

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting Report**

**October 15-17, 2019**

**Crowne Plaza  
Charleston, SC**

**VERSION  
FINAL, REVISED  
November 19, 2019**

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## Documents:

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- Attachment 2. Minutes of the August 2019 SSC MRIP Workshop
- Attachment 3. Landings Trends & ABC Comparisons for Unassessed Stocks
- Attachment 4. ABC Control Rule
- Attachment 5. SEDAR 72 Gag Schedule and Terms of Reference
- Attachment 6. Revised Schedules for Greater Amberjack, Red Porgy, Yellowtail Snapper, and golden Tilefish
- Attachment 7. Draft SOWs for Blueline Tilefish and Vermilion Snapper\*
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- Attachment 15. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2019
- Attachment 16. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2019

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

Revisions: The original report had several of the ABC values incorrect in Table 1. The values for Atlantic Spadefish and Bar Jack have been corrected. The value for Knobbed Porgy has also been revised to reflect the SSC's recommendation of using the rounded estimate rather than the point estimate of the calculations for that methodology.

## **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 8, 2019. 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 comes up for discussion. Comments will be taken after all the initial presentations are given and before the SSC starts the discussion of the agenda topic. As before, those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2019 meeting

Attachment 2. Minutes of the August 2019 SSC MRIP Workshop

### 1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
  - *Approved with the addition of a “Fishstory” agenda item under Other Business.*
- Approve Minutes
  - *Approved with one correction to the MRIP Workshop minutes: add Dr. Amy Schueller as an SSC participant.*

## 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. ABC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNASSESSED STOCKS

### 3.1. Documents

Attachment 3. Landings Trends & ABC Comparisons for Unassessed Stocks

Attachment 4. ABC Control Rule

### 3.2. Presentation

Overview: Dr. Mike Errigo, SAFMC

ABC Workgroup Recommendations: Dr. Scott Crosson (Chair), SEFSC

### 3.3. Overview

When MRIP rolled out the new catch estimates calibrated for both the FES survey and the new APAIS design, the results showed a large difference in the amount of recreational effort and, therefore, recreational catch for almost all species across the board. This necessitated the recalculation of all ABCs to match the new survey output. The ABC Workgroup has gone through all the unassessed stocks and given preliminary recommendations for the full SSC to consider.

The Council would also like the SSC to consider the inclusion of Monroe County landings when calculating the ABC for and tracking the landings of Dolphin and Wahoo. There is a large number of landings coming from Monroe County that are not included in our current ABCs, nor

do we track those landings. Consequently, the Gulf does not have an FMP for Dolphin and Wahoo, so they are also not tracking those landings. See the motion made at the March 2019 Council meeting below.

MOTION #1: ASK THE SSC TO CONSIDER MONROE COUNTY RECREATIONAL LANDINGS WHEN MAKING CATCH LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOLPHIN AND WAHOO. APPROVED BY COMMITTEE. APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

### 3.4. Public Comment

### 3.5. Action

- Are the time series for calculating ABCs for unassessed stocks still appropriate given the changes in the catch data? If not, modify as appropriate.
  - *The SSC discussed the time series for each stock and/or species complex. The SSC ABC working group had tried to pick time periods in which effort was relatively stable, and the SSC agreed with those recommendations for most cases. Given the recent workshop regarding the MRIP data the SSC has agreed that the MRIP data is considered BSIA and in most cases the time series were considered appropriate, but changes were recommended for some. In some instances, the SSC recommends removing 2008 from the reference period to avoid the impacts of the economic recession of the late 2000's. This generally resulted in a reference time period of 1999-2007 for most species/complexes. This change in the reference period was discussed and recommended when the ORCS approach was applied and for all stocks where the 3rd Highest method was updated. In a few instances the reference period was not considered appropriate. When recent trends in catch were declining and auxiliary information such as trends in surveys also indicated a decline the reference period was switch to more recent years.*
  - *The discussion notes and recommendations regarding time series for each stock or complex are in Table 1, below.*
- Are the previous decisions made while evaluating the Decision Tree stocks and the ORCS stocks still valid given the changes in the catch data? If not, update as appropriate.
  - ***SSC recommends that the new ABC control rule that is being developed revisit the ORCS method (including risk of overexploitation scalar). The new control rule should consider new research on data-limited approaches, given that ORCS does not perform well in the Management Strategy Evaluations conducted to date.***
  - ***SSC recommends review of the ORCS method and its applicability to many of these stocks whose ABC is much higher than historical weight-based catches (e.g., Lane Snapper).***

