



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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MARCH 4-8, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA

The following summary highlights the major issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s March 2019 meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia. 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 March 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 March 2019 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=46c78d75841c4cf6baacd5d36cef365c>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Red Snapper	<p>NMFS reported that the 2019 season would be 5 days long with the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The recreational annual catch limit will be 29,656 fish. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The recreational bag limit will be one red snapper per person per day. This applies to private and charterboat/headboat vessels (the captain and crew on for-hire vessels may retain the recreational bag limit). ▪ No minimum size limit. ○ The commercial annual catch limit will be 124,815 pounds whole weight (12,854 fish). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The commercial trip limit will be 75 pounds gutted weight. (trip limits are per day - if a vessel makes multiple trips per day, the 75lbs (gw) trip limit can only be harvested once per day) ▪ No minimum size limit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The recreational sector will open for harvest on the following days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ July 12, 13, & 14 – The recreational season opens at 12:01 a.m., local time, on Friday July 12, 2019, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on July 15, 2019. ▪ July 19 & 20 – The recreational season opens again at 12:01 a.m., local time, on Friday July 19, 2019, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on July 21, 2019. ○ The commercial sector will open at 12:01 a.m., local time, on July 8, 2019, and will close at 11:59 p.m., local time, on January 1, 2020, unless the commercial annual catch limit is met or projected to be met before this date.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices & Powerheads)	Reviewed document and: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Added a research & monitoring plan for descending devices 2. Modified alternatives to require descending devices or venting within 6 months of implementation and selected descending devices as a preferred alternative for private, for-hire, and commercial vessels 3. Clarified that descending device should be rigged and ready for use while fishing is occurring 4. Require the use of non-offset, non-stainless-steel circle hooks when using hook-and-line gear and natural baits in the EEZ north of 28 degrees north latitude (about 25 miles south of Cape Canaveral, FL) 5. Consult with the SSC on how a non-offset circle hook requirement will be used in stock assessments 6. Require use of non-stainless-steel hooks when fishing with hook-and-line gear and natural baits in the EEZ 7. Allow powerheads in the EEZ off SC 	Take to the Law Enforcement AP for review. Conduct public hearings prior to the June 2019 meeting.
Red Grouper Regulatory Amendment 30	The Council reviewed and modified the amendment and approved all actions in the amendment for final approval in June. Actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the maximum time allowed to rebuild (Tmax) which is 10 years ending in 2028 with 2019 = Year 1 • Jan thru April no recreational or commercial harvest/possession/sale/purchase of any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, grasby, or coney) and extend the closure off NC & SC for red grouper in May • Establish a commercial red grouper trip limit = 200 pounds gutted weight 	Council requested that staff bring Regulator Amendment 30 back at the June 2019 meeting for consideration for final approval.
Sea Turtle Release Gear & Framework Modification	Regulatory Amendment 42 – the Council reviewed and modified the amendment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed vision blueprint objectives • Actions make compliance easier 	Approved for formal review. The document will be sent for formal review prior to the June Council meeting.
Wreckfish ITQ Review	The Council received an update and will see a draft final document in June.	Approve for formal review at the September 2019 meeting.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Results of Recreational Workshops	<p>ASA, CCA, and Yamaha Marine Group reported the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should consider regional regulations for appropriate species. • The Council should continue to explore harvest rate management for high value snapper grouper species, especially for red snapper. • The Council could consider an Exempted Fishing Permit for a pilot program to test harvest tags for certain deep-water species (i.e., those with low annual catch limits or low abundance). • The Council should work with state partners to establish a registration for anglers targeting snapper grouper species, with consistency across all states. • The Council should continue development of Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 to implement required or selective reporting for recreational anglers and continue outreach on benefits of providing data. • The Council should continue development of Snapper Grouper Amendment 29 to require use of descending devices or venting tools, along with other best fishing practices, to reduce release mortality. 	<p>Results will be presented to the SG AP for their recommendations.</p> <p>The Council will consider the ASA, CCA, and Yamaha Marine Group’s recommendations as they work on the snapper grouper FMP.</p>
Spearfishing in the Snapper Grouper Fishery	<p>The Council reviewed a white paper on this topic.</p> <p>The Council requested staff to prepare options for vessels with SG1 permits and a spiny lobster tailing permit be allowed to retain commercial quantities (20, 30 or 40 lobsters) of spiny lobster in the EEZ north of Florida.</p>	<p>White paper to be presented to SG AP at their spring meeting. Staff to conduct a webinar with commercial spearfishing participants after the June 2019 meeting.</p> <p>Lobster options to be presented at the June 2019 Council meeting.</p>
