

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

October 13-15, 2020

Meeting via Webinar

**VERSION
FINAL Revised
October 8, 2020**

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	5
2.	PUBLIC COMMENT	5
3.	SEDAR ACTIVITIES	5
4.	PRIORITIZATION OF NEW DATA IN THE SEDAR 73 RED SNAPPER ASSESSMENT	6
5.	REVIEW OF THE KING MACKEREL LENGTH MEASUREMENT METHODOLOGY FROM THE FISHSTORY PROJECT	7
6.	SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOPATH WITH ECOSIM MODEL REVIEW	8
7.	COMPREHENSIVE ABC CONTROL RULE AMENDMENT	9
8.	COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE	11
9.	OTHER BUSINESS	12
10.	PUBLIC COMMENT	12
11.	CONSENSUS STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW	13
12.	NEXT MEETINGS	13

TABLES

Table 1. Current SEDAR projects and those planned but not yet scheduled, with SSC participants where applicable.....	6
Table 2. Currently active SSC workgroups and their membership.....	12

Revisions: The action items under Item 3 have been corrected. Item 4 has been updated to reflect a change in what is to be discussed. The order of the action items under Items 6 and 7 has been reorganized. The dates of the future meetings have been corrected.

Documents:

- Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2020 meeting
- Attachment 2. Blueline Tilefish ToRs
- Attachment 3. Red Grouper ToRs
- Attachment 4. Vermilion Snapper ToRs
- Attachment 5. No Attachment
- Attachment 6. FISHstory length analysis for Oct SSC Meeting
- Attachment 7. FISHstory length analysis presentation
- Attachment 8. EwE Model Review Workgroup Report
- Attachment 9. Presentation on SA EwE Model*
- Attachment 10. Presentation on SSC Workgroup Review
- Attachment 11. Presentation on Application of Ecopath, Ecosim and EcoSpace*
- Attachment 12. EwE Background Materials
- Attachment 13. ORCS Final Report
- Attachment 14. ORCS Analysis
- Attachment 15. Carruthers et al. Data Limited Methods Review and SSC Discussion
- Attachment 16. ABC CR Amendment
- Attachment 17. Current ABC CR
- Attachment 18. P* Examples
- Attachment 19. Risk Score Document
- Attachment 20. NMFS Guidance on Phase-Ins and Carry-Overs
- Attachment 21. Phase-In and Carry-Over Presentation*
- Attachment 22. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2020
- Attachment 23. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2020

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

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 6, 2020. 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.

Meeting Format:

Given the rapidly evolving situation with the outbreak of COVID-19 and potential health risks, this meeting will be held as a series of webinars from October 13-15. There will be a single link for the entire meeting, which is available on the Council's website at <https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meetings/>.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the April 2020 meeting

1.2. 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. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

3.1. Documents

Attachment 2. Blueline Tilefish ToRs

Attachment 3. Red Grouper ToRs

Attachment 4. Vermilion Snapper ToRs

3.2. Overview

SEDAR requests that the SSC review and approve the Draft Terms of Reference for the 2022 assessments of Blueline Tilefish, Red Grouper, and Vermilion Snapper.

3.3. Public Comment

3.4. Action

- Blueline Tilefish
 - Approve Terms of Reference.
- Red Grouper
 - Approve Terms of Reference.
- Vermilion Snapper
 - Approve Terms of Reference.

Table 1. 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
2020	68: RT	Scamp, Gulf + SA	2017	Summer 2021	DW & AW & RW: Churchill Grimes, Marcel Reichert, Alexei Sharov
	U	Snowy Grouper	2018	Fall 2020	No participants due to this assessment being an update.
	71: OA	Gag	2019	Spring 2021	Wilson Laney Scott Crosson Anne Lange
	66: OA	golden Tilefish	2018	Spring 2021	George Sedberry, Genny Nessler, Churchill Grimes
	73: OA	Red Snapper	2019	Spring 2021	Anne Lange, Jeff Buckel, George Sedberry
2021	68: OA	Scamp, Gulf + SA	2020	Early 2022	TBD
	B	Mutton Snapper	TBD	Mid 2022	TBD
	78: OA	Spanish Mackerel	TBD	Early 2022	Dustin Addis, Wilson Laney, Fred Scharf
	76: OA	Black Sea Bass	TBD	2022	Fred Serchuk, Chris Dumas, Alexei Sharov
2022	OA	Blueline Tilefish	TBD	TBD	TBD
	OA	Red Grouper	TBD	TBD	TBD
	OA	Vermilion Snapper	TBD	TBD	TBD
	RT	Gray Triggerfish	TBD	2024	TBD