- *The SSC discussed previous decisions regarding ABC-setting methods for each stock. In many cases the previous decisions were considered appropriate for Decision Tree and ORCS stocks and new MRIP estimates can be applied to those stocks. In some cases, the SSC recommended a different method or changes to the original method (e.g., changing the reference period), with application of new MRIP numbers. Additional recommendations for improvement were made for some stocks. The discussion notes and recommendations on the basis and revision of ABCs for each stock or complex are in Table 1, below.*
- *For some stocks, fishery-independent data were available, and the SSC considered how the trends in the fishery-independent indices help explain or support conclusions drawn from the catch data. Fishery-independent data included the Southeast Reef Fish Survey (SERFS), from which the SSC examined the chevron trap index ([SERFS 2019 Report](#)). The SSC also examined the fishery-independent [Reef Visual Census \(RVC\)](#) for indices on some stocks.*
- Given that a large portion of the Dolphin and Wahoo catch comes from waters off Monroe County FL, the vast majority of which occurs in the South Atlantic region, and that the Gulf Council does not manage Dolphin or Wahoo in their jurisdiction, discuss and make recommendations on the inclusion of catch data from Monroe County for Dolphin and Wahoo for both setting ABCs and tracking them.
  - *Dolphin CPUE has been going down, perhaps due to changing temperatures, Sargassum abundance, and other environmental factors. Effort has increased significantly. Investigation of trends in dolphin catch and effort was offered as an **SSC Research Recommendation** to determine what is occurring and if it is just localized to south Florida.*
  - *SSC suggests that SEFSC explore using average weight from adjacent years (if sample sizes are adequate) instead of borrowing from higher strata in the same year, if average annual weight changes are small.*
  - *The SSC recommends inclusion of the catch data for Dolphin and Wahoo from Monroe County for setting ABCs and tracking ACLs. See additional notes on these stocks in the summary Table 1, below.*
- Provide ABC recommendations for all unassessed stocks.
  - *The SSC recommends that some stocks (e.g., Almaco Jack, Gray Snapper) be removed from species complexes and assessed separately through SEDAR because catch data are reported separately for the individual species, fishery-independent indices are available for those species, and/or life history, genetic and other data needed for stock assessment have been accumulated in recent years.*
  - *The SSC recommends some stocks be considered as Ecosystem Component Species, as they are not targeted by the fishery and do not require management as a separate stock or member of a species complex.*

- *See ABC recommendations and notes for each stock and/or complex in the summary table below (Table 1).*



Table 1. New ABC recommendations, the basis used to derive those recommendations, and the reference period of years used in that method.

FMP/ Complex	Stock	ABC Basis		Reference Period		ABC Value		Notes
		Current	SSC Recommendation	Current	SSC Rec.	Current	Revised	
Snapper Grouper FMP	Atlantic Spadefish	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	812,478	1,298,026	Updated original method with new MRIP numbers.
	Bar Jack	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	62,249	84,871	Updated original method with new MRIP numbers.
	Black Grouper	SEDAR 19	Decision Tree (3 <sup>rd</sup> Highest)	NA	99-07	245,810	774,321	The assessment was stopped due to species ID issues. The FL RVC independent diver index shows no concerning trends. SSC recommends use Decision Tree (3 <sup>rd</sup> Highest), not ORCS, with new MRIP numbers.
	Gray Triggerfish	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	717,000	1,004,177	Updated original method with new MRIP numbers. <b>Recommended for higher tier assessment or other data-limited approaches.</b>
	GA-NC Hogfish	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	35,716	28,637	The SSC considers recreational landings underestimated due to inadequate sampling of the dive sector. Given how close all the calculations of ABC are, the SSC decided to update the original method with the new MRIP numbers. Note that the Current ABC is larger than the Revised ABC due to a large revision in the historical landings series.
	Scamp	ORCS	SSC Expert Judgement	99-07	10-13, 15-17	373,049	300,000	As Scamp is currently being assessed, this is a recommendation for interim measures until the research track and operational assessments are completed (in 2-3 years). A declining SERFS trend and reports from the fishery indicate concerns for this stock. SSC recommends setting ABC at lower level than ORCS, given unknown cause of significant decline in catch and fishery-independent indices. These declines indicate that the stock productivity may now be lower than when the current reference period was established. The SSC took the average landings of the most recent 7 years (excluding the 2014 spike) and added a buffer equal to the average of the PSEs in those years to obtain the revised ABC. <b>The SSC also recommends the Council be conservative and add an additional buffer when setting the ACL, considering an ACL of 200,000 lbs. and not additionally constrain the fishery, given the new assessment coming in 2022.</b>

