

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

October 24-26, 2017

**Town & Country Inn
Charleston, SC**

**VERSION
FINAL
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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	5
2.	PUBLIC COMMENT	5
3.	SSC/COUNCIL REVIEW PROCESS.....	5
4.	2016-2017 LANDINGS AND ACLS	7
5.	SEDAR ACTIVITIES	7
6.	RED GROUPER PROJECTIONS.....	13
7.	SEFSC REPORT ON GRAY TRIGGERFISH ASSESSIBILITY.....	14
8.	UPDATE ON SEFSC RESEARCH EFFORTS	15
9.	SEDAR 50 BLUELINE TILEFISH ASSESSMENT REVIEW	15
10.	REVISED GOLDEN TILEFISH ASSESSMENT	17
11.	MODIFICATIONS TO THE ABC CONTROL RULE	18
12.	SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOSYSTEM MODEL REVIEW	20
13.	SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 46 – RED SNAPPER	21
14.	WRECKFISH ITQ REVIEW	22
15.	SNAPPER GROUPER VISIONING AMENDMENTS	22
16.	COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE	23
17.	PUBLIC COMMENT	24
18.	OTHER BUSINESS	24
19.	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW	24
20.	NEXT MEETINGS.....	24

Documents:

- Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2017 meeting
- Attachment 2. Minutes of the September 2017 webinar meeting
- Attachment 3. SSC/Council review process presentation*
- Attachment 4. NS 2 Guidelines
- Attachment 5. Landings update presentation
- Attachment 6. Landings trends 1986-2015
- Attachment 7. SEDAR Steering Committee Report
- Attachment 8. Cobia Stock ID Workshop Schedule and ToRs
- Attachment 9. Greater Amberjack & Red Porgy Assess Schedule & ToRs
- Attachment 10. New SERFS Combined Index Methodology
- Attachment 11. Long Term Assessment Scheduling Approach
- Attachment 12. SEDAR 53 projections
- Attachment 13. SEDAR 53 SAR, Red Grouper
- Attachment 14. ABC Control Rule
- Attachment 15. Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report
- Attachment 16. SEFSC Gray Triggerfish Report
- Attachment 17. SEDAR 50 SAR, Blueline Tilefish*
- Attachment 18. Assessment Overview Presentation
- Attachment 19. Letter from MAFMC
- Attachment 20. Revised Tilefish Update SAR
- Attachment 21. Revised Tilefish Assessment Presentation*
- Attachment 22. ABC Control Rule Decision Document
- Attachment 23. Application of the ABC CR to Example Stocks*
- Attachment 24. Ecospace Model Webinar
- Attachment 25. Ecosystem Model Presentation
- Attachment 26. Wreckfish ITQ Review methodology*
- Attachment 27. Reg Amendment 26: Recreational Visioning Amendment
- Attachment 28. Reg Amendment 27: Commercial Visioning Amendment
- Attachment 29. Reg Amendment 27: Appendix J
- Attachment 30. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2017
- Attachment 31. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2017

*** Indicates documents not available for the Briefing Book. These will be distributed as they become available.**

TABLES:

Table 1. SAFMC SEDAR Projects October 2017	12
Table 2. Currently identified future assessment priorities.	12
Table 3. Blueline Tilefish Recommendations	17

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 Wednesday, October 18, 2017. Submit written comments to:

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

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 come 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

Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2017 meeting

Attachment 2. Minutes of the September 2017 webinar meeting

1.2. Presentation

Briefing on access to Council's public comment process: Cameron Rhodes, SAFMC staff

1.3. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public will be provided an opportunity to comment on SSC agenda items as they are being discussed during the meeting. Comments will be taken after any initial presentations are given on a particular topic, but before the SSC begins their discussion of the topic. There will also be an opportunity for comment at the start and end of the meeting. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

3. SSC/COUNCIL REVIEW PROCESS

3.1. Documents

Attachment 3. SSC/Council review process presentation*

Attachment 4. NS 2 Guidelines

3.2. Presentation

SSC/Council Review Process: Gregg Waugh/John Carmichael

3.3. Overview

The Council values the advice from the SSC and generally sends all technical analyses to the SSC for their review. Some amendments and analyses are more general in nature and are not routinely sent to the SSC for detailed discussion. Concern was expressed by the SSC during the September 5, 2017 webinar about the red snapper emergency action and Snapper Grouper Amendment 43. We want to clarify the Council's actions on these two items:

- A. Emergency Action – emergency action requests are not provided to the SSC for review. By their nature timing is very critical. Usually, the Council discusses an issue with at most some background information and makes a request to NMFS to

take action via an emergency rule. In the case of red snapper, the only way to preserve the Council's ability to make a request, and have it implemented in 2017, was for the Council and NMFS staffs to prepare a document for consideration at the September 2017 meeting. To maximize the chance that action would be implemented if the Council did request an emergency, the document also included a preferred alternative. This document was included in the Council's briefing book for the September 2017 meeting. The Council had flexibility to request or not request emergency action and to change the preferred alternative. The Council approved Alternative 4 as their preferred alternative and requested it be implemented via emergency action. Preferred Alternative 4 sets the ACL equal to the landings in 2014, the last time the fishery was open under a mini-season, with the rationale that the population has continued to rebuild after that level of landings in 2014 and whatever level of discard mortality occurred during and after 2014. The Council used the trap index, recent data from research projects in Florida, and observations shared through public testimony to support their conclusions that the population is continuing to rebuild and that the risk that limited harvest will result in overfishing or jeopardize stock rebuilding is minimal.

