

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PANEL OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SEP Meeting Overview**

**April 25-26, 2022**

**Held via Webinar**

## PURPOSE

This meeting is convened to discuss and provide input to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) on:

- Recent and developing Council actions and amendments,
- Citizen Science Program
- Research on alternative mechanisms for distributing fish to the recreational sector
- Allocation Decision Tool and stakeholder input for allocations,
- Best Fishing Practices outreach lexicon,
- Update on Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35,
- South Atlantic commercial golden tilefish fishery.

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## DOCUMENTS

**Attachment 1a.** Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview

**Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2021 meeting

**Attachment 2.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Council Amendments

**Attachment 3.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

**Attachment 4.** Using field experiments to assess alternative mechanisms for distributing fish to the recreational sector presentation

**Attachment 5a.** Allocations Decision Tool discussion document

**Attachment 5b.** Stakeholder input for allocations discussion document

**Attachment 5c.** Allocations Decision Tool presentation

**Attachment 6.** Best Fishing Practices outreach guidance

**Attachment 7.** Regulatory Amendment 35 update presentation

**Attachment 8.** Comparison of Tilefish Longline Behavior in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico presentation

## **1. Introduction**

### 1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1a.** Socio-Economic Panel Agenda Overview
- **Attachment 1b.** Minutes from the April 2021 meeting

### 1.2. ACTIONS

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve April 2021 Minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

## **2. Recent and Developing Council Actions**

### 2.1. Document

- **Attachment 2.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Council Amendments

### 2.2. Overview

Council staff will provide a briefing on recent and upcoming amendments and actions (*Attachment 2*). The following amendments may be of particular interest to SEP members.

#### *Amendment 48 (Wreckfish ITQ Program Modernization)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** The Council finished its second review of the Wreckfish ITQ program in September of 2019. As part of the review there were several recommendations made to modernize the program, which will be addressed in this amendment. The amendment also includes review of the ITQ goals and objectives and adoption of updated goals and objectives for the entire Snapper Grouper FMP.

**Action Summary:** moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; fishing season and spawning closure; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and vessel monitoring system requirements.

#### **Key Events:**

- September 2020: Amendment development initiated.
- October 2020: Meeting of the Wreckfish shareholders and wholesale dealers held to discuss amendment development.
- March 2021: Scoping held during the Council meeting.
- September 2021: Decision made to have Amendment 48 come to the Council every other or every third meeting, depending on workload.

- March 2022: Council reviewed actions and alternatives.
- Spring 2022: Meeting of the wreckfish shareholders to discuss amendment development and voluntary pilot program for the commercial electronic logbook.

### *Amendment 52 (Golden Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish)*

**Purpose of Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment for golden tilefish (SEDAR 66). Golden tilefish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The amendment would also respond to increased recreational effort on blueline tilefish.

**Action Summary:** Adjust catch levels and sector allocations for golden tilefish, consider modifications to commercial seasons (longline and hook-and-line) and recreational postseason accountability measures. Adjust the recreational bag limit and season for blueline tilefish and modify recreational postseason accountability measures.

**Key Events:**

- June 2021: Plan amendment initiated.
- October 2021: Snapper Grouper AP provided recommendations.
- December 2021: Approved the amendment for scoping and added actions to address blueline tilefish recreational management.
- February 2022: Scoping meetings held February 1, 2, and 3.
- March 2022: The Council reviewed scoping comments.

### *Regulatory Amendment 35 (Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper Catch Levels)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Respond to the latest stock assessment for Red Snapper (SEDAR 73). Red Snapper are overfished and overfishing is occurring, mainly due to the large number of Red Snapper that are released dead. Dead releases are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex. The amendment would consider management changes to reduce release mortality in the snapper grouper fishery that would lead to possible adjustment to the recommended ABC for Red Snapper.

**Action Summary:** reduce dead discards in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and modify the Red Snapper ABC and ACLs.

**Key Events:**

- June 2021: The Council received the results of SEDAR 73 and requested the SSC review the recommended ABC.
- September 2021: Reviewed the SSC's recommendation and initiated amendment.
- December 2021: Reviewed the Snapper Grouper AP's feedback and an information paper. Staff directed to investigate management changes to reduce dead discards in the snapper grouper fishery such that a possible adjustment to the ABC for Red Snapper can be considered.
- Winter 2022: Initial scoping conducted January 18-February 4.
- March 2022: The Council defined a list of potential management changes to explore further and obtain SSC feedback in April 2022.

### *Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permits and Reporting)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Address deficiencies in recreational data through the creation of a permit and reporting requirement for private recreational anglers.