FMP/ Complex	Stock	ABC Basis		Reference Period		ABC Value		Notes
		Current	SSC Recommendation	Current	SSC Rec.	Current	Revised	
Deepwater Complex	Blackfin Snapper	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	3,665	3,665	Updated original method with new MRIP numbers. The reference period was adjusted to reflect a decision made by the SSC during their ORCS workshops to drop 2008 due to the recession starting in that year. In the new recommendation, this was carried through for all stocks where the 3rd Highest method was updated.
	Misty Grouper	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	2,863	2,863	
	Queen Snapper	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	9,466	9,448	
	Sand Tilefish	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	7,983	12,622	
	Silk Snapper	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	90,323	91,222	
	Yellowedge Grouper	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	55,596	123,007	
Jacks Complex	Almaco Jack	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	ORCS	99-08	99-07	302,517	574,681	The fishery independent SERFS chevron trap catch index has been trending upward in the last 5 years. Fishermen have reported that there is not an issue with species ID. <b>SSC recommendation: apply ORCS with a Moderate Risk of Overexploitation. The SSC also recommends removing Almaco Jack from the Jacks Complex, assessing the stock through SEDAR, and that the SEFSC consider using data-limited approaches to assess Almaco Jack.</b>
	Banded Rudderfish	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	145,434	162,264	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year.
	Lesser Amberjack	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest))	99-08	99-07	9,270	11,043	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year.

FMP/ Complex	Stock	ABC Basis		Reference Period		ABC Value		Notes
		Current	SSC Recommendation	Current	SSC Rec.	Current	Revised	
Snappers Complex	Cubera Snapper	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	63,265	282,397	Updated MRIP numbers. <b>The SSC recommends Council consider Cubera for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Gray Snapper	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	1,247,132	2,340,993	Updated MRIP numbers. <b>The SSC recommends this stock for a SEDAR assessment.</b>
	Lane Snapper	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	203,486	387,054	Updated MRIP numbers.
Grunts Complex	Margate	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	76,792	232,127	Updated MRIP numbers. <b>The SSC recommends consideration for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Sailor's Choice	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	22,674	97,375	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year. <b>The SSC recommends consideration for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Tomtate	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	92,670	174,729	Updated MRIP numbers.
	White Grunt	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	643,889	950,897	Updated MRIP numbers.
Shallow-Water Complex	Coney	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	2,718	3,931	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year. <b>The SSC recommends consideration for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Graysby	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	17,597	26,086	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year.
	Red Hind	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	33,084	45,227	Updated MRIP numbers.
	Rock Hind	ORCS	ORCS	99-07	99-07	37,493	51,413	Updated MRIP numbers.
	Yellowfin Grouper	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	9,258	9,259	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year. <b>The SSC recommends consideration for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Yellowmouth Grouper	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	4,040	5,438	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year.

FMP/ Complex	Stock	ABC Basis		Reference Period		ABC Value		Notes
		Current	SSC Recommendation	Current	SSC Rec.	Current	Revised	
Porgy Complex	Jolthead Porgy	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	37,885	55,771	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year. <b>SSC recommends Jolthead and Knobbed Porgy for a SEDAR assessment and removal from porgy complex.</b>
	Knobbed Porgy	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Precautionary Method	99-08	15-17	67,441	30,000	There has been a sharp decrease in the fishery-independent SERFS chevron trap catch trend to a minimum for the time series, similar to landing trend (as was seen for Scamp). <b>The SSC recommends the Council be conservative when setting the ACL.</b> ABC calculated using the same method as was used for Scamp, based on 2015-2017 and set at 30,568 (based on average 57.2% PSE). The SSC is concerned about decline in landings and declines in SERFS index and concerns with species ID. Use last 3 years of landings to calculate new ABC. <b>SSC recommends Jolthead and Knobbed Porgy for a SEDAR assessment and removal from porgy complex.</b>
	Saucereye Porgy	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	3,606	4,692	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year. <b>The SSC recommends consideration for Ecosystem Component Species.</b>
	Scup	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Median	99-08	99-07	9,306	8,499	Species ID issues with Longspine Porgy. The fishery independent SERFS chevron trap catch trend has declined to a time series minimum. <b>Therefore, the SSC recommends the Council be conservative when setting the ACL.</b>
	Whitebone Porgy	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	99-07	25,024	50,359	Updated MRIP numbers. Dropped 2008 from reference period due to the recession starting in that year.

