



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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JUNE 13-17, 2016 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT COCOA BEACH, FLORIDA

The following summary highlights issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's June 2016 meeting in Cocoa Beach, Florida.

Briefing materials, presentations, and public comments are available on the Council's website at: <http://blog.safmc.net/meeting-documents/safmc-06-2016-meeting-briefing-book/>

Read further details and see images and other links at the June 2016 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map: <http://arcg.is/2607doc>

The Meeting News Release is available at: http://safmc.net/SAFMCNR_June2016CouncilMeeting

Overview of items approved for scoping/public hearings, to be developed for scoping, and scheduled for final approval later this year (see details below):

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Red Snapper	Direction to prepare a scoping document	September 2016 – Council reviews scoping document
Dolphin/Yellowtail Snapper	Approved items to scope including	August 2016 – Scoping meeting to be held via webinar
Hogfish	Guidance for preparing amendment for final approval	September 2016 – Council scheduled to approve amendment for formal review
Mutton Snapper	Finalize items for public hearings	August 2016 – Public hearings to be held in South Florida
For-Hire Reporting Amendment	Guidance for preparing amendment for final approval	December 2016 – Council is scheduled to approve amendment for formal review
Cobia	Finalize items for public hearings including	August 2016 - Public hearings to be held from GA through VA

The public hearing dates/locations are available from the Council's website: <http://safmc.net/meetings/public-hearing-and-scoping-meeting-schedule>

Red Snapper – Direction to Prepare a Scoping Document

The Council received a report from NOAA Fisheries that the red snapper fishery remains closed for the second year in a row in federal waters since the 276,729 red snapper removed in 2015 exceeded the annual catch limit of 114,000 red snapper. The Council received reports from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and the Science & Statistical Committee. The Council approved the following direction to the Science & Statistical Committee (SSC) for their October 18-20, 2016 meeting in Charleston, SC:

- Review additional assessment analyses at F_{MAX} and $F_{20\% SPR}$ and provide advice regarding the risk of overfishing if these potential new reference points were used for red snapper given their unique life history characteristics.
- Evaluate the current red snapper Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates to determine if they are reliable and adequate for management including quota monitoring and discard information.
- Request that the SSC consider revising the ABC control rule (for all stocks) by removing stock status from the factors contributing to the uncertainty adjustment. This is requested because the NOAA Fisheries has final authority to determine stock status, and because the ABC control rule is intended to address assessment uncertainty, whereas stock status is an assessment outcome rather than a source of uncertainty. Therefore, status is more appropriately considered by the Council in establishing its risk tolerance.
- Request that the SSC discuss and evaluate the new approach used to estimate natural mortality in SEDAR 41.

The Council requested that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center provide further explanation for the differences in the outcomes of SEDAR 24 and 41 for red snapper.

The Council provided the following direction to staff after discussing the red snapper comprehensive adaptive management program – Prepare a scoping document with a suite of options for review at the September 12-16, 2016 meeting in North Myrtle Beach, SC including:

- Snapper Grouper Private Recreational Fish Stamp – required to fish for or possess a snapper grouper species
- Electronic logbook – require private recreational anglers with a Snapper Grouper Private Recreational Fish Stamp to electronically report for each trip
- Federal Recreational Snapper Grouper Season – an open season in deeper water (depth to be determined) during which some red snapper (bag limit to be determined) may be retained and use of a descending device and/or venting may be required
- Shallow water (depth to be determined) area open year-round during which red snapper (bag limit to be determined) may be retained when the deeper water season is open
- Evaluate various size limit and no size limit
- Evaluate use of one hook on each recreational rod & reel
- Commercial trip limit or quota
- Collect data from the landed recreational and commercial red snapper to improve the next stock assessment
- Evaluation plan to monitor and modify management measures
- Surgical area closures (hot spots)

Cobia – Items for Public Hearings in August

The Council specified the following as preferred management alternatives for public hearings:

