

SSC CHAIRMAN REPORT

June 11, 2008

Agenda Item 2: SEDAR 16 Planning

Anne Lange volunteered to observe at the review workshop. At present, the SA SSC does not have a direct volunteer to act as an independent reviewer; however, Doug Gregory will be representing the Gulf SSC as reviewer and could potentially serve that role for both councils. The chair requested the members give the act of volunteering for this role further consideration.

Agenda Item 3: SEDAR 18 Planning

John Carmichael discussed the potential for deferral for the scheduling for this SEDAR to the Commission. After minimal discussion, the SSC agreed to defer.

Agenda Item 4: SEDAR 19 Planning

Luiz Barbieri and Anne Lange volunteered to be observers.

Agenda Item 5: Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Comprehensive Amendment

A presentation from Roger Pugliese on the FEP/CEA was made to the SSC.

There was a concern that fishing activity occurred within the HAPC. It seemed contradictory that fishing was occurring in the HAPC but that there wouldn't be an impact on coral habitat. The staff explained that the HAPC was a mosaic of habitats (they have high resolution mapping of these areas) and where fishing was occurring would not impact the deep water corals.

Several sections of both the FEP and CEA are incomplete or are piecemeal, and some are outdated. For these reasons, it is not the best available science. The SSC requests that these concerns be addressed before the FEP is finalized, and that the SSC be granted another review of the document.

Agenda Item 6: Shrimp Amendment 7

The shrimp review panel report was presented and discussed by the SSC. Concerns were raised relative to the break down of the model used by the Beaufort Center to predict pink shrimp landings based on water temperature. The unexplained decline in the fishery-independent data served to reinforce the concern.

Two presentations regarding the status of the FMP and the economic analysis were also discussed by the group, with some general comments and suggestions provided.

Agenda Item 7: Spiny Lobster

The SSC approved the spiny lobster amendment with the suggestion that size at maturity for the individual lobster stocks be included (particularly for Florida and the Caribbean US).

Agenda Item 8: Snapper Grouper Amendment 15B

A presentation was given by Dr. S. Holiman on the economic analysis for assessing the impacts of the prohibition on the sale of recreationally caught bag limits. There was limited discussion, with much of the dialog focused on issues of illegally sold catches. The SSC endorsed the analysis as best available science.

Eric Williams discussed methodology to be used to convert weight of snowy groupers to numbers of individuals. The main question asked of the SSC was which selectivity should be applied a dome shaped selectivity (from the headboat) versus a flat top (from the commercial). After discussion which included the concern over the newly developing recreational fishery targeting large snowys off VA, and the impact the selectivity would have had on the previous assessment, the SSC recommended using the flat topped selectivity.

SSC endorsed Amendment 15B as best available science.

At the request of Gregg Waugh, the SSC discussed the alternatives for monitoring bycatch as outlined in 15B. After clarification from Staff, the SSC suggested alternative 3 reflects the best available science for monitoring bycatch in Snapper Grouper Amendment 15B.

Agenda Item 9: Limited Access Privilege Program Report

Presentation was given to the SSC discussing the results of the LAPP. An interest was expressed by a couple of SSC members to be involved in the developmental stage.

Agenda Item 10: Snapper Grouper Amendment 16

Gregg presented an overview of Amendment 16. Jack McGovern presented new information on values to be used to adjust effort for changes in fishing behavior in

response to closure due to quota being met. The SSC recommended he consult with the AP for a better indication of the values.

Discussion focused on issues associated with the requirement for dehooking and venting tools in Amendment 16. The SSC passed a motion requesting that this requirement be removed from the Amendment because of poor documentation of the benefits relative to those species outlined in 16. It was suggested by members of the SSC that this particular management measure be considered as a stand-alone amendment.

SSC endorsed Amendment 16 as best available science.

Agenda Item 11: Snapper Grouper Amendment 17

Without the time to vet this process, we were compelled to adopt an ad-hoc approach. Until NMFS or the Council provides the SSC with guidance on a process for establishing ABCs, the SSC is willing only to offer interim recommendations, since we cannot capture the uncertainty in factors such as stock assessment results, time lags in updating assessments, the degree of retrospective revision of assessment results, or projections.