FMP/ Complex	Stock	ABC Basis		Reference Period		ABC Value		Notes
		Current	SSC Recommendation	Current	SSC Rec.	Current	Revised	
Dolphin Wahoo	Dolphin	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	94-97	15,344,846	18,354,469	The SSC recommends including Monroe County landings into the ABC calculation and for tracking the ACL. The SSC originally recommended the years 1994-1997 as the reference period for Dolphin, but the Snapper Grouper reference period years were used instead to calculate the ABC. That is corrected here. <b>The SSC also recommends adding the ORCS method to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP and revisiting this ABC at that time.</b>
	Wahoo	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	Decision Tree (3rd Highest)	99-08	94-03	1,794,960	1,950,582	All the same recommendations and caveats for Dolphin apply to Wahoo as well.

## 4. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

### 4.1. Documents

Attachment 5. SEDAR 72 Gag Schedule and Terms of Reference

Attachment 6. Revised Schedules for Greater Amberjack, Red Porgy, Yellowtail Snapper, and golden Tilefish

Attachment 7. Draft SOWs for Blueline Tilefish and Vermilion Snapper\*

### 4.2. Overview

SEDAR is providing an opportunity to review the updated schedules for SEDAR 59, 60 and 66 as well as the appointed participants for 66. SEDAR is requesting approval of the TORs and schedule for SEDAR 71. SEDAR is also requesting approval of Spanish Mackerel, Black Sea Bass, and Red Grouper draft TORs.

### 4.3. Public Comment

### 4.4. Action

- Approve the SEDAR 71 Gag Assessment Schedule and TORs.
  - *The SSC approved the TORs as provided.*
- Recommend SSC participants for the SEDAR 71 Gag Assessment.
  - *Participants: Wilson Laney, Scott Crosson, Anne Lange*
- Approve TORs for 2021 assessments Spanish Mackerel, Black Sea Bass, and Red Grouper.
  - *These actions were deferred, as the TORs were still being developed.*
- How does the SSC prefer to handle the review of the Yellowtail Snapper assessment?
  - *The SSC prefers sending a sub-group to the Gulf SSC meeting to jointly review the Yellowtail Snapper assessment and develop fishing level recommendations.*
- Review and approve the SOWs for Red Snapper, Blueline Tilefish, and Vermilion Snapper.
  - *Red Snapper*
    - *Under the heading “Address SSC Selectivity Concerns”, delete “The SSC found this study to be BSIA.”.*
    - *Recommend the analysts run projections that incorporate the use of the SAFMC best practices recommendations that might include descending devices and venting tools when releasing Red Snapper. Sensitivity runs*

*should include inputs that reflect varying levels of compliance with SAFMC best practices regulations.*

- *The SSC recommends bringing in external experts to be involved in the SEDAR Data Workshop, Assessment Workshop, and to participate in the review with the SSC. The recommendation includes experts with Red Snapper experience, recreational survey statistics, and with general stock assessment and selectivity modeling expertise.*
- *Vermilion Snapper*
  - *The SSC approved the TORs as provided.*
- *Blueline Tilefish*
  - *Correct the bullet that mentions an analysis of recruitment from South America, since Blueline do not occur in South America.*
  - *Add a bullet including the Mid-Atlantic Council in the assessment process.*
- Can those who volunteered for SEDAR 66 golden Tilefish still attend given the revised schedule? If not, is there anyone else interested in participating?
  - *Genny Nesslage and Churchill Grimes can attend.*
  - *George Sedberry will replace Luiz Barbieri.*

Table 2: Current SEDAR projects and those planned but not yet scheduled, with SSC participants where applicable.