4. UPDATE ON NEW DATA IN THE SEDAR 73 RED SNAPPER ASSESSMENT

4.1. Documents

Attachment 5. No Attachment

4.2. Overview

The SSC will be given an update on the progress of the selectivity workshop being conducted ahead of the SEDAR 73 Red Snapper Operational Assessment. This workshop was tasked with evaluating the selectivity of trap, hook and line, and camera gear in relation to one another and in

terms of their selectivity patterns. This selectivity workshop is just one new piece of information being considered for the SEDAR 73 assessment. Also, it might be beneficial to update the SSC as the SEDAR 73 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) progresses since the SSC is the reviewer for this operational assessment. The SSC could receive an update at the Snowy Grouper review webinar and could be given a final report on the selectivity workshop.

4.3. Public Comment

4.4. Action

- No action required.

5. **REVIEW OF THE KING MACKEREL LENGTH MEASUREMENT METHODOLOGY FROM THE FISHSTORY PROJECT**

5.1. Documents

Attachment 6. FISHstory length analysis for Oct SSC Meeting
Attachment 7. FISHstory length analysis presentation

5.2. Presentation

FISHstory length analysis presentation: Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC

5.3. Overview

Historic photos from the for-hire recreational fishery are an untapped source of potential biological data for years prior to dedicated catch monitoring programs. The SAFMC Citizen Science Program has developed the FISHstory Project which includes three major components: digitizing historic photographs, describing species composition in the photographs, and developing a technique to measure fish in the photographs and estimate length distribution. The SSC is being requested to review the techniques to estimate the length distribution from the photographs.

5.4. Public Comment

5.5. Action

- Review the methodology
 - Is this methodology appropriate to use for measuring fish in pictures?
 - Can a reliable size composition of catch be derived using this methodology?
 - Does the methodology adequately address uncertainty for the size composition?

6. SOUTH ATLANTIC ECOPATH WITH ECOSIM MODEL REVIEW

6.1. Documents

Attachment 8. EwE Model Review Workgroup Report

Attachment 9. Presentation on SA EwE Model*

Attachment 10. Presentation on SSC Workgroup Review

Attachment 11. Presentation on Application of Ecopath, Ecosim and EcoSpace*

Attachment 12. EwE Background Materials

6.2. Presentation

Introduction: Roger Pugliese, SAFMC

SA EwE Ecosystem Model: Lauren Gentry, FWRI

EwE Model Review Workgroup Overview: Dr. Yan Li, Workgroup Chair

Application of Ecopath, Ecosim and EcoSpace: Luke McEachron, FWRI

6.3. Overview

A new generation Ecopath with Ecosim (EwE) model has been developed to provide an evaluation tool for the SSC and the Council. This new South Atlantic model was developed through regional partners to refine links between the SAFMC FEP II and other regional conservation planning efforts. During the October 2019 meeting, an SSC EwE Model Review Workgroup (WG) comprised of selected members of the SSC was established. The WG was charged with providing a review of the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim (EwE) model. The review was guided by the Terms of Reference developed by the WG with the balanced and functioning SA EwE model available in advance of the initial Ecopath Model Review Workgroup Webinar. The WG reviewed the vulnerability analyses; and reviewed and edited the draft report. An overview will be provided on applications of an EwE model and capabilities afforded by the developing EcoSpace component.

6.4. Public Comment

6.5. Action

- Review the EwE model, considering the review done by the WG.

