OVERVIEW

Joint Council Committee on South Florida Management Issues
Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel
3841 N Roosevelt Blvd, Key West, FL
(305) 296-8100

The Joint Committee will provide guidance on actions/alternatives in the amendment, discuss the hogfish stock boundary and management responsibility; receive a progress report on speckled hind and warsaw grouper; and receive a status report on the goliath grouper stock assessment.

Minutes
The committee will review and approve the minutes from the last Joint Council Committee meeting (Attachment 1a) and from the last Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Steering Committee (Attachment 1b).

South Atlantic Species Removal in Snapper Grouper Amendment 35
Gregg Waugh, South Atlantic Council Staff, will update the committee on the status of Amendment 35 using the public hearing summary (Attachment 2). The Amendment would remove black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. These species would then be managed by the State of Florida. The amendment also addresses golden tilefish endorsements. A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 13th, beginning at 5:30 pm in the same meeting room. Public comments will be taken after a short staff presentation. The South Atlantic Council will review public comments, request additional comments, and approve all actions during the March 2-6, 2015 meeting in St. Simons Island, GA. Final approval of the amendment for formal review will occur during the June 8-12, 2015 meeting in Key West, FL. Regulations should be effective by January 2016.

Joint Gulf/South Atlantic Generic Amendment
Council staffs will review the actions in the amendment using the Decision Document (Attachment 3) and the Draft Amendment (Attachment 4). The Decision Document includes the wording for the actions/alternatives and will be used during the meeting to discuss and provide guidance through motions. Each Council Committee will make separate motions and vote separately. Some analyses are included in the Draft Amendment and some are included in the folder named (Data_Analyses). Council staffs will walk the committee through the analyses action by action.
Hogfish Stock Boundary & Management Responsibility

Gregg Waugh, South Atlantic Council Staff, will review this issue using results from the Hogfish Stock Assessment (Attachment 5a) and the South Atlantic Council’s SSC’s review (Attachment 5b). The Assessment indicated there are 3 stocks: Gulf, South Florida, and Carolinas. The South Florida Stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. The South Atlantic SSC reviewed the assessment (see pages 9-12) and provided the following fishing level recommendations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Deterministic</th>
<th>Probabilistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overfished evaluation</td>
<td>Yes, F/Fmsy = 1.593</td>
<td>1.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overfishing evaluation</td>
<td>Yes, SSB/MSST = 0.466</td>
<td>0.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFMT (Fmsy)</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSBmsy (male &amp; female mature biomass, units not reported)</td>
<td>1,043.44</td>
<td>1,033.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSST (male &amp; female mature biomass, units not reported)</td>
<td>856.664</td>
<td>848.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSY (1000 lb)</td>
<td>156.986</td>
<td>156.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y at 75% Fmsy (1000 lb)</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC Control Rule Adjustment</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Star (Prebuild)</td>
<td>27.5% (72.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFL (1000 lb)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ABC RECOMMENDATIONS: Projection results at the recommended P* were not available when this report was finalized. The projection report will be included as an appendix to this report.

Landings from the South Florida Stock from the Gulf Council’s area of jurisdiction are low and details will be provided at the meeting. If landings are sufficiently small, it may be effective for the South Atlantic Council to manage the South Florida Stock in the South Atlantic Council’s area of authority only. This would be more efficient to have one Council responsible for the rebuilding program for this hogfish stock.

The Joint Committees will be asked for their guidance with the understanding that each Council would need to address this issue at their upcoming meetings.

Speckled Hind & Warsaw Grouper

The following information is from the summary report of the July 2014 meeting:
“The Committee received a short report on the progress of the Joint Gulf and South Atlantic Speckled Hind and Warsaw Grouper working group. The charge of the group is to explore methods to identify a more informed stock status for warsaw grouper and speckled hind to help justify management discrepancies for these two species. The working group had discussed terms of reference and broad focus areas. One of the terms of reference was to develop a list of research elements to reduce uncertainty; another was to address potential analytical approaches for an assessment. Warsaw grouper and speckled hind are currently undergoing overfishing in the South Atlantic Council; in the Gulf, the status of the stocks is unknown. The overfishing condition in the South Atlantic Council is based on an outdated stock assessment, and the working group is trying to determine if new information is available to conduct some type of data poor method. Target date for short report on Speckled Hind and Warsaw Grouper end of 2014.”
John Hunt, FWC Staff, will provide an update.