B. Amendment 43 – the SSC reviewed Amendment 43 in April 2017, including the following documents and presentations:

Attachment 19. SEDAR 41 RS Base Run Correction Erratum

Attachment 20. SEDAR 41 RS Base Run Correction Presentation

Attachment 21. Red Snapper Guidance Request

Attachment 22. Amendment 43 Options Paper

Attachment 23. Index Based ABC Options Paper

RS Assessment Correction Presentation: Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

Red Snapper Amendment Overview Presentation: Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

Index Based ABC Presentation: Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

Our understanding of the outcome of the SSC discussions was that the SSC could not provide an updated ABC using the information available at that time, and that the SSC is willing to work with the SEFSC to use the index-based analysis to provide an updated ABC at some point in the future.

Based on this guidance from the SSC, the Council decided at their June 2017 meeting to pursue an interim ACL through Amendment 43 for 2018 onwards and continue work on red snapper through Amendment 46 at the December 2017 meeting. The Council's intent was to address the updated ABC recommendations from the SSC in Amendment 46 if one was provided in time. If not, the Council would address your updated ABC recommendation when it is provided. The Council provided guidance to staff, at the June 2017 Council meeting, that Amendment 43 did not need to be reviewed by the SSC given the review of the index-based ABC options paper in April 2017, and the one action in the amendment is to set an interim ACL that is a Council decision.

3.4. Action

- Provide clarification on the desired role of the SSC in reviewing methods for setting ACLs.
- Provide any other suggested modifications to the SSC and Council review process.

4. **2016-2017 LANDINGS AND ACLS**

4.1. Documents

Attachment 5. Landings update presentation

Attachment 6. Landings trends 1986-2015

4.2. Presentation

Landings and ACLs: Mike Larkin, SERO, via Webinar

4.3. Overview

The SSC will be provided an update on 2016 and 2017 landings, catch limits, and application of accountability measures.

4.4. Action

- Review and comment, with attention toward any ABC recommendation updates.
 - Emphasis should be placed on Level 4 and 5 stocks which have concerning landings trends as compared to their ABC values.
- Consider assessment schedule and research plan implications

5. **SEDAR ACTIVITIES**

5.1. Documents

Attachment 7. SEDAR Steering Committee Report

Attachment 8. Cobia Stock ID Workshop Schedule and ToRs

Attachment 9. Greater Amberjack & Red Porgy Assess Schedule & ToRs

Attachment 10. New SERFS Combined Index Methodology

Attachment 11. Long Term Assessment Scheduling Approach

5.2. Overview

SEDAR Projects statuses are summarized below. Specific action items are noted with each project.

SEDAR Steering Committee Report (Attachment 7)

The SEDAR Steering Committee met on September 26, 2017. The Steering Committee supported conducting Scamp as a research track pilot. The SEFSC will develop a work plan

including TORs and a project schedule for review by a group of Gulf and South Atlantic SSC representatives prior to consideration and approval by the Councils. The SSC is asked to provide 2 representatives for the plan review, to be held via a webinar meeting before the end of 2017.

The Steering Committee approved SAFMC assessment priorities for 2019 and tentative projects for 2020-2022. SSC feedback is desired on the type of assessment

ACTION

- Provide 2 representatives for the Scamp work plan review group.

SEDAR 48, Southeast Black Grouper, Benchmark

A benchmark assessment of Black Grouper was scheduled to be prepared during 2017 with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission providing the analytical team. This is a jointly managed stock with the GMFMC so both Councils made appointments and approved the schedule and Terms of Reference. The SAFMC made appointments and provided approvals in December 2016. The Data Workshop was held March 15-17, 2017 in St. Petersburg, FL. A variety of issues were identified during the data stage of this process and the FWC decided to halt the development of the assessment at that point. A Data Workshop report has been prepared, documenting the state of the data through the post- DW webinar. It is available on the SEDAR website at the following link: <http://sedarweb.org/sedar-48>.

SEDAR 58, Atlantic Cobia, Benchmark (Attachment 8)

Atlantic Cobia was originally scheduled as a Research Track assessment. However, at their May 2017 meeting, the SEDAR Steering Committee recommended conducting cobia as a Benchmark assessment, including a Stock ID evaluation based on the process developed by the Steering Committee in September 2016. Planning is underway for the Stock ID portion of the assessment. A Cobia Stock ID Organizing Committee was established. Members were appointed by their relevant SEDAR Steering Committee representatives and include representatives from the SEFSC, SERO, and staff from the SAFMC, GMFMC, ASMFC, and SEDAR. The Cobia Stock ID Organizing Committee has developed draft Stock ID Terms of Reference and a Stock ID Project Schedule for the SEDAR Steering Committee's consideration. The South Atlantic SSC and ASMFC provided feedback on the Cobia Stock ID ToRs via email. The Gulf SSC will be providing feedback on the ToRs during their October webinar meeting.

