SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

SSC Meeting Overview

October 20-22, 2026

Town & Country Inn

2008 Savannah Highway

Charleston, SC

VERSION
FINAL-REVISED
10/15/26

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTIONS 5
2. PUBLIC COMMENT 5
3. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT AND COUNCIL ACTIVITY UPDATES 5
4. SEDAR, ASSESSMENT, AND WORKGROUPS UPDATES 6
5. DOLPHIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION REVIEW 6
6. SEDAR 94: FLORIDA HOGFISH (EFL/FLK) STOCK ASSESSMENT MODEL REVIEW7
7. RESILIENT FISHERIES PROJECT: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION MODELING 10
8. STANDARDIZED BYCATCH REPORTING METHODOLOGY 11
9. SEDAR 94: FLORIDA HOGFISH (EFL/FLK) CATCH LEVEL PROJECTIONS 12
10. MRIP-FES REVISED ESTIMATES AND CALIBRATION UPDATE 12
11. RECREATIONAL ANGLER PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT DIRECTIVE (RAPID) PROGRAM UPDATE 13
12. SEFSC-OST PRECISION THRESHOLD WORKGROUP UPDATE 13
13. OTHER BUSINESS 14
14. PUBLIC COMMENT 14
15. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS 14
16. NEXT MEETINGS 14

DOCUMENTS

Attachment 1a. October 2026 SSC Agenda 5
Attachment 1b. August 2026 SSC Meeting Minutes 5
Attachment 3a. FMP Active Amendments Draft Document 5
*Attachment 3b. SG Am60 Presentation Update 5
Attachment 4a. South Atlantic SEDAR schedule 6
Attachment 4b. SSC Workgroups and SEDAR Panel Rosters 6
*Attachment 4c. Red Grouper Stock Risk Rating Spreadsheet 6
Attachment 5a. SEDAR 104: Atlantic Dolphinfish MSE Assessment Report 6
Attachment 5b. Dolphinfish MSE Empirical Management Procedures Presentation 6
Attachment 6a. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish (EFL/FLK) Stock Assessment Report 7
*Attachment 6b. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish Presentation 7
Attachment 6c. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 1 (Background) 7
Attachment 6d. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 2 (Background) 7
Attachment 6e. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 3 (Background) 7
Attachment 6f. Florida Hogfish Assessment Terms of Reference 7
Attachment 6g. SAFMC ABC Control Rule Summary Tables 7
Attachment 7a. Reef Fish Spatial Distribution Model Presentation 10
Attachment 7b. Pelagics Spatial Distribution Model Presentation 10
*Attachment 8a. SBRM 2026 Preliminary Report 11
Attachment 8b. SBRM 2021 Final Report 11
*Attachment 9. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish (EFL/FLK) Projections 12
*Attachment 10. MRIP-FES Update Presentation 12
Attachment 11. RAPID Program Update 13
Attachment 12. SEFSC-OST Precision Threshold Workgroup Update 13

**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 12 p.m., October 22, 2026.

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 and Country Inn, Charleston, SC. Online registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: https://safmc.net/events/oct-2026-ssc-meeting/

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. October 2026 SSC Agenda
Attachment 1b. August 2026 SSC Meeting Minutes

1.2 Action

- Introductions
- Review and approve agenda.
- Approve minutes from August meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided with 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 public comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair.

3. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT AND COUNCIL ACTIVITY UPDATES

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a. FMP Active Amendments Draft Document
*Attachment 3b. SG Am60 Presentation Update

3.2 Presentation

SAFMC Staff

3.3 Overview

The SSC will receive updates on several ongoing fishery management plan amendments in progress or completed where SSC review was involved. The goal for this agenda topic is to update the SSC on the current and upcoming fishery management plan amendments and discuss potential future involvement in the development of fishery management plan amendments with scientific input and recommendations. Specific updates will focus on Snapper Grouper Amendment 60: Commercial SG1 Permit and Trip Efficiency and Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 39: Spawning Special Management Zones.

3.4 Public Comment

3.5 Action

- No committee action needed.