Current EWE

- Identify, summarize, and discuss uncertainties and limitations of the analysis.
- Has the performance of the model been tested in the South Atlantic region?
- How can the model be used to influence or inform management action (Broad)?
- How can the model be applied to a fisheries management problem of a Council, Commission, or similar body (Region-Specific)?
- To what extent can the EwE model, in its current state of development, be used to evaluate the following South Atlantic management questions, and does the SSC consider the current input dataset adequate to yield reliable results that could be

considered BSIA for any of these questions (Comment on readiness of model vs. data components):

1. Continued poor recruitment in shallow water groupers, Red Porgy, and possibly other species
2. Impact of climate change on species distributions and fisheries
3. Impact of an episodic extremely high Red Snapper recruitment event on the Red Snapper stock, fishery, and other species in the Snapper Grouper complex
4. Benefits to fish stocks from decreases in discard mortality through best practices (SG RA29)
 - Rank the above questions in order of feasibility to be accomplished by October 2021.

EcoSpace

- Are spatial data available in the South Atlantic region adequate to develop a reliable and robust EcoSpace model?
- What additional questions can be answered for the South Atlantic region by incorporating EcoSpace?
- How much additional development time and data will be necessary to expand the model to incorporate EcoSpace?

Wrap up

- Consider establishing a standing ecosystem model workgroup to help with future updates and developments including the development of Ecospace.

7. COMPREHENSIVE ABC CONTROL RULE AMENDMENT

7.1. Documents

- Attachment 13. ORCS Final Report
- Attachment 14. ORCS Analysis
- Attachment 15. Carruthers et al. Data Limited Methods Review and SSC Discussion
- Attachment 16. ABC CR Amendment
- Attachment 17. Current ABC CR
- Attachment 18. P* Examples
- Attachment 19. Risk Score Document
- Attachment 20. NMFS Guidance on Phase-Ins and Carry-Overs
- Attachment 21. Phase-In and Carry-Over Presentation*

7.2. Presentation

- ORCS and Risk Analysis Presentation: Dr. Mike Errigo, SAFMC
- Phase-In and Carry-Over Presentation: Dr. Mike Schmidtke, SAFMC

7.3. Overview

The Council is resuming development of a comprehensive amendment to revise the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule, to address flexibility allowed by the Magnuson-Stevens

Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and to address issues raised over the last few years by the SSC with the existing rule.

At their October 2019 and April 2020 meetings, the SSC commented on the uncertainty associated with the Only Reliable Catch Stocks (ORCS, Attachment 13) methodology to assign ABCs for unassessed stocks. Carruthers et al. 2014 (Attachment 15) suggested the ORCS approach, and other catch-based approaches to assigning ABC values, may lead to a higher probability of overfishing and therefore may not be appropriate methods to use for setting ABC values. The SSC expressed a desire to revisit the ORCS approach in order to better understand how it operates and potentially make adjustments to the approach.

The SSC last reviewed the ABC Control Rule Amendment in April 2019. At this meeting, the SSC reviewed a method for setting the P* value that split the analysis into components of scientific uncertainty (evaluated by the SSC) and risk (evaluated by the Council). The risk level involves the risk of overfishing (determined by a complex analysis of attributes for each stock) and the status of the stock. The scientific uncertainty and risk level each give a penalty that is subtracted from 50% (which determines the OFL) to derive the P* value (which determines the ABC). The SSC recommended that the risk of overfishing for a species should increase proportionally by the number of unknown attributes within a risk category and the risk level should default to “high” when all the attributes for a category are unknown. The SSC would have the flexibility to deviate from this default where justifiable. The SSC also recommended that life history characteristics be considered in evaluating initial risk scores. The SSC requested additional information from Council staff, including a comparison of P* values for assessed species using the current and proposed ABC Control Rule methods.

Previous SSC recommendations are highlighted in the most recent draft of the amendment (Attachment 16). Council staff has developed the requested P* comparison (Attachment 18). Additionally, Council staff previously developed a preliminary application of the risk tolerance determination process (Attachment 19).

Guidance on use of phase-in and carry-over provisions was published by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in July 2020 (Attachment 20), which are also addressed in this amendment. The SSC previously supported the use of phase-ins for stocks above their Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST; i.e., those that are not overfished). The SSC also previously supported carry-overs if applied to stocks that are neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing and have catch close to the Annual Catch Limit (ACL), among other factors described in the document (Attachment 16).

