

**SSC Roadmap
August 16-17 2010
Briefing Book Draft**

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Synopsis:

The purpose of this meeting is to further develop the ABC control rule for stocks which are unassessed and for which no P*analysis is available, consider additional information requested for golden crab and corals to support ABC recommendations, and consider ABC recommendations for sargassum and wreckfish.

Documents:

- attachment 1 Updated SSC Roster
- attachment 2 April 2010 SSC Minutes
- attachment 3 SEDAR 23 (Goliath grouper) Admin Package
- attachment 4 SEDAR 24 (red snapper) Admin Package
- attachment 5 Spiny Lobster Update Admin Package
- attachment 6 Black Sea Bass Update Admin Package
- attachment 7 National SSC Draft Agenda
- attachment 8 SAFMC SSC Report, April 2010
- attachment 9 NS1 Final Rule
- attachment 10 SSC Proposed Assessed Stocks Control Rule
- attachment 11 DCAC approach SAFMC application
- attachment 12 "Cooper" ABC approach
- attachment 13 Council Control Rule Options
- attachment 14 OFL and ABC spreadsheet
- attachment 15 SEFSC Request, Coral and Golden Crab
- attachment 16 Golden Crab and Wreckfish Workshop Overview
- attachment 17 Coral Presentation, April 2010 SSC meeting
- attachment 18 Coral Literature summary
- attachment 19 Coral Landings Summary
- attachment 20 Coral Life History Overview
- attachment 21 Keys Octocoral Summary, FWC
- attachment 22 Sargassum FMP Excerpt and Landings

1. Introduction

1.1. Documents

Agenda.

Overview

attachment 1 Updated SSC Roster

attachment 2 April 2010 SSC Minutes

1.2. Overview

A. *Introductions and new members*

Several new members were added to the Committee by the Council in June 2010.

1.3. Actions

- Approve Agenda
- Approve April 2010 Meeting Minutes (Attachment 1)

2. SEDAR Activities

2.1. Documents

attachment 3 SEDAR 23 (Goliath grouper) Admin Package

attachment 4 SEDAR 24 (red snapper) Admin Package

attachment 5 Spiny Lobster Update Admin Package

attachment 6 Black Sea Bass Update Admin Package

2.2. Overview

A. *Participant Request*

Several vacancies were created in upcoming SEDAR workshops by recent SSC membership changes. Members are asked to indicate availability and interest for consideration by the Council in September.

1 SSC Reviewer for the SEDAR 23 Goliath grouper benchmark review panel

1 SSC Reviewer for the spiny lobster update joint review workshop

1 SSC Chair for the SEDAR 24 red snapper benchmark Review Panel

1 SSC Reviewer for the SEDAR 24 red snapper benchmark Review Panel

Additional participants for the South Atlantic black sea bass update

B. *Project Updates*

- SEDAR 23: South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Goliath Grouper (attachment 3)
Data and assessment workshops complete. Review Workshop in Key West, November 15-17.
- SEDAR 24: South Atlantic Red Snapper (attachment 4)
Data workshop complete and assessment webinars underway. Several additional assessment webinars were recently added for August. Review Workshop in

Savannah, GA, October 12 - 14. SSC review November 8-10 and Council presentation in December 2010.

- Spiny Lobster Update (attachment 5)
Data scoping webinar complete, assessment webinars underway. Assessment completion workshop in Key West, September 28 - 30. Review Workshop by representatives of Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs in Key West, November 18-19. Council presentation in December 2010.
- South Atlantic Black Sea Bass Update (attachment 6)
Appointments were made and the schedule and TORs were approved for this update in December 2009. The project was delayed in January 2010 when the red snapper update was elevated to a benchmark. A data scoping webinar was held in July 2010. A revised assessment schedule will be considered by the Council in September 2010 that proposes completion in March 2011. Additional SSC participation is possible, and current appointees should review the proposed schedule to ensure availability.

2.3. Actions

- Nominate SSC candidates for SEDAR Projects

3. Update on 2010 National SSC Workshop

3.1. Documents

attachment 7 National SSC Draft Agenda

3.2. Overview

The SAFMC is hosting the 2010 National SSC Workshop. It will be held at the Charleston Marriott, October 18 – 22, 2010. The SAFMC SSC chair is expected to chair the National Workshop.