4. SEDAR, ASSESSMENT, AND WORKGROUPS UPDATES

4.1 Documents

Attachment 4a. South Atlantic SEDAR schedule
Attachment 4b. SSC Workgroups and SEDAR Panel Rosters
*Attachment 4c. Red Grouper Stock Risk Rating Spreadsheet

4.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis, SAFMC Staff

4.3 Overview

Council staff will provide updates on various SEDAR projects currently ongoing and scheduled, including timelines for review, and other projects relevant to SSC meeting business. Council staff will review the list of SSC workgroups and SEDAR panel membership and provide any updates from recent work accomplished by the workgroups or SEDAR panels, as well as upcoming needs including populating panels with SSC members for the Red Grouper stock assessment. Additionally, the SSC will review the stock risk ratings for Red Grouper and provide preliminary scores for Council to review.

4.4 Public Comment

4.5 Action

- Review appointments to SSC Workgroups and SEDAR panels.
- Recruit SSC members for upcoming Red Grouper SEDAR panels.
    - Stock ID
    - Data Workshop
    - Review Workshop
- Review Stock Risk Ratings for Red Grouper.

5. DOLPHIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION REVIEW

5.1 Documents

Attachment 5a. SEDAR 104: Atlantic Dolphinfish MSE Assessment Report
Attachment 5b. Dolphinfish MSE Empirical Management Procedures Presentation

5.2 Presentation

Dr. Cassidy Peterson, SEFSC; Dr. Tom Carruthers, Blue Matter Science

5.3 Overview

SEDAR 104 addressed the management strategy evaluation for Atlantic Dolphinfish. The process consisted of a management strategy evaluation (MSE) conducted internally by the SEFSC and

an in-person CIE Review Workshop coordinated by SEDAR that was held in July 2026. The CIE Workshop conducted a comprehensive review of the Dolphin MSE operating model, performance metrics, and diagnostics and provided feedback to the project team. The assessment trials specifications document, Review Panel's report, and post review workshop addenda are included in the SEDAR 104 Assessment Report (Attachment 5a).

The SEFSC and Blue Matter Science will provide a presentation (Attachment 5b) that summarizes the MSE operating model, CIE review workshop discussions and recommendations, and some options for how results from the MSE process can be used for defining stock status and catch level recommendations for integration into the U.S. fishery management framework.

The SSC is tasked with recommending whether the MSE is consistent with Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA) guidance and principles, and whether the results from the MSE are useful for providing management advice and developing fishing level recommendations for the Council.

5.4 Public Comment

5.5 Action

- Advise on Management Procedure design and performance:
  - Define tuning targets and other tuning criteria.
  - Provide feedback on MP design and levers.
  - Provide feedback on desired management performance and trade-offs.
- Is this assessment (MSE) consistent with BSIA guidance and practices, and useful for providing management advice?
- Discuss ability of tuned MPs to provide stock status determination and OFL/ABC advice, and identify risks and uncertainties associated with such an approach.

6. SEDAR 94: FLORIDA HOGFISH (EFL/FLK) STOCK ASSESSMENT MODEL REVIEW

6.1 Documents

Attachment 6a. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish (EFL/FLK) Stock Assessment Report
*Attachment 6b. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish Presentation
Attachment 6c. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 1 (Background)
Attachment 6d. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 2 (Background)
Attachment 6e. SEDAR 94: CIE Review Report 3 (Background)
Attachment 6f. Florida Hogfish Assessment Terms of Reference
Attachment 6g. SAFMC ABC Control Rule Summary Tables

6.2 Presentation

Dr. Chris Swanson, FWC-FWRI/USF

6.3 Overview

SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish was conducted as a benchmark assessment effectively serving as two independent stock assessments within Florida waters: the Florida Keys/East Florida stock (FLK/EFL stock, under the South Atlantic jurisdiction) and the West Florida Shelf stock (Gulf jurisdiction). SEDAR 94 included data workshop, assessment workshop, and review workshop components that incorporated information for both stocks. Assessment models were constructed within the Stock Synthesis integrated modeling framework in version 3.30.24.1. The FLK/EFL stock assessment renewed all available data streams from SEDAR 37 (2014), provided and recommended measures of stock status according to each stock's management jurisdiction, and provided projections of spawning stock biomass, recruitment, and retained yield to inform the Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC).

