

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

September 7, 2023

Via Webinar

VERSION
FINAL
9/7/23

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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 12:00 p.m., September 7, 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 via webinar. Online registration for the meeting can be found at the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/events/sept-2023-ssc-meeting/>

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. SSC September 2023 Agenda
Attachment 1b. Minutes from the July 2023 meeting

1.2 Action

- Introductions
- Review and approve agenda.
- Approve minutes from July 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. SEDAR 86: RED GROUPEL OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a. Red Grouper Spatial Data Summary Report
Attachment 3b. Red Grouper Operational Assessment Terms of Reference
Attachment 3c. Red Grouper Options Paper
Attachment 3d. Red Grouper Spatial Data Presentation

3.2 Presentation

Dr. Lew Coggins, SEFSC

3.3 Overview

The Southeast Fishery Science Center assessment staff and data providers have been considering new data informing spatial patterns in the distribution, abundance, and landings of South Atlantic red grouper. These patterns may indicate that the fishery and population dynamics of two aggregations (Northern and Southern regions) within the South Atlantic are sufficiently different that a single coastwide stock assessment model is indefensible. To evaluate this supposition, datasets for the Northern (North and South Carolina) and Southern (Georgia and Florida) regions of the South Atlantic Management unit are summarized (Attachment 3a).

There is currently an ongoing operational assessment with no topical working groups for a single stock of Red Grouper along the SA region. The Terms of Reference for the Operational Assessment are included for review (Attachment 3b), as well as an Options Paper (Attachment 3c) that provides several options for moving forward with a decision on the assessment for the

SSC to consider. Note that if changes to the assessment are recommended, the Terms of Reference will need to be revised.

The SSC is asked to review the spatial considerations for the SEDAR 86: Red Grouper Operational Assessment and recommend whether the one-area or two-area model configuration is more appropriate for the operational assessment and discuss approaches to incorporate changes into the assessment if warranted.

3.4 Public Comment

3.5 Action

- Review the spatial considerations data summary for Red Grouper.
- Recommend use of one-area or two-area model for the operational assessment.
- If changes to model structure are recommended, determine an appropriate assessment type to incorporate changes.

4. DRAFT CLIMATE GOVERNANCE POLICY

4.1 Documents

*Attachment 4a. Climate Governance Policy Background Presentation
Attachment 4b. NMFS Draft Climate Governance Policy

4.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis, SAFMC

4.3 Overview

In anticipation of an increasing number of fish stocks shifting in geographic distribution, new fisheries emerging, and other demographic shifts in fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service (informally, NOAA Fisheries) has identified a need for guidance on determining the geographic scope of fisheries and on how to determine which Regional Fishery Management Council(s) (Council) will be responsible for preparing and amending new and/or existing fishery management plans (FMPs) for fisheries that extend or have moved beyond the geographical area of authority of any one Council, including those that move, across Council boundaries.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), each of the eight Councils has responsibilities for fisheries within specified geographic areas (MSA § 302(a)(1)) and is required to prepare and submit FMPs for fisheries that “require conservation and management” (MSA § 302(h)(1); see also 50 C.F.R. § 600.305(c)). In situations where a fishery extends beyond the geographic area of any one Council, MSA § 304(f)(1) authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to either designate a Council to prepare an FMP or require the relevant Councils to prepare an FMP jointly. To date, NOAA Fisheries and the Councils have addressed

management of fisheries that span multiple Council jurisdictions on a case-by-case basis. However, given that the geographic scope of fisheries is expected to continue to shift across Council jurisdictions in the future, preparing in advance for these situations, and having an established process and guidance in place for addressing them, will give NOAA Fisheries, the Councils, and the public a more transparent, orderly, and responsive approach for fishery management.

This policy provides guidance on (1) determining whether to review the geographic scope of a fishery and/or the designation of Council authority; (2) determining the geographic scope of the fishery; (3) designation of Council authority under MSA § 304(f); and (4) guidance for transitioning management from existing Council(s), if needed.

NOAA Fisheries has requested input on the draft policy from the regional Councils. The agency is accepting comments until November 17, 2023, with a goal of completing and implementing the policy in Summer 2024.

The SSC should review the draft Climate Governance Policy document and make recommendations on the policy guidance items (1) – (4) listed above as well as the action items below as it pertains to South Atlantic managed fish stocks. These recommendations will be passed along to the SAFMC for incorporation into a comment letter addressed to NOAA Fisheries on this policy.

4.4 Public Comment

4.5 Action

- Comment on the proposed process to review the geographic scope of a fishery and/or the determination of Council authority.
- Provide feedback on the application and potential implications of the proposed review criteria, metrics, and data sources described in Section III.
- Comment on the potential science and stock assessment implications of this policy (including development and timing of scientific advice to inform the management process).
- Provide any additional comments or recommendations for the Council for incorporation into the comment letter.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- Attachment 5a. Statement of Work for the Black Sea Bass SSC/SEFSC Workgroup – SAFMC Staff

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The public is provided one final opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items. Electronically submitted comments can be viewed [here](#).

7. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The draft SSC report will be provided to the Council at their September Council meeting. The final SSC report will be posted on the Council website three weeks following the end of this meeting (approximately Sept 29th).

8. NEXT MEETINGS

8.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings

- October 24-26, 2023 in Charleston, SC
- April 15-16, 2024 in Charleston, SC (SEP)
- April 16-18, 2024 in Charleston, SC (SSC)

8.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings

- September 11-15, 2023 in Charleston, SC
- December 4-8, 2023 in Beaufort, NC

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