

# Summary of Stakeholder Input: South Carolina Port Meetings 2014

## Top issues and suggested solutions:

**ISSUE 1: REPORTING:** *This issue came up at every port meeting and fishermen expressed their frustration with the duplicity of state and federal reporting (commercial sector); the lack of reporting required for the recreational sector; and the need for more streamlined reporting using new technology.*

### Solutions –

- Implement voluntary or mandatory electronic reporting for all sectors.
- Test and utilize new technologies for electronic reporting (web-based, mobile apps, etc.).
- Streamline reporting required for state and federal agencies to reduce redundancy; information should feed into one centralized database.
- Develop incentives for accurate self-reporting of catch by the recreational sector.

**ISSUE 2: DATA COLLECTION & RESEARCH:** *This issue was discussed at each port meeting in the context of the accuracy of data, timeliness of data collection and analysis, and the need to collect geographically specific data on certain species. Groups also discussed the need to involve more fishermen in cooperative data collection programs and research projects in order to foster “buy-in” by fishermen.*

### Solutions –

- Develop methods to collect anecdotal information from fishermen that is then incorporated into analyses outside of traditional data collection programs (commercial logbook, MRIP, etc.) and in stock assessments; Self-reported data using web-based/mobile technology, video, etc. was suggested.
- Develop a training program to teach fishermen how to voluntarily collect data using standardized methods that could be used in analyses and stock assessments.
- Create more opportunities for cooperative research for fishermen.
- Develop joint agreements with the states for data improvements (similar to the Joint Enforcement Agreements currently in place for law enforcement).
- Need spawning information on triggerfish to determine appropriateness of split seasons and other management measures.
- Implement a recreational tag harvest program for tracking harvest of certain species (recreational and for-hire sectors).
- Require a separate federal snapper grouper permit/license for recreational fishermen.
- Create a recreational snapper grouper (reef fish) stamp.
- Add a check box to the current state saltwater fishing license to indicate if the license holder participates in offshore fishing; this would help target MRIP surveys and other recreational data collection programs.

**ISSUE 3: FLEXIBILITY IN MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS (ACLS), SEASONS & ALLOCATIONS:** *The need for more flexibility in management was discussed at all port meetings and ranged in topic from seasonal closures, in-season allocation modifications and managing fishing seasons to allow better stability for fishing businesses (commercial and for-hire sectors).*

**Solutions:**

- Develop staggered fishing seasons for recreational sector to allow longer fishing seasons; example of two weeks on and two weeks off for fishing was given.
- Allow for in-season bag limit adjustments for the recreational sector; utilize “step-down” approach currently used in the commercial sector for a reduction in bag limits once 75% of the ACL has been met; also allow for an increase in bag limits when it is evident that the recreational ACL for some species will not be met for the year to allow full access to the recreational ACL.
- Allow underages in one sector to roll over to other sectors within a season; this would allow the total ACL to be utilized.
- Need to consider trip limits and measure that will ensure reliable supply of seafood to chefs/consumers.
- Consider more recent catch history instead of historical catch history when addressing sector allocations; this concern arose from the decline in commercial fishing activities in recent years.
- Need to address latent effort in the commercial fishery to determine the true capacity of the fishery. (Manage the commercial fishery for full-time fishermen.)
- Need to address and consider the value of owner-operators when making management decisions for the commercial sector.
- Address methods and eligibility requirements for allowing new entrants into the fishery and specifically the endorsement programs for black sea bass and golden tilefish (commercial sector).

**ISSUE 4: REDUCING DISCARDS:** *Fishermen expressed concern over the timing of fishing seasons for certain species and frustration about having to discard fish for regulatory reasons knowing that fish caught in deep water were likely going to die.*

**Solutions:**

- Implement a poundage limit on catch of snapper grouper species with no size limit (zero discards) for the recreational sector; an aggregate per person or trip poundage limit.
- Consider implementing a bycatch allowance for undersized species at the trip level (commercial sector).
- Consider new techniques and methods for decreasing barotrauma; fish descending tools, etc.

**ISSUE 5: REGIONAL/SUB-REGIONAL MANAGEMENT:** *The topic of “one-size-fits-all” management was discussed at all port meetings and fishermen expressed concerns about the broad geographic range of the Council’s jurisdiction and the need for more regionally specific management for certain species and certain management issues.*

**Solutions:**

- Develop a joint agreement with states to conduct state-by-state management of federal species possibly for just the recreational sector (similar to the Joint Enforcement Agreements currently in place for law enforcement).
- Allow the state to manage certain species (black sea bass and red snapper) for the recreational sector.
  - Develop a method for calculating the health of the recreational red snapper fishery in SC; fishermen felt it was important to analyze state specific recreational data in order to get state specific quota for red snapper and other species.
- Use research to clearly define zone management for some species in the recreational sector; fishermen mentioned the use of genetics research to better delineate zones.
- Place South Florida (South of Ft. Pierce) into the jurisdiction of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

**ISSUE 6: TIME/AREA MANAGEMENT:** *The topics of seasonal closures and management of areas to protect habitat and spawning fish was discussed at the port meetings. Fishermen expressed the need to consider the timing of seasonal closures and the use of area management for specific management objectives.*

**Solutions:**

- Coordinate the fishing seasons to align the seasons to maximize fishing opportunity.
- Consider a rolling spawning season closure (for shallow-water groupers) that accounts for when the fish are actually spawning in different areas of the region; fishermen felt that fish are spawning earlier further south in the region and then spawn later in the northern part of the region.
- Shorten the spawning season closure for shallow-water grouper to a 2-month closure that aligns with when the fish are spawning in different regions.
- Need to consider trip limits and measure that will ensure reliable supply of seafood to chefs/consumers.
- Need to have 3-5 species of fish available to chefs year round (even if they are different species throughout the year; having 3-5 allows chefs flexibility in their menus, purchasing practices and ability to plan).
- Develop a “one-stop shop” for chefs/consumers to access region by region information on available quota, fishery openings and closures.
- Implement sunset laws on the current system of Marine Protected Areas in the region.
- Identify and protect known spawning areas.
- Reconfigure existing Marine Protected Areas to encompass known spawning areas.
- Place more artificial reef materials in federal waters where fish could spawn.