Plan Year	SEDAR #: Type	Stock	Terminal Data	Assessment Complete	SSC Participants
2019	64: B	Yellowtail Snapper	2017	Spring 2020	DW: George Sedberry, Luiz Barbieri AW: Fred Serchuk, Anne Lange RW: Amy Schueller, Alexei Sharov
	58: B	Atlantic Cobia	2017	Early 2020	DW: George Sedberry, Marcel Reichert AW: Jeff Buckel, Anne Lange RW: Rob Ahrens, Jeff Buckel
	59: S	Greater Amberjack	2017	Spring 2020	Anne Lange, Fred Serchuck
	60: S	Red Porgy	2017	Spring 2020	Fred Scharf, Marcel Reichert, George Sedberry
	U	King Mackerel	2017	Spring 2020	
2020	B	Mutton Snapper	TBD	Late 2021	
	68: RT	Scamp, Gulf + SA	2017	Summer 2021	DW & AW & RW: Rob Ahrens, Marcel Reichert, Alexei Sharov
	U	Snowy Grouper	2018	Late 2020	
	71: OA	Gag	2019	Spring 2021	
	66: OA	golden Tilefish	TBD	Spring 2021	Luiz Barbieri, Genny Nesslage, Churchill Grimes
2021	68: OA	Scamp, Gulf + SA	2020	Early 2022	
	OA	Red Snapper	TBD	TBD	
	OA	Spanish Mackerel	TBD	2022	
	OA	Black Sea Bass	TBD	2022	
	OA	Red Grouper	TBD	2022	
	OA	Vermilion Snapper	TBD	TBD	
	OA	Blueline Tilefish	TBD	TBD	



## 5. REVIEW DRAFT NS1 GUIDELINES ON CARRYOVERS AND PHASE-INS

### 5.1. Documents

Attachment 8. Draft NS1 Guidelines on Carryovers and Phase-Ins

### 5.2. Presentation

Overview: Dan Holland, NWFSC

### 5.3. Overview

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review and comment on the draft NS1 Guidelines on Carryovers and Phase-Ins. The Council will consider these draft guidelines and the SSC's comments at its December 2019 meeting.

### 5.4. Public Comment

### 5.5. Action

- Review and provide comments and recommendations on the draft NS1 Guidelines.
  - *Carryover has the potential to re-allocate the ACL, since ABC decisions are not where the allocation decision is made. If a sector does not catch its portion of the ACL, how will the carryover be allocated in the carryover year?*
  - *The SSC recommends the addition of guidance on the use of phase-ins and carryovers for stocks that have ABCs but do not have OFLs. In particular, what would set the upper limit on the amount carried forward or phased in if an OFL has not been specified. The OFL would set this upper limit when combined with the ABC for future years but absent an OFL it is not clear how the upper limit (ABC + carry forward or ABC + amount added for phase in) would be set.*
  - *The SSC recommends a retrospective analysis of the efficacy of assessment projections to gauge how well carryovers may work. This MSE exploration could be implemented using an assessment from a data-rich stock as a reference model. The combination of assessment methods, ranging from age-structured assessment to catch-only methods, and carryover amount (percent of unused ACL) could be evaluated relative to standard performance metrics.*

## 6. REVIEW DRAFT MODERNIZING RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ACT – REPORT TO CONGRESS

### 6.1. Documents

Attachment 9. Draft MRFA Report to Congress

### 6.2. Overview

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Act – Report to Congress. Below is an excerpt from an email from David Detlor, the acting director of the Office of Science and Technology, explaining what this document is and what he needs from the Committee.

“The NMFS Office of Science and Technology has developed a draft Report to Congress as required in Section 201 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018. This draft Report addresses improvements in data collection by state and nongovernmental organizations to facilitate greater incorporation of that data. The Report draws on many existing guidance documents, including the Stock Assessment Improvement Plan, National Standard 2 Guidelines, and Marine Recreational Information Program Procedural Directives which provide guidance on best scientific information and data collection and analysis. The draft Report also provides (non-binding) recommendations for facilitating greater incorporation of these data sources.

NOAA Fisheries is directed to produce this report ‘in consultation with the SSCs of the Councils and the Marine Fisheries Commissions.’ Thus, we are seeking SSC, Council, and Commission review and feedback on the draft Report to Congress.”

