



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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### DECEMBER 2-6, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

The following summary highlights the major issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s December 2019 meeting in Wilmington, North Carolina. Briefing materials, presentations, and public comments are available on the Council’s website at:

<http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/>

Final Committee Reports contain more details of what was accomplished for each committee and are located on the December 2019 briefing book page. In addition, the Summary of Motions on the Council’s website includes all motions from the meeting. Read further details and see images and other links at the December 2019 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=683b6570b2444ac8949710a512a31325>

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<p><b>Mackerel</b> Emergency Action</p>	<p>In June 2019, the Council approved a request for NMFS to raise the commercial king mackerel trip limit south of the Flagler/Volusia County line, Florida from 50-fish to 75-fish for the 2019-2020 season via emergency rule. The value of unharvested quota over the last four fishing seasons averaged \$3,880,961 per season.</p>	<p>The Council’s letter requesting emergency action was sent to NMFS on June 21, 2019 with a request to implement this prior to Season 2 of the 2019-2020 season (October 1<sup>st</sup>). NMFS implemented the emergency action effective October 1<sup>st</sup>.</p>
<p>Spanish Mackerel Control date</p>	<p>In June 2019, the Council approved a motion requesting that a control date be established for the open access commercial Spanish mackerel permit as of March 7, 2019, the date at which the Council first dis used limited-access for the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery.</p>	<p>The request for a control date in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery was sent to NMFS on June 21, 2019. NMFS published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking on October 15, 2019. The public comment period concluded on November 14, 2019. NMFS is drafting responses to the comments.</p>

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
CMP Framework Amendment 8 – increase the king mackerel commercial trip limit in the southern zone.	The Council approved the following preferred alternative for formal review: <b>Preferred:</b> 100 fish October 1 <sup>st</sup> to the end of February.	Staff and the IPT will prepare CMP Framework Amendment 8 <b>for formal Secretarial review</b> . The Council’s intent is to have these permanent regulations in place prior to the start of the second season of the 2020/21 fishing year (October 1 <sup>st</sup> ).
CMP Framework Amendment 9 – Spanish mackerel commercial trip limit in the northern zone.	The Council reviewed the Advisory Panel’s recommendations and approved alternative trip limits for the Northern Zone of 1,500, 2,000, 2,500, or 3,500 pounds whole or gutted weight (no action). The Council selected 2,000 pounds as preferred and approved the amendment for public hearings.	Staff and the IPT will prepare CMP Framework Amendment 9 for public hearings to be held prior to the March 2-6, 2020 Council meeting.
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>ABC’s for Unassessed Snapper Grouper Stocks</b>	The Council reviewed the SSC recommendations and directed staff to begin an information paper to evaluate the continued need for conservation and management of species recommended by the SSC for Ecosystem Component designation and evaluate additional species for management (barrel fish and African pompano).  The Council also recommended that gray snapper, almaco jack, knobbed porgy, and jolthead porgy be considered for assessment through the SEDAR process.	The Council will review this information paper at the March 2-6, 2020 Council meeting.  The SEDAR Steering Committee will review this request at their May 2020 meeting.
<b>Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 (South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish ACL)</b>	The Council approved the following preferred alternative for formal review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the total ACL from 174,798 to 233,968 lbs ww</li> <li>• Increase the commercial ACL from 87,521 to 117,148 lbs ww</li> <li>• Increase the recreational ACL from 87,277 to 116,820 lbs ww</li> <li>• Increase the recreational ACT from 54,653 to 70,886 lbs ww</li> </ul>	Staff and the IPT will prepare SG Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 <b>for formal Secretarial review</b> . The Council’s intent is to send for review prior to the March 2020 Council meeting.