We chose to tackle those species with the most information first. Given that a probabilistic approach had been applied to the data in the recent gag assessment, and that the approach has been peer-reviewed confidence in its use for determining the OFL and ABC levels was high. For those species that have been assessed but do not have probabilistic analyses associated with them, a motion was made for the SAFMC to request that those analyses be run and that these analyses be included as part of the terms of reference in future SEDAR assessments. These analyses are critical to the determination of ABCs in accounting for uncertainty.

For those assessed species, we developed an interim approach which set the OFL equal to the yield at MFMT (as outlined in the current rule) and the ABC equal to the yield at 75% Fmsy (the current proxy for Foy). Assuming the Council was to set the ACL equal to ABC, future management actions would be status quo.

For those data poor species identified in Amendment 17, we had landings. We attempted to develop an overarching procedure to be used for the four species, however, information from members indicated that fishery-independent projects indicated that speckled hind and Warsaw grouper were conspicuously absent from historical areas of catch. The group then decided to address the ABCs and OFL for the individual species. Because the OFL could not be determined, the incredibly small biomass for speckled hind and Warsaw and the high degree of uncertainty associated with these species, the group felt that any catch would likely result in overfishing of these stocks and therefore felt an ABC of zero was warranted.

Black and red groupers are not necessarily data-poor. The identified problem with these species was the lack of assessment. Because anecdotal evidence indicates that red are probably in a healthy state, the group used average landings over five years as a proxy for the OFL, setting the ABC slightly below the OFL was to account for uncertainty. There was less information relative to anecdotal status black grouper and as such, the ABC was set lower than that of red grouper.

There was considerable debate about these recommendations and a motion was drafted to rescind the motions for only the data-poor species. Concerns were expressed that the measures were inconsistent and/or were not conservative enough. After further debate and discussion, the motion failed from lack of support.

OFLs and ABCs were not recommended for the deep water or shallow water groups because of the lack of scientific basis for the groupings.

The SSC discussed and recommended a future meeting time for a more in-depth discussion with the goal being the development of guidelines for establishing controls rules for setting OFLs and ABCs. Unfortunately, scheduling conflicts within the group did not allow for this. A motion was made to request that the Council allow for the SSC to have an additional day at the December meeting for further discussion.

Agenda Item 12: SEDAR 15 Assessments

The committee received presentations on the red snapper, greater amberjack and mutton snapper assessments. There were some clarification questions on red snapper, but no major concerns were expressed for any of the assessments. The SSC passed motions to accept all three assessments as based on the best available science.

Agenda Item 13: Snapper Grouper Amendment 18

Gregg provided a status report on the scoping document for Amendment 18. The SSC did not have any comments or suggestions at this time.

Motions

SG Amend 15B

1) Move that the flat top selectivity curve be used for conversion of the recreational allocation in weight to numbers for snowy grouper in amendment 15B. This would result in converting the 4400 lb allocation to 523 fish.

Barbieri/Crosson. Carried.

2) Move that the report of Dr Holiman on social and economic evaluation is accepted as best available science.

Motion by Whitehead/Larkin. Carried

3) Move that the SSC endorses Amendment 15B as based on best available science.

Barbieri/Chester. Carried.

THE SSC SUGGESTS ALTERNATIVE 3 REFLECTS THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE FOR MONITORING BYCATCH IN SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 15B.

Amendment 16

4) Move that, despite appreciation of the effort extended to address bycatch reduction in Amendment 16, the committee determines that the justification for measures as applied to the species addressed in Amendment 16 intended to reduce bycatch are deficient and strongly urges that language be included to clearly documents the effects of such measures.

Cooper/Williams. (motion was substituted.)

5) Move to consider substitute motion (by Chester/Reichert). Motion to substitute carried.

Substitute Motion (4):

Move that, despite appreciation of the effort extended to address bycatch reduction in Amendment 16, the committee determines that the justification for measures as applied to the species addressed in Amendment 16 intended to reduce bycatch are deficient and strongly urges that language be included to clearly documents the effects of such measures.

Vote on the substitute motion: Carries.

5) Move that, with exception of items in approved motion regarding bycatch reduction, the committee determines that snapper-grouper Amendment 16 is based on the best available science.

Cooper/Barbieri. Carries.

