed priority stocks. The SSC is asked to further review and comment on the approach and priority stocks. Following SSC review, staff will prepare a schedule for 2016-2026 for consideration at the December Council meeting.

Gray triggerfish were included with SEDAR 32, then delayed due to ageing issues. At first a desk review was planned for early 2014, but the problems proved more difficult and the delay extended. The Committee will be provided a status report.

The Steering Committee supports holding a SEDAR procedures workshop to address South Atlantic Shrimp Data, as discussed at the SSC meeting of October 2012. At this time the Committee is asked to provide guidance on workshop objectives, TORs, participants, and organizing committee membership.

Table 1. SEDAR Assessment Projects for the South Atlantic, 2013-2016.

Year	SEDAR #	Stocks	Type	Terminal Data	Assessment Complete
2013	U	Black Sea Bass	Update	2012	April 2013
	36	Snowy Grouper	Standard	2012	October 2013
	32	Blueline tilefish	Benchmark	2012	October 2013
	U	Mutton snapper	Update	2012	April 2014
2014	U	Gag	Update	2012	April 15, 2014
	37	Hogfish	Benchmark	2013	June 2014
2015	41	Red snapper Gray triggerfish	Benchmark start 8/2014	2013	August 1, 2015
	U	Tilefish	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Red grouper	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Vermilion snapper	Update	2014	October 1, 2015
	U	Black grouper	Update	2014	April 2015
2016		Scamp Gray snapper	Benchmark start ~7/2015	2015	April 2016
		red porgy	Benchmark	2014	October 1, 2016

### 3.3. Action

- Approve SEDAR 41 TORs, schedule, and participants
- Approve gag grouper update TORs
- Provide guidance on future assessment priority stocks and the planning approach.
- Provide guidance on the shrimp data procedures workshop objectives, TORs, participants, and organizing committee.

## SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:

## 4. STOCK ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Documents

Attachment 8. Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations

Attachment 9. MSST Alternatives, SEFSC 2011

Attachment 10. Council Conclusions on MSST, Amendment 24

### 4.2. Overview

The Committee is asked to consider two topics related to the development of fishing level recommendations from stock assessments. The first is the basis of MSST, last discussed in 2011 during deliberations on red grouper and Snapper-Grouper FMP Amendment 24. The other is a follow-up to discussions at the previous meeting, and the incorporation of probabilistic results in the recommendations.

#### *MSST Basis*

The Committee planned to discuss MSST alternatives in April 2011, in response to a document provided by SEFSC (Attachment 9). No detailed presentation on the method was provided at that time, leading the SSC to develop the following recommendation:

*With regard to the new MSST method derived by SEFSC, the SSC did not feel it could evaluate the technique at this time. The SSC also indicated the technique should be considered in the future, but at present did not recommend using it in a generic sense or specifically in the case of red grouper. The SSC recommended delaying the application of the new approach until the SEFSC could provide further information.*

No further information is available for consideration at this meeting, and staff is not aware of any additional evaluations conducted since this was discussed in 2011. However, the Council is faced with determining MSST for several stocks during this meeting. Both 1-M(SSBmsy) and other percentages, such as 75%SSBmsy, are in use in current FMPs. As shown in the Council Conclusions on Amendment 24 (Attachment 10), the Council supports using the 75%SSBmsy level.

### *Probabilistic Approach*

The SSC reviewed the update assessment for black sea bass during their April 2013 meeting in Charleston, SC. The projections showed an ABC value that was higher than the base run point estimate of MSY, which was traditionally used as the value of OFL. This apparent conflict in MSA mandates and assessment results brought to light the possible discrepancies of mixing deterministic base run point estimates with probabilistic projections from an MCB analysis. The SSC decided to use the base run in order to determine stock status, but to use the probabilistic projections to provide catch level recommendations to the Council. However, the SSC noted that the probabilistic stock status results provide the Council with a better idea of the uncertainty associated with the point estimates and that further discussion was warranted at their next meeting. Attachment 8: 'Probabilistic Approach for Assessment Recommendations' addresses this issue in detail and suggests several methods of using probabilistic MCB runs to determine BRPs and stock status for the SSC to consider.