### 6.3. Public Comment

### 6.4. Action

- Review and provide comments and recommendations on the draft Report to Congress.
  - *Introductory section is incomplete. In summarizing the types of data, the introductory paragraph makes no mention of effort, age and growth, reproduction, stock structure and fishery-independent programs.*
  - *There should be a separate paragraph on fishing effort that defines and describes the means of collecting commercial and recreational fishing effort data.*
  - *The stock structure section only mentions genetics and leaves out other methods, such as mark-recapture, morphometrics (including otolith microstructure), otolith chemistry and tagging studies.*
  - *In the ecosystems and socio-economics section, when describing ecosystem factors, the text should refer to understanding the effects of high-frequency*

*environmental variation (e.g., temperature and salinity) and low-frequency basin-scale oceanographic phenomena (e.g., El Nino).*

- *NMFS does a lot of the analyses of the data and modeling relevant to stock status, but the states and some outside organizations also are involved in collecting and analyzing data and conducting analyses that are incorporated into models and stock assessments.*
- *The criteria for including outside datasets are too restrictive. Short-term and localized data collection programs can also be very informative. Also, those surveys that don't necessarily cover the entire stock, but are still very informative and useful in assessments and management.*
- *Does the SSC have the time to review potential new data sources given their current workload and the increased expectation of assessment review?*
  - *Such reviews may already be part of the SEDAR review process, or does the SSC have to do this in addition to their SEDAR review duties?*
- *Does the Science Center have the necessary resources to assign a liaison to the SSC or do they need to ask for additional funding?*
- *Include federal scientists in state research projects for federally-managed species to facilitate the use of the data in stock assessments.*
- *States and NGOs would be very useful in addressing gaps in the MRIP survey, such as those anglers renting housing and fishing from private docks. These programs would need to be developed in conjunction with MRIP.*
- *Outreach efforts, and evaluation of the efficacy of such efforts, are needed to improve angler compliance with fishing regulations.*

## **7. CORAL HABITAT DISTRIBUTION MODEL REVIEW**

### **7.1. Documents**

Attachment 10. Coral Habitat Distribution Model Presentation

### **7.2. Presentation**

Overview: Matthew Poti, NCCOS

### **7.3. Overview**

The SAFMC created Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern in the Coral, Coral Reef, and Live/Hardbottoms (Coral) FMP (1983) and Coral Amendment 6 (2008) and expanded CHAPCs in Coral Amendment 4 (2001) and Coral Amendment 8 (2014) based on observed locations and likely distribution of coral and coral reefs. Since, new observations from remotely operated vehicles have identified coral mounds outside of current CHAPCs and additional mapping data was collected to refine past coral habitat probability models. The methods and data used in coral

habitat probability models have not been reviewed by the SSC for use in managements. If approved as usable for management, the coral habitat probability models would be considered in development of Coral Amendment 10, Golden Crab Amendment 10, and Shrimp Amendment 11, which the Council discussed at their September 2019 Meeting.

#### 7.4. Public Comment

#### 7.5. Action

- Review and discuss the uncertainties and assumptions associated with occupancy models to describe habitat probability.
  - *One major assumption is that the habitat is closed and there are no time-varying relationships incorporated into the model. This is one source of uncertainty in this analysis.*
  - *Some concern over space-for-time substitution with temperature/climate change going forward. Recommend addressing this in a future iteration of this model when more data to inform it becomes available.*
- Determine whether this analysis is the Best Scientific Information Available and is appropriate for use in managing fisheries resources.
  - *The SSC recommends further developing this modeling approach for the South Atlantic. This could include model validation using subsets of the data. This could help the SSC determine if this is BSIA in the future.*

## 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. This update will include a discussion on the possibility of a Wreckfish assessment in 2019-2020.

### 8.3. Public Comment

### 8.4. Action

- No specific actions required.

## 9. CLARIFICATION ON BLUELINE TILEFISH OFL AND ABC

### 9.1. Documents

None.

### 9.2. Overview

The SSC reviewed SEDAR 50 Blueline Tilefish at their October 2017 meeting and subsequently formed a Workgroup to devise a means of splitting the ABC recommendation from the portion of the stock north of Cape Hatteras, NC into South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic components. That was done at the May 2018 SSC meeting, leaving us with the ABC previously calculated using the P\* from the Production model for the southern portion of the stock and this new ABC derived for the stock north of Cape Hatteras, NC to the NC-VA border. The implicit intent was to combine these two ABCs into a single South Atlantic ABC. We would like to have this intent stated explicitly to clarify the record.