Discussion topics include: SSC progress report on ABC control rule implementation; update on NS2 guidelines; update on the data poor subcommittee; assessment peer review processes; developing fishing level recommendations, data poor approaches, and defaults when no recommendations are provided by the SSC (attachment 7).

3.3. Actions

Indicate availability and interest in participating in the National SSC workshop

4. ABC Control Rules for Unassessed Stocks

4.1. Documents:

attachment 8 SAFMC SSC Report, April 2010
attachment 9 NS1 Final Rule
attachment 10 SSC Proposed Assessed Stocks Control Rule
attachment 11 DCAC approach SAFMC application

attachment 12 "Cooper" ABC approach
attachment 13 Council Control Rule Options
attachment 14 OFL and ABC spreadsheet

4.2. Overview

The SSC discussed control rules for data poor or unassessed stocks in April 2010. An alternative control rule was developed and presented in the April committee report (attachment 8).

ABC control rules are addressed in the guidelines for National Standard 1 (attachment 9). The SSC's assessed stocks control rule is provided for reference and information of newly appointed members (attachment 10). During deliberations, the Council suggested that the control rules be divided into 'assessed' and 'unassessed' stock components, as 'data poor' is a relative term.

A. Council Guidance

The Council received the proposed data poor control rule in June 2010. Some aspects of the proposed rule and its criteria were considered inappropriate considering guidance that the rule should account for scientific uncertainty. The Council ultimately rejected the data poor control rule as put forth by the SSC and requested that the SSC consider the following in revising the rule:

MOTION: COUNCIL DIRECTS THE SSC TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE WHEN CONSIDERING AN ALTERNATIVE CONTROL RULE FOR UN-ASSESSED STOCKS:

- (1) DETERMINATION OF SPECIES AS ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS AND INCREASING BUFFERS ABOUT OFL FOR SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT UNCERTAINTY AND SHOULD THEREFORE NOT BE PART OF AN ABC CONTROL RULE.*
- (2) THE COUNCIL BELIEVES THAT STOCK STATUS IS AN OUTCOME AND NOT AN ASSESSMENT UNCERTAINTY APPROPRIATE TO CONSIDER IN AN ABC CONTROL RULE.*
- (3) THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT THE SSC CONFIGURE THE DATA POOR CONTROL RULE TO PROVIDE A REDUCTION DOWNWARD FROM OFL, AS DESCRIBED IN THE GUIDELINES, AND DOES NOT BELIEVE IT IS APPROPRIATE TO START AT AN ASSUMPTION THAT ABC=0. (Number 3 is missing in the minutes page 164)*
- (4) THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT THE SSC CONSIDER A TIERED APPROACH THAT DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN LEVELS*

OF DATA DEFICIENCY, AND TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION SOURCES OF INFORMATION BEYOND LANDINGS STREAMS THAT MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, PRIOR ASSESSMENTS, EFFORT TRENDS, SURVEY AND MONITORING TRENDS.

MOREOVER, THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT THE SSC REVIEW, COMPARE AND CONTRAST AND COMMENT ON THE UTILITY OF:

- (1) THE ANALYTICAL APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPING ABCS IN DATA POOR SITUATIONS AND FOR UN-ASSESSED STOCKS THAT WERE PROVIDED FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE APRIL 2010 MEETING (E.G., DCAC AND COOPER APPROACHES);*
- (2) THE ALTERNATIVE ABC CONTROL RULES DEVELOPED BY THE COUNCIL AND INCLUDED IN CURRENT DRAFT AMENDMENTS; AND*
- (3) THE PROPOSED DATA POOR CONTROL RULE DEVELOPED AT THE APRIL 2010 MEETING.*

THE SSC SHOULD COMMENT ON WHICH OF THESE APPROACHES IS MOST ROBUST TO UNKNOWN INFORMATION AND MOST APPROPRIATE FOR USE IN DERIVING ABC FROM OFL. [INTENT THAT THIS APPLIES TO ALL SPECIES; USE ANY ASSESSMENT, NOT JUST PEER REVIEWED ASSESSMENTS].

