

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Update and Liaison Report



September 2022

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Charleston, South Carolina, September 12-16, 2022. Below is a summary of the Council's actions.

2021 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Master Officer Clay McDonough and Officer Specialist Chris Demeter, crew of FWC's Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) *Osprey*, were awarded the 2021 award.

Commercial Electronic Logbook Amendment

This amendment is being developed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to require commercial logbooks be submitted via electronic reporting forms instead of the currently used paper-based forms for the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Gulf Reef Fish Fishery management plans.

Council staff delivered a presentation covering some background and progress to date on the amendment, a short video demonstrating how eTRIPS is used to enter a trip, and a spreadsheet to compare current data fields and modifications that would be required for implementing an electronic logbook (eTRIPS). The Council reviewed the draft purpose and need statements and amendment development timeline and had no modifications. Advisory panel meetings will be held in the fall in both regions to gather input from stakeholders. The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils will consider approving the amendment for public hearings in October and December, respectively.

Acceptable Biological Catch Control Rule Amendment

A public hearing and joint meeting of representatives from the Dolphin Wahoo, Golden Crab, and Snapper Grouper Advisory Panels (AP) were held via webinar in August, 2022. An additional in-person public hearing was held as part of the Council's public comment session on September 14, 2022. Council staff presented the draft amendment and decision document and provided a summary of the recommendations from the joint AP meeting. The Council reviewed

the amendment, selected remaining preferred alternatives, and approved all actions. The Council will consider the amendment for final approval in December 2022.

Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative

Council staff provided an update on recent developments and an overview of scenario narratives developed during a Scenario Creation Workshop (held in June 2022), where a group of 75 stakeholders developed an initial set of scenarios for east coast fisheries out to 2042. Two Scenario Deepening webinars were held in August 2022 to review, validate, and add details to the draft scenarios. The next phase of the initiative involves Fishery Manager Brainstorming Working Sessions scheduled for September/October 2022 to identify topics of discussion at upcoming Council and Commission meetings scheduled for the remainder of 2022. A summit meeting is being scheduled for early 2023.

Snapper Grouper Amendments

Release Mortality Reduction & Red Snapper Catch Levels (Regulatory Amendment 35)

Regulatory Amendment 35 was initiated to revise red snapper catch levels to be based on the most recent acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations from the SSC and to reduce dead releases of snapper grouper species in response to concerns over red snapper dead releases.

Council staff presented a draft options paper that describes initially directed actions and a report responding to the Council's June 2022 data request. The Council directed staff to continue developing the amendment with actions to: (1) adjust red snapper catch levels based on SEDAR 73 and the SSC's ABC recommendation, (2) prohibit the use of automatic rod and reel for the snapper grouper recreational sector, and (3) prohibit the use of more than one hook per line for the snapper grouper recreational sector. In addition, the Council directed staff to develop an outreach and education program aimed at promoting best fishing practices that reduce recreational dead releases and include this as an appendix in the amendment. The Council will be considering the amendment for public hearings in December 2022.

The Council also directed staff to develop a white paper that explores longer-term options for reducing discards of snapper-grouper species to allow more efficient utilization of those resources.

Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting (Amendment 46)

At the June 2022 meeting the Council established membership for the Snapper Grouper Private Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel (AP), which convened in August 2022. The Council provided guidance on how the AP should proceed at its next meeting (Fall 2022) and on the intended outcomes of implementing a potential private recreational permit and reporting requirement. The Council approved the following vision statement: *A permit for the private recreational sector of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper fishery will facilitate the collection, validation, and analysis of harvest and discard data to improve the catch and effort estimates used for fisheries science and management decision-making.*

Gag (Amendment 53), Golden and Blueline Tilefish (Amendment 52) and Snowy Grouper (Amendment 51)

The Council continue work on Amendment 53 with the intent to consider approving for public hearings in December 2022. The Council modified the range of alternatives for the commercial

trip limit and the recreational vessel limit. In addition, the Council requested adding action(s) to consider modifications to recreational management measures for black grouper.

The Council reviewed public input received on Amendments 51 and 52 (hearings were held via webinar on Sept 6 and 7) and continued work on the amendments with the intent to approve for formal review in December 2022. The Council discussed difficulties in managing blueline tilefish and snowy grouper due to latitudinal differences in co-occurrence (above Cape Hatteras, NC, the two species occupy different habitats).

Greater Amberjack (Amendment 49)

The Council reviewed rationale for each action and approved the amendment for formal review. The amendment proposes the following changes:

1. Adopt the recommended catch levels based on SEDAR 59 (2020) and set total ACL and annual optimum yield equal to the ABC
2. Revise the greater amberjack sector allocations and sector annual catch limits: 65% recreational, and 35% commercial
3. Reduce the commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack to 34 inches fork length
4. Increase the commercial trip limit in season 2 (September-February) to 1,200 pounds
5. Extend the April spawning closure for greater amberjack to both sectors
6. Remove recreational annual catch targets from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan

In addition, the amendment would adopt revised goals and objectives for the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Yellowtail Snapper (Amendment 44)

The Council reviewed the results of the interim assessment (SEDAR 64) and an overview of the SSC report. The Council was also provided with an updated fishery overview. The Council directed staff to resume work on the amendment.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics

Updates to Gulf king mackerel management based on SEDAR 38 Update 2020 (CMP Amendment 33)

Matt Freeman, Gulf Council staff, presented draft options to be considered in Amendment 33, which proposes modifications to catch limits and sector allocations for Gulf king mackerel based on the results of the SEDAR 38 Update stock assessment. The Council asked staff to discuss the amendment with the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel during their October 2022 meeting. Specifically, the Council wanted feedback on how an increase in the commercial Gulf king mackerel quota may affect the market price of Atlantic king mackerel.

CMP FMP Objectives

The Council reviewed the CMP FMP objectives and approved modifications to objective one to more closely align with the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards, addition of a new objective as proposed by the Gulf Council at their June 2022 meeting, and removal of objective three which was redundant with newly added objective.

Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Assessment (SEDAR 78)

SEDAR 78 was completed in July 2022 and included an assessment for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. In August 2022, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the results of the updated SEDAR 78 and recommended additional work completed. Shannon Cass-Calay presented the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) report and SSC Chair, Jeff Buckel, presented the SSC recommendations to the Committee. Council staff presented an overview of the Atlantic Spanish mackerel fishery.

The SEFSC will rerun the SEDAR 78 assessment model with new landings to address uncertainty with MRIP estimate in the terminal year. The SSC will review the changes at their upcoming October 2022 meeting and determine whether the changes were sufficient to address their cited concerns or if additional changes are needed. If additional changes are substantial, a research track assessment would be needed for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

Given continuing closures in the commercial sectors, the Council directed staff to apply the allocation decision tool to Spanish mackerel at the December 2022 meeting, considering both sector and regional allocations.

False Albacore/Little Tunny

On September 19, 2022, the Council received a letter from the American Saltwater Guides Association requesting the consider re-adding false albacore to the CMP FMP. The Council directed staff to develop a white paper examining if false albacore meets the Magnuson Stevens Act criteria for conservation and management.