

Port Meeting Summary:
Charleston, SC
February 17, 2014, 6 p.m. session

1) Reducing Discards:

Issues Not Working –

- Current size limits (recreational) for some species cause discards.

Solutions –

- Eliminating size limits to reduce discards.
- Create a set poundage limit for recreational harvest with no size limits (zero discards). For example, you can catch 15 pounds of snapper grouper species per trip regardless of size.
- Consider new methods and technologies to decrease barotrauma (fish descending tools, etc.)

2) Flexibility with ACLs and Allocation:

Issues Not Working –

- Current seasons for certain species
- The recreational ACLs for some species (scamp) are not being met each year which is not maximizing harvest for the recreational sector.
- Current system of quota management and possession limits leading to unnecessary discards.

Solutions –

- Staggered recreational fishing seasons to extend the season for key species (like black sea bass); Suggestion to have one month 'on' and one month 'off' or fishing is only open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (similar to other wild game hunting regulations).
- Allow underages in harvest in one sector to roll over to other sectors within a season/fishing year. Would be assessed in-season and only apply to one fishing season.
- In-season trip/bag limit adjustment for the recreational sector (similar to what is currently done in the commercial sector with step-down limits once 75% of the ACL is met).
- Allow the state to manage certain species for the recreational sector (black sea bass).

3) Red Snapper Management:

Issues Not Working –

- Red snapper mini-seasons (weekends) are being held while the fish are spawning.
- The number of fishing weekends is not enough (for planning purposes).
- *Data collection and analysis is not quick enough.*
- *Data from all states are being lumped together for analysis and fishermen can't see how well the fishery is doing in their own state.*
- *What fishermen are seeing on the water is not matching what the stock assessment is saying and how the fish are being regulated.*

Solutions –

- Develop a method for calculating the health of the SC fishery.

4) Better Data & Research (Accuracy/Timeliness/Geographically) & Reporting:

Issues Not Working –

- Data used in stock assessments may not be from sampling conducted in all 12 months of the year.

- Data and science on actual catches of specific species (black sea bass and red snapper) needs to be more accurate.
- Recreational data collection (analysis) is too slow.
- Regional differences in the fishery and possible regional management strategies need to be considered.

Solutions –

- Implement electronic reporting for recreational sector (web-based or mobile technology).
- Create a separate recreational permit/license for the snapper grouper fishery.
- Develop methods to incorporate anecdotal information into data collection programs and analysis. (Video, self-reported data, etc.)
- Create a “reef fish stamp” to improve recreational data.
- Add a check box on state recreational fishing licenses to indicate if the license holder fishes offshore. (To help target the MRIP data collection better.)

5) Habitat Protection (Focused on Spawning Sites):

Issues Not Working –

- Large numbers of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could create overfishing everywhere else that is not an MPA.

Solutions –

- Spawning areas should be located and protected.
- Develop sunset laws on current Marine Protected Areas.
- Reconfigure existing MPAs to encompass known spawning aggregation sites.

6) Artificial Reefs:

Issues Not Working –

- Consideration of artificial reefs for habitat protection sites in federal waters.

Solutions –

- Place more artificial reef materials in federal waters where fish could spawn (possibly close these areas during spawning).
- More artificial reefs like the Charleston Memorial Deep Reef that has Marine Protected Area status.
- Get more recreational fishermen involved in the creations of artificial reefs.

7) Stakeholder Involvement:

Issues Not Working –

- Not enough involvement with chefs in the management process.

Solutions –

- Include chefs in the outreach efforts about ACL monitoring and management decisions.