The SSC should review the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock assessment report (Attachment 6a, redacted to include just FLK/EFL assessment information), which includes the Review Workshop report (section 5) and research recommendations (section 6). The SSC should review the assessment; identify, summarize, and discuss key assessment risks and uncertainties as they relate to making stock status determinations and setting catch level recommendations. The Committee will apply the SAFMC ABC Control Rule for determination of P* and complete the catch level recommendations table.

6.4 Public Comment

6.5 Action

- **Review assessment**
  - Does the assessment address the ToRs to the SSCs satisfaction?
  - Is the assessment consistent with BSIA guidance and practices?
  - Does the assessment reliably capture past trends in the fishery and population?
  - Does the assessment provide a reliable, quantitative estimate of current stock status?
  - Does the assessment provide reliable predictions of future conditions to support catch level projections?

- **Identify, summarize, and discuss assessment risks and 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 determine P* values for projection scenarios. Explain any deviations in the ABC control rule if taken.
- Comment on any difficulties encountered in applying the Control Rule, including any required information that is not available.
- Complete the Catch Level Recommendations Table below.

➢ **Provide advice on monitoring the stock until the next assessment.**

- What indicators or metrics should be included in the SAFE Report to monitor and evaluate the stock until the next assessment? Current data will be included:
  - Total Landings relative to ABC from the previous assessment until values from SEDAR 94 are adopted.
  - Recreational (MRIP-FES and FL-SRFS values) and Commercial Landings
  - Trends in abundance included in SEDAR 94
  - Economic trends
    - Recreational – MRIP Directed Trips
    - Commercial – Ex-Vessel Value
  - Social trends
    - Observations of Closures
    - Comments from Fishery Performance Report
  - Recent management actions
  - Other?

➢ **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.

Table 1. South Atlantic SSC Florida Hogfish (FLK/EFL) Catch Level Recommendations

Criteria	Value
Stock Risk Rating	High
Relative Stock Biomass Level	High
P-Star	40%

CATCH LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Year	Observed Landings (lbs, ww)	Observed Landings (number)	Projected OFL recomm. (lbs, ww)	Projected OFL recomm. (number)	Projected ABC recomm. (lbs, ww)	Projected ABC recomm. (number)

7. RESILIENT FISHERIES PROJECT: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION MODELING

7.1 Documents

Attachment 7a. Reef Fish Spatial Distribution Model Presentation
Attachment 7b. Pelagics Spatial Distribution Model Presentation

7.2 Presentation

Dr. Jie Cao, NCSU; Seungyeon Jade Hong, UNC-Chapel Hill

7.3 Overview

Understanding and predicting environmentally driven shifts in species distribution is important for effective fisheries management. This project aims to improve our understanding of how ecosystem change affects where key fish species are found in the Southeastern United States. Using state-of-the-art spatiotemporal modeling techniques, this resilient fisheries project will explore indicators of non-stationarity in the spatial distribution and habitat associations for the fish and fisheries managed under the Council's Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo FMPs. The outcomes will inform more resilient fisheries management and governance by updating descriptions of distributions and Essential Fish Habitat. This will also inform an evaluation of existing governance structures, potential changes in interjurisdictional governance, and implementation of more resilient management.

7.4 Public Comment

7.5 Action

- Review preliminary spatial distribution models for reef fish and provide feedback on model development including data inputs and uncertainties.

- Review preliminary spatial distribution models for coastal migratory pelagics and dolphin/wahoo and provide feedback on model development including data inputs and uncertainties.

8. STANDARDIZED BYCATCH REPORTING METHODOLOGY

8.1 Documents

*Attachment 8a. SBRM 2026 Preliminary Report
Attachment 8b. SBRM 2021 Final Report

8.2 Presentation

Dr. Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

8.3 Overview

The SSC will review and comment on the review of the Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) with particular emphasis towards fishery management plans for the South Atlantic region. SBRMs are required for every federal fishery management plan. A final rule requiring review of SBRM's every 5 years was published in February 2017. The first (2017) and second (2021) review of the SAFMC's SBRMs was conducted by NMFS with help from SAFMC staff. The SSC is asked to comment on the methodology design considerations such as data elements, sampling designs, sample sizes, and reporting frequency. The Committee should discuss the review of the current methodologies used to describe bycatch reporting and data gaps present.

