# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGMENT COUNCIL

# SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview
October 20 - 22, 2015
Crowne Plaza
North Charleston, SC

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# **Documents:**

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Attachment 2. Minutes of the June 2015 webinar meeting

Attachment 3. Minutes of the September 2015 webinar meeting

Attachment 4. SEFSC Headboat Data Evaluation Report

Attachment 5. Data Best Practices Report

Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Report\*

Attachment 7. SEFSC Assessment Proposal (PPT)

Attachment 8. SEDAR Project List

Attachment 9. Citizen science flyer

Attachment 10. Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs) Document\*

Attachment 11. Amendment 37 (Hogfish) Document

Attachment 12. Hogfish assessment

Attachment 13. Hogfish Projection Request from SAFMC

Attachment 14. Hogfish projections

Attachment 15. GA-NC Hogfish landings and intercepts\*

Attachment 16. Regulatory Amendment 16 (BSB Pots) Document

Attachment 17. Draft System Management Plan for the Deepwater MPAs

Attachment 18. ABC Control Rule

Attachment 19. SAFMC Research Recommendations Document

Attachment 20. Prioritization report

Attachment 21. Mid-Atlantic Blueline Tilefish Draft Action Plan

Attachment 22. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2015

Attachment 23. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2015

<sup>\*</sup> Indicates documents not available for the first Briefing Book. These will be distributed as they become available.

# **TABLES:**

Table 1. SAFMC Assessment Priorities, 2018-2020

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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 13, 2015.

SAFMC 4055 Faber Place Drive Suite 201 North Charleston, SC 29405

#### 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 2015 meeting

Attachment 2. Minutes of the June 2015 webinar meeting

Attachment 3. Minutes of the September 2015 webinar meeting

# 1.2. Action

- Introductions Including the new Council liaison Ben Hartig
- 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. 2014-2015 LANDINGS AND ACLS

#### 3.1. Documents

None.

#### 3.2. Presentation

Landings and ACLs: Mike Larkin, SERO, via Webinar

# 3.3. Overview

The SSC will be provided final 2014 and an update on 2015 landings, catch limits, and application of accountability measures.

#### 3.4. Action

- Review and comment, with attention toward any ABC recommendation updates.
- Consider assessment schedule and research plan implications

# 4. UNITS FOR FISHING LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

# 4.1. Documents

None.

#### 4.2. Presentation

The use of pounds versus numbers for setting catch level recommendations and implications for sector ACLs: Mike Errigo, SAFMC

# 4.3. Overview

ACLs for all federally managed species were set in pounds, for both sectors, up until several years ago. Some of the deepwater species, which had very low recreational allocations, were set in umbers rather than in pounds due to the low numbers of intercepts and very high PSE values around those estimates. Currently, Snowy Grouper, Golden Tilefish, and Wreckfish all have their recreational ACLs set in numbers of fish rather than in pounds.

The Council discussed setting the recreational ACLs for the two Hogfish stocks in numbers as well and decided to do so at their June 2015 meeting. However, the current method of setting recreational ACLs in numbers is to get the total ABC from the assessment (or some other methodology, such as ORCS) and then convert pounds to numbers of fish using the average weight from the recreational sector. This methodology first became a problem with Snowy Grouper, when there weren't enough recreational samples to calculate a representative average weight. Instead, the average weight from the commercial hook and line samples was used to convert the recreational ACL from pounds to numbers. More recently, the GA-NC stock of Hogfish has become problematic for two reasons. First, there are very few samples of Hogfish in any given year. Second, the Hogfish intercepts include other species that are significantly smaller, skewing the average weight of Hogfish from this stock.

Issues such as the ones listed above, in conjunction with the fact that the recreational catch is typically under-sampled in comparison to the commercial catch, led to the suggestion of using the total ABC in numbers, applying the allocation to divide into recreational and commercial sectors, and then convert the commercial ACL into pounds. The SSC is asked to evaluate these methodologies, as well as the idea of setting the recreational ACL in numbers versus pounds, so the Council can move forward with setting the recreational ACLs for recreational stocks.

The Council wants to track the recreational ACLs in numbers of fish to reduce the likelihood of exceeding recreational ACLs. Currently the headboats provide weekly electronic reports, and the Council is proposing the same requirement for charter vessels. This would provide weekly updates of the for-hire sector and provide more insight into the recreational rate of harvest by the private sector. This would help reduce the risk of exceeding the recreational sector ACLs.

