



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston SC 29405

Call: (843) 571-4366 | Toll-Free: (866) SAFMC-10 | Fax: (843) 769-4520 | Connect: www.safmc.net

Melvin Bell, Chair | Stephen J. Poland, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

SAFMC Recreational Fishery Topics Meeting

November 9, 2020

1. Recreational Reporting: Snapper Grouper Amendment 46

The Council received an overview presentation on the topics in the amendment and was provided the last options paper from April 2018. The amendment includes actions related to private recreational reporting to address ongoing issues with high uncertainty and low precision in catch estimates and respond to input from recreational stakeholders during development of the Vision Blueprint and the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel.

The Council recommended discontinuing work on this amendment. However, the Council will continue to address reporting issues through other efforts such as the joint workgroup (see item 4) and recommends evaluating how state data collection and permitting programs may be used to improve catch estimates. Issues to consider include determining the purpose of a permit, the role of the states vs NMFS in reporting and permitting, and how state programs like the Florida Reef Fish Survey operate.

2. Recreational Accountability Measures: Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 31

The Council received an overview presentation on the amendment and the most recent decision document from December 2019. This amendment proposes revisions to accountability measures (AMs) to increase flexibility. It was noted that work was halted due to the changes in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates, with the intent to restart once the impacts of the survey modifications on recreational catch estimates were better understood.

The Council recommended discontinuing work on this amendment. The Council noted that there were ongoing concerns with the MRIP estimates as well as a lack of widespread understanding of how and why various estimates changed. The Council expressed interest in pursuing revisions to AMs through individual species amendments such as those now underway for the Dolphin Wahoo and Snapper Grouper FMPs. It was further suggested that some AM-related recommendations may come from the joint working group (see item 4 below).

3. MyFishCount Program Report

The Council received a final report on the MyFishCount pilot program initiated in 2017. The program developed an electronic reporting app and web portal targeted to private anglers to explore the potential for reporting requirements in the region and supplement information on recreational fisheries in the region. The program initially targeted participants in the snapper grouper fishery and was focused on coastal counties of the South Atlantic states. During 2019 and 2020 the program expanded to allow all private recreational anglers to report via the app and an aggressive outreach campaign was launched. The Council's role in the project concluded with transfer of the program to the Angler Action Foundation in December 2020.

4. Report of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Joint Workgroup for Sec. 102 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Act

The Council received an update on the activities of the joint working group and an overview of the background documentation included in the Briefing Book. Much of the discussion by the group so far has been directed to background information and recreational fishery issues occurring in both the Gulf and South Atlantic. More in-depth discussion of issues and development of recommendations and potential solutions is expected at future meetings.

5. Recreational Issues Discussion and Recommendation

The Committee withheld most discussion until this final topic on the agenda, to ensure the discussion could address all the meeting topics. The discussion was guided by several trigger questions below.

- What recreational fishery issues does the Council consider most important?

The Council considers ensuring reliable catch estimates and optimizing fishery access to be important issues at this time.

The Council recommended continuing to address permitting and reporting through the joint and SAFMC working groups; evaluating AMs on species-by-species basis as needed in upcoming FMP amendments; and discontinuing development of amendments 31 and 46 at this time.

- Is the Council interested in considering tags for improving data collection or controlling effort or harvest?

The Council is not interested in pursuing tagging programs or tagging regulations for these purposes.

- Mandating large hooks may reduce discards of smaller and undersize fish. Is this a management measure the Council would consider?

The Council is not interested in pursuing hook size regulations at this time. More information is needed. The Council recommends developing research needs and recommendations to identify additional best practices to reduce discard losses, estimate discard mortality, determine the selectivity of discard losses, and how changes in discard selectivity may impact population conditions. In addition, the Council recommends evaluating the performance of slot limits used in conjunction with descending devices.

- Is the Council interested in pursuing regional management approaches, such as state by state ACL allocations, to address recreational fishery challenges?

The Council is open to considering such regulatory approaches for individual species, such as Spanish Mackerel.

MOTION 1:

Move to form an ad hoc committee of Council, NMFS, ACCSP, and state representatives to identify options and determine feasibility of state administered private recreational data collection and angler or vessel permitting programs. The committee will report to the Council at each meeting and complete its work by December 2021.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Direction to staff –

- Meet via webinar (including FRNs)
- Have Florida give a presentation on the details of the Florida State Reef Fish Survey.
- Focus on programs directed at ‘specialized’ fisheries: primarily reef fish.
- Compare federal vs state permitting and data collection approaches.
- Request MRIP report on the rare event species working group.
- Council staff provide admin-logistics support.
- Chair: select from members
- Membership:
 - 4 state council reps + other Council members
 - 1-2 state staffers per state (if desired, not required ea state)
 - SERO-MRIP-SEFSC
 - ACCSP
 - Others TBD
 - Submit names to Mel-Steve-John by Dec 9