

Summary of Stakeholder Input: Florida Port Meetings March/April 2014

Top issues and suggested solutions:

ISSUE 1: Data Collection/Science/Stock Assessments

Solutions -

- Increase funding for collection of best available science.
- Create complex-specific permits for recreational and for-hire sectors based on the HMS model -- This would help identify users fishing for snapper grouper resources; suggestions for separate shallow-water and deep-water complex permits; online permit, minimal cost, can print out yourself
- Require dealers (and other permittees required to report) to fill out every category on trip tickets, logbooks, etc. -- *when the headboat sector switched to electronic reporting, enforcement has been focused on getting people used to reporting electronically; however, people are not filling out the forms completely and this is not being enforced. This could be a training issue.*
- Electronic reporting in the for-hire and recreational sectors –
 - web-based reporting could be more accurate than MRIP;
 - fishermen could fill out at their leisure;
 - any recreational electronic reporting would need to be standardized and accepted by the scientific community so it can be used in assessments and for management.
- Require different species to be reported separately on trip tickets to address misreporting – *for example, if fisherman only lands a minimal amount of species X, it will often get thrown in with species Y for reporting purposes; this is a problem for red and silk snapper in particular.*
- Electronic logbook/reporting online (recreational and commercial sectors)
- Improve mobile technology for data collection (i.e. iSnapper App - like Gulf Council utilizes)
- Readdress MRIP sampling design/sample frame; need better methodologies
- Prioritize stock assessments regionally and by economic importance; important species should be assessed every 5 years minimum (also in #3)
- At-sea observers to help improve recreational discard rates/estimates
- Improve recreational discard estimates headboat vs. charter/for-hire vs. private recreational
- Best Management Practices workshop for handling and releasing fish
- Require fish handling release workshops in order to obtain a saltwater fishing license
- Re-allocate Council and other agency staff to allow for more analysis - increase science positions from 40-60%
- Discussion that charter/for-hire should not be lumped into the recreational sector; discard mortality rates likely differ between casual recreational anglers and the for-hire sector; an understanding of who and what the recreational sector really is needs to be re-addressed. It is all lumped together as a recreational discard, which is bad science.
- Stop funding research providing incorrect data.
- Update research on discard mortality rate.
- Researchers should be familiar with species, location, environment, and abundance and make quotas reflect area being fished
- REGIONAL stock assessments
- Aim for more real time assessments
- Set minimum standards/requirements for data to be used in assessments and management

- Stock assessments need to be more timely
- Allow for a benchmark assessment on red snapper immediately.
- More independent scientists/reviewers
- Rely on states' research for stock assessments
- Include industry scientists on assessment panels as a panelist
- Re-evaluate the SEDAR process (SEDAR currently lacks credibility with stakeholders)
- Need to prioritize stock assessments based on economic value (Red porgy/trigger/vermillion = these fisheries represent the backbone of our fishery in southeast FL)
- Funding for stock assessment needs to be redistributed to higher priority species.
- Allow for an external scientist to review assessments; Allow for 3rd party reviews that aren't affiliated with the SSC or SAFMC.
- Require SSC/scientists to go fishing on a red snapper trip with commercial vessels.
- Provide an opportunity for Council and NMFS staff to go out on boats to observe what is going on.
- Quotas should be based on scientific certainty, not speculation of the Council.
- No more endorsement programs.
- No catch shares, no discussion until 5 years since an endorsement is issued (i.e. tilefish; and black sea bass).
- No transfer without history in golden tilefish.
- Provide permits to fishermen.
- Develop a Reef Fish Stamp (this has been developed for recreational anglers in Gulf, with oil spill funds) – something that allows MRIP to refine their sampling pool.
- Use underwater cameras to count fish as opposed to asking fishermen to report landings – counting of underwater fish.
- Provide recreational anglers with logbook for reporting .
- Mandate a reef license for recreational anglers.
- Fishermen need to have industry scientists (scientists hired by industry, and these scientists should be paid for by government) involved as panelists on the assessment/review/and data workshops
- Ask fishermen about data through collection of anecdotal information.
- Require states to get more involved in data collection efforts
- Utilize cooperative research for data collection
- Consider a rolling spawning season closure with consideration of how do you prevent pressure from out of state fishermen.