At this meeting, the SSC is asked to provide comments on the actions included the amendment. Previous SSC recommendations on the actions are provided in the discussion of each action and are highlighted in the document provided for review (Attachment 16). These recommendations help the Council decide the range of feasible alternatives, request analyses for the alternatives, and select appropriate preferred recommendations.

7.4. Public Comment

7.5. Action

- ORCS
 - Are the assumptions of the Carruthers paper being met in the South Atlantic fisheries using ORCS? Which stocks does the study apply to?
 - Is there any evidence that stocks managed by ABCs based on the ORCS method have experienced overfishing, become overfished, or show any other signs of declining stock status?
- Risk Analysis
 - Review the P* comparison and provide feedback on implications of this comparison for the new ABC Control Rule methodology.
 - Review the document describing Risk Score calculation (Attachment 19) and provide feedback on potential use of this calculation moving forward.
- Phase-In
 - Review previous recommendations and provide further feedback on when phase-ins should/should not be allowed, also considering recent guidance from NMFS.
 - Should allowable phase-in time periods be tied to relative biomass levels, uncertainty, or stock characteristics?
 - Should the SSC provide recommendations on allowable phase-in time periods?
- Carry-Over
 - Review previous recommendations and further feedback on when carry-overs are allowable, also considering recent guidance from NMFS.
 - Should allowable carry-over amounts be determined by relative biomass levels, risk, or fishery characteristics?

8. **COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE**

8.1. Documents

Attachment 22. SAFMC Work Plan, September 2020

Attachment 23. SAFMC Amendments Overview, September 2020

8.2. 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. Items with a question mark next to them do not currently have an assigned staff member in charge of them due to the shuffling around of positions within the office this year. An assignment will be made when the vacant tech staff position is filled.

There is also a table below (Table 2) which lists all the active SSC workgroups and their members. There is currently only the Ecopath Model Review Workgroup that is active, but it should have finished its charge by the time this meeting occurs.

- Coral Amendment 10 (Oculina Bank) – Roger Pugliese
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan – Roger Pugliese
- SG Regulatory Amendment 31 (Recreational AMs) – Brian Chevront
- SG Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Program Modernization) – Brian Chevront
- SG Amendment 50 (Red Porgy Rebuilding and Allocations) – Myra Brouwer
- DW Amendment 10 (Management Measures for Dolphin and Wahoo) – John Hadley
- DW Amendment 12 (Bullet and Frigate Mackerel as EC Species) – John Hadley
- Spiny Lob Regulatory Amendment 5 (Comm Trip Limits for SG1 and LT Permits off GA-NC) – Christina Wiegand
- Bycatch Reporting Amendment – Mike Schmidtke
- Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment – Mike Schmidtke and Mike Errigo

Table 2. Currently active SSC workgroups and their membership.

Workgroup	Members
Ecopath Model Review Workgroup	Yan Li (Chair)
	Eric Johnson
	Alexei Sharov
	Fred Scharf

8.3. Public Comment

8.4. Action

- No specific actions required

9. OTHER BUSINESS

- Decision Tree approach to allocations

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

11. 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 close of business on Friday, November 13, 2020 (approximately 4 weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the December Council meeting.

12. NEXT MEETINGS

12.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2021 Spring Meeting Dates

- April 20-22, 2021 in Charleston, SC
 - Leaves less time for assessment review, but more time for report writing.
- April 27-29, 2021 in Charleston, SC
 - Typically, the preferred week.
- May 4-6, 2021 in Charleston, SC
 - Leaves less time for report writing, but more time for assessment review.

12.2. SAFMC Meetings

2020 Council Meetings

December 7-11, 2020 in Wrightsville Beach, NC

2021 Council Meetings

March 1-5, 2021 in Jekyll Island, GA

June 14-18 in Ponte Vedra, FL

September 13-17 in Charleston, SC

December 6-10 in Beaufort, NC

ADJOURN