- Establish a recreational bag limit for Atlantic cobia of 1 fish per person per day
- Establish a recreational vessel limit for Atlantic cobia of 3 fish per vessel per day
- Increase the minimum size limit for Atlantic cobia for recreational and commercial harvest of Atlantic cobia from 33 inches FL to 36 inches FL
- Modify the fishing year for Atlantic cobia from the calendar year to May 1 through April 30.
- Accountability Measures: If recreational landings, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, exceed the recreational Annual Catch Limit (ACL), then during the following fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings. If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of the following fishing season to ensure that recreational landings meet the recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) but do not exceed the recreational ACL, based on the recreational landings in the previous year. The length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary. The ACT for 2016 and subsequent fishing years is 500,000 lbs, as established in Coastal Migratory Pelagics (Mackerel/Cobia) Amendment 20B. The Regional Administrator will reduce the length of the following fishing year only if the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.
- Commercial trip limit alternatives with no preferred alternative
- Explore adding an alternative that would designate a certain number of fishing days per state for recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia.
- Include language that the Council is exploring latitudinal season openings for cobia management.
- Send the public hearing document to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for review and input at their August 2-4, 2016 meeting.
- The Council requested a cobia benchmark assessment in 2018, and to include cobia in the SEDAR stock ID workshop in 2017.

Hogfish – Guidance for Final Approval in September

The Council's chose additional preferred alternatives for the following:

- Establish a recreational fishing season for the FLK/EFL stock of hogfish in the South Atlantic region of July-October
- Accountability Measure for both hogfish stocks: If commercial landings reach or are projected to reach the commercial annual catch limit (ACL), NMFS would close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase is prohibited and harvest or possession of hogfish in or from the EEZ would be limited to the recreational bag and possession limit. This bag and possession limit applies in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters. Additionally, if the commercial ACL is exceeded, NMFS would reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if hogfish is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) of the respective stock is exceeded.

Mutton Snapper – Items for Public Hearings in August

The Council specified the following as preferred management alternatives for public hearings:

- Revised catch level specifications including annual catch limits
- Designate April-June as the spawning months
- Retain mutton snapper in the 10 snapper aggregate bag limit and set the mutton snapper bag limit as 3 per person per day year-round
- Specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the “spawning months” in the South Atlantic of 3 per person per day
- Establish a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the “regular season” (i.e., non-spawning months) in the South Atlantic of 300 pounds
- Increase the minimum size limit for mutton snapper in the South Atlantic region from 16 to 18 inches TL

For-Hire Reporting Amendment – Guidance for Final Approval in December

- Approved a list of core data elements to be reported for each trip
- Add language to the for-hire reporting amendment acknowledging the Council is considering limited entry in the for-hire industry and may consider compliance with reporting requirements among the eligibility criteria.
- Review the amendment at the September 12-16, 2016 meeting in North Myrtle Beach, SC

For-Hire Control Date & Limited Entry

The Council established June 15, 2016 as the control date for the three open access charter vessel/headboat permits (Snapper Grouper, Mackerel/Cobia, and Dolphin/Wahoo) and directed staff to begin development of a limited entry amendment for these three for-hire fisheries.

Spiny Lobster – Future Annual Catch Limit Changes

The Council directed staff to start work on an amendment to revise the ACL, including an option based on the Review Panel recommendation (1991-92 through 2015-16). Also, to include the Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel recommendation for the low-landing monitoring measure in the amendment: There be a lower landing trigger based on the average of the three low landings years (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004) that would initiate a review panel, if below this average for two consecutive years (5.3 million pound total catch). The Council is also including an action to prohibit recreational traps in South Atlantic EEZ along with a range of alternatives with restrictions. The Scientific and Statistical Committee will review these actions at their October 18-20, 2016 meeting in Charleston, SC.

Fishery Ecosystem Plan II & Ocean Technology

The Council received presentations on the Fishery Ecosystem Plan II and new Ocean Technology available to conduct mapping, monitoring, and data collection. The Council will review executive summaries of the new Climate Variability and Food Web and Connectivity chapters of the FEP II and draft policy discussions at the September Council meeting; FEP II is scheduled for final approval in March or June 2017. Council Staff will coordinate participation in a technology test bed engaging Ocean Area and Submarine AUV, Teledyne Marine, and SCDNR/SEAMAP/MARMAP for a potential late July test bed off Charleston, SC.