The Council passed a motion establishing a data poor (later the term 'unassessed stocks' was indicated as preferred) ABC control rule of ABC=75% of OFL for snapper grouper stocks, excluding wreckfish. This was intended as a way to move the process ahead while giving the SSC additional time to develop the unassessed stocks control rule, and is an alternative referenced in (2) of the second clause of the motion listed above. The full suite of ABC alternatives under consideration by the Council are listed in the excerpt from the Comprehensive ACL amendment (attachment 13)

Council Motion:

ESTABLISH AN ABC CONTROL RULE FOR DATA POOR (NO P* ANALYSIS) SNAPPER GROUPER SPECIES WHERE ABC = 75% OF OFL (ALTERNATIVE 3B) EXCEPT FOR WRECKFISH.

B. National SSC committee progress

A data poor or unassessed stocks ABC working group was convened following the 2009 National SSC meeting. The group has met several times over the previous year and expects to present findings at the 2010 meeting in October.

Two members of the SAFMC SSC serve on this committee and may be able to provide some preliminary guidance on this topic.

C. Options from previous SSC meeting

The following information is provided to help the Committee address the issues and concerns raised by the Council. Text describing alternative approaches for deriving ABC for unassessed stocks is essentially unchanged from the April 2010 Roadmap.

Establishing OFL

At the April 2010 meeting the Committee agreed that the first step in providing fishing level recommendations, including ABC, is to establish the OFL. The Committee recommended that OFL be based on the median landings over the last 10 years (1999-2008). This recommendation was supported by the Council.

ABC Control Rule Alternatives

The SSC was provided documentation and example applications of various approaches for deriving ABC from OFL for unassessed stocks for the April 2010 meeting. These included the “DCAC” approach as applied to SAFMC stocks (attachment 11), the “Cooper approach” as described in attachment 12, and a range of fixed OFL-ABC buffer alternatives as contained in the current SAFMC Comprehensive ACL amendment provided as an excerpt (attachment 13). Values for OFL and outcomes of these alternatives for deriving ABC are provided in a spreadsheet (attachment 14). Additional reference documents in support of these approaches are provided in the reference documents folder of the briefing book.

The DCAC method of MacCall requires average landings, estimates of M , and two scalar parameters, one that reflects the reduction in biomass over time and another which reflects the relation between M and F_{msy} . In January 2010 the Council requested that SEFSC provide DCAC-based estimates of sustainable yield for unassessed stocks. When that request was denied, SAFMC staff pursued a simple spreadsheet application of the method to available data. The general approach applied for this exercise was to fix the F_{msy} scalar at 1, which in practice assumes $F_{msy}=M$ for those stocks for which an M estimate is available. It was assumed that $M=0.2$, and therefore $F_{msy}=0.2$, for any stocks for which a documented M value was unavailable. Next, a value for the biomass trend scalar was found, using solver, that provided a 25% reduction in average catch. This was chosen to be consistent with the rule of thumb of $ABC=75\% MSY$, but in practice any value could be used. In fact, any of these assumptions can be modified or derived from more rigorous information if available. For more detailed information, see applications of this approach described in draft documents provided by the North Pacific Council SSC contained in the reference documents folder. Also included in the reference section is the latest MARMAP status of

stocks report providing fishery-independent CPUE trends which may provide information of stock biomass trends for refining the DCAC parameters.

The "Cooper Approach" was put forth by SSC member Andy Cooper following discussions of ABC approaches during the Committee's January 2010 conference call meeting. ABC is derived from an average catch value through assumption of a CV and calculation of a distribution in lieu of an observed P* distribution (attachment 12).

Council directed the Committee to specifically review the range of alternatives for developing ABCs in data poor situations and to consider a tiered approach that accounts for the varying levels of available data.

The Committee should also consider whether the existing assessed stocks ABC control rule should be modified based on the recommendation from April 2010 that it only applies in circumstances where a P* analysis can be developed.

4.3. ACTIONS

- Recommend an ABC control rule for unassessed stocks.
- Review the assessed stocks ABC control rule for consistency with discussions and recommendations made during this and the April 2010 meetings.