The preliminary schedule has the Stock ID Workshop being held in April 2018 and the Stock ID Review Workshop in June 2018. Following the Review Workshop, there will be a joint Cooperator technical review via webinar (similar to joint SSC webinar convened by SEDAR for Blueline Tilefish) followed by a Science and Management Leadership call, if necessary. The final Stock ID resolution is scheduled to be complete by August 2018. Planning for the remaining stages for this assessment (Data, Assessment and Review) will get underway in early 2018.

ACTION

- Identify SSC representation for Cobia Stock ID Process. SSC participation is requested for the Stock ID Workshop, the Stock ID Review Workshop, and the joint Cooperator

technical review. To help ensure independence, representatives may not participate in multiple stages of the Stock ID process.

SEDAR 59, South Atlantic Greater Amberjack, Standard (Attachment 9)

Planning is underway for the South Atlantic Greater Amberjack assessment. A standard assessment was requested to allow consideration of the SERFS video index data and headboat at-sea observer index, and to reconsider the use of age and length composition data. The terminal year will be 2016 and assessment webinars will be held spring through fall 2018. Draft ToRs and a project schedule have been developed in consultation with the SEFSC. The draft schedule provides the assessment for SSC consideration in April 2019 and Council consideration in June 2019. The Council will be asked to make appointments for the assessment panel and approve the schedule and TORs at the December 2017 meeting.

ACTION

- Review the ToRs and schedule for Greater Amberjack and recommend changes or additions as appropriate.
- Identify SSC representation for Greater Amberjack.

SEDAR 60, South Atlantic Red Porgy, Standard (Attachment 9)

Planning is underway for the South Atlantic Red Porgy assessment. A standard assessment was requested to allow consideration of new video index data. The terminal year will be 2017 and assessment webinars will be held summer 2018 through winter 2019. Draft ToRs and a project schedule have been developed in consultation with the SEFSC. The draft schedule provides the assessment for SSC consideration in April 2019 and Council consideration in June 2019. The Council will be asked to make appointments for the assessment panel and approve the schedule and TORs at the December 2017 meeting.

ACTION

- Review the ToRs and schedule for Red Porgy and recommend changes or additions as appropriate.
- Identify SSC representation for Red Porgy.

SEDAR 55, South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper, Standard (Attachment 10)

A standard assessment was requested to allow consideration of the new SERFS video index data and to reconsider error distributions for fitting age and length composition data. The Project Schedule and Terms of Reference were finalized in June 2017 and the terminal year of the assessment will be 2016. A data scoping call was held in August 2017. An Assessment Scoping webinar is scheduled for October 2017 and a series of Assessment Webinars are scheduled for November 2017 through February 2018. The assessment is scheduled to be complete at the end of March 2018, to be considered by the South Atlantic SSC in late April 2018, and recommendations provided to the Council in June 2018.

The data deadline for this project was September 18, 2017. Hurricane Irma impacted many data providers' ability to meet this deadline. A memo was sent to the SEFSC and SAFMC leadership

on Sept 27, 2017, notifying them of the impact of Irma on data submission. At this time, it is unknown how, or if, this will impact the overall timeframe of the assessment.

On the August 2017 Data Scoping call, the analytical team identified additional changes for consideration during SEDAR 55 that were not included in the Terms of Reference. The SEDAR 55 Panel discussed these issues and supported the following items be considered for use during this standard assessment: alternative method to estimate recreational historic catch that has been used in recent SEDAR assessments (FHWAR method); use of all available ages (SEDAR 17 used a sub-sampling method to select otoliths for aging due to time constraints); use of number of batches by size/age in reproductive analyses; and new method to combine SERFS video and trap indices. This information is being provided to the SSC to ensure the Committee is comfortable with these changes being considered in the SEDAR 55 standard assessment framework.

ACTION

- Determine if the SSC supports the additional changes (described above) being considered in the SEDAR 55 standard assessment framework.
- Consider whether any additional guidance is needed regarding analyses the Committee would like to see in order to evaluate these changes.

SEDAR 56 South Atlantic Black Seabass, Standard

A standard assessment was requested to allow consideration of new video data and to reconsider the use of length and age data. The assessment originally had a terminal year of 2015 and was scheduled to occur over a series of webinars between February and August 2017. On May 1, 2017, the analytical team requested a six-week delay in the assessment due to late data submissions. With the requested delay, the SEDAR 56 assessment would not be available for review at the October 2017 SAFMC SSC meeting. The SEDAR Steering Committee discussed the requested delay at their May 2017 meeting, approving the delay but requesting the SEFSC report back on the feasibility of advancing the terminal year of the assessment. After consultation with the SEFSC and other data providers, the terminal year for the assessment was advanced to 2016 and the schedule was revised extending the series of webinars through February 2018. The assessment is now scheduled to be complete at the beginning of April 2018, to be considered by the South Atlantic SSC in late April 2018, and recommendations provided to the Council in June 2018.

