

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting**  
**FINAL REPORT**  
**April 16-18, 2024**

**The Crowne Plaza**  
**4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd.**  
**North Charleston, SC**

VERSION  
FINAL  
5/24/2024

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## **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 10:00 a.m., April 18, 2024.

### **Verbal comment:**

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items were provided at set times during SSC meetings. The first was at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion.

An opportunity for comment on specific agenda items was also provided as each item came up for discussion. Comments were taken after all the initial presentations were given and questions from the SSC were answered, but before the SSC started making recommendations to address the action items. All comments were part of the record of the meeting.

### **Meeting Format:**

This meeting was held in-person at The Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, SC. Online registration for the meeting could be found at the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meeting/>

## 1. INTRODUCTIONS

### 1.1 Documents

Attachment 1a. SSC April 2024 Agenda

*Agenda was approved*

Attachment 1b. Transcript from the February 2024 meeting

*Transcript was approved*

### 1.2 Action

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

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public was provided this comment period for any general comments pertaining to any items on the agenda. There was also time provided for public comment during each specific agenda item as they were discussed.

## 3. SEFSC MINIMIZING RED SNAPPER DISCARDS PUBLICATION

### 3.1 Documents

Attachment 3a. Shertzer et al. 2024 red snapper discards publication

\*Attachment 3b. SEFSC red snapper discards presentation

### 3.2 Presentation

Dr. Scott Crosson and Dr. Kyle Shertzer, SEFSC

### 3.3 Overview

South Atlantic Red Snapper are considered overfished and undergoing overfishing per the latest stock assessment (SEDAR73). A significant proportion of the total fishing mortality is from discarded fish and efforts to reduce total dead discards has been a focal point of the SAFMC. Several strategies to achieve this objective are presented in the Shertzer et al. 2024 publication and fall broadly into the categories of gear modification, discard mortality mitigation, size limits, spatial approaches, or temporal approaches. Criteria for comparison address the management goals of decreasing dead discards, rebuilding the age structure, and increasing landings and spawning biomass.

The SAFMC is concurrently developing a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the snapper-grouper fishery and several of the strategies presented by Shertzer et al. may be considered in the MSE. The SSC should discuss the potential effectiveness of these strategies for

achieving management goals and make recommendations on which management strategies should be explored for the Snapper-Grouper MSE.

### 3.4 Public Comment

### 3.5 Action

- Discuss what strategies could meet goals for reducing discards and rebuilding the red snapper stock.
- *The SSC much appreciated the presented research and recommends continuing this model exploration by adding other species. This can be a valuable tool to understand and explore management options.*
- *The SSC recognizes that these management strategies can be applied to the short-term, but planning for longer-term strategies should also begin now given the process will likely take several years. Once red snapper is rebuilt, an update of the assessment and an MSE or some other harvest policy analysis will be needed to prevent a return to the overfished/overfishing status immediately upon being rebuilt.*
- *The SSC recognizes this study is looking at a suite of strategies for rebuilding in an equilibrium time frame to compare their relative performance, but for management the SSC will need shorter-term tactical analyses for making final management recommendations. The MSE currently underway in conjunction with assessment projects will inform those short-term recommendations.*
- *The SSC recommends making the following management approaches a lower priority based on the effects on the population as detailed in the Shertzer et al. paper:*
  - *Size limits.*
  - *Red snapper species-specific season length.*
  - *Area closures for bottom fishing (listed because area closures did not perform well across all metrics due to estimated declines in recreational landings), but area closures may be very effective at rebuilding the stock as noted below.*
    - *Could be inequitable in practice.*
    - *Shifting effort due to spatial/temporal closures will likely negate some of the benefits.*
  - *Gear modifications/selectivity.*
  - *Annual catch limits.*
  - *Species-specific bag limits.*
- *We recommend that the MSE development team retain this list of strategies that do not have a substantial effect (though may be easy to implement) in the MSE to demonstrate they have been explored and to demonstrate the relative effectiveness of other strategies.*
- *What potential strategies should be explored for the Snapper-Grouper MSE?*
- *The effort control strategy with a broader range of percent reduction in effort should be explored, specifically looking at values between 25% and 75% would be beneficial.*
  - *Significant effort reduction would be required to meet management objectives.*

- *Investigate alternative ways to implement effort control (e.g., capping vessel trips, angler trips, number of trips made per individual vessel, trip lotteries, harvest tags, etc.), and also investigate potential non-linear responses in effort control or other effects (biological, economic, social). Investigate the number of trips by individual reef fish vessels and individual reef fish anglers per year. What does that distribution look like? If most vessels/anglers take only one or two trips for reef fish per year then a reduction in effort within the fishery will require lottery/harvest tags as vessel trip limits will not be effective; however, if most vessels/anglers take a relatively high number of trips per year then reductions in vessel or individual trips per year might have an impact on effort reductions.*
- *Look at response to different levels of compliance with full retention strategies or other management strategies (e.g., descending device usage, etc.).*
- *Retain descending device usage/best fishing practices but provide more detail on calculations of fish conserved using barotrauma mitigation.*
- *Explore combined strategies and additive benefits (e.g., barotrauma mitigation plus reduction in effort).*
- *Area closures for bottom fishing (listed because large effect on reducing dead discards in scenario 20, but not for scenario 16).*
  - *Scenario 20 has a substantial potential for rebuilding spawning biomass and mean age.*
  - *A combination of different spatial/temporal closures can also be considered.*
- *Would these strategies be applicable in a multi-species fishery and what are some of the hurdles?*
- *Spatial and temporal closures and effort reductions would need to be implemented for the entire snapper-grouper fishery to ensure efficacy and feasibility, and this would affect all species, independent of biomass or stock status. Shifting of effort from spatial and/or temporal closures may impact species in other areas or seasons.*

## **4. SEFSC LOW RECRUITMENT WORKGROUP UPDATE**

### **4.1 Documents**

\*Attachment 4. SEFSC Low Recruitment Workgroup Presentation

### **4.2 Presentation**

Dr. Kyle Shertzer, SEFSC

### **4.3 Overview**

Several species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit managed by the SAFMC have been experiencing historically low recruitment over the past decade. A number of these species are in an overfished status and have a scheduled rebuilding plan, though the low biomass of these stocks are not necessarily the result of high fishing mortality over this time period but rather a

failure in recruitment. The SEFSC has formed a workgroup to investigate the potential causes of this low recruitment trend and the SSC will receive a presentation on the progress of this workgroup.

#### 4.4 Public Comment

#### 4.5 Action

- No action needed.