5. Fishing Level Recommendations

5.1. Documents:

attachment 15 SEFSC Request, Coral and Golden Crab
attachment 16 Golden Crab and Wreckfish Workshop Overview
attachment 17 Coral Presentation, April 2010 SSC meeting
attachment 18 Coral Literature summary
attachment 19 Coral Landings Summary
attachment 20 Coral Life History Overview
attachment 21 Keys Octocoral Summary, FWC
attachment 22 Sargassum FMP Excerpt and Landings

5.2. Overview

The Council selected alternative control rules for many of the unassessed stocks at the June meeting. Unique circumstance of the four stocks in this section led to their individual consideration.

Considerable discussion that ensued at the June 2010 SAFMC meeting following review of the SSC report from April 2010, and testimony received during the meeting, indicated that information is available for some stocks beyond that considered by the SSC in April. Based on these findings, further data exploration of

coral and golden crab was requested of SEFSC for consideration at this meeting (attachment 15).

Dr. Henry Feddern, coral fisherman and member of the SAFMC Coral AP, submitted numerous documents related to coral stocks that are provided in the reference section. Staff of FL FWC also provided additional coral information. SAFMC Staff summarized much of this information in the provided attachments. Those interested in the source or further detail are directed to the reference section.

A workshop was held in June 2009 including the SSC and representatives of the golden crab and wreckfish APs. Considerable information was presented regarding prior assessment efforts and Council decisions on reference points for these stocks. Documents from that workshop are included in the reference section.

A. GOLDEN CRAB

Information available for golden crab was summarized in the overview for the 2009 workshop (attachment 16). ABC options listed below were derived based on information available at the workshop. There have been no subsequent assessment efforts on golden crab.

It is widely argued that the golden crab is an underutilized resource and that the fishery exploits only a portion of the species' range. Much of the earlier deliberation regarding MSY and OY values was tied to efforts to expand information from the exploited area to the entire stock range and entire stock's productivity.

ABC alternatives are under consideration for golden crab:

2.3 Action 3. Establish an Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for the Golden Crab Fishery of the South Atlantic region.

Alternative 1. No action (THERE IS NO ABC SPECIFIED FOR GOLDEN CRAB)

Alternative 2. ABC = 2 MILLION POUNDS

Alternative 3. ABC = 1.5 MILLION POUNDS

Alternative 4. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE SSC.

Alternative 5. ABC = 4.0-4.5 MILLION POUNDS

The SSC recommended ABC for golden crab in April 2010 based on the control rule derived at that meeting. The Council rejected that control rule as noted above, and therefore removed ABC recommendations based on that control rule as illustrated for golden crab in the following motions.

MOTION #2: DELETE ALTERNATIVE 4 FROM ACTION 3.

Action 3. Establish an Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for the Golden Crab Fishery of the South Atlantic region.

Alternative 4. 336,905 pounds (recommendation from the SSC)

MOTION #3: REMOVE 336,905 POUNDS FROM ACTION 4, ALTERNATIVE 2 AND LEAVE IT BLANK.

*Action 4. Establish an Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for the Golden Crab Fishery of the South Atlantic region.
Alternative 2. ACL=ABC=336,905 pounds*

The Council agreed with the SSC comments from April 2010 that there is likely additional information that could be compiled for golden crab that could better support fishing level recommendations. One of the concerns is that there is quite a wide range of prior estimates of productivity and acceptable yield, as is illustrated by the overview and other documents from the 2009 Golden Crab-Wreckfish workshop. A memo requesting the following was submitted to the SEFSC to try and address these outstanding concerns and uncertainties:

1. Landings, mean size, effort, and CPUE over all available years.
2. Evaluation of prior assessments (Harper et al 1998 and 2000), the estimate of MSY put forth in the SEFSC memo from Dr. Powers dated 9/12/01, and other evidence used to determine stock status as reported in the 1999 and 2004 SAFE reports, as indicators to inform SSC recommendations for OFL and ABC.
3. Review of any golden crab research conducted since 2000.
4. Evaluation of the proportion of the population's distribution that is exploited by the current fishery, including consideration of the extent to which distance from shore, pending Deepwater Coral HAPCs, and Bahamian waters protect portions of the stock from harvest.

This information was requested by August 1, and will be provided to the SSC upon receipt.

B. CORAL

Information on landings and possible reference points for corals was provided in a presentation made at the April 2010 meeting (attachment 17).