ISSUE 2: Reducing Discards

Solutions -

- Bycatch allowance; suggested bycatch allowance for black grouper, species affected by closure during the closure, deepwater species that will likely not survive if released, warsaw
- Explore/study descending devices; research discard mortality;
- Implement a 12-inch minimum size limit for red porgy.
- Develop a bycatch allowance (for gag, red snapper, and other species).
 - Create a realistic bycatch allowance – 2 per person per boat.
- Consider the use of descending devices.
- Give credit towards the Annual Catch Limit for those using descending device
- Implement bag-limits that allow for year round fishing.
- Consider a “by the pound” limit, not a size limit on fish (recreational/for-hire)

- Reduce size limits = yield goes up
- No size limits and full retention for commercial sector
- Align seasons together
- Open small fisheries at the same time
- 3,000 lb trip limit any species no size limit (commercial)
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ISSUE 3: Closures – Spatial and Seasonal

Solutions -

- Well thought out spawning area closures - allow fishing year round outside closed areas; better identify spawning areas and make smaller, more specific spawning area closures
- Make better use of data/users to prevent area closures
- Increase size of marine sanctuaries
- Ban fishing in spawning areas and compensate fishermen for their losses
- Obtain funding to help fishermen during closures
- Consider sunset clauses on spatial closures/closed areas
- Open closed areas (specifically mentioned East Hump MPA)
- Enforcement of all sectors in closures; don't discriminate by sector; need to be fair to all sectors
- Increase communication between Council, Biscayne Bay National Park, and National Marine Sanctuaries; Council needs to work with National Marine Sanctuaries and National Park Service on additional proposed closures
- Rolling spawning closures for areas when fish are actually spawning; closures should affect all sectors the same
- Bycatch allowance during closures
- Consider closing gag (and other shallow water grouper) January and February only.
- Close fisheries when the fish are spawning, not based on quotas.
- Educate new recreational fishermen about potential damage to reef habitat from fishing.
- Collaborate with the states and develop best management practices training for fishing - fish handling training; ethical angling.
- Implement closures based on reliable data
- No new MPAs under the SAFMC's vision.
- No more artificial reefs.

ISSUE 4: Annual Catch Limits – Monitoring and Flexibility

Solutions -

- Separate yellowedge from the deepwater complex
- Develop a separate jacks ACL
- Almaco jacks - open year round and a 1,000-lb trip limit.
- Stock assessment for Almaco jacks.
- Create trip limits for the jacks complex species.

- Weekly trip limits for certain species instead of daily trip limits (specifically for grouper and tilefish; this approach makes trips economically feasible).
- Get rid of accountability measures that cause ACLs to go down.
- Electronic reporting should be able to monitor trip limits – this is data in real time, this is easy for fishermen, and accessible.
- Do away with precautionary step downs.
- New stock assessment for golden tilefish to address the ACL being too low.
- Fine late reporting dealers or dealers that are not properly reporting; incur fine within a reasonable timeframe.
- More proactive management.
- Consider removing a % of Total Allowable Catch based upon prior year closures

ISSUE 5: Ability To Fish Year-Round

Solutions -

- Consider Individual Transferable Quotas
- Use more common sense.
- Make fishing seasonal and compensate fishermen for losses
- Size limits working in this area of the Keys (examples – yellowtail, mutton, gray snapper); keep using them; don't change management strategy; prefer management by size limits instead of ITQ/spawning closures/etc.
- Lower the size limit for black sea bass to 12-inches (in order to reduce discard mortality).
- Implement a smaller size limit for red porgy
- Increase the recreational minimum size limit for lane snapper to 10-inches.
- Increase the recreational minimum size limit for mangrove snapper (gray) to 12-inches.
- Use a slot limit for mutton snapper (no recommendation on range for slot).
- Implement a recreational bag limit of 5 fish per species.
- Split seasons for snapper grouper species (commercial sector) with quota roll-over to the second half of the season if the quota from the first half of the season was not caught (similar to what is happening with vermilion currently).
- Align the start dates of snapper grouper species at the same time to allow for multi-species fishing trips.
- Allow fishermen to catch fish when they want = more \$\$ - more fish does not equal more \$ (i.e., catch shares, specifically for golden tilefish longline).
- Year round red snapper fishing w/ a 300 pound trip limit.
- Allow trip limits that are high enough to meet trip expenses.
- 400 pound trip limit on snowy or a weekly trip limit.
- Should have state by state management.
- Fish one week and then take a week off. Require this of all permit holders and this would allow the season to be extended and quotas would not be reached as quickly.
- Set trip limits year round to use all TAC.
- Lower trip limits on species with shorter seasons – i.e., vermilion, when the quota reaches 75%, lower the trip limit to 500 lbs
- Open red /scamp grouper through February – doing so would accurately reflect the spawning season closure (in this area of Florida).
- Base trip limits on average landings for specific species – i.e. gray triggerfish, not that many trips with huge landings; take an average of for all of the trips that have gray triggerfish landings and then re-evaluate the trip limits.

