SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

SSC Meeting Overview

October 24-26, 2023

Town and County Inn

Charleston, SC

VERSION
FINAL
10/19/23

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*Indicates materials not available for briefing book at time of posting. These materials will be added to the recent materials section when available.

SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is provided to the Committee through an online form, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment can be submitted at this link. For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment is 5:00 p.m., October 25, 2023.

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 questions from the SSC are answered, but before the SSC starts making recommendations to address the action items. 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:

This meeting will be held in-person at the Town & Country Inn, Charleston, SC. Online registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: https://safmc.net/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meeting/

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. SSC October 2023 Agenda
Attachment 1b. Transcript from the September 2023 meeting

1.2 Action

- Introductions and New Members
- Review and approve agenda.
- Approve transcript from September meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided this comment period for any general comments pertaining to any items on the agenda. There will also be time provided for public comment during each specific agenda item as they are discussed. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

3. REVIEW OF MRIP-FES PILOT STUDIES

3.1 Documents

*Attachment 3a. NOAA-OST Presentation
Attachment 3b. Evaluating Measurement Error in the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey

3.2 Presentation

Dr. Richard Cody, NOAA-OST

3.3 Overview

NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) will present the results of recently completed pilot studies that investigated potential biases in the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES). The goal of these studies is to quantify the magnitude of bias resulting from non-sampling errors, including nonresponse, non-coverage, and measurement errors, and develop revised or new methods to reduce or mitigate bias.

The first study evaluated recall error in the FES by comparing FES estimates, which are based upon two-month reference periods, to those from experimental questionnaires that collected data for one-month reference periods. Results from the study suggest that FES estimates are not likely to be biased from errors of omission, but rather, respondents are more likely to over-report fishing activity when the reference period is limited to a single month. The study identifies an approach to reduce telescoping error by providing bounds, in the form of questions about additional reference periods, against which responses are based.

The second study included analytical and experimental work to evaluate recall error related to the order in which survey questions are presented. Results from this study also suggest that the predominant form of measurement error in the FES is telescoping error; respondents are more likely to report out-of-scope trips than omit trips. The current FES questionnaire design includes bounding questions (12-month shore and boat fishing) that are likely to reduce telescoping error relative to an unbounded design. However, the order in which questions are presented may not be optimal in terms of reducing telescoping error - respondents are unlikely to review the entire questionnaire, including the bounding questions, prior to reporting for the desired reference period. Consequently, the current design is likely overestimating fishing effort. A revised design that presents the 12-month fishing questions before the two-month questions would likely further reduce bias resulting from telescoping error.

Lastly, MRIP-FES reporting has recently transitioned from producing estimates for catch and effort in two-month waves to producing cumulative estimates to meet the commitment in providing quality data in line with updated survey and data standards. This change increases sample sizes, thereby producing more reliable estimates that improve in precision throughout the year. The updated survey and data standards guide the design, improvement, and quality of data produced by the national network of recreational fishing surveys. The standards were established in 2020 and are being implemented in a phased approach to allow stock assessors and fisheries managers time to adapt to the updates.

The SSC should review the results of the pilot studies and transition to reporting of cumulative estimates and provide feedback for the Council on the implications of these findings for recreational catch estimates and its use for management.

3.4 Public Comment

3.5 Action

- Discuss the findings of pilot study 1 that evaluated recall error based on two-month versus one-month reference periods.
- Discuss the findings of pilot study 2 that evaluated recall error based on the order in which survey questions are presented.
- Discuss the implications of the transition to cumulative from two-month waves for catch and effort estimates.
- Discuss how pilot study results will impact timing of ongoing/future assessments and ABC determinations.

4. SEDAR 76: BLACK SEA BASS OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 Documents

*Attachment 4a. SEDAR 76: Black Sea Bass Presentation
*Attachment 4b. SEDAR 76: Black Sea Bass Report

*Attachment 4c. Black Sea Bass Workgroup Report

4.2 Presentation

Dr. Matthew Vincent, SEFSC

4.3 Overview

The SEDAR 76 Black Sea Bass Operational Assessment was reviewed by the SSC at the April and July 2023 meetings. The base run estimate of terminal year (2021) spawning stock is below the MSST and the estimated fishing rate is above F_{MSY}; thus, this assessment indicates that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. Projections with $F = 0$ indicate that the stock could recover to its target of SSB_{MSY} within ten years if recruitment returns to its long-term average. If recruitment remains low, the stock abundance will remain low and not achieve SSB_{MSY}.