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>Snapper Grouper</b> Regulatory Amendment 31 (Modifications to Recreational Accountability Measures)	The Council revised the purpose and paused future work on Regulatory Amendment 31 until December 2020 when more will be known about how MRIP revisions will affect ACL and allocation revisions.	The Council will discuss SG Regulatory Amendment 31 at the December 2020 Council meeting.
<b>Snapper Grouper</b> Regulatory Amendment 33 (Red Snapper Season Modifications)	The Council revised the purpose and need for the amendment, decided not to change the start date of the commercial red snapper season, kept the preferred alternative to remove the minimum #days (3) for a season, and approved the amendment for formal review.	Staff and the IPT will prepare SG Regulatory Amendment 33 <b>for formal Secretarial review.</b> The Council's intent is to send for review prior to the March 2020 Council meeting.
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>Snapper Grouper</b> Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices & Powerheads)	The Council approved the amendment at the September meeting and the document is being finalized before sending for formal Secretarial review. At the December meeting, they reviewed a summary of current and past outreach efforts on best fishing practices in the South Atlantic and their results. Council staff also presented plans for future outreach efforts.	Council staff are planning an outreach program to coincide with the anticipated approval and implementation of the amendment in 2020.
<b>System Management Plan Workgroup</b>	The System Management Plan Workgroup met in October 8-9, 2019 to go over the Spawning Special Management webpage and begin an outline for evaluation of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area. Council staff briefed the Committee on the meeting and the evaluation plan.	Council staff will continue working with the System Management Plan Workgroup to complete the plan during 2020.
<b>Landing Snapper Grouper Species in whole condition</b>	The Committee discussed the regulation that requires that all snapper grouper species be landed with heads and fins intact. Staff provided background on the rationale for this regulation and recent inquiries from fishermen regarding whether certain species can be cut up to be used as bait.	The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel discussed the issue at their May 2019 meeting and stated there were no enforcement concerns. This was reiterated at the Committee meeting by the USCG representative who stated there had been very few cases where fishermen were found to be in violation of this regulation. The Committee did not express intent to modify the current regulation.

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>Shrimp Amendment 11</b> (Transit Provisions)	The Council reviewed scoping comments, modified the need statement, modified alternative 2 as shown below, and approved the amendment for public hearings: Alternative 2. A vessel may transit with non-stop progression through the South Atlantic cold-weather closed area with fishing gear appropriately stowed with trawl doors and nets out of the water. The bag straps must be removed from the nets.	Staff and the IPT will prepare Shrimp Amendment 11 <b>for public hearings</b> . Public hearings and review by the Shrimp/Deepwater Shrimp, and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels will be held prior to the March 2020 Council meeting.
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>SEDAR</b>	The Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved appointments to the Gag operational assessment (SEDAR 71) and modified appointments to the Tilefish assessment (SEDAR 66).</li> <li>• Approved the schedule and the terms of reference for the Gag operational assessment (SEDAR 71).</li> <li>• Approved the scopes of work for the red snapper, blueline tilefish, and vermilion snapper assessments. The red snapper operational assessment will begin in early 2021.</li> </ul>	The Council will monitor progress of the assessments.
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>Advisory Panel Selection</b>	The Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved appointments to the Dolphin Wahoo, Habitat Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management, Information and Education and Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panels.</li> <li>• Discussed concerns expressed by some Advisory Panel members about reimbursements for travel expenditures. The Council recognizes the importance of the AP members to the management process and the need to fairly cover expenses for travel for their voluntary participation.</li> </ul>	Staff will advertise open seats on the AP's as appropriate for consideration at the June 2020 Council meeting.  Staff will draft edits to the Council Handbook that allow leeway for travel reimbursements as recommended for consideration at the March 2020 Council meeting.