*- The SSC greatly appreciates the analyses of the SEFSC's Low Recruitment Working Group to date and their plans to continue trying to identify the cause of estimated declines in and sustained low recruitment for multiple stocks in the South Atlantic.*

*The SSC recommends:*

- Spatial changes in SERFS data collection over time to be explored more thoroughly by comparing the exact sampling frame from pre-2010 to the sampling frame post-2010 by subsetting data using those sites that were contained in the original sampling universe and creating an index to compare to the current index (See Vecchio et al 2023). Then, include the two different indices into the stock assessment individually to determine if there are different outcomes. Even slight differences in the indices of abundance could lead to differences in recruitment if the overall slope of the index changes.*
- Closer examination of timing in fishery change point analysis relative to changes in estimated recruitment. There are likely additional species to be added to the analysis including those observed to have changes in trends and length over time as demonstrated in the presentation of the SERFS data (e.g., King and Spanish Mackerel, *Stenotomus* spp, Bank Sea Bass, and maybe others)*
- Evaluating modelling approaches used to standardize SERFS CPUE and composition data (e.g., explore additional data distributions & model parameterizations) where appropriate.*
- Analyses of the impact of additional potential environmental drivers, particularly those likely to drive larval movement and settlement (e.g., Gulf Stream transport/ direction, wind, etc.), potentially in a more holistic statistical fashion (e.g., random forest).*
- Potential to examine demographic changes that could impact reproduction and egg output (e.g., shifts in sex ratios to include fewer males, shift to smaller sizes of males which could indicate earlier transition from female to male, impacting female egg output).*
- Explore whether similar trends in low recruitment are occurring for Gulf of Mexico species that spawn in winter.*

*Furthermore, the SSC recommends that SSC representation join the SEFSC low recruitment working group for identifying a path forward. This will help communicate SSC ideas and concerns to the working group more effectively so we can work together to integrate new information on causes of low recruitment into South Atlantic assessments and management.*



*For future ecosystem issues and integration of SCS8 findings, discuss the formation of an SSC ecosystem workgroup at the summer webinar meeting. See also under Other Business below.*

## **5. FLORIDA STATE REEF FISH SURVEY**

### **5.1 Documents**

Attachment 5a. Introduction to Florida SRFS  
Attachment 5b. Florida SRFS Presentation

### **5.2 Presentation**

Dr. Luiz Barbieri and Beverly Sauls, FL-FWCC

### **5.3 Overview**

The Florida State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) was developed to be a specialized, supplemental survey to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), and it is being considered into the stock assessment process for Florida centric species (e.g., yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, hogfish). These presentations will provide an opportunity to update the SSC on (1) the need for our national-level recreational fisheries data collection enterprise to evolve given the assessment and management demands brought up by the last reauthorization of MSA (i.e., implementation of ACL's, AM's, etc.); (2) provide a deep dive into SRFS so they can see how a specialized, supplemental survey can help address some of MRIP's current limitations; and (3) get a better understanding of the careful planning and technical complexity of SRFS design and estimation procedures.

Several key points related to the FL-SRFS to consider are that:

1. SRFS was developed to be a specialized, supplemental survey to MRIP. The MRIP program helped develop the survey and provide continued assistance in survey implementation.
2. SRFS has been peer-reviewed, is MRIP-certified, and conforms to MRIP's data standards to make it consistent with BSIA.
3. SRFS is conducted just in Florida so at this stage only applicable to Florida-centric assessments where the vast majority of landings happen in Florida.
4. The SRFS-MRIP calibration for YTS and Mutton is ongoing but with the assistance of the NMFS OS&T-MRIP program it will be peer-reviewed by a panel of professional survey statisticians following pre-established TORs.

The S79 and S96 assessments have a TOR that asks the panels to consider the use of SRFS in place of MRIP for the private boat segment of the recreational fisheries. The decision to use one survey vs. the other for these assessments will be made by the SEDAR panels (as it is usually the case with any other SEDAR assessment) but since the SSC will review these assessments this is a good opportunity for the SSC to ask questions or voice any concerns on the integration of the Florida SRFS into the stock assessment process.

## 5.4 Public Comment

## 5.5 Action

- No action needed.

*The SSC appreciated the comprehensive presentations and the efforts put forth by the FL FWC to enhance the collection of recreational harvest and effort data in their region, and the thoroughness with which the implementation of this survey was approached. We expect that these data could prove valuable to future assessment activities. The SSC is looking forward to further discussing this survey's integration in upcoming assessments when these assessments are up for SSC review.*

*The SSC had several questions:*

- Relative to the statement above “the use of SRFS in place of MRIP for the private boat segment of recreational fisheries”; would this be the same as the SRFS-MRIP calibration that was approved for SEDAR 72 and 88, or a complete replacement of MRIP by the SRFS data?*
- For the SRFS questionnaire, could it potentially lead to underreporting of effort? Is it possible that the new shortened questionnaire could lead to telescoping bias (overreporting of effort)? Similar to the recent analyses and changes to the ordering of questions in the MRIP survey, it's not clear if it can be determined definitively which direction the bias is occurring for each survey questionnaire design.*
- Why is the bias different between the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of Florida?*

# 6. **EVALUATION OF COMMERCIAL DISCARD LOGBOOK DATA**

## 6.1 Documents

\*Attachment 6a. SEFSC Presentation Commercial Discard Logbook

\*Attachment 6b. SEFSC White Paper on Commercial Discard Logbook

## 6.2 Presentation

Dave Gloeckner, SEFSC

## 6.3 Overview

Following the June 2023 meeting, the Council requested that the SEFSC provide an evaluation of the commercial discard logbook with an emphasis on the reliability of annual discard estimates. This request was prompted by concerns that an increasing percentage of trips reporting no discards would affect the reliability of the logbook data over time. The SEFSC provided a general update on the status of that request to the Council in December 2023 and plans to continue the work in 2024. The SSC will receive an update on the progress of this evaluation.