Certain model configurations were requested to be revised before recommending catch levels and rebuilding scenarios, and a dedicated workgroup was formed to discuss and provide these recommendations (see 4c. workgroup report). Recommendations from the workgroup included:

- Use F40% mature biomass for calculating SPR.
- Use F40%SPR as the reference point for F.
- After reapplication of the ABC control rule, use P* of 30% and 35% in projections.
- In fitting the landings and discards, use $F_{current}$ from the assessment ($F_{2019-2021}$) for 2023-2024, and also run an alternate scenario to use $F_{2020-2022}$ to incorporate the most recent data.
- Keep discards at current discard F and adjust landings based on specified management scenario.

The SSC is asked to review, discuss, and provide feedback on the recommendations of the workgroup and the resulting base model run and preliminary projections.

4.4 Public Comment

4.5 Action

- Review workgroup recommendations and resulting base model and preliminary projections.
    - Determine if P* should be 30% or 35%
    - Discuss high spikes in F for interim years
- Set catch levels based on projections if appropriate and fill out Table 1.

Table 1. Black Sea Bass Catch Level Recommendations

Criteria	**Deterministic**	**Probabilistic**
Overfished evaluation ($SSB_{2001}/MSST_{)}$		
Overfishing evaluation ($F_{2019\text{-}2021}/F_{MSY}$)		
MFMT (F_{MSY})		
SSB_{MSY} (1E10 eggs)		
MSST (1E10 eggs)		
MSY (1000 lbs.)		
Y at 75% F_{MSY} (1000 lbs.)		
ABC Control Rule Adjustment		
P-Star		
SSC recommended $P_{Rebuild}$		
M		
Generation Time		

OFL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed (lbs ww)	Discard (lbs ww)	Landed (number)	Discard (number)
2025				
2026				
2027				
2028				
2029				

ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed (lbs ww)	Discard (lbs ww)	Landed (number)	Discard (number)
2025				
2026				
2027				
2028				
2029				

5. MODELING DISCARDS AND ABC DETERMINATIONS

5.1 Documents

Attachment 5a. Modeling Discards and ABC Determinations Presentation
Attachment 5b. Bohaboy et al. 2022 Publication

5.2 Presentation

Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

5.3 Overview

The Council requested during their June 2023 meeting an evaluation of how discards are addressed in applying sector allocations to develop ABC and ACL. Specifically, the Council is interested in allocating total stock removals to each sector to develop sector specific ABCs, and then subtracting sector-specific dead discards to provide sector ACLs expressed in landings. To support this evaluation, the Council requested a presentation from the SEFSC be given to the SSC in October 2023 on the recent paper (05b Bohaboy et al. 2022) describing pros and cons of developing sector ABCs with landings and discards and ACLs for landings.

5.4 Public Comment

5.5 Action

- Review an evaluation of how discards are addressed in applying sector allocations to develop ABC and ACL.
- Discuss the implications of the publication results towards this effect.
- Should this alternative method be added to the terms of reference for future assessments?

6. VERMILION SNAPPER INTERIM ANALYSIS

6.1 Documents

*Attachment 6a. Vermilion Snapper Interim Analysis Presentation
*Attachment 6b. Vermilion Snapper Interim Analysis Report
*Attachment 6c. Excerpt from Oct 2022 SSC Meeting Final Report

6.2 Presentation

Dr. Nikolai Klibansky, SEFSC

6.3 Overview

The SEFSC will present the interim analysis modeling approach and data inputs for vermilion snapper. The overall interim analysis approach was reviewed by the SSC in Oct 2022 and

recommendations are included in the final meeting report (06c). The SSC should discuss the approach and data inputs, and how the information could be used for providing catch advice for vermilion snapper.

6.4 Public Comment

6.5 Action

- Discuss the modeling approach and data inputs for the vermilion snapper interim analysis.
  - Are recreational catch values in CHTS or FES?
  - Are index values from the SERFS trends report or recalculated using the SEDAR 55 assessment approach?
- Discuss if the interim approach should be used to develop ABC adjustments (up and down) or serve as a health check on current status.
  - Review catch adjustments and make recommendation to Council if appropriate.
- What criteria should be met to apply interim analysis to change catch levels?