A new discard mortality paper (Rudershausen et al. 2014) was published after the last Black Seabass assessment (SEDAR 25). Consideration of new information on discard mortality was not included in the SEDAR 56 ToRs, however, the analytical team and SEDAR 56 Panel would like to consider this paper for potential use in the assessment. This information is being provided to the SSC to make sure the Committee is comfortable with this change being considered in the SEDAR 56 standard assessment framework.

ACTION

- Determine if the SSC supports new information on discard mortality being considered in the SEDAR 56 standard assessment framework.
- Consider whether any additional guidance is needed regarding analyses the Committee would like to see in order to evaluate this change to SEDAR 56.

SAFMC Future Assessment Priorities

Future priorities identified by the Council are show in table XX. The Council requests feedback from the SSC on the type of assessment.

Golden Tilefish: In April 2017, the SSC stated: “The SSC strongly supports the Council’s request to undertake as soon as possible a new Standard assessment for Tilefish that incorporates changes in selectivity, differences in modeling techniques, and perceived changes in recruitment since the last update”.

- Are there any other justifications for the standard approach to assessing Golden Tilefish?

Snowy Grouper: Scheduled for 2019 as a standard. The last assessment was a standard, conducted in 2013 (SEDAR 36), including data through 2012. In April 2014, the SSC recommended conducting the next assessment as an update within 5 years.

- Does the SSC still recommend an update for the next Snowy Grouper Assessment in 2019?

Spanish Mackerel: Scheduled for 2020, type TBD. The last assessment was a benchmark conducted in 2012 as SEDAR 28, including data through 2011. In April 2013, the SSC recommended conducting the next assessment as an update in 2017.

- Does the SSC still recommend an update for the next Spanish Mackerel Assessment in 2019?

Gag: Scheduled for 2020, Type TBD. The last assessment was an update, conducted in 2013, including data through 2012. In April 2014, the SSC recommended conducting the next assessment as “at least a standard” within in the next 3-4 years, and noted that the addition of video index data and exploring alternative approaches to index development could justify a benchmark. Another concern raised by the SSC at that time was use of a fixed steepness value.

- Does the SSC still recommend a standard for the next Gag Assessment in 2020?

Long Term Assessment Approach (Attachment 11)

Council and SEFSC staff have been developing an alternative approach to assessment scheduling and information delivery. The intent is to provide more timely information on the primary or “Key” stocks in the fishery, a more measured and methodical approach to assessment scheduling, and implement ‘rumble strip’ and ‘indicator’ concepts discussed in recent years.

We are interested in SSC feedback on the approach and potential indicator or key stocks.

ACTION

- Provide guidance on the long-term assessment approach and candidate key stocks.

Table 1. SAFMC SEDAR Projects October 2017

Plan Year	SEDAR #	Stock	Approach	Terminal Data	Assessment Complete	Lead Agency
2017	50	Blueline Tilefish	Benchmark	2015	October 2017	SEFSC
	55	Vermilion Snapper	Standard	2016	April 2018	SEFSC
	56	Black Sea Bass	Standard	2015	Oct 2017	SEFSC
	48	Black Grouper	Benchmark	2015	halted	FL FWCC
2018	B	Yellowtail Snapper	Benchmark	2016	Spring 2019	FL FWCC
	RT	Atlantic Cobia	Benchmark	2016	Mid-2019	SEFSC
	S	Greater Amberjack	Standard	2017	Jan 2019	SEFSC
	S	Red Porgy	Standard	2017	Jan 2019	SEFSC
	B	King Mackerel	Benchmark	TBD	TBD	SEFSC
	R	MRIP Revisions ¹	Revision	varies	Late 2018	SEFSC
2019	RT	Scamp, Gulf + SA	Research Track	2017	Mid-2020	SEFSC
	S	Snowy Grouper	Standard	2017	Late 2019	SEFSC
		golden Tilefish	Standard?	2018	Late 2019	SEFSC
2020	O	Scamp, Gulf + SA	Operational	2018	Late 2020	SEFSC
	B	Red Snapper	Benchmark	TBD	TBD	SEFSC
	S	Spanish Mackerel	Standard?	2017	Late 2019	SEFSC
	S	Gag	Standard?	2018	Early 2020	SEFSC

1. MRIP revisions: Red Grouper, Blueline Tilefish, Black Sea Bass

Table 2. Currently identified future assessment priorities.

Year	Stock	Approach
2021	Gray Triggerfish	Benchmark
	Black Sea Bass	Update or Standard
	Red Grouper	Update or Standard
2022	White Grunt	Benchmark

5.3. Action

- Provide 2 representatives for the Scamp work plan review group.
- Identify SSC representation for Cobia Stock ID Process. SSC participation is requested for the Stock ID Workshop, the Stock ID Review Workshop, and the joint Cooperator technical review. To help ensure independence, representatives may not participate in multiple stages of the Stock ID process.
- Review the ToRs and schedule for Greater Amberjack and recommend changes or additions as appropriate.