**Action Summary:** This amendment will investigate requiring a permit for anglers to participate in the recreational snapper grouper fishery and whether trip reporting requirements would be required.

**Key Events:**

- November 2020: Council suspended work on the amendment (which was initiated in 2017) and directed staff to convene a workgroup to explore approaches for a private recreational permit and reporting requirements in the South Atlantic region. The workgroup convened three times during 2021.
- December 2021: Council requested that discussion on this amendment be added to the March 2022 agenda.
- February 2022: Recreational Reporting Workgroup met and formulated recommendations for the Council’s consideration.
- March 2022: Council reviewed background information, recommendations from the workgroup, and directed staff to assemble candidates for an ad hoc advisory panel to be selected in June 2022.

*Holistic Approach to Snapper Grouper Fishery Management*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** Dead releases are a major issue in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and affect many species within the complex. The Council has directed a management strategy evaluation (MSE) project that would consider multispecies effects of potential management changes and be used to develop a more holistic approach to management of the snapper grouper fishery. The amendment will follow the MSE project and consider implementation of management changes evaluated through the MSE.

**Action Summary:** This amendment will provide actions intended to incorporate recommendations from the MSE project.

**Key Events:**

- June 2021: The Council received the results of SEDAR 73 that indicated Red Snapper is not yet rebuilt and is undergoing overfishing.
- September 2021: The Council reviewed the SSC’s recommendations and provided direction to staff to begin development of a long-term amendment to revise management measures in the snapper grouper fishery.
- December 2021: The Council reviewed a proposed work plan for a management strategy evaluation for the fishery and directed staff to continue development of this project. The management strategy evaluation is intended to inform the Council on potential tradeoffs in the fishery if different suites of actions are selected. The MSE is scheduled to begin in June 2022 and take two years to complete.

*Amendment 10 (Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures)*

**Purpose of the Amendment:** This amendment implements catch level recommendations from the Council’s SSC and revises sector allocations and ACLs for dolphin and wahoo, addresses deficiencies in the recreational AMs for dolphin and wahoo, and responds to public comments received on changes needed in the dolphin wahoo fishery.

**Action Summary:** Revise the total ACLs, sector allocations, and accountability measures for dolphin and wahoo. Also allow the retention of dolphin and wahoo when trap, pot, or buoy gear are onboard a vessel, remove the operator card requirement, and reduce the recreational vessel limit for dolphin from 60 fish to 54 fish.

### **Key Events:**

- March 2016: The Council directed staff to begin development of a joint dolphin wahoo and snapper grouper amendment to examine different ways to allocate or share quota between the commercial and recreational sectors for dolphin and yellowtail snapper.
- June 2016: Approved for scoping.
- December 2016: The Council split Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 from Snapper Grouper Amendment 44.
- March 2017: The Council decided to stop work on the amendment until revised MRIP data were available.
- December 2018: The Council directed staff to start work again on the amendment.
- June 2020: The Council received revised catch level recommendations for dolphin and wahoo.
- March 2021: Approve for public hearings.
- June 2021: Final vote to approve amendment for submittal to NMFS.
- October 2021: The amendment was submitted to NMFS.
- May 2, 2022: Regulations effective

### **2.3. Presentation and Discussion**

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

### **2.4. ACTIONS**

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to brief the SEP on potential Council actions that may be presented to the group for review later in the meeting or at a future SEP meeting.

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **3. Update on the Citizen Science Program**

#### **3.1. Document**

- **Attachment 3.** Citizen Science Program update presentation

#### **3.2. Overview**

Julia Byrd, SAFMC staff, will provide an update program activities and recent efforts of the [SAFMC's Citizen Science Program](#). Projects currently underway include FISHstory and [SAFMC Release](#). FISHstory uses historic dock photos to document species and length composition data in the charter and headboat fisheries from the 1940s-1970s prior to when dedicated catch monitoring programs began. SAFMC Release works with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen to collect information on discards using a mobile app. This project originally started by collecting information on scamp, but has recently expanded to include other shallow water grouper species and will also soon include red snapper.

The Citizen Science Program is undergoing an initial program evaluation that will gather baseline data on knowledge, attitudes, collaborations, engagement, and trust levels of various stakeholders. As part of this process, the program will conduct interviews and develop an online survey to gather necessary information.

### Presentation and Discussion

Julia Byrd, SAFMC staff

#### 3.3. ACTIONS

Provide feedback and guidance on survey related aspects of the Citizen Science Program evaluation.