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<p><b>Dolphin Wahoo</b> SSC recommendations on ABC levels</p>	<p>The Council discussed and provided the following requests for the SSC to consider at their April 2020 meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconsider the time series used for dolphin when setting catch level recommendations for dolphin.</li> <li>• Consider if a different time series that is more reflective of the current fishery for wahoo would be more appropriate in setting catch level recommendations for wahoo.</li> <li>• Would application of the ORCs method be a superior approach to the “third highest landings” approach in setting catch level recommendations for dolphin and wahoo? If so, does the SSC deem this approach best scientific information available (BSAI) and thus this method can be applied rather than the existing approach?</li> </ul>	<p>Staff will work with the SSC to be sure they address the request from the Council at their April 2020 SSC meeting.</p>
<p>Goals and Objectives</p> <p>Amendment 10 (Dolphin and Wahoo Management Measures)</p>	<p>The Council reviewed Amendment 10 and provided guidance to staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To modify the goals and objective of the FMP.</li> <li>• Determined additional scoping was not necessary given the extensive discussions and public input during past meetings.</li> <li>• Moved Action 8 (Allow adaptive management of sector ACLs for dolphin) to the considered but rejected section. Directed staff to move Alternatives 3 &amp; 4 in Action 8 to the Comprehensive ABC Control Rule amendment.</li> <li>• Removed Alternatives 2 and 3 in Action 9 (Revise the commercial accountability measures for dolphin).</li> </ul> <p>Postponed further discussion of Amendment 10 until the June 2020 Council meeting when revised catch level recommendations from the SSC will be available.</p>	<p>The revised goals and objectives will be added to the next plan amendment.</p> <p>The Council will review a revised Amendment 10, with the SSC’s new ABC recommendations, at the June 8-12, 2020 meeting in Key West, FL.</p>
<p><b>Dolphin Wahoo</b> Amendment 12 (Bullet &amp; Frigate Mackerel)</p>	<p>The Council approved modifications to the purpose &amp; need and approved further development of the amendment at the March 2020 Council meeting when the NMFS and NOAA GC will provide recommendations on regulatory measures.</p>	<p>The Council will review a revised Amendment 12 at the March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.</p>

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>MyFishCount</b>	<p>BeBe Harrison gave the Council an update on activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff participated in the American Sportfishing Association Industry Summit, Oct. 7-11, Stevenson, WA.</li> <li>• Staff presented at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Meeting, Oct. 28-31, Hilton Head, SC.</li> <li>• Staff secured booth space at the November 1-2, 2020 National Seminar Series hosted by George Poveromo at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show.</li> <li>• Staff participated in the North Carolina Boating and Fishing Industry Summit, Nov. 6-7, Greensboro, NC.</li> <li>• Staff participated in the South Carolina Sportfishing Industry Summit, Dec 4, Columbia, SC</li> <li>• Modifications have been made to give a new look and feel to MyFishCount.com.</li> <li>• Upgraded the software for iOS and Android MyFishCount apps.</li> <li>• Developed a MyFishCount message with monthly incentives and featured anglers to keep the public interested and informed.</li> </ul>	<p>Council staff are continuing to work on MyFishCount during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year (2019-2020).</p> <p>Information from the pilot project will be used by the Council when they continue work on the permitting and reporting amendment at a future meeting.</p>
<b>Issue:</b> <b>Citizen Science Program</b>	<p>The Council covered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Byrd, Program Manager, gave an update on the 2019 Programmatic activities, pilot projects in progress, and projects and collaborations under development. Staff have been very busy presenting and participating at meetings and further developing the program.</li> <li>• Data collection for the SAFMC Scamp Release project is underway. The project has been and is still recruiting fishermen to participate in the program. Additionally, staff have been pursuing additional grant funding to help promote and expand the SAFMC Release mobile app. .</li> <li>• The FISHstory project is under development and a demonstration of the FISHstory test project in Zooniverse was conducted.</li> <li>• An additional collaboration is under development with the SEFSC to expand their series of Participatory Modeling</li> </ul>	<p>Work will continue on the program, the two pilot projects, and in developing new projects and collaborations.</p> <p>Data from the SAFMC Scamp Release project will be made available for 2020 scamp assessment.</p> <p>Work will continue on the FISHstory project. The tentative schedule is to beta test the project in Zooniverse in Dec 2019 and launch the project in early 2020.</p>