- Identify SSC representation for Greater Amberjack.
- Review the ToRs and schedule for Red Porgy and recommend changes or additions as appropriate.
- Identify SSC representation for Red Porgy.
- Determine if the SSC supports the additional changes (described above) being considered in the SEDAR 55 standard assessment framework.
- Consider whether any additional guidance is needed regarding analyses the Committee would like to see in order to evaluate these changes.
- Determine if the SSC supports new information on discard mortality being considered in the SEDAR 56 standard assessment framework.
- Consider whether any additional guidance is needed regarding analyses the Committee would like to see in order to evaluate this change to SEDAR 56.
- Are there any other justifications for the standard approach to assessing Golden Tilefish?
- Does the SSC still recommend an update for the next Snowy Grouper Assessment in 2019?
- Does the SSC still recommend an update for the next Spanish Mackerel Assessment in 2019?
- Does the SSC still recommend a standard for the next Gag Assessment in 2020?
- Provide guidance on the long-term assessment approach and key stocks.

6. RED GROUPER PROJECTIONS

6.1. Documents

Attachment 12. SEDAR 53 projections
Attachment 13. SEDAR 53 SAR, Red Grouper
Attachment 14. ABC Control Rule
Attachment 15. Red Grouper Fishery Performance Report

6.2. Presentation

Projections Overview: Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

6.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the most recent set of projections for Red Grouper prepared through SEDAR 53 and provide fishing level recommendations (Attachment 12).

Red Grouper was assessed through the SEDAR 53 Standard assessment, and was determined to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. Red Grouper has been in a rebuilding plan since

2011 and was projected to be rebuilt in 2020. However, the results of SEDAR 53 showed that rebuilding would not be possible by 2020 even at $F=0$ and would take until 2030 to rebuild at $F=0$ (Attachment 13). The SEFSC explored the possibility of two different recruitment scenarios, high and low, which could explain the differences in the stock status between SEDAR 53 and SEDAR 19. Therefore, the Council requested a new set of projections at 75% F_{MSY} and at F_{MSY} .

6.4. Action

- Review the projections and determine if they are best scientific information available and useful for management.
- Apply the ABC control rule and provide fishing level recommendations.

7. **SEFSC REPORT ON GRAY TRIGGERFISH ASSESSIBILITY**

7.1. Documents

Attachment 16. SEFSC Gray Triggerfish Report

7.2. Presentation

SEFSC Report on Gray Triggerfish Assessibility: Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

7.3. Overview

In the South Atlantic, multiple attempts to assess the stock of Gray Triggerfish have failed to produce advice useful for management (ex. SEDAR 32, SEDAR 41). This contrasts with the Gulf of Mexico Gray Triggerfish population, which has been successfully assessed multiple times (ex. SEDAR 9, SEDAR 9 update, SEDAR 43) and those assessments have been used to inform management decisions. At their June 2017 meeting, the Council requested that the SEFSC provide an evaluation of prior assessment efforts for Gray Triggerfish, including a comparison with the successful Gulf assessments, for the SSC to review. Gray Triggerfish is preliminarily scheduled to be assessed in 2021.

7.1. Action

- Review the Gray Triggerfish Assessibility report.
 - Identify any differences between the South Atlantic and Gulf stocks that could account for the differences in assessibility.
 - Identify any factors which may have caused the South Atlantic stock assessments to be rejected.
- Discuss future alternatives and provide direction for assessing Gray Triggerfish in the South Atlantic.
- Suggest research topics that could improve the next Gray Triggerfish assessment.

8. UPDATE ON SEFSC RESEARCH EFFORTS

8.1. Documents

None.

8.2. Overview

The Committee will be updated on research projects currently ongoing within the SEFSC, with a particular focus on those directly affecting stock assessments.

8.3. Action

- No specific actions required.

9. SEDAR 50 BLUELINE TILEFISH ASSESSMENT REVIEW

9.1. Documents

Attachment 17. SEDAR 50 SAR, Blueline Tilefish*
Attachment 18. Assessment Overview Presentation
Attachment 19. Letter from MAFMC

9.2. Presentation

Assessment Overview: Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

9.3. Overview

The Committee is asked to review the Blueline Tilefish Benchmark assessment prepared through SEDAR 50 and provide fishing level recommendations (Attachment 17). The SEDAR 50 Review Workshop report completion was delayed due to Hurricane Irma and won't be available when the briefing materials initially go out, however it will be provided when it becomes available.

Blueline Tilefish was first assessed in SEDAR 32, including data through 2011. The stock was found to be not overfished but it was undergoing overfishing. Blueline Tilefish had several unique issues, making it difficult to assess. First, the stock extends up into the Mid-Atlantic, where it has not historically been managed. Due to the lack of formal management, almost no sampling data was available from that region.

The inclusion of data through the Mid-Atlantic region led to SEDAR 50 being a joint assessment between the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic. SEDAR 50 will be reviewed by both of the regional SSCs since a portion of the fishery, and therefore a portion of the decided upon ABC, falls into the Mid-Atlantic's jurisdiction (Attachment 19).