#### Discussion Questions:

The Citizen Science Program is operating on a limited budget, keeping that in mind please consider the following questions:

1. In your experience, what can help to get a good response rate with an online survey?
2. With limit resources, how can we try to get participants from outside the Council's typical network of people?
3. How long should we consider keeping the survey open?

### **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **4. Using field experiments to assess alternative mechanisms for distributing fish to the recreational sector**

##### 4.1. Document

- **Attachment 4.** Using field experiments to assess alternative mechanisms for distributing fish to the recreational sector presentation

##### 4.2. Overview

Dr. Alexander Gordan of the SEFSC will present recent research and a potential pilot project on the use of field experiments to evaluate alternative methods for distributing fish to the recreational sector. The pilot project is designed to better inform future distributions of fisheries resources allocated to the recreational sector.

##### 4.3. Presentation

Dr. Alexander Gordon, SEFSC

#### 4.4. ACTIONS

Evaluate the information presented, provide feedback on the nature of data to be collected from anglers in the project, and make recommendations on the project. In general, this agenda item is meant to update the SEP on research relevant to fisheries in the Southeast.

### SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

## 5. Allocation Decision Tree Blueprint

### 5.1. Documents

- **Attachment 5a.** Allocation Decision Tree Blueprint
- **Attachment 5b.** Stakeholder input for allocations discussion document
- **Attachment 5c.** Allocation Decision Tree Blueprint presentation

### 5.2. Overview

Making sector allocation decisions is often a difficult and complicated process. To help the Council incorporate multiple sources of information, in addition to landings, when making sector allocations, the Council has developed a Decision Tree Approach to help the determine salient issues when discussing sector allocations and develop an organized approach to allocations. Over approximately the past year, the Allocation Decision Tree Approach has been reviewed by many of the Council's advisors, including the SEP, and revised accordingly. Questions within the approach have been refined and developed into a tool that is intended to provide concise guidance when examining to biological, economic, and social aspects of allocation decisions.

To help inform answers to some of the questions within the tool, Fishery Performance Reports (FPRs) will be relied upon where appropriate, particularly social and economic portions of the reports. Fishery Performance Reports are developed by the Council's advisory panels (APs) and rely on AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. As such, the Council has asked staff to create additional questions to ask AP members when developing FPRs that will help further inform aspects of the Allocation Decision Tool, focusing on changing species distribution, importance of abundance to the recreational sector, and cultural or historic significance of a species. In addition to the FPRs, the Council would like to solicit similar information from the public through an online form similar to the [Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Fishermen Feedback](#) (formerly 'Something's Fishy') tool. This tool would be made available at the same time a fishery performance report was conducted.

### 5.3. Presentation

Christina Wiegand and John Hadley, SAFMC staff



#### 5.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and provide feedback on the Allocation Decision Tool social and economic questions. Also provide feedback and recommendations on Fishery Performance Reports and the public input tool.

##### Discussion Questions:

1. Allocation Decision Tool questions: Economic
  - a. Keeping in mind the need to focus on readily available data and completion of the decision tree in a relatively short time (several weeks to a few months), does the SEP feel that the set of questions presented covering economic topics is adequate?
    - i. Given the relative lack of specific and dynamic information on demand, is the use of proxies appropriate? If not, are there recommendations for solutions or other sources of information that could be used and applied in a time-sensitive manner?
  - b. Are the resulting recommendations from the economic decision trees appropriate? Will they help guide allocation decisions without being too prescriptive?
2. Allocation Decision Tool questions: Social
  - a. Does the SEP feel that the outlined data analyses are adequate? Are there other readily available analyses or data sources that should be examined?
  - b. Given the need to complete any decision tree related analysis in a short amount of time, what is the best way to summarize and present available qualitative data?
  - c. Are the resulting recommendations from the social decision trees appropriate? Are they clear enough to guide allocation decisions without being too prescriptive?
3. Fishery Performance Report questions:
  - a. Are the proposed additional discussion questions for developing the Fishery Performance Reports sufficient to gather the information needed for future discussions of allocations?
  - b. What improvements could be made to the discussion questions to produce more valuable information? Are there topics important to allocations that are missing from the Fishery Performance Reports?
  - c. Fishery Performance Reports are time consuming to conduct with advisory panel members, are there any questions that seem redundant or unnecessary?
4. Public Input Tool questions:
  - a. The public is asked to provide input to the Council often (public hearings, meeting public comment etc.) How can staff ensure that the new public input tool stands out and isn't overly burdensome on stakeholders?