	<p>Workshops from the Gulf of Mexico to the South Atlantic. The South Atlantic workshops would focus on the Dolphin/Wahoo fishery. The tentative plan is for workshops to be held in the Carolinas and FL Keys in 2020 and have initial information available for the Council in late 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council reviewed, modified, and adopted the updated Citizen Science research priorities which incorporated feedback from the Citizen Science Projects Advisory and Operations Committees.</li> <li>• Dr. Jennifer Shirk, Interim Director of the Citizen Science Association, presented preliminary findings from her research on the development of the Council’s Citizen Science Program. Her findings found a high return on the Council’s investment in the development of the Citizen Science Program. By supporting the Citizen Science Project Design Workshop and one staff person, a volunteer corps of over 45 people was mobilized, devoting the estimated equivalent of over \$50k worth of time to develop the SOPPS and the community capacity to implement them, as well as the development of 2+ pilot projects. Recommendations for the continued development and growth of the Council’s Program included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investing in the continuity of the Program by maintaining and growing staff support</li> <li>○ Retaining the Action Teams, which will both require and offset staff time (e.g. mobilize to review/update products)</li> <li>○ Seeking and securing funds on hand to anticipate and enable timely project roll-out; and</li> <li>○ To conduct an analytical study of success factors and evaluation of both the Program and individual projects.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rick Bonney gave a presentation on evaluation, highlighting its importance in order to determine whether a project or program is working and to identify ways to improve overall effectiveness. He noted that evaluation can be complicated and requires a careful look at goals, objectives, and indicators of success. He noted that the Council has led the way in the development of its Citizen Science Program by focusing on the Program first approach and that they will need to lead the way in the development of an evaluation plan for this Program.</li> </ul>	<p>Staff will work with the SEFSC and reach out to the states and Dolphin/Wahoo AP members to help determine when and where to hold the workshops.</p> <p>The Council reviewed, made modifications, and approved the updated Citizen Science research priorities.</p> <p>The Council reiterated their support for the program and thanked Dr. Shirk and Rick Bonney for all their help and support.</p> <p>The Committee supported pursuing evaluation for both the overall Citizen Science Program and individual projects. As a next step for the Program evaluation, they supported staff working with Rick Bonney and the Operations Committee to draft Program objectives and indicators of success based on the Program goals identified in the SOPPS. These draft objectives and indicators of success would then be brought to the Council for their review and consideration.</p>
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<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Action Taken:</b>	<b>Schedule:</b>
<b>For-Hire Recreational Reporting</b>	The Amendment was sent for formal review on March 4, 2017 with a request for implementation by January 1, 2018. The amendment was approved on June 12, 2018 and the Final Rule was expected to publish in mid-April 2019 with a 60-day cooling off period.	At the December meeting, the Council was told the <b>final rule package has been sent from the Region to NMFS HQ and is under review</b> . No specific timing was available on publication of the final rule.
<b>Full Council Actions:</b> 1. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary  2. Menhaden  3. Council staff will develop a proposal for the South Atlantic/Gulf Council work group to look at flexible management options and bring back to the Committee at the March 2020 Council meeting.  4. Next Executive Director	Sarah Fangman, FKNMS Superintendent, presented an overview of their proposed actions and alternatives. The Council discussed the input from the public and the Advisory Panels and requested some additional input from staff and NOAA GC for the March 2020 Council meeting.  The Council discussed the request for input from NMFS on the finding of non-compliance by the State of Virginia with the ASMFC's Menhaden Plan.  The Council directed staff develop a proposal for the work group looking at flexible management options.  The Council thanked Gregg Waugh for his service to the Council over the past 39 years and for the excellent support provided by all Council staff under his leadership.	The Council will develop final recommendations at the March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.  The Council approved sending a letter to NMFS supporting the non-compliance determination of Virginia with the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The letter was sent on December 5, 2019.  Council staff will coordinate with Gulf Council staff for input at the Gulf's January 2020 meeting and bring back recommendations to the South Atlantic Council's March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.  John Carmichael assumes duties as the next Executive Director effective December 13, 2019 at 5:01 p.m.