Joint Dolphin/Wahoo and Snapper Grouper Amendment – Items for Scoping

The Council approved the following Dolphin and Yellowtail Snapper Allocations items for scoping:

- Common pool allocation
- Reserve category as discussed today
- Temporary allocation shift (king mackerel method)
- Temporary allocation shift (similar to bluefish)
- Permanent allocation shift
- Allocation by gear type for the commercial sector in the dolphin fishery.
- Combined ACL

The Council also compiled a master list of items to be considered in a future dolphin wahoo amendment:

- For-hire bag limit sales of dolphin by dually permitted vessels
- Modification of the Purpose and Need for the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP to allow for a directed commercial fishery for dolphin
- Make the commercial Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo Permit limited entry
- Make the for-hire Dolphin Wahoo Permit limited entry
- Institute a circle hook requirement for the dolphin fishery (clarify if just for longline or all commercial)
- Change fishing year start date to better accommodate the growth the NE fishery
- Consider using an ACT to monitor the recreational fishery (as opposed modifying the ACL or OY)
- Remove operator card requirement for DW charter vessels
- Consider complementing HMS requirements in the directed dolphin longline fishery

Golden Tilefish Assessment

The Council discussed the golden tilefish assessment and the resulting large reduction in Annual Catch Limit and directed staff to investigate what methods have been/are being used in the Mid-Atlantic to assess the status of golden tilefish. The Council requested the Scientific and Statistical Committee address the following at their October 18-20, 2016 meeting in Charleston, SC:

- Review productivity estimates of previous tilefish assessments, identify uncertainties that impact productivity estimates, and comment on how well overall stock productivity is determined at this point in time. Identify research or data needs that could improve estimates of productivity for future assessments.
- Review application of the P* technique to the tilefish update. Provide an explanation for the apparent unusually large difference in yield between the OFL (P* = 0.5) and the ABC (P* = 0.3). Compare the buffer estimated for tilefish with those for other assessments with similar P* values. Identify which assessment uncertainties are “driving” the P* analysis and the high buffer. Consider whether the P* approach is appropriate for this assessment, and whether basing ABC on yield at 75% Fmsy and OFL on yield at Fmsy is a viable alternative.
- Review the performance, accuracy, and reliability of tilefish assessment projections from past assessments. The Council is concerned with the impact of the high age of fishery

selectivity combined with the lack of fishery independent information for younger fish on stock projections. Identify research or data needs that could improve future projections.

- Comment on the biological risk and the social and economic impacts of a phased-in approach to implementing the reduced catch levels for tilefish, such that the ABC is set equal to OFL in year 1 and then ABC is specified through the standard application of the control rule in later years. Also consider providing a constant ABC for later years, specified in 3-year blocks.

Stock Assessment Schedule & Appointments

The Council appointed attendees for the Atlantic Blueline Tilefish benchmark assessment and the South Atlantic Red Grouper standard assessment. They also approved the schedules and terms of reference for those two assessments. The Council requested a cobia benchmark assessment in 2018, and to include cobia in the SEDAR stock ID workshop in 2017. The following recommendations were approved for SEDAR assessments and will be considered by the SEDAR Steering Committee when they meet September 20-21, 2016. The Council also requested the Scientific and Statistical Committee provide recommendations at their October 18-20, 2016 meeting for stocks to consider for data limited assessment methods.

Table 6 of Attachment 6.							
Year	Quarter	1	2	3	4	FL FWCC	Extra
2016	1	RSGT	RSGT			1 GG GG	SA tile SA tile
	2	RSGT					
	3	BL	BL		RG		
	4	BL	BL		RG		
2017	1	BL	BL	<u>BSB-S</u>	RG	BLG BLG	
	2	BL	BL	<u>BSB-S</u>			
	3	BL	BL		VS		
	4			MRIP	VS		
2018	1	S/RT	<u>COBIA</u>	MRIP	<u>RP-S</u>	BLG	KM
	2	S/RT	<u>COBIA</u>	<u>GAJ-S</u>	<u>RP-S</u>	BLG	KM
	3	S/RT	<u>COBIA</u>	<u>GAJ-S</u>		YTS	KM
	4	S/RT	<u>COBIA</u>			YTS	KM
2019	1	S/RT	<u>COBIA</u>			YTS	KM
	2	S/RT		<u>GAG-S</u>	<u>SpMack-S</u>	YTS	
	3			<u>GAG-S</u>	<u>SpMack-S</u>		
	4			<u>SNG-S</u>	<u>Tile-S</u>	<u>Hog, N-U</u>	
2020	1	<u>GT-B</u>	<u>WhG-B</u>	<u>SNG-S</u>	<u>Tile-S</u>	<u>MS-S</u>	
	2	<u>GT-B</u>	<u>WhG-B</u>			<u>MS-S</u>	
	3	<u>GT-B</u>	<u>WhG-B</u>	<u>RS-U</u>	<u>RG-U</u>		
	4	<u>GT-B</u>	<u>WhG-B</u>	<u>RS-U</u>	<u>RG-U</u>		