## 6.4 Public Comment

## 6.5 Action

- Evaluate the findings of the Commercial Discard Logbook data and discuss the implications for commercial data streams in stock assessments.
- *SSC recommends not using commercial discard logbook data as currently configured as a direct time series in stock assessments. Further exploration of the data and other methods to better estimate commercial discards is needed.*
- *Develop incentivized programs to improve reporting of discard data (incl. decrease of zero discard reporting), and additional funding is needed to expand the commercial observer program in the South Atlantic to improve data collection.*
- *There may be other methods or data sources for gathering commercial discard data such as:*
  - *Ratio methods (discards/unit catch) or other methods from the existing observer data.*
  - *Subset of reliable reporting vessels coupled with observer validation (i.e. study fleet).*
  - *Electronic monitoring (vessel camera collected data) has already been used in HMS and for GOM reef fish and should be more seriously considered (cost-savings over live observers, improved reliability).*
- *Need to provide information to fishers to improve understanding of why accurate discard reporting is important and how this affects assessments. More accurate data is beneficial because it may decrease the uncertainty buffer in stock status estimates and resulting management recommendations.*
- *The SSC noted that the increased proportion of zero discards coincided with increased reporting compliance (see attachment 6b, Figure 1), and that zero discard reporting was highest for fishermen that took very few trips see attachment 6b, Figure 2), indicating that there may be a reliable subset of the data that could be used. The SEFSC agreed to investigate these issues.*

# 7. SEFSC PRECISION THRESHOLD WORKGROUP

## 7.1 Documents

Attachment 7. SEFSC Precision Threshold Workgroup Presentation

## 7.2 Presentation

Dr. Vivian Matter, SEFSC

## 7.3 Overview

A joint NOAA Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) and NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) workgroup was formed last year to analyze highly imprecise estimate scenarios that are impacting assessments and how to address these concerns. The SSC will receive an update on the progress of this workgroup.

#### 7.4 Public Comment

#### 7.5 Action

- No action needed.

## 8. **SERFS 2023 TRENDS REPORT**

#### 8.1 Documents

Attachment 8. SERFS 2023 Trends Report

#### 8.2 Presentation

Dr. Tracey Smart, SCDNR

#### 8.3 Overview

The SSC will receive an update on the 2023 trends report from the Southeast Reef Fish Survey.

#### 8.4 Public Comment

#### 8.5 Action

- No action needed.

*The SSC appreciates this informative annual update of SERFS and recommends that length compositions continued to be included in these updates, and also included in assessments (or assessment working documents) because they contain valuable information.*

## 9. **SEDAR: RED SNAPPER BENCHMARK TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### 9.1 Documents

Attachment 9. South Atlantic Red Snapper Benchmark Terms of Reference

#### 9.2 Presentation

Dr. Julie Neer, SEDAR Staff

#### 9.3 Overview

At its March 2024 meeting, the SAFMC elected to change the next assessment type of Red Snapper from a coupled Research Track and Operational Assessment to a Benchmark Assessment. The SSC reviewed the terms of reference for the Red Snapper Research Track

Assessment at its February 2024 meeting, but due to the nature of the Research Track assessment type not providing management advice, terms of reference related to stock status determinations and projections were not described. The terms of reference for the Benchmark Assessment include these additions and the SSC should review these modifications and make recommendations where necessary.

#### 9.4 Public Comment

#### 9.5 Action

- Review the Terms of Reference for the South Atlantic Red Snapper Benchmark Assessment.
  - *The SSC made its edits and recommendations to the Terms of Reference and these are reflected in the revised document that will be provided to the Council.*
- Receive update on ongoing SEDAR process revisions.

*The SSC had a lot of questions about how this new approach to stock assessments is going to work and what the potential consequences are for the SSC review responsibilities and workload, and is looking forward to receiving updates on this process in future SSC meetings.*

## 10. SEDAR: REVIEW SCOPE OF WORK FOR BLACK SEA BASS

#### 10.1 Documents

\*Attachment 10. Scope of Work for Black Sea Bass

#### 10.2 Presentation

SAFMC/SEDAR Staff

#### 10.3 Overview

The SSC finalized its review of SEDAR 76: South Atlantic Black Sea Bass and made catch level recommendations for 2025-2026 to the Council during its February 2024 meeting. Recommendations for the timing of the next assessment were also given and included conducting an interim analysis for providing 2027+ catch levels followed by another assessment. The SSC should review the scope of work for the next Black Sea Bass stock assessment.

#### 10.4 Public Comment

#### 10.5 Action

- Review scope of work for the next Black Sea Bass stock assessment.
  - *The SSC made its edits and recommendations to the Scope of Work and these are reflected in the revised document that will be provided to the Council.*

- *An interim analysis or updated assessment is requested by the SSC to allow them to provide ABC recommendations for 2027 forward. The SEFSC will investigate the tradeoffs between timing and uncertainty between approaches (operational assessment or interim analysis).*

## **11. SOUTH ATLANTIC RED SNAPPER RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE**

### **11.1 Documents**

\*Attachment 11. SARSRP Update Presentation

### **11.2 Presentation**

Dr. Will Patterson, UF

### **11.3 Overview**

The SSC will receive an update on the progress of the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project that is using a variety of techniques to estimate the abundance of Red Snapper in the U.S. South Atlantic. Methods being utilized include the combined use of ROV visual surveys and genetic close-kin mark and recapture techniques using fin clip tissue analyses. The results from this project will be integrated into the next benchmark stock assessment for Red Snapper.

### **11.4 Public Comment**

### **11.5 Action**

- No action needed.

*The SSC received a thorough overview of this comprehensive research project and had a few questions about the accuracy of the epigenetic ageing and location of catches of confirmed related Red Snapper. Data analyses for many aspects of this project are ongoing and the SSC is looking forward to receiving the next update.*

## **12. SEP MEETING SUMMARY**

### **12.1 Documents**

\*Attachment 12. SEP Preliminary Report

### **12.2 Presentation**

Dr. Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, SEP/SSC

### **12.3 Overview**

The Social and Economic Panel met prior to the SSC this week. An SEP/SSC member will provide a brief summary of the topics discussed.

#### 12.4 Public Comment

#### 12.5 Action

- No action needed.

### 13. SCS8 MEETING UPDATE

#### 13.1 Documents

Attachment 13. Preliminary Agenda for SCS8

#### 13.2 Presentation

Dr. Judd Curtis, SAFMC Staff

#### 13.3 Overview

The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee will convene its 8th workshop (SCS8) in Boston, MA from August 26-28, 2024. The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) will host this three-day workshop. The meeting format will feature a keynote speaker in each sub-theme area and several regional case studies from SSC members and NOAA staff followed by break-out groups and synthesis of ideas. Expectations for participating members following the meeting will be to assist the implementation of actionable outcomes and pathways forward to their respective regional SSCs.