#### 4.1. Action

• Review the utility and methodologies for setting fishing level recommendations in numbers vs. pounds and provide a recommendation to the Council on specifying recreational ACLs in numbers of fish.

# 5. FINAL SEFSC HEADBOAT DATA EVALUATION

#### 5.1. <u>Documents</u>

Attachment 4. SEFSC Headboat Data Evaluation Report

# 5.2. Presentation

Final Evaluation Overview: TBD, SEFSC

# 5.3. Overview

The Committee will receive an overview on the final SEFSC evaluation of the concerns raised regarding the reliability of historical headboat data records.

#### 5.4. Action

• None Required.

#### 6. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

#### 6.1. Documents

Attachment 5. Data Best Practices Report

Attachment 6. SEDAR Steering Committee Report\*

Attachment 7. SEFSC Assessment Proposal (PPT)

Attachment 8. SEDAR Project List

#### 6.2. Overview

The SEDAR Steering Committee met September 28-29 in Charleston SC. The Committee took the following actions:

- Approved Marcel Reichert as Chair for SEDAR 41, and appointing both Gulf appointees as reviewers.
- Approved creating a standing Data Best Practices Panel that will meet regularly to review data issues and keep best practices recommendations up to date.
- Approved a stock ID and meristics workshop in 2016.
- Directed that Council Cooperators review the NOAA Fisheries Stock Assessment Prioritization plan, and to consider SEDAR implications at the next meeting.
- Scheduled a meeting via webinar for October 30 to resolve 2018 assessment projects.
  - Concern arose with scheduling updates to address MRIP CHTS-Effort survey changes.
  - Agency proposed updating existing assessments with revised catch data through the terminal year of the prior assessment.

 Committee could not resolve at this time. It was not clear how much time and effort this would involve nor how it would affect Council priorities.

Table 1. SAFMC Assessment Priorities, 2018-2020

14513	Stock	Type	Lead	SSC Review
2016	Red Snapper/Gray	Benchmark	SEFSC	Oct 2016
	Triggerfish*			
	(golden) Tilefish*	Update	SEFSC	Apr. 2016
	Blueline Tilefish*	Update	SEFSC	Apr. 2017
	Red Grouper*	Update	SEFSC	Apr. 2017
2017	Gulf & SA Scamp, Gray Snapper	Benchmark	SEFSC	April 2019
	Vermilion	Update	SEFSC	Apr. 2018
	Greater Amberjack	Update		Apr. 2018
	Yellowtail Snapper	S/B	FWC	Oct 2018
2018	Red Snapper	Update	SEFSC	Apr. 2019
	Sea Bass	Standard	SEFSC	Apr. 2019
	Red Porgy	Standard	SEFSC	Apr. 2019
	Snowy Grouper	Standard	SEFSC	Apr. 2019
2019	Blueline	Update	SEFSC	
	Spanish	Update	SEFSC	
	Cobia	Update	SEFSC	
	Gag	Standard	SEFSC	
	Yellowtail Snapper	Update	FL FWCC	
2020	White Grunt (potentially	Benchmark	SEFSC	
	multiple stocks)			
	King Mackerel	Update	SEFSC	
	Tilefish	Update	SEFSC	
	Hogfish	Update	FL FWCC	

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes stocks that will not include revised MRIP estimates.

# 6.3. Action

• Comment on the assessment priorities for 2018-2020.

# 7. SAFMC CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

# 7.1. Documents

Attachment 9. Citizen science flyer

# 7.2. Overview

The Committee will receive an overview of the Citizen Science Project and progress that has been made. The Council made appointments for this workshop in September. SSC

representatives identified include Steve Cadrin and Luiz Barbieri. Marcel Reichert, Jeff Buckel and Carolyn Belcher were identified as state representatives.

#### 7.3. Action

• No specific actions required.

# 8. SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 36

#### 8.1. Documents

Attachment 10. Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs) Document\*

# 8.2. Overview

The Council is considering the following actions in Amendment 36:

- Specify a process for identifying spawning sites for snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and warsaw grouper, based on the characteristics of sites important for spawning (bottom topography, current systems, etc.).
  - Purpose: Document spawning events in protected areas and characterize these protected areas in terms of bottom topography, habitat, fish occurrence, fish spawning, oceanography, etc.)
  - How measure success/working? By documenting spawning events in the protected areas using a combination of citizen science and fishery independent sampling (e.g., MARMAP, SEAMAP, SEFIS)
- Currently Spawning SMZs would only consider prohibiting fishing for and/or possession of snapper grouper species (species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit). Transit would be allowed; anchoring would be prohibited (there may be an exception for Areas 51/53).
- The amendment specifies proposed Spawning SMZ sites and the Council has chosen preferreds.
- Action 7 proposes to move the Existing Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the Northwest to match the boundary of the permitted site.
- Action 9 proposes a sunset provision for all new SMZs unless appropriate monitoring/research efforts document spawning prior to the end the sunset timing.