- b. Given constraints associated with the PRA, how can staff structure the tool to elicit information that is important for the Council’s allocation discussions?
- c. Given time constraints, other than the analyses listed, are there other ways to present the data gathered through the new public input tool.
- d. Any ideas for a catchy name for the new public input tool?

**SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**6. Best Fishing Practices outreach lexicon**

6.1. Document

- **Attachment 6.** Best Fishing Practices outreach guidance

6.2. Overview

The Council has partnered with Sea Grant programs in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to create a new South Atlantic Reef Fish Extension and Communication Fellowship. The Fellow will be conducting outreach on best fishing practices, Citizen Science efforts, and reef fish science being undertaken in the region. Specific emphasis will be put on methods to reduce barotrauma related release mortality in the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery.

Outreach efforts will include media tours (chartered fishing trips) where project partners and outdoor science writers may tag along to see best fishing practices and citizen science in action. Additionally, the fellow will visit fishing tackle and sporting good shops, sportfishing clubs, and marinas to connect with fishermen, share outreach materials, and hold seminars with key influencers in the offshore fishing community. The goal of these outreach efforts is to generate awareness and enthusiasm for best fishing practices and citizen science projects.

6.3. Presentation

Ashley Oliver and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC staff

6.4. ACTIONS

Provide feedback and guidance on Best Fishing Practices lexicon and outreach.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can staff present best fishing practices as the responsibility of an ethical fishermen without inadvertently offending fishermen or sounding unsympathetic to the practicalities of being on the water?

2. Are there key words or jargon that staff should be using (i.e., “floaters” instead of “experiencing barotrauma”) when communicating with fishermen?
3. How can staff make an immediate impression on tackle shops, considering both time and financial constraints.
4. How can staff help encourage those who are influential in fishing communities to not just utilize but share information related to best fishing practices?

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **7. Update on Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35**

#### 7.1. Document

- **Attachment 7.** Regulatory Amendment 35 update presentation

#### 7.2. Overview

In March 2022, the Council initiated a regulatory amendment to reduce release mortality in the snapper grouper fishery and implement catch levels for red snapper based on the SEDAR 73 stock assessment. SEDAR 73 indicating that the South Atlantic red snapper stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing, but is making adequate progress according to its current rebuilding plan. The assessment indicated that the majority of red snapper fishing mortality occurs as release mortality rather than through landings. While increased use of best practices, including descending devices, has increased survival rates for released fish, the high number of red snapper caught out of season has continued the high number of fish estimated to die as a result of being caught and released. Therefore, the Council is investigating potential management measures to reduce out-of-season encounters for red snapper as well as other snapper grouper species, including time, area, and depth based restrictions. As part of the information gathering process, Council staff is compiling social and economic information on the Snapper Grouper fishery that are relevant to seasonality of the fishery, effort within the fishery, and previous Council efforts to examine similar time, area, and depth based restrictions.

#### 7.3. Presentation

Dr. Mike Schmidtke, SAFMC staff

#### 7.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to update the SEP on recent Council actions and brief the SEP on the potential need for input in the future.

## **SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

## 8. South Atlantic Golden Tilefish fishery

### 8.1. Documents

- **Attachment 8.** Comparison of Tilefish Longline Behavior in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico presentation

### 8.2. Overview

The Council is in the process of developing Amendment 52 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan that will in part address management changes to the commercial golden tilefish fishery. As part of this examination of the fishery, a meeting is planned this fall for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish Endorsement holders to discuss potential changes that may be needed in the fishery.

Dr. Scott Crosson, SEFSC staff, will present recent research on the commercial golden tilefish fishery in the Southeast. This will be followed up by a discussion on potential questions that Council staff could consider asking endorsement holders on management changes that could improve the social and economic performance of the fishery.

### 8.3. Presentation

Dr. Scott Crosson, Christina Wiegand, and John Hadley

### 8.4. ACTIONS

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What topics should staff consider asking shareholders that could lead to improved social and economic outcomes for the fishery?
  - I. Management measures that could lead to improvements in economic performance
    - a) Increase revenue
    - b) Reduce costs
    - c) Improve price
  - II. Management measures that could address social and equity topics
    - a) Distribution of profits
      - i. Crew wages and wellbeing
    - b) Safety at sea
    - c) Resilience and diversification

## **9. Other Business**

## **10. Opportunity for Public Comment**

## **11. Report and Recommendations Review**

## **12. Next SEP Meeting**

- Potential Fall 2022 webinar to discuss social and economic aspects of the Snapper Grouper MSE
- Spring 2023 Annual Meeting in Charleston, SC