#### 13.4 Public Comment

#### 13.5 Action

- Review preliminary agenda and sub-theme topics for SCS8.
- Enlist SSC members to represent the SA-SSC at the meeting.
  - *Kai Lorenzen and Christina Package-Ward volunteered.*
  - *Jie Cao will co-present with Matt Damiano on the low recruitment working group work.*

### 14. OTHER BUSINESS

- *Florida Black Grouper MSE: potential joint GOM/SA SSC meeting to present analytical findings on Black Grouper. Discuss future steps for a Black Grouper MSE.*
- *In addition to those who volunteered during the previous SSC webinar meeting the following members were added to the Red Snapper Benchmark Data Workshop:*
  - *Marcel Reichert*
  - *Anne Markwith*

- *The SSC will evaluate the current working groups in their summer webinar to see if there is a need for consolidation or elimination.*

## **15. CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

*The final April SSC report was provided to Council staff on May 6 for inclusion in the briefing book for the June 2024 Council meeting.*

## **16. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

## **17. ELECTIONS**

*The SSC elected Marcel Reichert as the new SSC Chair and Walter Bublely as the new SSC Vice-Chair for 2-year terms. The SSC thanked Jeff Buckel and Fred Scharf for their leadership and service during their tenure as Chair and Vice-Chair.*

## **18. NEXT MEETINGS**

### **18.1 Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings**

- Jun/July Webinar (TBD)
- October 22-24, 2024 in Charleston, SC

### **18.2 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meetings**

- June 10-14, 2024 in Daytona, FL
- September 16-20, 2024 in Charleston, SC
- December 2-6, 2024 in Wrightsville Beach, NC

**ADJOURNED**



# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PANEL OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SEP Meeting Overview**

**April 15-16, 2024**

**Crowne Plaza  
4831 Tanger Outlet Blvd  
North Charleston, SC 29418**

## PURPOSE

This meeting is convened to discuss and provide input to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) on:

- Recent and developing Council actions and amendments,
- The National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries, Management Benefits,
- Council stakeholder engagement meetings,
- Council best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop,
- Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports,
- The Citizen Science Program,
- Equity and environmental justice discussion based on the Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting, and
- Potential renaming of the Socio-Economic Panel

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## DOCUMENTS

**Attachment 1a.** Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview

**Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2023 meeting

**Attachment 2a.** Presentation slides for National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

**Attachment 2b.** Summary of National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

**Attachment 3.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Amendments

**Attachment 4.** Stakeholder engagement meetings discussion document

**Attachment 5.** Best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop discussion document

**Attachment 6.** Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports

**Attachment 7.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

**Attachment 8.** Equity and environmental justice discussion document based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting

**Attachment 9a.** Renaming the Socio-Economic Panel discussion document

**Attachment 9b.** United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision: Mexican Gulf Fishing Company versus The United States Department of Commerce

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1a.** Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview
- **Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2023 meeting

#### 1.2. Actions

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve April 2023 minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

## 2. National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

### 2.1. Documents

- **Attachment 2a.** Presentation slides for National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits (*Recent Documents*)
- **Attachment 2b.** Summary of National Academy of Sciences report on Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

### 2.2. Overview

In 2023, an ad hoc committee of the National Academies was assembled to draft a consensus report assessing equity in the distribution of fisheries management benefits. Specifically, the Committee was tasked with determining the categories of information required to adequately assess where and to whom the primary benefits of commercial and for-hire fishery management accrue; determining what information currently exists within those categories and what additional information, if any, NOAA Fisheries would need to collect; identifying potential obstacles to collecting this additional data; and identify methodologies the agency could use to assess the relative distribution of benefits from federal commercial and for-hire fishery management based on available information. Committee member, Steven Scyphers, will present the Committee's final report and recommendations.

### 2.3. Presentation

Steven Scyphers, University of South Alabama

### 2.4. Action

Provide feedback on how Council staff can implement the recommendations presented in the Committee's final report.

### Discussion Questions:

1. The report recommends "...further developing products that are not geographically constrained or limited by the spatial resolution of census data, which may not always align with a holistic definition of equity." What data sources that fit this criterion are available to aid in understanding community dependence on fisheries?
2. The report recommends analyses "...move beyond a focus on distributional outcomes associated with permit and quota holdings to a more multidimensional assessment of equity." What other regulatory measures might be important for the Council to consider in equity assessments?
3. In what ways can Council staff take a participatory approach to identify and integrate equity considerations into the decision-making process?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP agrees with the report's finding that there is a lack of data sources for use in better understanding equity and distributional issues in fisheries of the South Atlantic. Better data, such as found in Jepson and Colburn (2013), need to be developed.

- The SEP speculated on the availability and usefulness of various existing data sources. For example, there are likely a number of reports and other types of data that reflect historical community dependence on fisheries (e.g., SAFMC’s Fishstory photographs, NOAA’s Voices oral histories). North Carolina may have data that records commercial landings back to the 1800s. Unfortunately, these data sources are limited due to uneven coverage of fisheries and communities. Even if the data were available, historical comparisons with fishery dependent data are difficult due to regulatory differences over time (e.g., differences in season lengths due to quotas).
- Another equity issue is accommodation of emerging fisheries that do not have historical data. For example, North Carolina fishers could not get permits for golden tilefish since there were no historical golden tilefish landings in North Carolina.
- In addition to addressing the issues above, the SEP believes that there is a role for the use of qualitative research to address equity issues. Further, equity and distributional issues are typically treated as a separate “bounded” topic; the SEP recommends that these issues should be integrated into any analysis of a fishery.
- The SEP inquired about the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> NAS study and report that “will build on this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative fisheries” and whether this effort would assist in the development of the guidance document to measure and assess equity that was suggested by the academy.
- Reference:  
Jepson, Michael, and Lisa L. Colburn, Development of social indicators of fishing community vulnerability and resilience in the U.S. Southeast and Northeast regions 2013, NOAA tech. memo. NMFS-F/SPO-129.

### 3. Recent and Developing Council Actions

#### 3.1. Document

- **Attachment 3.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Council Amendments

#### 3.2. Overview

Council staff will provide a briefing on recent and upcoming amendments and actions (*Attachment 3*). The following amendments may be of particular interest to SEP members.

#### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Program Modernization)*

**Staff Lead:** Christina Wiegand

**Purpose of Amendment:** The Council finished its second review of the Wreckfish ITQ program in September of 2019. As part of the review there were several recommendations made to modernize the program, which will be addressed in this amendment.

**Action Summary:** moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; fishing season; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and monitoring requirements.

**Development Level:** public hearings and final action at the June 2024 Council meeting.

### *Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 (Discard Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper Catch Levels)*

**Staff Leads:** Mike Schmidtke

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment for Red Snapper (SEDAR 73). Red Snapper are overfished and overfishing is occurring, mainly due to the large number of Red Snapper that die after catch and release. Dead discards are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex.

**Action Summary:** Modify the Red Snapper ABC and ACLs and reduce dead releases in the snapper grouper fishery through prohibiting use of multiple, separate hooks per line by the recreational sector, as well as expansion of best fishing practices outreach and education efforts. These actions are designed to implement Red Snapper catch levels based on the best scientific information available, reduce widespread discarding of snapper grouper species, and address overfishing of red snapper.