The second issue was the large spatio-temporal change in how the fishery operated in the terminal years of the assessment. Landings in recent years were higher than any seen in the time series. This spike in landings is coupled with a change to directed targeting for Blueline Tilefish and an increase in interest from Mid-Atlantic fishermen.

The final issue is related to ageing. It was determined that age determination was too uncertain to be used in the assessment, therefore making a catch-at-age model (as was used in SEDAR 32) an unlikely candidate for obtaining information that is useful for management. Therefore, a number of data-limited methods were employed to assess this stock for the current assessment, including production models and the DLM Toolkit.

Due to these issues, and the many attempts at addressing these issues, the overview presentation is still preliminary (Attachment 18). It is an amalgamation of presentations given at the various SEDAR 50 workshops and is a bit disjoint and cumbersome. However, a revised version is being prepared and will be distributed to the Committee as it becomes available.

9.4. Action

- Review assessment
 - Does the assessment address the ToRs to the SSCs satisfaction?
 - Does the assessment represent Best Scientific Information Available?
 - Does the assessment provide an adequate basis for determining stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations?
- 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.
 - Describe the risks and consequences of the assessment uncertainties with regard to status and fishing level recommendations.
 - Are methods of addressing uncertainty consistent with SSC expectations and the available information?
 - List (in order of the greatest contribution to risk and overall assessment uncertainty) and comment on the effects of those assessment factors that most contribute to risk and impact status determinations and future yield predictions.
- Provide fishing level recommendations
 - Apply the ABC control rule and complete the fishing level recommendations table.
 - Comment on any difficulties encountered in applying the Control Rule, including any required information that is not available.
 - Is adequate rebuilding progress being made? Comment on reasons why progress differs from projections.
- Provide advice on monitoring the stock until the next assessment
 - What indicators or metrics should the council monitor and could the SSC evaluate to evaluate the stock until the next assessment?
 - Is there a recommended trigger level for these metrics? How should the Council respond if a trigger is activated?
- 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 and type.

SSC RECOMMENDATION:

Table 3. Blueline Tilefish Recommendations

Table 3: Balaire-Tromén Recommendations				
Criteria		Deterministic		Probabilistic
Overfished evaluation (SSB/SSB _{MSY})				
Overfishing evaluation				
MFMT (F _{MSY})				
SSB _{MSY} (Units)				
MSST (Units)				
MSY (1000 lbs.)				
Y at 75% F _{MSY} (1000 lbs.)				
ABC Control Rule Adjustment				
P-Star				
M				
OFL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number

10. REVISED GOLDEN TILEFISH ASSESSMENT

10.1. Documents

Attachment 20. Revised Tilefish Update SAR

Attachment 21. Revised Tilefish Assessment Presentation*

10.2. Presentation

Revised Tilefish Assessment Overview: Dr. Kyle Shertzer, SEFSC

10.3. Overview

At the May 2016 meeting, the Committee reviewed the SEDAR 25 Update for Tilefish and found it to be best scientific information available (BSIA) and useful for management. There were several differences in this update as compared to the SEDAR 25 Benchmark. One of these changes, which has received a lot of discussion and consideration, is the use of a robust multinomial likelihood function, in place of the standard multinomial likelihood, for estimating the age and length compositions. This change, along with several others, was the apparent cause of a large shift in the status of the Tilefish stock.

Since that time, subsequent SEDAR assessments have found that neither the original multinomial likelihood, nor the robust multinomial likelihood is truly appropriate for estimating composition data. Instead, a new function, known as the Dirichlet multinomial, has been deemed as BSIA and is currently in use for all ongoing assessments.

Due to the assessment schedule, a new Standard assessment for Tilefish will not be able to be conducted until 2019. Therefore, at their June 2017 meeting, the SAFMC requested that a revision to the 2016 Tilefish Update be conducted using the new Dirichlet multinomial likelihood function in place of the robust multinomial likelihood function. The results of that revision are presented in Attachment 20.

10.4. Action

- Review the revised Tilefish assessment
 - Is the application of the new likelihood adequately documented, evaluated, and described?
 - Is the new likelihood fitting approach appropriate for this assessment?
 - Does the SSC recommend basing stock status and fishing level recommendations on one of the new assessment runs? If so:
 - What are the changes in status and fishing level recommendations due to the change in the likelihood fitting approach?
 - What are the implications of these changes to the fishery and the stock?
 - Apply the ABC Control Rule and provide fishing level recommendations consistent with the revised assessment.
 - Can the SSC provide any additional advice or recommendations on fitting algorithms for future assessments?

11. MODIFICATIONS TO THE ABC CONTROL RULE

11.1. Documents

Attachment 22. ABC Control Rule Decision Document

Attachment 23. Application of the ABC CR to Example Stocks*

11.2. Presentation

Overview and Update: John Carmichael, SAFMC Staff

11.3. Overview

The Committee has reviewed and commented control rule modifications over several years, through both meetings and dedicated workshops. Control rule development and the changes now under consideration are described in Attachment 22. The current version of this document incorporates SSC recommendations from April 2017 and Council discussions of September 2017. The Council will hold a meeting via webinar on November 6, 2017, to discuss the ABC Control Rule.