The Council has chosen preferreds for this amendment at their September 2015 meeting. This is the SSC's final opportunity to review Amendment 36 before the Council votes on final approval at their March 2016 meeting. The SSC is given the opportunity to review the document and provide comments.

# 8.3. Presentation

Amendment 36 Document: Gregg Waugh, SAMFC

#### 8.4. Action

• Review and provide comments.

# 9. SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 37

# 9.1. Documents

Attachment 11. Amendment 37 (Hogfish) Document

Attachment 12. Hogfish assessment

Attachment 13. Hogfish Projection Request from SAFMC

Attachment 14. Hogfish projections

Attachment 15. GA-NC Hogfish landings and intercepts\*

# 9.2. Overview

The Council is considering the following actions in Amendment 37:

- Designate 2 stocks for Hogfish in the South Atlantic.
  - o Florida Keys/East Florida Stock (FLK/EFL)
  - o Georgia to North Carolina Stock (GA-NC)
- Set ABCs and ACLs for both stocks of Hogfish.
- Implement a rebuilding plan for the FLK/EFL stock.
- Implementing/modifying commercial trip limit and size limit for both stocks.
- Implementing/modifying recreational bag limit and size limit for both stocks.
- Implementing a recreational season for both stocks.
- Adopting Accountability Measures for both stocks.

The Council would particularly like the SSC to review and provide guidance on the recommended ABC values for each of the Hogfish stocks in Amendment 37 for the reasons detailed below.

The SSC reviewed assessments for the GA/NC and SE/FL Keys stocks of hogfish in October 2014, and concluded that the Southeastern Florida/Florida Keys stock was overfished. The Council requested rebuilding projections for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock of hogfish.

The original Hogfish projections for the FLK/EFL stock had management beginning in 2016, with commercial data through 2014 and recreational data through 2013. Due to timing of the amendment, management will not take effect until 2017. Also, 2014 recreational landings were significantly higher than what was assumed in the original projection scenarios. Therefore, an updated series of projections was run with updated interim landings. The SSC is asked to review these updated projections.

At the September meeting, the Council also had a lengthy discussion involving the GANC stock and the ABC for that stock. It was pointed out that the Hogfish in this stock are much larger, have a larger size at transition, and are found much further from shore than Hogfish in the FLK/EFL stock. This information may suggest that this stock is healthier than the FLK/EFL stock and perhaps less vulnerable to overfishing. Also, SAFMC staff has found some MRIP records that reported Hogfish, which may not be Hogfish. The non-hogsnapper fish have much lower average weights than what is typically reported for Hogfish in the GA-NC stock and are skewing the calculations of ABC from ORCS. The

Council has requested that the SSC reevaluate the ORCS calculation of ABC for the GANC stock.

#### 9.3. Presentation

Amendment 37 Document: Myra Brouwer, SAMFC

#### 9.4. Action

- Review the hogfish projections and consider:
  - o Do the new projections represent BSIA?
  - o What are the projection uncertainties, and how might they affect rebuilding efforts and strategies?
  - Does the SSC have any other guidance for the Council on rebuilding strategies?
- Review the GA-NC stock ABC and consider:
  - o Is a Moderately-High risk of overexploitation appropriate for this stock?
  - o Is ORCS the appropriate methodology for determining ABC for this stock? If not, how should the ABC be determined?
  - o If anything changes for this stock, recommend a new ABC level.
- Comment on the appropriate methodology for setting the recreational ACL in numbers.
  - O Should the ABC be set in numbers and the commercial ACL be converted to pounds or should the ABC be set in pounds and the recreational ACL be converted to numbers?
  - o Provide any guidance on how (or whether) to address sector allocations as a result of setting the ABC in numbers (if that methodology is chosen).
- Review the rest of the document and provide comments.