**Development Level:** Council approved the amendment in March 2023 but rescinded approval in December 2023. Final re-approval is pending.

### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting and Education Requirement)*

**Staff Lead:** John Hadley

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Address deficiencies in recreational data through the creation of a permit requirement for private recreational vessels or anglers. Additionally, consider establishing an education component to encourage best fishing practices and reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery.

**Action Summary:** This amendment will investigate establishing a permit and education requirement for anglers to participate in the recreational snapper grouper fishery.

**Development Level:** Scoping conducted and amendment being developed.

### *Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation*

**Staff Lead:** Chip Collier and Judd Curtis

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Dead releases are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex. The Council has directed a management strategy evaluation (MSE) project that would consider multispecies effects of potential management changes and be used to develop a more holistic approach to management of the snapper grouper fishery. The recreational fishery for red snapper, gag, and black sea bass are the main focus of the MSE effort. An amendment will follow the MSE project and consider implementation of management changes evaluated through the MSE.

**Action Summary:** A future amendment will provide actions intended to incorporate recommendations from the MSE project.

**Development Level:** MSE in progress, amendment to follow.

### *Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 (Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper)*

**Staff Lead:** Allie Iberle

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 68).

**Action Summary:** Establish a scamp/yellowmouth grouper complex, remove yellowmouth grouper from the shallow water grouper (SWG) complex, establish catch levels and sector allocations for the new complex, adjust catch levels and sector allocations for the SWG complex.

**Development Level:** Scoping completed.

### *Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 56 (Black Sea Bass)*

**Staff Lead:** Mike Schmidtke

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 76).

**Action Summary:** Establish a rebuilding plan, revise catch levels, consider revision of sector allocations, other black sea bass management measures.

**Development Level:** Pre-scoping.

### *Comprehensive Recreational For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment*

**Staff Leads:** John Hadley & Myra Brouwer

**Purpose of Amendment:** To establish limited entry for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries.

**Action Summary:** TBD

**Development Level:** Pre-scoping. In December 2023, the Council initiated amendment development and created additional control dates of December 8, 2023, for for-hire permits and December 5, 2023, for reporting to SEFHIER established.

### *Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment*

**Staff Leads:** Mike Schmidtke and Judd Curtis

**Purpose of Amendment:** To modify the ABC Control Rule to address flexibility allowed under the MSA and revise how uncertainty and risk tolerance are addressed in setting ABCs.

**Action Summary:** Modify the ABC Control Rule, including specification of scientific uncertainty and management risk components, application of the Control Rule to rebuilding stocks, criteria and procedures for phase-in of ABC changes, criteria and procedures for carry-over of unused portions of the annual catch limit, and establishment a framework procedure to allow carry-overs.

**Development Level:** Implemented February 2, 2024

### *Allocation Review Guidelines*

**Staff Leads:** Christina Wiegand, John Hadley, Mike Schmidtke, and Myra Brouwer

**Purpose of Project:** Better document the Council's efforts to address the Government Accountability Office's allocation-related recommendations over the past couple of years including the allocation review trigger policy, developing an allocation decision tool, allocation discussions when developing amendments, updating Fishery Management Plan goals and objectives, and providing research recommendations. [The guidelines](#) outline the Council's process for allocation reviews, including the [allocation decision tool process](#), the updated [allocation review trigger policy](#), and the types of information that will be documented following an allocation trigger and subsequent review. This document will present a record of the basis for the Council's decisions and will be made accessible to the public on the [Council's website](#).

**Development Level:** Council staff prepared a draft of this document for review at the September 2023 Council meeting and a revised draft for Council approval at the December 2023 meeting.

### 3.3. Presentation and Discussion

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

### 3.4. Action

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to brief the SEP on potential Council actions that may be presented to the group for review later in the meeting or at a future SEP meeting.

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP appreciated the updates but had no questions.

## **4. The Socio-Economic Panel feedback on upcoming South Atlantic Fishery Management Council stakeholder engagement meetings**

### 4.1. Document

- **Attachment 4.** Stakeholder engagement meetings discussion document

### 4.2. Overview

Council staff has begun work to develop a plan for holding stakeholder engagement meetings along the south Atlantic coast, meeting fishermen in their communities. The traditional public comment format does not always allow for two-way discourse between Council members and fisheries stakeholders. These stakeholder engagement meetings will provide an opportunity for Council members to have productive dialogues with fisheries participants. By engaging stakeholders in this more informal setting, Council members will be able to build relationships and increase engagement in the management process. Building relationships and momentum for participation in the management process requires consistent interaction with stakeholders over time, so staff intend for these types of meetings to become a regular part of the Council's engagement efforts. Council staff will present a discussion document with information on the goals and objectives and proposed format for stakeholder engagement meetings.

### 4.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

### 4.4. Action

Provide feedback on the proposed structure for stakeholder engagement meetings and whether it matches the goals and objectives outlined by the Council.

### Discussion Questions

1. Stakeholder engagement meetings are different from traditional opportunities for public input because they are not tied to a specific management action. The Council will need to communicate to stakeholders how the input gathered will be used, the benefits of attending



- these meetings, and the opportunities they provide that traditional meeting processes may not provide. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to help the Council have these discussions?
2. Is two hours an appropriate amount of time to ask stakeholders to attend a meeting? Should staff prioritize time for the structured breakout groups or the unstructured breakout groups session?
  3. Should staff change structured and unstructured topics by city and state or try to maintain some consistency each year.
  4. Considering staff workload, does the SEP have suggestions on how information could be presented during the unstructured session (looping PowerPoint, informational flyers, etc.)
  5. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to adjust the proposed structure for low or high attendance scenarios?
  6. Are there other methods that staff should consider for facilitating the meeting to better meet the objective of providing an opportunity for an open dialogue and mutual learning between Council members and stakeholders?
  7. Are there novel or creative ways to summarize the information gathered during these meetings for Council members and the public?
  8. Discussion questions will be developed to help begin conversation during the structured breakout groups. Are there best practices for developing discussion questions? Would any SEP members be willing to volunteer to review discussion questions developed by staff?
  9. Staff has not begun development of evaluation methods yet, but does the SEP have any ideas for how the success of these stakeholder engagement meetings could be measured?