- Open vermilion, triggerfish & red porgy seasons all together
- Split season for gray triggerfish and for red porgy (i.e., vermilion snapper)
- Open the red snapper fishery year round and implement a 200-lb commercial trip limit.
- Gag grouper - Split the season for gag (January-June; July-December) and keep March/April closed to spawn region-wide. Implement a commercial trip limit of 1,000-lb.
- Re-open gag for January/February for east central Florida fishermen; open red snapper at same time.
- Black sea bass – set management measures that allow for year-round fishing; consider a split season.
- Consider a 500-lb deepwater species limit (commercial).
- Maximize usage of Total Allowable Catch - many species are underutilized and fishermen should be rewarded when they fish under their TAC by allowing any remaining quota to roll over;

ISSUE 6: Issues with Goliath Grouper, Lionfish, and Sharks

Solutions -

- Allow bag and size limit for goliath
- Lottery system for goliath grouper harvest – similar to what is in place for alligator harvest in Florida.
- Permit tags – permits could be sold via lottery; similar to what is done for alligators
- Open minimal catch of goliath with stringent regulations
 - Allow commercial sector 1 goliath per boat
 - Slot limit on goliath
 - Open Goliath when others groupers close
- Keep goliath protected and increase eradication of lionfish
- Funding for studies on lionfish fishery
- Encourage recreational anglers to get saltwater products license – would become dealer and be able to sell lionfish
- Develop a fishery for lion fish
- Support lionfish trap testing / research projects
- Diver education (net harvest)
- Support commercial lionfish trap program based on studies
- Improve communication between HMS and Council (shark ‘problem’)
- Open fishing for sharks in winter, don’t cave to the Carolinas
- Allow for consistent shark fishery at some level.
- Open seasons for sharks twice a year.
- Split shark season.
- Identify areas with overabundance of sharks and allow harvesting.

ISSUE 7: Regional Management to Address Regional Differences

Solutions -

- Make South FL or all of FL separate management zone
- Allow people knowledgeable about the local waters and fisheries to be involved directly in management (it was noted that no one from the FL Keys is on the Joint Council South FL Management Committee)
- Create South FL Council or at least a South FL Advisory Panel
- Separate South FL and Keys into its own management zone; would be better able to handle Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic conflicting regulations
- Regional quotas - Separate South FL quotas from other jurisdictions

- Have consistent regulations between FL, GMFMC, and SAFMC
- Regional stock assessments on economically important species
- Prioritize stock assessments regionally and by economic importance; important species should be assessed every 5 years minimum
- Regional closures; change shallow water grouper closure; group noted Jan. – April is the only time able to catch grouper in Monroe County; spawning closure should match the spawn for specific areas; consider setting spawning closure annually and basing timing of closure in part on water temperatures
- Split season on snapper grouper – vermilion; line up seasons for red porgy and vermilion
- Give Palm Beach a regional quota for vermilion
- State management of the recreational fishery.
- Different trip limits for different regions of the fishery.
- State by state approaches to quota management/allocation, trip limits, and openings.

Other issues of importance:

- Proper fish ID/communication with federal dealers.
- Address allocations – equity issues between sectors, for deepwater complex, gear types (golden tilefish sectors).
- Concerns about access to the fishery – need to address endorsement programs (black sea bass and golden tilefish)
- Size limits for certain species (hogfish, slot limit of 24-34 inches for grouper,
- Addressing how management measures impact the ability to provide consumers with a reliable seafood supply
- Addressing permit issues – commercial 2-for-1 requirement; for-hire limited entry, etc.
- Recognizing when management is working and leaving management strategies in place.
- Conflict between sectors – what may be best for one sector may not be best for other sectors (eg., divers vs. for-hire vs. recreational vs. commercial); conflicts between sectors while on the water for access to a fishing area
- Considering the economic impact of management measures and regulations on communities and specific sectors.
- Timeliness of implementing policy change at the Council level (amendment process and when stocks recover; checks and balances for council and council staff allocation towards more scientists)
- Not enough enforcement in specific areas (East Hump MPA) and with specific sectors (recreational)
- Catch shares – concerns from some about use of this strategy in the future and minimal support for them by some.
- Creation, restoration and protection of critical habitats for snapper grouper species
- Fishing pressure by different sectors and shift in effort causing local depletion.
- Professionalizing the fishery – define commercial, define for-hire (and how much the fishery can sustain).
- Access and inconsistent supply of seafood to consumers
- Lack of Cooperative Research to address data needs.
- Need to address the current Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- Underutilization of the resource
- Recreational access to red snapper.