7. BSIA NATIONAL STANDARD 2 REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

7.1 Documents

Attachment 7a. BSIA National Standard 2 Regional Framework
Attachment 7b. MSA-NS2-50-CFR-600.315

7.2 Presentation

John McGovern, SERO and Erik Williams, SEFSC

7.3 Overview

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA § 301(a)(2)) mandates that fishery conservation and management decisions in the U.S. be based on the Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA). NOAA Fisheries is responsible for implementing this requirement in consultation with Fishery Management Councils and other advisory bodies. This document clarifies the framework used to make BSIA determinations in the Southeast Region, including the jurisdictions of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (per NOAA Fisheries Procedural Directive 01-101-10).

7.4 Public Comment

7.5 Action

- Review the southeast regional framework for determining that fishery conservation and management measures are based on the best scientific information available.

- What are the implications for scientific based management and the peer review process if the SSC's determination of BSIA is overridden by the SEFSC for stock assessments used to set ABCs?

8. SNAPPER GROUPER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (*POSTPONED*)

~~8.1 Documents~~

~~*Attachment 8a. Snapper Grouper MSE Presentation~~

~~8.2 Presentation~~

~~Dr. Tom Carruthers and Dr. Adrian Hordyk, Blue Matter Science~~

~~8.3 Overview~~

~~The SSC will receive an update on the snapper grouper MSE progress and discussion of initial results, management options and performance metrics.~~

~~8.4 Public Comment~~

~~8.5 Action~~

~~➢ TBD~~

9. SOUTH ATLANTIC DEEPWATER LONGLINE SURVEY REVIEW

9.1 Documents

*Attachment 9a. SADL Survey Overview Presentation
Attachment 9b. SSC-SADL Workgroup Final Report

9.2 Presentation

Dr. Kevin Craig, SEFSC and Dr. Marcel Reichert, SSC WG Chair

9.3 Overview

The South Atlantic Deepwater Longline (SADL) survey was developed to survey deep-water species inhabiting the continental shelf and upper slope habitats of the Southeastern US, particularly in depths ranging from 75-366 m. These demersal deep-water species include Blueline Tilefish, Snowy Grouper, and Tilefish (Golden), as well as other snapper and grouper species managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. These deep-water species tend to be data-limited with assessments relying heavily on fishery-dependent data. The SADL survey was designed to fill data gaps by incorporating cooperative sampling approaches with stakeholders using industry vessels as survey platforms to collect abundance data and life-history

information (e.g., otoliths and reproductive samples) to support stock assessments and management.

The survey was implemented in 2020 and repeated in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Survey methodology was developed through guidance from the 2015 South Atlantic Deepwater Survey Workshop, results from the Mid-Atlantic deepwater longline fisheries-independent pilot survey and based on prior cooperative SCDNR-industry projects. In order to incorporate information into SEDAR stock assessments, the SSC has been asked to review a report from the Southeast Fishery Science Center documenting the sampling design and methodology and data generated from this survey. An SSC workgroup comprised of four members was formed in Oct 2022 that was tasked with providing comments during the development of a final report that will be presented to the SSC. The SSC will review the survey report, SSC workgroup review, and ensure the methods are consistent with best scientific information available (BSIA).

9.4 Public Comment

9.5 Action

- Review presentation on the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey (SADL) and the final report and recommendations of the SSC SADL workgroup.
- What diagnostics are necessary for inclusion into stock assessments?
- What elements of the survey should be included into stock assessments and/or management (age/biological information, allocation between Councils, etc.)?

10. SEDAR 94: FLORIDA HOGFISH TERMS OF REFERENCE, SCHEDULE, AND PARTICIPANTS

10.1 Documents

Attachment 10a. Florida Hogfish Terms of Reference

10.2 Presentation

Dr. Julie Neer, SEDAR Staff

10.3 Overview

Review terms of reference, schedule, and recruit participants for SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish benchmark assessment.

10.4 Public Comment

10.5 Action

- Review the terms of reference, schedule, and select participants for the SEDAR 94 Florida hogfish stock assessment.

11. YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER OFL/ABC CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 Documents

Attachment 11a. Council Memo to Reconsider Yellowtail Snapper OFL/ABC

11.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis and Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

11.3 Overview

The Council has asked the SSC to reconsider their OFL and ABC recommendations for the yellowtail snapper stock. This request is being made on account of the recent findings from the MRIP-FES pilot study, which showed increased uncertainty in recreational catch and effort estimates. Because of the high proportion of recreational landings for this species and that it is a jointly managed species with the Gulf of Mexico, future adjustments to recreational estimates could significantly affect the jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Florida FWC is currently developing a process for integrating the State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) into the yellowtail snapper assessment process and at the end of this year will contain sufficient years of data to calibrate with MRIP-FES to increase precision in recreational estimates. An updated assessment will then be produced and sent to the SSC for review and provide updated catch level recommendations.

11.4 Public Comment

11.5 Action

- No action needed.

12. CLIMATE CHANGE SCENARIO PLANNING UPDATE

12.1 Documents

Attachment 12a. Potential Action Items from CCSP
Attachment 12b. Climate Change Scenario Planning Summit Report

12.2 Presentation

SAFMC Staff

12.3 Overview

Council staff will provide an update on topics relevant to the Climate Change Scenario Planning report and actions that are relevant to recent concerns in the South Atlantic (regime shifts, low recruitment, dynamic biomass reference points, etc.), and discuss some potential ideas for how to address these topics in the next year. Some ideas include holding a dedicated South Atlantic

Climate Change Scenario Planning data workshop and soliciting requests for research proposals to investigate these topics and operationalize for management.

12.4 Public Comment

12.5 Action

- No action needed.

13. SCS8 MEETING SUBTHEME TOPICS

13.1 Documents

Attachment 13a. Proposal for the SCS8 Theme Topic
*Attachment 13b. SCS8 Presentation to the CCC

13.2 Presentation

Dr. Jeff Buckel, SSC Chair

13.3 Overview

The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee proposes to convene its 8th workshop (SCS8). The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) is willing to host this meeting. The proposal is for a three-day workshop to be held during the early fall of 2024 (tentatively the last week of August or first week of September 2024). The NEFMC proposes to hold the workshop in New England, depending on the availability and cost of suitable event facilities. The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee reached consensus on the proposed theme after seeking input from all the Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) and now is looking for additional input on subthemes and topics.

13.4 Public Comment

13.5 Action

- Review presentation to the CCC and discuss potential subtheme topics for the 8th national workshop of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee (SCS8).

14. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT UPDATES

14.1 Documents

*Attachment 14a. Fishery Management Plan Updates

14.2 Presentation

SAFMC Staff

14.3 Overview

Council staff will provide an update on the recent fishery management plan amendments that have been reviewed by the SSC at previous meetings and are now being discussed by the Council for integration into management.

14.4 Public Comment

14.5 Action

- No action needed.

15. MRIP-FES DATA FOR UNASSESSED SPECIES UPDATE

15.1 Documents

*Attachment 15a. SEFSC-OST Precision Threshold Workgroup Presentation

15.2 Presentation

SAFMC/SEFSC

15.3 Overview

The SSC is waiting on catch estimates with proportional standard error less than 50% to initiate the Unassessed Species Workgroup. Many of the unassessed stocks have annual proportional standard error that exceeds precision standards for reporting values by the Marine Recreational Information Program (PSE >50%). There is a joint workgroup of the Southeast Fishery Science Center and Office of Science and Technology to develop appropriate methods to estimate catch for these stocks. The SEFSC will provide an update on the workgroup's progress.

15.4 Public Comment

15.5 Action

- No action needed.

16. OTHER BUSINESS

- EwE SSC workgroup members
- Tilefish/Blueline Tilefish assessment potential delays

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided one final opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items.

18. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by noon on Friday, November 17th, 2023 (approximately 3 weeks from the end of the meeting) for inclusion in the briefing book for the December Council meeting.

19. NEXT MEETINGS

19.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings

- January/February Webinar (TBD)
- April 8-11 or 15-18, 2024 in Charleston, SC (with SEP)

19.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings

- December 4-8, 2023 in Beaufort, NC
- March 4-8, 2024 in Jekyll Island, GA

ADJOURN