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- SEP gave feedback on the structure and goals of the stakeholder engagement meeting. SEP supported having both structured and unstructured components, and beginning with structured.
- SEP members recommended having staff help Council facilitate small group break out discussions when/if possible. SEP noted that if breakout groups are intended to be heterogeneous (i.e., not broken out by sector), be deliberate and consistent in ensuring that the breakout groups are truly heterogeneous across all observable criteria (sector, home port, race & ethnicity, relationship to Council or Council staff, etc.).
- SEP suggested considering additional ways to engage, such as digital (iPads) or a board with sticky notes to gather information; could be particularly helpful when groups are large.
- SEP had a lengthy discussion about the ultimate goals and outcomes of the meetings, and stressed the importance of identifying what will be done with the information gathered, noting that attendees may want something tangible as a result and that the goal of establishing communication (while important) may not be enough to bring people to the

room. SEP also noted the importance of setting expectations, and educating about what is and isn't within the Council's power to change/act upon.

- SEP discussed incentives, noting that the opportunity to talk face-to-face with Council may recruit some, but may not be enough of an incentive for all.
- SEP recommended having visual methods to show where these meetings fit in with the Council process, as well as short videos sharing information (e.g., "what is NMFS, what is DNR, what is a 'stock', etc.").
- SEP also recommended Council members present back to the public what they learned from these meetings to show that input was heard, and share what they got from them. SEP also discussed ways to evaluate the efficacy of these meetings in reaching goals both short and long-term.

## **5. The Socio-Economic Panel feedback on upcoming South Atlantic Fishery Management Council best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop**

### **5.1. Document**

- **Attachment 5.** Best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop discussion document

### **5.2. Overview**

The South Atlantic Council's Best Fishing Practices (BFP) Outreach Initiative was expanded in December 2022. Evaluation of the outreach efforts conducted is key in ensuring that the goal of increasing the use of BFP in the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery is achieved. Fortunately, in recent years, there has become increased interest in exploring stakeholder perception and usage of BFP, namely barotrauma mitigation tools like descending devices. Several survey-based studies have been completed throughout the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico region. However, they all ask slightly different questions, focus on different areas, or are not longitudinal in nature, making it challenging to determine changes in fishing behavior throughout the South Atlantic region. To help aid the Council, researchers conducting work on BFP perceptions, outreach, and usage would be invited to a workshop to present their work and discuss how it may benefit the Council's BFP program. Council staff will present a plan for the workshop, including tentative discussion topics and meeting structure, or SEP discussion.

### **5.3. Presentation**

Christina Wiegand, Judd Curtis, and Ashley Oliver, SAFMC Staff

### **5.4. Action**

Provide feedback on the proposed topics and structure for the best fishing practices outreach evaluation workshop.

### Discussion Questions

1. Are the goals and objectives for the workshop reasonable for the subject matter and achievable?
2. Does the SEP have any recommendations for topics to cover during the pre-workshop survey?
3. Do the presentations cover the topics necessary to meet the goals and objectives of the workshop or are there additional topics that could be beneficial for attendees to discuss?
4. Any recommendations for presenters that have conducted research within the key subject areas?
5. Does the SEP have any suggestions for how to make breakout groups successful? In your experience are their discussion methods more effective than others?
6. Is there a way to make the report out sessions more interactive and engaging for attendees (ex. sticky wall, flip chart notes)?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP agreed that the goals and objectives for the workshop are reasonable to achieve evaluation of the Council's outreach efforts with respect to best fishing practices (BFP) and the use of descending devices.
- The SEP recommended a "State of the Science" topic to be cover during the pre-workshop surveys to gauge the attendees' current state of knowledge regarding BFP, descending devices, and how this information can inform stock assessments.
- The SEP was enthusiastic about the workshops covering the regional social norms of fisheries, the social norms related to descending devices, and social norms outside of fisheries. Specifically, the SEP drew on comparisons to the social norms of West Coast fisheries with respect to BFP and descending devices. However, they also pointed to larger bodies of literature beyond "social norms" as being relevant, such as models for behavior change in public health, or persuasive communication strategies in communications.
- The SEP encouraged collaboration with West Coast fisheries managers and enforcement officers to aid in topics and discussion points to be covered during the social norm sessions.
- The SEP suggested that keeping the breakout groups task oriented to a specific problem will aid in the success of these break out discussions. The SEP also suggested that topics be directed more towards the benefits of BFP and descending devices on fisheries, rather than the costs of not utilizing these practices.
- The SEP recommended that the report out sessions should come to a consensus of key take away from the previous breakouts sessions. Encouraging attendees to participate in the summarization of the workshop discussions will aid in engagement during the report out sessions.

## 6. Social and economic metrics used in Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) reports

### 6.1. Document

- **Attachment 6.** SAFE Report background document and discussion questions

### 6.2. Overview

Council staff have started to develop Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports. These reports are required through National Standard 2 of the Magnuson Stevens Act. The report should contain the best scientific information available on the condition of the stock, essential fish habitat, marine ecosystems, and the fishery. These reports can serve as regular updates to the AP, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Council to aid in discussing the condition of the stock and potential need for adjusting management measures. The SSC has provided feedback on information that is crucial for a SAFE report and information that would be good to include based on draft SAFE reports for Dolphin Wahoo and Snapper Grouper fishery management plans (FMPs). SAFE reports will be developed and updated every two years for each FMP and provided at the spring SSC meeting and June Council meeting. These reports will also be provided to any interested constituents on the Council's website.

Chip Collier, SAFMC staff, will brief the SEP on the draft SAFE reports for dolphin and wahoo and solicit input on changes that the SEP would like to see in the reports before they are finalized.

### 6.3. Presentation

Chip Collier, Christina Wiegand, and John Hadley, SAFMC Staff

### 6.4. Action

Provide feedback on the social and economic components of the draft SAFE reports and input on any additional information that may be useful.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Out of the social and economic information provided, which items do think are most useful for managers or constituents?
  - a. Specifically for managers?
  - b. Specifically for constituents?
2. Are there additional pieces of readily available social or economic information that should be added to the SAFE reports?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Chip Collier briefed the panel on the status of the social and economic metrics used in stock assessment and fisheries evaluation (SAFE) reports. They are mandatory for every managed fishery, and will likely be updated every year. The briefing solicited feedback on the report

structure for two species: Snapper and Grouper. There are also SAFE drafts for Dolphin and Wahoo and they expect to include Shrimp and Golden crab in the future.