**Goliath Grouper Stock Assessment**

The following information is from the summary report of the July 2014 meeting:

“Dr. Barbieri presented an overview of ongoing goliath research. He summarized studies on biology and ecology occurring at various universities and agencies and a detailed literature review by Collins (2014). The geographic distribution of the information available on goliath grouper is improving but is minimal outside the State of Florida. He categorized the new information with a report card from A-F for indices of abundance, reproduction, longevity, size-at-age composition, fisheries data, and a large-scale mark-recapture survey. The next steps for a stock assessment were summarized as minor progress had been made on addressing critical assessment data needs. The Councils should decide if an uncertain assessment would be acceptable based on the catch free model and data poor methods implemented if another stock assessment occurs. Ultimately, a new assessment was recommended, but prior to this the terms of reference should be better suited for stocks like goliath grouper. Both Councils have developed reference points; other options besides maximum sustainable yield (MSY) reference points could also be considered. A time series of landings after the 1990s for goliath grouper is not available; therefore, a more comprehensive index of abundance across age ranges and geographic distribution is needed.

Dr. Porch stated that there were several exciting new approaches for genetic tagging, including “next of kin” methods that could be used to get better estimates of the abundance and mortality of various age classes. He thought these methods, if implemented over 2-3 years, could result in valid estimates of the number of adult goliath grouper, which in turn could be used to define potential overfishing limits (OFLs). It would be beneficial if the Councils showed support for this new technology.

One Committee member asked if they move forward with an assessment if it would need to go through the SEDAR process or if Florida FWC could complete the assessment. It was stated that Florida FWC could complete the assessment, and the review process would be conducted through SEDAR. Because the same modeling environment could be used, a Standard Assessment would suffice instead of using the Benchmark process. The Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Joint South Florida Steering Committee made the following recommendation to the Joint South Florida Committee: **Based on additional research and new technology for indices of abundance that Florida FWC move forward with a stock assessment for goliath grouper and is in full support of the “next of kin” genetic mapping technology to better estimate indices of abundance across age classes.**

The Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper meeting concluded.”
“The Joint South Florida Committee reconvened and passed the following motions on goliath grouper.

**Motion: Request a standard stock assessment for goliath grouper by FWC with a review by SEDAR**
SAFMC – Motion Approved
GMFMC – Motion Approved

The Committee discussed the issue of mercury content in the flesh of goliath grouper. One Committee member stated they typically don’t get involved in making such testing and research recommendations. After discussion, the Committee passed the following motion so that it was clearly listed as a research priority and in hopes that this information could be collected at the same time the genetic “next of kin” mapping was being completed on goliath grouper.

**Motion: Request that mercury testing be included when tissue samples of goliath grouper are collected**
SAFMC – Motion Approved
GMFMC – Motion Approved

The Committee discussed the next steps of the Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Committee. It was concluded the Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Committee had met its goals based on the original motion. Therefore, goliath grouper will be retained on the agenda at future Joint South Florida Committee meetings and the Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Committee could be dissolved.

**To be retained as an agenda item during future meetings of the Joint Council Committee on South Florida Issues and dissolve the Ad Hoc Goliath Grouper Committee**

John Hunt, FWC Staff, will provide an update on the status of data collection and the stock assessment.

**Next Meeting**
The Committee should discuss the need for, timing, and location of the next Committee meeting. Assuming both Councils approve the amendment for public hearings during their June 8-12, 2015 meetings in Key West, FL and public hearings are held in August 2015, the Joint Committee could meet to review public comments and determine necessary modifications to the amendment before it goes to each Council for final approval. The South Atlantic Council has scheduled their final review in December 2015 and the Gulf Council in January 2016.