Arguments presented at the June Council meeting suggested that the Coral resource was vast relative to the actual harvest and that species are able to repopulate after harvest. This led the Council to request additional coral information from SEFSC, with the requested delivery date August 1. (No information has been received at this writing. Any information received will be forwarded to the Committee via email or FTP site as appropriate)

Additional information for this meeting includes:

- Summary by SAFMC Staff of general information based on the documentation provided by Dr. Feddern (attachment 18)
- Summary of landings provided by FL FWC (attachment 19),
- Life history summary of various coral species (attachment 20)
- Summary of FL Keys Monitoring, provided by FL FWC (attachment 21)
- Response by SEFSC to SAFMC request (to be provided upon receipt)

C. Wreckfish

After extensive discussion of wreckfish issues, the SSC recommended that ABC was unknown and that Council should consider an ACL that does not exceed 200,000 pounds (attachment 8). One of the issues raised in April is that the management system of individual quotas tied to portions of the allowable harvest level potentially alters the relation between the recommended harvest and the realized harvest. Effort is reduced in the fishery, to the extent that recent landings are confidential because fewer than 3 harvesters are in operation in recent years. Landings are reduced and recent trends in landings, even if such landings could be publicly disseminated, are possibly not representative of fishery productivity. Landings through 1999

June 2010 Council Motions:

MAKE ALTERNATIVE 3 THE COUNCIL'S PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR MSY FOR WRECKFISH.

Alternative 3. MSY = 1.946 million pounds. This figure is the average landings from 1988-1994 which represent the years of high landings.

SET OFL = MSY AND ABC = 75%OFL FOR WRECKFISH.

Wreckfish landings for 1988-1998, copied from the 1999 SAFE report, are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Commercial wreckfish landings (in whole weight) by fishing year.

Fishing Year	Landings (whole lbs)	Mean Catch / Day (whole lbs)	Mean Catch/Trip
1988	617,662		
1989	4,161,965		
1990	1,970,299		
1991	1,926,088	984	6,254
1992	1,270,557	932	5,723
1993	1,144,726	758	5,451
1994	1,203,265	814	5,986
1995	644,997	751	4,607
1996	396,868	548	4,178
1997	248,084	628	4,459
1998	210,800	791	5,856

D. SARGASSUM

The SAFMC Sargassum FMP was approved in November 2002. Actions relating to fishing level recommendations include:

ACTION 1. Establish the Management Unit for pelagic *Sargassum* throughout the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and State Waters. The management unit is the population of pelagic *Sargassum* occurring within the South Atlantic Council's area of jurisdiction along the U.S. Atlantic coast from the east coast of Florida, including the Atlantic side of the Florida Keys, to the North Carolina/Virginia Border and within state waters of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and the Florida East Coast.

ACTION 2. Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for South Atlantic pelagic *Sargassum* is estimated to be 100,000 metric tons (220,460,000 pounds) wet weight per year.

ACTION 3. Specify Optimum Yield (OY) for pelagic *Sargassum* as 5,000 pounds wet weight per year.

ACTION 4. Specify Overfishing Level to meet Magnuson-Stevens Act Mandate for pelagic *Sargassum*. Overfishing is defined as the rate of harvest which compromises the stock's ability to produce MSY. The Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold (MFMT) is 9.0 to 18.0 units per year. The Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) is 25,000 metric tons (55,115,000 pounds).

At this time there is no known harvest of sargassum. The SSC recommended ABC=0 in April 2010, based on consideration of no harvest and sargassum as habitat. Discussions at the June Council meeting suggested that the Council could choose to set ACL to 0, but the SSC should recommend an ABC consistent with productivity levels and should not recommend an ABC of 0 simply because there is no current harvest.

Additional information regarding the justification for the Council's original actions on Sargassum is provided in attachment 22. A table of landings, 1976-2010, is also included in the attachment.

The SSC is asked to consider an ABC recommendation, and in doing so, to consider whether there is evidence to justify changing the current fishing level recommendations for sargassum.

5.3. Actions

Provide fishing level recommendations for Golden Crab, Corals, Sargassum, and Wreckfish.

6. Other Business

7. Review Recommendations and Draft Committee Report

8.