- Council staff indicated potential additions to future versions of the reports, including sentiment analysis (much like that being used in the Gulf). The SEP noted that the council may be constrained by surveys/research, but anglers' satisfaction data (if available and collected consistently) can be useful instead of sentiment analysis. However, they also suggested caution with using sentiment analysis because of generalization issues. Information about weather patterns (such as El-Nino and La-Nina) may be impacting fisheries, so conversations with wholesalers and retailers could provide insight into these.
- The SEP asked who the end users are and what they could use the report for, as this will help determine what is useful to be added. There was also discussion about the order in which things are listed in the report, with questions about the reasons and intents behind the orders of items listed. Staff explained that the existing structure is based on the order in which they accessed the data, and didn't represent any intentional organization (but that they will consider this topic moving forward, as they acknowledge that order can influence the viewer's understanding and impressions).
- SEP suggested adding a few additional items that are already available, including: a couple of sentences about the species; percent breakdown on trip/revenue data from Chris's report (this is available online); data on landings by state and RQ information; landings trend data at state level to give indicators about what is happening within the state/region; and/or species specific trend data; social indicators such as commercial engagement and reliance and recreational engagement and reliance; and top communities by commercial and for-hire permits.
- The SEP urged Council staff not to replace older data as time passes, but add new information to the existing report in order to show progress or trends.
- One member suggested keeping information similar across species, but also including information unique to the species. For example, if you find that landings are declining, and there is potentially information not in the report, it can be included as hyper link / "for more information." However, another member warned that this inclusion could be a lot of work (requiring additional research). If we don't know why something is happening we should just say we don't know why we are seeing this trend. If there is a paper describing the species, etc. we can include that, but caution should be taken.

## 7. Citizen Science Program update

### 7.1. Document

- **Attachment 7.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

### 7.2. Overview

Julia Byrd, SAFMC staff, will provide an update on program activities and recent efforts of the [SAFMC's Citizen Science Program](#). The presentation will include updates on the Citizen

Science Project Idea Portal, SMILE, SAFMC Release, and FISHstory projects. SEP members will be asked to provide feedback on topics to include in a SAFMC Release participant survey and ways to gather photos for the FISHstory project.

## Presentation and Discussion

Julia Byrd and Meg Withers, SAFMC staff

### 7.3. Action

Provide feedback and guidance on topics to include in the SAFMC Release participant survey and on strategies to gather additional photos for the FISHstory project based on the discussion questions below.

#### Discussion Questions:

##### **SAFMC Release**

A SAFMC Release participant survey is being developed. The following topics are being considered for inclusion in the survey: avidity, years fishing/experience, demographics, motivations and barriers to participation, participants' sources of information, efficacy of project's communication, and perception of the project and its role in fisheries science/management.

1. Are the proposed topics appropriate for the participant survey?
2. Is the number of topics appropriate? Are there topics you would recommend eliminating or adding?
3. Is there any additional feedback or guidance regarding the survey?

##### **FISHstory**

The FISHstory project is working to gather more photos from across the South Atlantic region from the 1940s-1980s. Scanning events were held in conjunction with Council related meetings last fall.

1. What avenues should the Council explore to gather additional historic photos?
2. Are there any organizations or individuals in your area that may be good contacts to gather historic fishing photos?
3. When FISHstory re-launches in Zooniverse – we'll be looking for volunteers to help analyze photos. Do you have suggestions on where we could share information to recruit new volunteers?

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The SEP recognized the effort the council is making through the citizen science portal as a good opportunity to match researchers to citizens who were interested in similar research projects. Some concern about the opt in bias of the SMILE project which is inherent to all citizen science was identified and the SEP recommended to continue identifying those biases.
- In response to council staff explanation of concerns about retention of SciFish participants, the SEP recommended exploring public private partnerships and potentially learning from existing well established recreational reporting apps. The SEP brainstormed ideas of how to identify the type of participant in the SciFish program. A need to explore why participants are interested in the Scifish project and what makes a citizen join in the first place, remain

involved, or not engage was identified. To capture that information, it was recommended to ask demographic information either when citizens are signing up or randomly as the app is opened. There are examples of participants putting in their location of catch at a delay and that could be a concern of the use of this dataset. When collecting additional data fields try to keep the questions as concise as possible and if there is not a direct usable benefit of the questions exclude them. The SEP suggested to explore what the expectations of the citizens using the app are for the data that they are inputting.

- The SEP agreed that the Fishstory project was a good opportunity to collaborate the states and engage the public. There was concern that there would be upward bias on catch and length given the public's preference to photograph and then share successful trips.

## **8. Equity and environmental justice discussion based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting**

### **8.1. Document**

- **Attachment 8.** Equity and environmental justice discussion presentation based on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's identified items from their March 2024 meeting

### **8.2. Overview**

In May 2023, NMFS approved their Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy. Subsequently, the NMFS Southeast Regional Office began development of a Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan. Through a series of engagement efforts, including focus groups, scoping trips, online comment opportunities, and virtual multilingual listening stations SERO developed a list of action items that would guide strategy implementation. Many of those action items will require collaboration with the regional fishery management councils. Staff will present some of the action items identified as important during the March 2024 Council meeting for discussion.

### **8.3. Presentation**

Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

### **8.4. Action**

Provide feedback on how Council staff can better incorporate equity and environmental justice considerations into Council activities.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is the SEP aware of any southeast-region specific equity and environmental justice training or other general diversity training that may be beneficial for Council members and staff?
2. Does the SEP have any recommendations on how Council staff can better incorporate EEJ principles into daily activities?

3. Does the SEP know of any studies that have been conducted looking at the success or failure of management measures in the South Atlantic region, specifically?
4. Given funding and regulatory constraints (Paperwork Reduction Act), does the SEP have suggestions for how Council staff can better identify marginalized social groups?
5. Incorporating processes that ensure stakeholder input is actively considered and communicated is becoming increasingly important as the Council undertakes more stakeholder driven initiatives, such as Stakeholder Engagement Meetings. How can the Council effectively communicate that they are listening and value stakeholder input?
6. How can the Council improve access to Council meetings for constituents in rural areas?
7. Does the SEP know of information, readily available, that would help the Council better understand how allocation decisions are affecting underserved communities?
8. Would the SEP recommend establishing an EEJ Advisory Panel or better incorporating members from underserved communities into existing advisory panels?
9. What other issues related to council activities might an EEJ Advisory Panel provide comment on for the Council?
10. How might the Council better ensure that Council meetings (including advisory panel meetings) are comfortable for members of communities that are underserved?

