

Science, Service, Stewardship



Improvement of Methods to Approve New Technologies and Protocols for Sea Turtle Safe Handling and Release

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Current Practices

- Currently new technologies and methods for sea turtle safe handling and release can only be incorporated into existing regulations through the FMP process
- This process typically takes 2-3 years
- This results in a delay in implementation of new technologies in both advancement and practice



History of Techniques and Requirements for Safe Handling of Threatened and Endangered Sea Turtles

- Technological Memorandum 524 June 2004
- Biological Opinion for GOM Reef Fish February 2005
- Biological Opinion for snapper/Grouper June 2006
- Technological Memorandum 580 December 2008
- Biological Opinion for GOM Reef Fish October 2009
- Technological Memorandum 580 revised October 2010
- Biological Opinion for GOM Reef Fish September 2011
- Draft Technological Memorandum 580 October 2015



Technological Memorandum 524 June 2004

- Established protocols for the HMS PLL Fisheries
- 2005 Biological Opinion for Reef Fish
- SERO presented these protocols to GMFMC for Amendment 18A



Technological Memorandum 580 December 2008

- Adds new gear and protocols to support Reef Fish 18A and Snapper/Grouper 13C
- Supports 2009 Biological Opinion for Reef Fish and 2006 for Snapper/Grouper in compliance of outreach and point of contact
- “New release tools may be certified by submitting them to the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center for testing.
- Gear specialists/researchers will assess item's usefulness and safety in removing gear from animals during laboratory and/or field trials. [Takes 6-9 months]
- When new items are certified by NOAA Fisheries, a notice will be published in the Federal Register.”



Technological Memorandum 580 December 2008 cont.

- However, before being published they must first be incorporated into an FMP Amendment [Takes 2-3 years]



Technological Memorandum 508 October 2010

- Supports Biological Opinions for GOM Reef Fish September 2009 and SAFMC Snapper/Grouper June 2006
- Adds new dehooker (NOAA Chain Link) and net (small Hoop net)
- Incorporates joint GOM Reef Fish and SAFMC Snapper/Grouper protocols and requirements



DRAFT Technological Memorandum 580 October 2015

- Adds new equipment (collapsible hoop net and hookout dehooker)
 - **approved for use by SEFSC in Jan 2015**
- Places more emphasis on fishing line removal as a significant reduction of post hooking mortality
- Reduces overall size of TM 580 from 130 pages to 77 pages
- Supports Biological Opinions 2006 and 2011



Biological Opinion Mandates

- NMFS must update its careful release protocols and modify release gears as new information becomes available. If necessary, NMFS, in cooperation with the GMFMC and SAFMC, must revise associated regulatory requirements.
- Explore potential fishing gear and fishing behavior modifications that reduce adverse impacts from the fishery.



Biological Opinion Mandates

- NMFS must update its careful release protocols and modify release gears as new information becomes available.
- If necessary, NMFS, in cooperation with the GMFMC and the SAFMC, must revise associated regulatory requirements.



Conclusion

- Development of new gears and technologies will continue
- NMFS, the SAFMC, and the GMFMC are mandated through Biological Opinions to promote gear development and update protocols
- A procedure must be in place to allow new available technologies to be incorporated into regulations in a timely fashion



Questions?