8.4 Public Comment

8.5 Action

- Discuss and comment on the review of SBRM:
  - Are the reporting methods standardized within fishery management plans and feasible to execute?
  - Is the scientific uncertainty resulting from the methods properly characterized and adequate in the review?
  - Provide recommendations for improving bycatch reporting for the southeast region. What data/resource gaps are there and how can they be addressed?
- Target Questions:
  - Feasibility: What is the feasibility of the bycatch methodology from cost, technical, and operational perspectives?
  - Data Use: How are the data resulting from a SBRM used to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery?
  - Data Uncertainty: Can the uncertainty associated with bycatch data be described, quantitatively or qualitatively?

9. SEDAR 94: FLORIDA HOGFISH (EFL/FLK) CATCH LEVEL PROJECTIONS

9.1 Documents

*Attachment 9. SEDAR 94: Florida Hogfish (EFL/FLK) Projections

9.2 Presentation

Dr. Chris Swanson, FWC-FWRI/USF

9.3 Overview

After reviewing base models and/or initial projection scenarios, the SSC will have the opportunity to review additional projection runs that were requested to set catch level projections.

9.4 Public Comment

9.5 Action

- Review additional requested projections for Florida Hogfish and make catch level recommendations.

10. MRIP-FES REVISED ESTIMATES AND CALIBRATION UPDATE

10.1 Documents

*Attachment 10. MRIP-FES Update Presentation

10.2 Presentation

Dr. John Foster, NOAA-OST

10.3 Overview

NOAA Office of Science and Technology will present the results from the improved Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) and display calibrated timeseries for select South Atlantic managed species. Council staff will lead discussion about how new calibrated MRIP-FES recreational timeseries will be incorporated into the stock assessment and management frameworks.

10.4 Public Comment

10.5 Action

- Receive an update on the MRIP-FES revised estimates and calibrations for select South Atlantic species.

11. RECREATIONAL ANGLER PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT DIRECTIVE (RAPID) PROGRAM UPDATE

11.1 Documents

Attachment 11. RAPID Program Update

11.2 Presentation

Dr. Luiz Barbieri, FWC-FWRI; Tim Sartwell, NOAA Fisheries

11.3 Overview

NOAA Fisheries is transitioning to a new recreational fishing data enterprise. The transition phase – called the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID) – will improve trust and confidence in recreational fishing data and management by ensuring timely, rigorous, transparent and credible estimate production. RAPID is the process that will lead the transition from the Marine Recreational Information Program to a new co-designed system. It is not a direct replacement of the program. The goal is to shift into a new partnership data enterprise among the states, commissions, councils, and NOAA. Partners will work together to develop a framework to modernize and innovate recreational fisheries data collection through adaptable and transparent data collection processes. The framework that will come out of RAPID will continue to build on a strong state-federal partnership to give stock assessment scientists and decision-makers access to the most accurate recreational catch and effort data.

11.4 Public Comment

11.5 Action

- Receive RAPID program update.

12. SEFSC-OST PRECISION THRESHOLD WORKGROUP UPDATE

12.1 Documents

Attachment 12. SEFSC-OST Precision Threshold Workgroup Update

12.2 Presentation

Dr. Erik Williams, SEFSC

12.3 Overview

A joint NOAA Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) and NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) workgroup was formed to analyze highly imprecise estimate scenarios (i.e. PSE > 50%) that are impacting assessments and management and how to address these concerns. Methods developed by this workgroup will be used to provide updated data streams for the South Atlantic unassessed stocks. The SSC will receive an update on the progress of this workgroup.

12.4 Public Comment

12.5 Action

- Receive update on the progress of the precision thresholds workgroup.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

15. 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 20, 2026 for inclusion in the briefing book for the December 2026 Council meeting.

16. NEXT MEETINGS

16.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings

- Winter 2027 (TBD)
- April 19-22, 2027 in Charleston, SC (SEP/SSC)
- October 26-28, 2027 in Charleston, SC

16.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings

- December 7-11, 2026 in Beaufort, NC
- March 8-12, 2027 in Jekyll Island, GA
- June 7-11, 2027 in Daytona Beach, FL

ADJOURN