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Is the SEP aware of any southeast-region specific equity and environmental justice training or other general diversity training that may be beneficial for Council members and staff?
  - Potential training sources: SE and Caribbean Communities of Practice, EPA (including Region 4 online trainings that might be relevant), Colleges & Universities local to where the training might take place, seek out professional organizations such as AFS that might have training modules, and local community groups that are involved in DEI
2. Does the SEP have any recommendations on how Council staff can better incorporate EEJ principles into daily activities
  - Writing and presenting in plain language.
  - Offering translated materials and interpretation services.
  - Partnering with NMFS staff to engage in analysis or research to identify underserved communities, barriers, and issues and incorporating this into the process and also analysis of fisheries management actions.
  - Trying to travel to and hold meetings in places that the council doesn't normally go; considering offering ways for rural participants to engage (such as a location where they might view the council meeting – lack of internet access was mentioned as an issue for rural folks).
  - Considering the development of an EEJ AP.
  - Attempting to make the council appointment system more clear – such as providing notice that they're looking for applicants (people mentioned not seeing themselves represented in the council members).
  - Look at hours, places, days of the week of meetings that might be more convenient to underserved populations.
  - Providing childcare.



- Look to local leaders among underserved populations like pastors, barbers/beauticians.

3. Does the SEP know of any studies that have been conducted looking at the success or failure of management measures in the South Atlantic region, specifically?

- The SEP noted that there may be some work from a while ago about the Pamlico Sound Gill Net fishery ban and long term follow up of the affected fishers. They also mentioned peer-reviewed literature by Kathy Kitner about snapper grouper crew, and Jennifer Sweeney Tookes et. al. on compliance and the use of turtle excluder devices.

#### References:

Kitner, Kathi. 2006. "Beeliners, Pinkies, and Kitties: Mobility and Marginalization in the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Fishery." *Human Organization*; Fall (65): 3. Tookes, J. Sweeney, Tracy Yandle, and Bryan Fluech. 2022. "'The Turtle Shooter's a Great Thing': The Role of Fisher Engagement in the Successful Adoption of Turtle Excluder Devices in Georgia's Shrimping Industry." *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. 80(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsac062>

4. Given funding and regulatory constraints (Paperwork Reduction Act), does the SEP have suggestions for how Council staff can better identify marginalized social groups?

- Past research has suggested that some populations, including underserved populations sometimes outside of normal data collection periods. This would introduce bias into the sample.
- Simply ask people at meetings who is not being reached through the traditional methods used for meetings.
- Ask state agencies if they have identified who marginalized people are who might be involved in the process.

5. Incorporating processes that ensure stakeholder input is actively considered and communicated is becoming increasingly important as the Council undertakes more stakeholder driven initiatives, such as Stakeholder Engagement Meetings. How can the Council effectively communicate that they are listening and value stakeholder input?

- Need more of a compilation of all comments/suggestions made by shareholders at meetings
- Add word clouds to documents to compile these.
- Ask people what they think would make like they are being heard and that their contributions are valued.

6. How can the Council improve access to Council meetings for constituents in rural areas?

- Use listening stations like the Council did in the past.
- Issues related to access to getting on the water to fish such as loss of headboats in recent years.
- Ask people as to what it would take to get them more involved.

- Be willing to have meetings with underserved populations in non-traditional settings such as high school gyms or auditoriums in their communities.
  - Local newspapers and radio to inform people of local meetings.
7. Does the SEP know of information, readily available, that would help the Council better understand how allocation decisions are affecting underserved communities?
- The SEP wondered whether the data even exists to do this, and thinks that the lack of this data is the issue at hand
8. Would the SEP recommend establishing an EEJ Advisory Panel or better incorporating members from underserved communities into existing advisory panels?
- Is it possible to do both as there are benefits of doing both:
  - Not all EEJ people are aspects on other underserved populations so just one on an AP may not adequately represent all relevant groups
  - An EEJ AP would consider EEJ issues for all actions and would better represent most underserved populations
9. What other issues related to council activities might an EEJ Advisory Panel provide comment on for the Council?
- An EEJ AP could advise on the barriers faced by underserved communities in the Council and management process and on EEJ issues, such as advising on the action items included in the EEJ implementation plan and putting those items into effect, including on whether the efforts have been successful or not. An EEJ AP could also advise on any issues or current Council actions that might impact EEJ populations.
10. How might the Council better ensure that Council meetings (including advisory panel meetings) are comfortable for members of communities that are underserved?
- SAFMC has a “greeter” for Council meetings. Have a staff member assigned as a greeter for other meetings such as AP or SSC. Make it a point for the person to reach out to people who are attending for the first time. Assign additional staff to work as greeters prior to public comment periods.
  - Bring back the “fireside chats” with NMFS and Council leadership at Council meetings
  - Create a simple guide, such as an infographic, that helps people know what to expect and what they can do at a public comment period.

## 9. Consider revising the name of the Socio-Economic Panel?

### 9.1. Documents

- **Attachment 9a.** Discussion document to consider revising the name of the Socio-Economic Panel
- **Attachment 9b.** United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision: Mexican Gulf Fishing Company versus The United States Department of Commerce

### 9.2. Overview

The term “socio-economic” has recently faced scrutiny in the U.S. Federal court system due to its non-specific nature and association with demographics or societal status rather than purely economic or social topics. Additionally, there is also the notion that the term “socio-economic” may not encompass or properly categorize all economic and social topics that often come before the SEP as well as the Council. In light of recent scrutiny of the term, the SEP will be asked to discuss whether it would be appropriate to consider revising the name of the Panel.

### 9.3. Presentation

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

### 9.4. Actions

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Given recent legal scrutiny of the term “socio-economic” and the potential narrow association of the term with demographic information, does the SEP think that the name of the Panel should be revised?
  - a. If so, what should be the new name? Social and Economic Panel?

#### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Based on their readings of the document, the SEP doesn’t think the court has an issue with either the social and economic, but think the concern is more that they’re smashed together and only one side was presented in that research instrument; therefore separating them could be ok
- Legal counsel thinks this is more of a legal record issue, that had the involved parties have specified what they would be gathering in the proposed rule and included it in the record, they probably would not be in the same situation. However, they agree that it does make some sense splitting the two up.
- Socio economic has specific meanings, words matter; Social vs economic has methodological differences
- One suggestion is that we should specify that the SEP is comprised of “sociologists and economists” (as social could mean planning parties) but there are other non-economic social science disciplines represented in this SEP and amongst Council staff.
- The panel acknowledged that a good solution would be to rename to the social science panel because that encompasses everyone in the field, but there will likely be confusion with the acronyms being too close between SSP and SSC

- Decided on “Social and Economic Panel (SEP)”.

## **10. Election of new Chair and Vice-Chair**

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Current Vice-Chair, Jennifer Sweeney Tookes was elected Chair. SEP and SSC member Jason Walsh was elected Vice-Chair.
- The new Chair thanked Dr. Scott Crosson for his many years of guidance and skilled leadership of the SEP. His service is much appreciated.

## **11. Other Business**

## **12. Report and Recommendations Review**

## **13. Next SEP Meeting**

## **14. Adjourn**