



Goliath Grouper ABC Review

Provided to:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's
Scientific and Statistical Committee
April 2022 Meeting

Council Request

- FL-FWC March 2022 meeting: Approved a limited, highly regulated harvest of Goliath Grouper in state waters
- Council at March 2022 meeting made the following motion: Request that the SSC reconsider the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for Goliath Grouper



ABC Development

- Moratorium since 1990
- SSC Recommendation, April 2011:
 - Support conclusions of SEDAR 23 Review Panel: stock status is unknown (for both biomass and exploitation levels)
 - Continue current regulations with no directed fishery (no removals)
 - Set OFL as unknown, and $ABC = 0$



SEDAR 47

- SEDAR 47: Last stock assessment conducted by FL-FWC was completed in 2016 with a terminal year of 2014.
- Two age-structured assessment models were employed for SEDAR 47: catch-free model and stochastic stock reduction analysis (SSRA)
- Both models indicated that the spawning stock biomass (SSB) likely exceeded the management reference target ($SSB_{F50\%SPR}$) in the more recent years.
- Both models suggest that Goliaths are no longer in the overfished condition.



SEDAR 47: Review Panel

- Main areas of concern were the available data, treatment, high uncertainty of the landings (catch) and the indices of relative abundance, and the structure of the chosen assessment models.
- Not adequate to support stock status inferences, and as a result should not be used for management advice.
- However, general increase in abundance since moratorium appears to be a reliable signal.



SSC Review 2016

- SSC reviewed assessment in October 2016, and again accepted the recommendations of the Review Panel:
 - Not adequate to support stock status inferences or fishing level recommendations
 - OFL is unknown, ABC = 0 (remains unchanged)
- Unlikely overfishing is occurring based on the existing moratorium and some survey-based evidence of increasing stock abundance
- Evidence the stock is recovering



SSC Review 2022

- Action

- Consider new data streams and updated indices since last stock assessment.
- Determine what analysis would be needed to revise an ABC currently set at 0.
- Outline an approach for review of these data