### 9.3. Public Comment

### 9.4. Action

- Clarify if the intent of the SSC in setting the OFL and ABC for Blueline Tilefish in the South Atlantic's jurisdiction was to add the estimated values of OFL and ABC from the portion of Blueline Tilefish south of Cape Hatteras and those north of Cape Hatteras to the NC-VA border together to get a single OFL and ABC for the entire South Atlantic.
  - *The SSC concurs that this was the intent for setting the OFL and ABC for Blueline Tilefish in the South Atlantic.*

## 10. SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOSYSTEM MODEL UPDATE

### 10.1. Documents

Attachment 11. Ecopath with Ecosim Model of the South Atlantic Region: A Path Forward - September 2019\*

Attachment 12. Presentation: Update on Construction of the Ecopath Diet Matrix

Attachment 13. Presentation: Information Supporting Development of Ecopace\*

### 10.2. Presentation

Update on Construction of the Ecopath Diet Matrix: Lauren Gentry, FWRI

Information Supporting Development of Ecopace: Luke McEachron, FWRI

### 10.3. Overview

The Committee will be provided two presentations providing an overview of outcomes associated with the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model Coordination Meeting held on July 24-25, 2019 at FWRI in St. Petersburg, Florida. The meeting was attended by members of

newly formed South Atlantic Ecopath Model Review Workgroup and invited participants. Two presentations are being made to the Committee to highlight outcomes of the meeting. Lauren Gentry will provide the Committee an overview of the process of diet data collection and analysis for the South Atlantic Ecopath model, with an update on Model Workgroup decisions about data-deficient species. Luke McEachron will discuss advances and guidance provided supporting future development of Ecospace for the SA Ecopath model.

The updated SA EwE Path Forward (Attachment 10) highlights the background/process and the SSC subsequent establishment of the Ecopath Model Review Workgroup endorsement and initiation of the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim Model review which will start in November/December 2019. Once initiated it will be followed by 2-3 additional Webinars to complete the review for presentation during the April 2020 SSC meeting with an in-person meeting possibly being scheduled in February 2020 if needed.

#### 10.4. Public Comment

#### 10.5. Action

- Approve the timing of the Workgroup's model review and path forward.
  - *The updated SA EwE now includes an improved diet matrix with additional new data, much of which replaced proxies, estimates or data from other regions. The update process pointed out areas where additional diet data are needed, including data needs for species of concern to the SAFMC (e.g., Red Snapper, Blueline Tilefish, lionfishes) and for information on ontogenetic, spatial, seasonal and long-term temporal changes in diet. The update process highlighted additional research areas also (e.g., as managed species shift north, will their prey?).*
  - *The diet matrix will be useful for examining biological interrelationships that can inform stock assessments (e.g., Red Snapper predation on Black Sea Bass).*
  - *Formal review of EwE in SA region by the workgroup will begin in November 2019. The final review of the Ecopath with Ecosim model will come to the SSC at their April 2020 meeting.*
  - *The SSC agrees with this timing.*

## **11. DOLPHIN WAHOO AMENDMENT 12: BULLET AND FRIGATE MACKEREL**

### 11.1. Documents

Attachment 14. DW Amendment 12 Decision Document

### 11.2. Presentation

Overview: John Hadley, SAFMC

### 11.3. Overview

In March 2018, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Mid-Atlantic Council) requested that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) consider managing bullet mackerel (*Auxis rochet*) and frigate mackerel (*Auxis thazard*) as ecosystem component (EC) species in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic (Dolphin Wahoo FMP). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) disapproved inclusion of these two species in the Mid-Atlantic Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. NMFS stated that the reasons for disapproval included the following: 1) inconsistency with National Standard 2 and an insufficient connection to that Council's FMPs; 2) not meeting the Mid-Atlantic Council Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) size criteria for forage species; and 3) inconsistency with criteria for EC species as outlined in the NS guidelines at 50 C.F.R. § 600.305 that explains EC species should not include target stocks that are caught for sale or personal use. NMFS went on to state that the mackerel species "are caught and sold by commercial vessels and are retained for personal use as bait by recreational fisheries in Federal waters, creating competing interests and conflicts among user groups, both of which are criteria that could exclude consideration of bullet and frigate mackerel as EC species under the National Standard Guidelines."

At their December 2018 meeting, the South Atlantic Council received a presentation on the presence of bullet and frigate mackerel in the diets of dolphin and wahoo, noting a particularly strong reliance of wahoo on the two *Auxis* mackerel species as forage. At subsequent meetings, the Council reviewed mechanisms and regulatory parameters for adding EC species to a FMP, ways that other Councils have addressed EC species in their FMPs, species that have been identified as notable forage for dolphin and wahoo, background information on fisheries for the two *Auxis* mackerel species, and scoping comments on adding the two *Auxis* mackerel species as EC species to Dolphin Wahoo FMP. In June 2019, the Council directed staff to start work on Amendment 12 to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP that would add bullet and frigate mackerel to the FMP as EC species and provide an options paper for development of the amendment. The Council reviewed an options paper for this amendment at the September 2019 meeting and requested guidance from the National Marine Fisheries Service on parameters regarding the Council's ability to add EC species to an FMP and implement regulatory measures.