# 10. SNAPPER GROUPER REGULATORY AMENDMENT 16

#### 10.1.Documents

Attachment 16. Regulatory Amendment 16 (BSB Pots) Document

# 10.2. Overview

Regulatory Amendment 16 includes two actions to address the prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots that was implemented through Regulatory Amendment 19 and became effective on October 23, 2013. The first action has alternatives that modify the closure based on variations of time, area, and depth. The second action modifies black sea bass pot gear strength and marking requirements that could make the gear less likely to get entangled with northern right whales, as well as be able to identify gear as South Atlantic black sea bass pot gear if it is recovered from a whale. This is the SSC's final opportunity to review Regulatory Amendment 16 before the Council votes on final approval at their December 2015 meeting.

#### 10.3.Action

• Review and provide comments.

# 11. SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN

# 11.1.Documents

Attachment 17. Draft System Management Plan for the Deepwater MPAs

#### 11.2.Overview

The Council is developing a System Management Plan (SMP) to specify the outreach, law enforcement, and monitoring/research projects (with cost estimates) necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate the deepwater MPAs. The Council is expected to approve the SMP for the deepwater MPAs at their December 2015 meeting.

#### 11.3.Action

• Review and provide comments.

# 12. RECREATIONAL CATCH ESTIMATES FOR RARE SPECIES

#### 12.1. Documents

None.

#### 12.2.Presentation

Recreational Catch Estimates Overview: John Foster, NOAA Fisheries

#### 12.3.Overview

When the 2006 MSA Reauthorization and the requirement for all federally managed fisheries to have ABCs and ACLs was implemented, it became clear that not all species' landings were tracked with the same level of precision. Rare event species (those that are rarely encountered and/or rarely intercepted) are a particular issue when estimating recreational landings. Most years, the landings are estimated to be zero or at a very low, base level. However, occasionally an intercept will occur in an area that gets expanded to a very large catch estimate for that species and these estimates have large amounts of uncertainty associated with them (high PSEs).

The Council expressed concern over managing these rare species using estimates from the standard MRIP survey, so MRIP has devised several ways of addressing the issue of rare event species. The Committee will receive an overview of these proposed methods and is asked to review them and comment on their utility in providing more accurate and reliable estimates for these rarely encountered species.

#### 12.4.Action

 Review the methodologies presented and comment and their utility in providing more accurate and reliable estimates of rarely encountered species.

#### 13. ABC CONTROL RULE REVISION GROUP REPORT

#### 13.1.Documents

Attachment 18. ABC Control Rule

# 13.2.Presentation

Overview and Update: Luiz Barbieri/Steve Cadrin, SAFMC SSC

# 13.3.Overview

At their April 2015 meeting, the SSC discussed the results of the ABC Control Rule Workshop held in October 2014. There were difficulties producing results from that workshop, so the SSC decided to convene a sub-committee to develop a draft proposal to bring to the entire SSC for review.

Here is the summary from the April 2015 meeting:

The SSC discussed results of the ABC control rule workshop held in October 2014. The main comments, issues, and recommendations discussed by the Committee included:

- There is renewed interest by the SSC in adding flexibility to the control rule as to accommodate individual species situations as well as socio-economic information that may not have been properly taken into account during the assessment and catch level recommendation process.
- However, given the extent of the topics to be discussed and the difficulties associated with having a productive discussion with such a large group the SSC suggested that a smaller sub-committee or working group be established to develop a draft proposal for SSC review and discussion at its October 2015 meeting.
- The Committee is extremely appreciative of Steve Cadrin's offer to Chair that sub-committee. Other members who volunteered to participate in this process are:
  - John Boreman
  - Amy Schueller
  - Tracy Yandle
  - Eric Johnson

#### 13.4.Action

• Consider the ABC Control Rule revisions presented by the sub-committee.

# 14. REVISED RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

# 14.1.Documents

Attachment 19. SAFMC Research Recommendations Document

# 14.2.Presentation

SAFMC Revised Research Recommendations: John Carmichael, SAFMC

#### 14.3.Overview

At the Council's June 2015 meeting, the SEFSC pointed out that the current format of the Research Recommendations document is not conducive to implementing those research goals, nor does it give priorities for short-term versus long-term projects. Therefore, the Council made the following motion to direct staff to revise the Research Plan:

# *Move to direct staff to:*

 Modify the research plan to include a list of specific short term and long term needs that will improve guidance for researchers considering projects as well as those developing requests for proposals, and offer a revised version for consideration at the September meeting. The revised version should separate research and monitoring topics and consider upcoming assessment projects and past assessment research recommendations.