Both the Council and SSC support modifying the rule allow the Council to specifically establish risk tolerance levels and incorporate additional flexibility allowed under the MSA. Discussions at this point should now start to consider details and the specifics of how risk tolerance is determined for different stocks, how chosen risk tolerance levels are applied to assessment results (including uncertainty) to provide ABC values, and the details of the provisions allowing additional flexibility.

The September 2017 SAFMC discussion focused primarily on Action 3 – methods of specifying risk tolerance, with recommendations summarized in the document. The Council prefers the categorical approach to risk determination, as detailed in Alternative 4. An additional sub-Alternative is proposed in the current document, based on different groupings of stock biomass. The SSC is asked to focus on these groupings, and consider appropriate biomass categories and risk tolerance bounds.

A new action 10 is added, addressing possible accountability measure changes. Accountability measures have become inconsistent across stocks and FMPs over time. The Council is particularly interested in addressing AMs the require in-season adjustment of recreational regulations based on MRIP monitoring.

Based on decisions and comments made by the Committee at their April 2017 meeting, some examples are presented for the Committee to review and further refine their recommendations for modifying the ABC Control Rule, specifically addressing how assessment uncertainty is quantified (Action 4, Attachment 23).

11.4. Action

- Are there additional items to include in the purpose and need statements?
- Are any modifications or changes suggested to the Action 1 alternatives, describing assessment categories?
- Are there any other alternatives to consider for Action 2?
- Comment on Action 3 – risk determination
 - Are the categories in Alternative 4 reasonable and appropriate?
 - How might risk of overfishing be impacted by the different biomass categories suggested in the new and original approaches to alternative 4?

- What are appropriate minimum and maximum risk values?
- Should PSA scoring be used to assign stocks to broad risk categories? If so, should the NMFS, MRAG, or another scoring process be used to assign scores?
- Consider approaches for evaluating uncertainty in Action 4.
- Comment on how different periods proposed for Action 5 could affect risk and uncertainty, and suggest ways multi-year specifications can be calculated.
- Consider further guidance on details of alternatives in Actions 6 - 9
- Provide comments on the measures proposed in Action 10.

12. SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOSYSTEM MODEL REVIEW

12.1. Documents

Attachment 24. Ecospace Model Webinar

Attachment 25. Ecosystem Model Presentation

12.2. Presentation

Ecosystem Model Presentation: Dr. Tom Okey, UVIC; Dr. Howard Townsend, NMFS

12.3. Overview

The Council, using the Essential Fish Habitat Plan as the cornerstone, adopted a strategy to facilitate the move to an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in the region. This approach required a greater understanding of the South Atlantic ecosystem and the complex relationships among humans, marine life, and the environment including essential fish habitat. To accomplish this, a process was undertaken to facilitate the evolution of the Habitat Plan into a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the biological, social, and economic impacts of management necessary to initiate the transition from single species management to ecosystem-based management in the region.

To help facilitate this transition, the Council worked cooperatively with the University of British Columbia and the Lenfest Sea Around Us project to develop a straw-man and preliminary food web models (Ecopath with Ecosim) to characterize the ecological relationships of South Atlantic species, including those managed by the Council. This effort was envisioned to help the Council and cooperators in identifying available information and data gaps while providing insight into ecosystem function. More importantly, the model development process provides a vehicle to identify research necessary to better define populations, fisheries, and their interrelationships.

A second collaboration built on the initial Ecopath model developed through the Sea Around Us project for the South Atlantic Bight with a focus on potential changes in forage fish populations in the region that could be associated with environmental or climate change or changes in direct exploitation of those populations.

A new South Atlantic ecosystem modeling effort funded by the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC), is being conducted to engage a broader scope of regional

partners. This effort is drawing on existing ecosystem and other supporting models to facilitate development of a suite of ecosystem models ultimately providing evaluation tools for the SSC and Council. A new Ecopath model is under development and supporting model inputs through regional partners to refine links between the SAFMC FEP II and other regional conservation planning efforts.

12.4. Action

- Review and provide comments on the use of this Ecosystem Model.
 - Provide feedback as to possible direction of the modeling efforts.
 - Discuss how this could assist the SSC in providing recommendations to the Council in the future.

13. SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 46 – RED SNAPPER

13.1. Documents

None.