#### 11.4. Public Comment

#### 11.5. Action

- Does the SSC support consideration of bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel as ecosystem component species in the Dolphin Wahoo FMP?
  - *The SSC recommends adding Bullet Mackerel and Frigate Mackerel to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP as ecosystem component species.*
- Review and provide recommendations regarding actions and alternatives as necessary.
  - *The SSC has no additional recommendations pending guidance from NMFS.*

## 12. COUNCIL WORKPLAN AND SSC WORKGROUP UPDATE

### 12.1. Documents

Attachment 15. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2019

Attachment 16. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2019

### 12.2. 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 amendment under each of our managed FMPs, as summarized below.

There is also a table below (Table 3) which lists all the active SSC workgroups and their members.

- Corals Amendment 10/Golden Crab Amendment 10/Shrimp Amendment 11 (Access Areas) – Chip Collier
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan – Roger Pugliese
- SG Amendment 46 (Red Snapper & Recreational Reporting) – Chip Collier
- Abbreviated Framework 3 (Blueline Tilefish) – Roger Pugliese
- DW Amendment 10 (Revise Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures) – John Hadley
- Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment – John Carmichael
- Bycatch Reporting Amendment – Chip Collier
- Recreational AMs (SG Reg 31/CMP Framework 7/DW Reg 2) – Brian Chevront



- Regulatory Amendment 33 (modifications to red snapper seasons) – Myra Brouwer
- ABC Control Rule Amendment? – John Carmichael

Table 3. Currently active SSC workgroups and their membership.

Workgroup	Members
ABC Workgroup	Scott Crosson (Chair)
	Jeff Buckel
	Eric Johnson
	Marcel Reichert
Ecopath Model Review Workgroup (Chair?)	Marcel Reichert
	Eric Johnson
	Rob Ahrens
	Alexei Sharov
	Fred Scharf
	Luiz Barbieri*

\* Dr. Barbieri is no longer a member of the SSC and should probably be removed from this list. Although he can remain on the workgroup given there are still 5 other SSC members on it.

### 12.3. Public Comment

### 12.4. Action

- No specific actions required
  - *Dr. Barbieri was removed from the Ecopath Model Review Workgroup and the remaining five members will form the workgroup.*

## 13. OTHER BUSINESS

- Fishstory validation volunteers
  - *George Sedberry*
  - *Additional suggestions from the SSC:*
    - *Chuck Manooch*
    - *Scott Van Sant*

## 14. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

## 15. CONSENSUS STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

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

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, November 12, 2019 (approximately 3 ½ weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the December Council meeting.

## 16. NEXT MEETINGS

### 16.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

#### 2020 Tentative Meeting Dates

##### Spring

- The SSC will be reviewing 3 SEDAR assessments during this meeting (Red Porgy, Greater Amberjack, and King Mackerel).
- Two of these assessments should be completed by mid-March. The other two should be completed by the end of March or beginning of April.
- An earlier meeting gives more time for report writing, but potentially less time for assessment reports to come in leading to less review time.
- A later meeting gives less time for report writing but can potentially allow the SSC to get a head start on reading and reviewing the assessment reports. (This option leaves only a little over a week to complete the report, which may be difficult given the content).
  - ❖ April 21-23, 2020 in Charleston, SC
  - ❖ April 28-30, 2020 in Charleston, SC
    - Overlaps with MREP.
      - *Preferred week.*
  - ❖ May 5-7, 2020 in Charleston, SC

##### Fall

- ❖ October 13-15, 2020 in Charleston, SC
  - *Preferred week.*
  - *Look at SSC schedule for New England.*
- ❖ October 20-22, 2020 in Charleston, SC
  - *Not good for some SSC members.*

### 16.2. SAFMC Meetings

#### 2019-2020 Council Meetings

December 2-6, 2019 in Wilmington, NC

March 2-6 in Jekyll Island, GA

June 8-12 in Key West, FL

September 14-18 in Charleston, SC

December 7-11 in Wrightsville Beach, NC

**ADJOURN**