#### 4.3. Presentation

Probabilistic Approach -- Mike Errigo

#### 4.4. Action

- Provide guidance on the basis for MSST
- Provide guidance on the probabilistic approach to developing fishing level recommendations
- Modify the base assessment recommendations table, if needed
- If necessary, modify assessment TORs

### **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

## **5. SPANISH MACKEREL ASSESSMENT PROJECTIONS**

### 5.1. Documents

Attachment 11. Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment Report

Attachment 12. Revised Spanish Mackerel Projections

Attachment 13. June 2013 Mackerel Committee Excerpt

### 5.2. Overview

Complete stock projections were not available when the SSC reviewed the SEDAR 28 assessment of Spanish Mackerel in April 2013. When provided to the Council in June 2013 there was significant discussion. The Council noted that, despite the stock never being overfished or experiencing overfishing, and biomass and exploitation levels well removed from their limits, decreased yield was indicated in the P\* projections. Because the SSC was not able to review the projections provided to the Council and the Council advised that it can accept a higher risk level for Spanish mackerel over the short-term,



based on current conditions and status trends, Council requests that the SSC review the projections and reconsider the ABC recommendations for Spanish Mackerel, including consideration of basing recommendations on 75% Fmsy levels.

The following text is taken from the SAFMC Mackerel Committee Report, June 2013:

**MOTION: REQUEST THAT THE SSC REVIEW THE SPANISH MACKEREL PROJECTIONS AND REVISIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFL AND ABC. THE SSC IS ASKED TO CONSIDER BASING OFL AND ABC ON EQUILIBRIUM PROJECTIONS OF MSY, IN LIGHT OF EFFECTS OF SELECTIVITY AND RECRUITMENT PATTERNS ON SHORT-TERM YIELD ESTIMATES.**

**Approved by Committee. Approved by Council.**

**Additional language was added to provide guidance and clarification to the SSC:**

Considering the high degree of confidence that the stock is not only not-overfished nor undergoing overfishing, but that current biomass is high ( $SSB/MSST = 2.29$ ) and exploitation is low ( $F/F_{msy} = 0.53$ ) and that the stock has not experienced overfishing over the assessment period, the Council believes that use of a less risk-averse reference point such as the equilibrium MSY, (6.063 mp) as OFL for 2013-2015 is justified. Due to the exploitation history and stock status, the Council believes such a reference point does not significantly increase the probability of overfishing during these years. The Council recommends that the SSC consider whether OFL recommendations could be based on equilibrium conditions for stocks which are neither overfished nor overfishing. Such an approach would provide stable landings and enable the Council to implement constant regulations that will provide stability to the fishery. In addition, the Council is willing to accept the risk associated with small buffers between OFL and ABC for stocks well above reference limits, and requests that the SSC provide guidance on OFL-ABC buffers in such situations.

In addition, SEFSC staff reported that a revision of the projections was necessary following the June Council meetings, and indicated that revised projections will be available at this meeting.

### 5.3. Presentation

Updated projections: SEFSC

### 5.4. Action

- Review revised Spanish mackerel projections
- Address Council motion to reconsider ABC recommendations and basis.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

Table 2. Spanish mackerel ABC recommendations

Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number

## 6. SEFIS UPDATE

### 6.1. Documents

### 6.2. Presentation

SEFIS Update: TBD, SEFSC.

### 6.3. Overview

The SSC requested an update of the SEFIS monitoring program, to obtain information on coverage, sampling levels, and data evaluation. The committee is interested in the video survey data in particular, including how they are used in developing abundance indices.

### 6.4. Action

- No specific actions required.