The Plan was revised as directed and approved by the Council in September. The SSC will be asked to consider recommendations for the 2016 plan in April 2016.

#### 14.4.Action

• None required

# 15. NMFS NATIONAL STOCK PRIORITIZATION TOOL

#### 15.1.Documents

Attachment 20. Prioritization report

#### 15.2. Presentation

National Stock Prioritization Tool Overview: Rick Methot, NMFS (via Webinar)

#### 15.3. Overview

#### 15.4.Action

• Review and comment on application and use for establishing South Atlantic Priorities.

# 16. BLUELINE TILEFISH ASSESSMENT AND FISHING LEVELS

# 16.1.Documents

Attachment 21. Mid-Atlantic Blueline Tilefish Draft Action Plan

#### 16.2. Overview

At the June 2015 webinar meeting, the Committee reviewed updated projections for Blueline Tilefish and determined them not to be best scientific information available. Several additional runs were requested exploring a range of alternative recruitment scenarios. The Committee reviewed the results of these runs at their September 2015 webinar meeting. The Committee was not provided the results of all their requested runs due to those runs being deemed scientifically unreasonable by the SEFSC. Therefore, based on the information available, the SSC recommended an ABC value at the Yield at 75% Fmsy. A caveat was added that this ABC was only to remain in effect for two years, until the Blueline Tilefish assessment could be updated.

Currently, there are efforts underway to collect more information on Blueline Tilefish and identify stock structure throughout the Atlantic. The SEFSC currently has additional survey efforts to collect information on Blueline Tilefish. Also, MARMAP and the MAFMC are working on genetic studies to identify the stock structure of Blueline Tilefish in Atlantic waters. Due to this new information being collected for Blueline, the Council made a motion to request a standard assessment, rather than an update, be conducted in 2016. The Council passed the following motion:

Requesting a standard approach for blueline tilefish in 2016, to incorporate results of additional SEFSC survey efforts now underway and stock ID results expected to be available later this year. The Committee directed that the SSC review the justification for a standard assessment in October, with participation by SEFSC staff.

The SSC is asked to review this request for a standard assessment in light of this new information being collected for Blueline Tilefish.

The SSC should also be aware of the intentions of the MAFMC. Mr. Tony DiLernia of the MAFMC was present at the September 2015 SAFMC Council meeting and expressed that the MAFMC was moving forward with adding Blueline to the Golden Tilefish FMP and they also had funding to determine stock structure. Here is the excerpt from the Snapper Grouper Committee report:

Mr. Tony DiLernia, representative of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) on the Snapper Grouper Committee, indicated the MAFMC is in the process of adding blueline tilefish to their existing Golden Tilefish Fishery Management Plan and

has committee funding to conduct genetic studies to determine stock structure. Mr. DiLernia indicated that the MAFMC intends to manage blueline tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic region primarily as a recreational fishery. Temporary management measures are in place in the Mid-Atlantic region until the current emergency rule expires.

#### 16.3.Action

- Comment on the appropriate type of assessment to be conducted for Blueline Tilefish.
- Consider the actions being taken by the MAFMC.

# 17. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE

# 17.1. Documents

Attachment 22. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2015 Attachment 23. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2015

#### 17.2.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 Chip Collier
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan Roger Pugliese
- Snapper Grouper Myra Brouwer
- Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 (Spawning SMZs) Gregg Waugh
- Spiny Lobster Kari MacLauchlin
- Golden Crab Brian Cheuvront
- Dolphin-Wahoo Brian Cheuvront

#### 17.3. Action

No specific actions required

# 18. OTHER BUSINESS

# 19. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

# 20. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

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, Nov 17, 2015 for inclusion in the first briefing book for the December Council meeting.

# 21. CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR ELECTIONS

# 22. NEXT MEETINGS

# 22.1.SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2016 Meeting Dates (Tentative)

April 26 – 28 in Charleston SC. October 19 – 21 in Charleston, SC

# 22.2.SAFMC Meetings

2015-2016 Council Meetings

December 7 - 11, 2015 in Atlantic Beach, NC March 7 - 11, 2016 in Jekyll Island, GA June 13 - 17, 2016 in Cocoa Beach, FL September 12-16, 2016 in North Myrtle Beach, SC December 5-9, 2016 in Atlantic Beach, NC

# **ADJOURN**