Species and Stocks Codes

gT	golden Tilefish	BL	Blueline Tilefish	RS	Red Snapper
S/RT	Scamp, Research Track Pilot	RG	Red Grouper	GAG	Gag Grouper
DS	HMS Dusky Shark	VS	Vermilion Snapper	SBS	Sandbar shark
GBt	Gulf Blacktip Shark	GAJ	Greater Amberjack	YTS	Yellowtail Snapper
RSGT	Red Snapper, Gray Triggerfish	ABt	Atlantic Blacktip Shark	GDL	Gulf Data Limited
BLG	Black Grouper (review only)	ABP	Best Practices, Assessments	GS	Gray Snapper, start time TBD
MRIP	Revision Updates for MRIP Data	GG	Goliath Grouper (review only)	SID	Stock ID and Meristics
CDL	Caribbean Data Limited	KM	King Mackerel		

Other Items:

- Mackerel Framework Amendment 5 (Revise Permit Restrictions) - The purpose of this action is to eliminate permit restrictions unique to commercial king and Spanish mackerel permit holders in the Gulf, South Atlantic, and Mid-Atlantic regions.
- Mackerel Amendment 29 (Gulf king mackerel allocations) – Council staff briefed the Committee on Amendment 29. After the Gulf Council makes changes in June and August, the South Atlantic Council will review the actions and alternatives in September 2016.
- MARMAP/SERFS Update – the presentation showed significant increases in red snapper and concerning declines in black sea bass.
- S-K Project Updates – the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Development Foundation presented research results on catch and discards in the snapper grouper vertical hook-and-line sector and a cooperative bottom longline survey to augment fisheries independent reef fish data collection in the deepwater snapper grouper fishery.
- Vision Blueprint Amendments – the Council directed staff to add a recreational and a commercial amendment to the work schedule to address visioning recommendations.
- Scientific & Statistical Committee Appointments:
 - Reappointed Dr. Luiz Barbieri, Dr. Jeff Buckel, Dr. Churchill Grimes, and Dr. George Sedberry to the SSC for 3-year terms.
 - Appointed Dr. Robert Ahrens and Dr. Genevieve Nesslage to the SSC for 3-year terms.
 - Designated Dr. Scott Crosson, Dr. Sherry Larkin, and Dr. Tracy Yandle to the SSC Social Sciences and Economics seats.
 - Postponed filling the 19th SSC seat until the September 12-16, 2016 Council meeting in Charleston, SC.
 - Appointed Dr. Jennifer Tookes to the Socio-Economic Panel.
 - Invited Advisory Panel representatives to attend the portion of the October 18-20, 2016 Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting in Charleston, SC when the assessment prioritization scoring will be discussed.
 - Directed staff to develop a proposal, for consideration at the September 12-16, 2016 in Charleston, SC, for conducting Scientific and Statistical Committee peer review of complex analyses such as management alternative decision tools.
 - Develop guidelines for what constitutes a conflict of interest for SSC members.
- Advisory Panel Changes
 - Added 2 new seats to the Information and Education Advisory Panel and to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel for fishing representatives.
 - Require a working email address and Internet access for advisory panel applicants. Clarify when publicizing open seat on the advisory panels that

applicants must have access to a “working” email account for correspondence and that it may be a shared account with another family member, etc.

- Add two new seats on the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel for a member within the Mid-Atlantic and New England jurisdictions.
- Work with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Council staff to publicize open seats and solicit applicants for the Council’s advisory panels as appropriate.
- Public Comment Guidelines – the Council approved the method used at the June meeting for public comments. Having the public provide comments using the Council’s Comment Form makes them available to Council members and the public.
- Support a 50%/50% split of any increase in the Council/Commission budget line item.
- Provide Legislative Updates to all Council members.
- Continue to work with the SEFSC and ACCSP to have the data available through ACCSP and compliance with Public Access to Research Results (PARR).
- Rename the Mackerel Committee and Coastal Migratory Pelagics Advisory Panel to the Mackerel/Cobia Committee and Advisory Panel
- Request the NMFS lead analyst present stock assessment results to the Council via webinar
- Law Enforcement Issues – provided guidance on agenda items for the August 4-5, 2016 Joint Law Enforcement Advisory Panel & Committee meeting in Charleston, SC and selected the 2015 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award to be presented at the September 2016 Council meeting.