## SSC RECOMMENDATION:

## 7. ACCSP BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING TARGETS

### 7.1. Documents

Attachment 14. ACCSP BioSampling Prioritization Matrix

Attachment 15. ACCSP BioSampling Priorities Keys

Attachment 16. SEFSC Presentation on Biosampling targets

### 7.2. Overview

At their September 2013 meeting in Charleston, SC, the Council was given a presentation by Dr. Bonnie Ponwith on how well the science center has been meeting the BioSampling targets. The Council has been concerned about the data going into assessments and the amount of uncertainty in the assessments attributed to lack of adequate sampling. This presentation from the science center highlighted the fact that many of the species sampled in the South Atlantic are under sampled, some achieving less than 10% of the BioSampling targets. It became apparent that one of the problems is the appropriateness of the targets relative to the landings, number of trips, and number of samplers. Other issues include the year of the landings data used to set current targets, the fact that targets are set during periods when fisheries are not open. The number of trips sampled, and the small number of samplers available in the South Atlantic. The Biological Review Panel (BRP) at ACCSP has been discussing this matrix and the matrix itself has been evolving, however the concerns of the Council have prompted more action on how these sampling targets are determined. The Council would like the input of the SSC as we move forward with modifications to the BioSampling matrix and protocols for setting targets. Some specific areas the Council and the BRP would like input on include the basis of sampling targets, particularly if developing them by species is appropriate in the South Atlantic and whether the range of strata variables is appropriate. Also, the overall sampling intensity for lengths and ages is a concern, especially for the age samples. Finally, thoughts on the appropriateness of per trip sampling in the multi-species snapper grouper fishery, rather than by species, would be very helpful.

### 7.3. Action

- Review the sampling prioritization approach
- Provide guidance on appropriate methods of allocating sampling effort for SA fisheries
- Discuss species versus trip-based sample allocation, as it pertains to multi-species fisheries such as the snapper-grouper complex
- Discuss length versus age sampling intensity, with emphasis on allocation of effort when typical age-length key approaches are not appropriate.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

## **8. MUTTON SNAPPER ASSESSMENT**

### 8.1. Documents

None

### 8.2. Overview

The mutton snapper assessment is not complete, and will be reviewed at a later meeting.

## 9. BLUELINE TILEFISH ASSESSMENT REVIEW

### 9.1. Documents

Attachment 17. SEDAR 32 Assessment Report, Blueline Tilefish

### 9.2. Presentation

Assessment Overview: SEFSC, TBD

### 9.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the blueline tilefish assessment prepared through SEDAR 32. This is the first assessment prepared of this stock, so there are no existing recommendations to consider. The Review Workshop was held in August 2013. The version of the assessment report provided here is not the final SAR. Additional projections are required to address a RW request to use actual 2012 landings, and to meet the Terms of Reference and management specifications. See the document cover page for details. Since this work was not completed as of the Federal Government shut-down on October 1, it will not likely be available for SSC consideration.

An ABC recommendation of 592,602 pounds, provided in April 2011, was based on twice the highest landings observed prior to 2006. The Committee reached this decision primarily on constituent testimony that this was a developing fishery, of limited scope and few participants, with considerable room for increased landings. Given the impending assessment, the SSC felt the risk to the resource was minimal, and supported the anecdotal comments of a developing fishery with ample ability to support increased harvest.

### 9.4. Action

- Consider whether the assessment is adequate for providing management advice.
- Provide fishing level recommendations consistent with the ABC control rule, considering items included in the fishing level recommendations table
- Consider alternatives for MSST and provide a recommended value and basis.
- Comment on assessment uncertainties and their impact on risk determinations
- Provide guidance on the next assessment - type and timing.

## SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:

Table 3. Blueline tilefish fishing level recommendations

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Deterministic</b>	<b>Probabilistic</b>
Overfished evaluation		
Overfishing evaluation		

MFMT				
SSBmsy (unit)				
MSST (unit)				
MSY (1000 lb)				
Y at 75% Fmsy (1000 lb)				
ABC Control Rule Adjustment				
P-Star				
OFL (1000 lb)				
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number

**10. SNOWY GROUPEER ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

10.1. Documents

Attachment 18. SEDAR 36, Snowy Grouper Assessment Report

10.2. Presentation

Assessment Overview: SEFSC, TBD

10.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the snowy grouper assessment prepared through SEDAR 36 and provide fishing level recommendations. Snowy grouper was last assessed in SEDAR 4, and was determined to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. This led to the Council developing a rebuilding plan in Amendment 15A. Rebuilding began in 2006 and ends in 2039. Commercial accountability measures specified in Amendment 17B include in-season closure ability and payback of overages. The recreational season will be reduced if the average landings over the prior 2 years exceeds the recreational ACL. During initial reviews of assessed stocks, the SSC calculated a P\* of 30% for snowy grouper, and a probability of rebuild of 70%. However, since rebuilding of snowy grouper began prior to existence of the P\* approach, the rebuilding plan was based on a 50% chance of reaching SSBmsy by the end of the rebuilding period. This is the first assessment of snowy grouper under both the Reauthorized MSA and the P\* methodology.