Amendment 17

Chester/Lange Motion Carries.

6) Move to Recommend that Yield at MFMT applied to projected biomass=OFL, and yield at 75% Fmsy (current SAFMC default definition for Foy) applied to projected biomass = ABC, as a reasonable interim step to address the species in Amendment 17 and assessed through SEDAR. For gag grouper, for which a probabilistic examination of overfishing is available, establish an ABC consistent with the level adopted in December 2007. Given ACLs must be established annually, this interim approach will be reassessed each year.

Cooper/Barbieri. MOTION...CARRIES.

7) Move that the SSC recommend the SAFMC request the assessing organization for each SEDAR species perform a probabilistic analysis of overfishing for various catch levels

8) Move to set OFL equal to average landings over the last 5 years (2003-2007) and ABC=90% of OFL for those species in Amendment 17 which lack quantitative SEDAR assessments (red grouper, black grouper, speckled hind, warsaw grouper).

Gregory/Larkin. Failed.

9) Move to set ABC for Speckled Hind to 0 and to recommend that the OFL is unknown.

Williams/Chester. Carried.

10) Move to set ABC for Warsaw Grouper to 0 and to recommend that the OFL is unknown.

Williams/Reichert. Carried.

11) Move to set OFL for Red Grouper equal to average landings over the last 5 years (2003-2007) and ABC=95% of OFL.

Crosson/Gregory. Carried.

12) Move to set OFL for BLACK GROUPER equal to average landings over the last 5 years (2003-2007) and ABC=90% of OFL.

Crosson/Gregory. Carried.

13) Move to add black grouper and red grouper to the SEDAR assessment schedule ASAP. Recommend that white grunt be replaced by red grouper and hogfish be replaced by black grouper in SEDAR 19.

Buckel/Barbieri. Carried.

14) Move that there is no scientific basis for the shallow water and deep water species groupings proposed for amendment 17 and that the SSC cannot recommend OFL or ABC levels for the groupings.

Williams/Buckel. Carried.

Consent : Request guidance at next meeting for the ecosystem classification.

Tuesday, June 10.

Continue discussion on SG Amendment 17.

Move to consider next agenda item.

Crosson/None. Motion dies for lack of Second.

Move to revisit those species in amendment 17 having a SEDAR assessment, and to evaluate the uncertainty in the individual assessments to establish OFL and ABC recommendations. This shall be done in an SSC meeting prior to the September 2008 Council meeting.

Burgess/NONE. Motion dies for lack of second..

15) MOVE to hold an SSC meeting prior to the September 2008 Council meeting to revisit OFL and ABC recommendations for Amendment 17. The committee will evaluate uncertainty in individual assessments and the probability of overfishing at various exploitation levels for assessed stocks. The Committee will evaluate life history, fishery trends, and population dynamics information for the unassessed stocks. The Committee will develop OFL and ABC recommendations.

Burgess/Barbieri. Motion Carries.

16) Move that the ABC levels for amendment 17 set by the SSC in previous motions on Monday, June 9 2008, do not explicitly account for uncertainty in factors such as stock assessment results, time lags in updating assessments, the degree of retrospective revision of assessment results, nor projections.

Williams/Burgess. Carries.

17) Move to accept the SEDAR 15 red snapper assessment as the best available science

Buckel/Burgess Carried

18) Move to accept the Greater Amberjack assessment as best available science.

Burgess/Barbieri. Carries.

19) Move to accept the Mutton Snapper assessment as best available science.

Reichert/Cooper. Carries.

20) Move to rescind the OFL/ABC motions for red grouper and black grouper passed by the Committee on June 9.

Pollock/Williams. Motion Fails.

21) Move to rescind (motion 15 above, SSC meet pre Sept).

Burgess/Crosson. Carried.

22) Move that the SSC be allocated an extra day of meeting time at the December 2008 meeting to specifically address the OFL/ABC process. The SSC meeting should nonetheless start on Sunday afternoon like always.

Crosson/Burgess. Motion Carried.

Move to nominate Carolyn Belcher as chair elect.

Crosson/Reichert. Done.

Move to nominate Luiz Barbieri as vice chair elect.

Gregory/Crosson. Done.

Move to nominate Douglas Gregory as vice chair elect.

Barbieri/No Second