13.2. Presentation

Amendment 46 Presentation: Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

13.3. Overview

Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 will include many of the actions moved out of Amendment 43 (ACLs for red snapper). The Council will receive an options paper in December 2017. Actions likely included in Amendment 46 will be specify OFL/ABC/ACL for red snapper, recreational permitting and reporting for private recreational fishermen, best fishing practices (also include an option to remove circle hook requirements for snapper grouper fishing), and removing powerhead restrictions in special management zones off South Carolina. Since the Council has not received the options paper, actions included in the amendment will likely change. OFL/ABC/ACL for red snapper based on SEDAR 41 have not been adopted through the amendment process; however new projections based on SEDAR 41 could not be provided by the SEFSC due to the time since the last amendment, uncertainty in recreational landings and discards, and upcoming changes to recreational landings estimates. Recreational permitting and reporting could aid in improving private recreational catch estimates of snapper grouper species. Different alternatives for recreational permitting and reporting have been developed. The Council is waiting on results of the NMFS work on an index-based method that the SSC could use to provide a current ABC estimate. Should that updated ABC be provided by the SSC during development of the amendment, the Council will incorporate it into Amendment 46. Best fishing practices include options to require descending devices and/or venting tools for commercial and recreational fishermen, require the use of single hook rigs, and options to alter circle hook rig requirement (including an alternative to remove circle hook requirements). At the September Council meeting, removing the powerhead restriction in the special management zones off South Carolina was requested to be included. Regulations vary by state for special

management zones and powerheads are prohibited in most South Carolina special management zones.

13.4. Action

- Review and provide comments.

14. WRECKFISH ITQ REVIEW

14.1. Documents

Attachment 26. Wreckfish ITQ Review methodology*

14.2. Presentation

Wreckfish ITQ Review methodology: Dr. Brian Cheuvront, SAFMC staff

14.3. Overview

In June of 2017 the Council directed staff to begin a review of the Wreckfish ITQ program. This is the first review of the program. In a review of this type, the Council does not consider actions to modify the program, but could consider actions through FMP amendments. Staff met with shareholders in August 2017 to discuss their concerns about the program. The Council would like the SSC to discuss the methods that will be used to conduct the review. The SSC should expect to see a “close to completed” version of the review document in April 2018 and will be asked to provide comments at that time on the entire document. Arrangements are being made for the SEP to meet in February 2018 to discuss the ITQ and provide input on the program and potential modifications that could come as recommendations in the report for future action.

14.4. Action

- Provide comments on the data and methods for reviewing the Wreckfish ITQ system.

15. SNAPPER GROUPER VISIONING AMENDMENTS

15.1. Documents

Attachment 27. Reg Amendment 26: Recreational Visioning Amendment
Attachment 28. Reg Amendment 27: Commercial Visioning Amendment
Attachment 29. Reg Amendment 27: Appendix J

15.2. Presentation

Amendment Overview: Myra Brouwer, SAFMC staff

15.3. Overview

At their September 2017 meeting, the Council reviewed options for actions/alternatives for both Visioning Amendments to the Snapper Grouper FMP. Regulatory Amendment 26 (Attachment 27) addresses management of the recreational fishery and Regulatory Amendment 27 includes changes to the management of the commercial sector. The Council is still considering how best to structure actions in Regulatory Amendment 26; analyses conducted to-date, therefore, will undoubtedly change as the amendments moving along the development process. The Council refined actions and alternatives in Regulatory Amendment 27 (Attachment 28) but the modifications were minor. Hence, preliminary technical analyses conducted to date on that amendment would benefit from SSC review. In particular, the SSC should comment on the appropriateness of the two methodologies used to predict landings under various scenarios. Analyses were performed by NMFS SERO staff and are contained in Attachment 29. Completion of the two Visioning amendments is scheduled for September 2018. The SSC will have another opportunity to review any technical analyses for these amendments, as needed, in Spring 2018.

15.4. Action

- Review and comment on the use and uncertainties of the two methods used in Actions 1-6 of Reg Amendment 27 to analyze the effects of the alternatives.
 - Is one methodology more appropriate for use in these analyses?
 - Do either of these approaches provide clearer management advice to the Council?
 - Are there differences in relative risk or uncertainty between the two methods?
- Comment on any other Actions or items as appropriate.

16. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE

16.1. Documents

Attachment 30. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2017

Attachment 31. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2017

16.2. Overview

These documents are provided at each meeting to keep the Committee 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 – Christina Wiegand
- Corals – Chip Collier
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan – Roger Pugliese
- Snapper Grouper – Myra Brouwer
- Snapper Grouper Amendments 43 & 46 (Red Snapper) – Chip Collier
- Snapper Grouper Commercial and Recreational Visioning Amendments – Myra Brouwer
- Spiny Lobster – Christina Wiegand
- Golden Crab – Brian Cheuvront
- Dolphin-Wahoo – John Hadley
- South Atlantic For-Hire Reporting Amendment – John Carmichael
- Wreckfish ITQ Review – Brian Cheuvront
- Snapper Grouper Amendment 38 (Blueline Tilefish) – Roger Pugliese

16.3. Action

- No specific actions required

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

18. OTHER BUSINESS

19. 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, November 14, 2017 for inclusion in the first briefing book for the December Council meeting.

20. NEXT MEETINGS

20.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2018 Tentative Meeting Dates

April 24-26, 2018 in Charleston, SC

October 23-25, 2018 in Charleston, SC

20.2. SAFMC Meetings

2017 Council Meetings

December 4-8, 2017 in Atlantic Beach, NC

2018 Council Meetings

March 5-9, 2018 in Jekyll Island, GA

June 11-15, 2018 in Fort Lauderdale, FL

September 17-21, 2018 in Charleston, SC

December 3-7, 2018 in Kitty Hawk, NC

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