10.4. Action

- Consider whether the assessment is adequate for providing management advice.
- Provide fishing level recommendations consistent with the ABC control rule, considering items included in the fishing level recommendations table
- Consider alternatives for MSST and provide a recommended value and basis.
- Comment on assessment uncertainties and their impact on risk determinations
- Provide guidance on the next assessment - type and timing.

**SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Table 4. Snowy grouper fishing level recommendations

<b>Criteria</b>		<b>Deterministic</b>		<b>Probabilistic</b>
Overfished evaluation				
Overfishing evaluation				
MFMT (Fmsy)				
SSBmsy (unit)				
MSST (unit) (75% SSBmsy)				
MSY (1000 lb)				
Y at 75% Fmsy (1000 lb)				
ABC Control Rule Adjustment				
P-Star				
OFL (1000 lb)				
<b>ABC RECOMMENDATIONS</b>				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number

**11. DATA POOR ASSESSMENT APPROACHES**

11.1. Documents

Attachment 19. Data Poor Assessment Approaches

### 11.2. Presentation

Presentation on Methods: Dr. Tom Carruthers

### 11.3. Overview

The Committee will receive a presentation on new approaches to assessing, and providing fishing level recommendations for, data limited stocks.

### 11.4. Action

Information topic; none required.

## **SSC RECOMMENDATION:**

## **12. ABC CONTROL RULE PSA COMPONENTS**

### 12.1. Documents

Attachment 20. ABC Control Rule  
Attachment 21. MRAG PSA Reports

### 12.2. Overview

The Committee requested time on this agenda to discuss the PSA basis in the ABC control rule. During initial ABC control rule development, the SSC recommended using the MRAG PSA evaluation in the tier scores. During more recent discussion of the ORCS approach the Committee noted some dissatisfaction with that approach, and offered that additional research may be available to revised and updated some of the values.

### 12.3. Action

- Consider modifications to the ABC Control Rule

## **13. SNAPPER-GROUPER AMENDMENT 22**

### 13.1. Documents

Attachment 22. Snapper-Grouper Amendment 22 Draft

### 13.2. Overview

Staff Contact: Myra Brouwer

Staff Contact: Myra Brouwer

The purpose of Amendment 22 is to create a recreational tag program for the South Atlantic region that could be applied to any snapper grouper species with a small Annual Catch Limit (ACL) as determined by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Regional Administrator (RA).

Proposed actions include: establish a recreational tag program to track harvest of snapper grouper species with low ACLs, establish eligibility criteria for individuals or entities to participate in the program, establish an annual issuance progress for recreational tags, and establish a cost-recovery plan.

### 13.3. Action

- Provide guidance on data collection aspects of recreational tag programs. Can such programs provide data for use in assessment or other status evaluations?
- Provide guidance on the use of a tag program to track harvest or evaluate AMs.

## 14. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE

### 14.1. Documents

Attachment 23. SAFMC Work Plan, March 2013

Attachment 24. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2013

### 14.2. Overview

The Committee is provided these documents at each meeting to stay 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.

- Coastal Migratory Pelagic - Kari MacLauchlin
- Corals - Anna Martin
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan - Roger Pugliese
- Snapper Grouper - Myra Brouwer
- Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 17 (MPAs) - Gregg Waugh



- Spiny Lobster - Kari MacLauchlin
- Golden Crab - Brian Chevront

## **15. OTHER BUSINESS**

## **16. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW, PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

The Final SSC report should be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, November 12, 2013, for inclusion in the first briefing book.

## **17. NEXT MEETINGS**

### **17.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS**

2014 Tentative Dates

April 29 - May 1  
October 28 - 30, 2014

### **17.2. SAFMC Meetings**

2013 Council Meetings

December 2-6, 2013: Wilmington, NC

2014 Council Meetings

March 3- 7, Savannah GA  
June 9 - 13, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL  
September 15 - 19, Charleston SC  
December 1 - 5, New Bern, NC

## **18. ADJOURN**