Special Management Zones (SMZs) around Artificial Reefs	<p>NC requested SMZs around 30 artificial reefs in the EEZ off NC to prohibit gear other than handline, rod-and-reel, and spearfishing gear and to limit possession of SG species to the recreational bag limit when using spearfishing gear.</p>	<p>Draft document to be reviewed at the September 2019 meeting. SC expected to add sites and other states may as well.</p>
Possible move of Jacks Complex from Snapper Grouper to Mackerel Cobia FMP	<p>The Council requested staff to prepare options to consider removing the jacks complex from the SG FMP, possibly to the mackerel cobia FMP</p>	<p>The Council will review options at the June 2019 Council meeting.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Allocation Review Trigger Policy	<p>This action would establish a policy that determines which triggers would automatically initiate a review of allocations. The Council reiterated its desire to apply both indicator-based and time-based criteria as triggers for re-examining allocations. The Council added an additional trigger criterion to consider a change to the social or economic status of at least one sector to the indicator-based criteria. The Council also discussed the GMFMC's recommendation that the "between Council" allocations of black grouper, mutton snapper, and yellowtail snapper be reassessed every 10 years. The South Atlantic Council recommended that the "between Council" allocations for these species be reconsidered every 7 years.</p> <p>The Council also made the following decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will revisit allocations for species each time a stock assessment for a species is accepted. • The default review for allocations will occur every 7 years. • To avoid reviewing all allocations potentially every 7 years, the Council wants managed species to be sorted into 3 bins: 1) species that have an allocation in effect in any year prior to 2013; 2) species that last had their allocation set in 2013; and 3) species that had their allocations set in 2014 or later. The Council will review these groupings the next time they review the amendment. • A sector would need to exceed its allocation 3 out of 5 years to trigger an allocation review. • A sector would need to under harvest at least 50% of its sector ACL for 3 out of 5 years to trigger an allocation review. • The Council will review at a later date the information they would like to have to help them in determining whether or not sector allocation is warranted. 	The Council will review a revised document at the June 2019 meeting.
Recreational Accountability Measures Amendment	The Council reviewed scoping comments, modified alternatives, and provided guidance to staff.	The Council will review an updated document at the September 2019 meeting.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Citizen Science Program	The Council received a short update on the program and projects (the Scamp app to collect discard data for the next assessment and a project to document the historical catch and length distribution for early headboat catches).	Work will continue on the program and these two projects. The Scamp app is now available, and funding was just received for the photo project.
Dolphin Wahoo	<p>The Council reviewed a white paper on mechanisms and regulatory parameters for adding ecosystem component (EC) species to a fishery management plan (FMP), ways that other Councils have addressed EC species in FMPs, as well as background information on fisheries for bullet mackerel, frigate mackerel, and other major prey species for dolphin and wahoo.</p> <p>The Council also reviewed items for inclusion in Amendment 10 and provided guidance to staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply catch level recommendations to actions as appropriate when available. • In Action 9, include sub-alternatives to accommodate the following gears: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ American lobster traps ○ Spiny lobster pots ○ Stone crab pots ○ Black sea bass pots • Include information on HACCP training that may be required for for-hire vessel operators or crew if bag limit sales are allowed. • Bring back information on adding buoy gear to the list of allowable gears. • Removed ABC, ACL & ACT changes from the amendment. 	<p>The Council requested staff hold scoping meetings on adding bullet and frigate mackerel as ecosystem components to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP in the spring of 2019. The Council will review scoping comments at the June 2019 meeting.</p> <p>A draft list of options for items to be included in Amendment 10 will be presented at the March 2019 meeting.</p>
For-Hire Recreational Reporting	The Council received an update on the amendment: The Amendment was approved on June 12, 2018 and the Final Rule is expected to publish in mid-April 2019 with a 60-day cooling off period.	A mid-June 2019 effective date will allow ACCSP to incorporate the permit information from NMFS. NMFS is exploring exempting dual permit holders until the Gulf system is implemented. Training and outreach will continue, and details will be shared once the final rule publishes.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
<p>Habitat and Ecosystem Based Management</p>	<p>The Council hosted the representatives from the New England/Mid-Atlantic Councils and ASMFC to discuss the issue of species expanding northwards.</p> <p>There was agreement to move forward with the following two groups/activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Science/Data – the Northeast and Southeast Fisheries Science Centers are leading this effort and a workshop is currently being scheduled. The Councils want to be involved in the workshop/discussions, in part to ensure ongoing fishery independent data collection programs continue (e.g., SEAMAP, NEAMAP, SEFIS, and State programs). The South Atlantic Council’s Citizen Science Program is exploring a mechanism for the public to act as an early warning system to report when new species show up in an area. 2. Governance – the CCC members of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Councils and the ASMFC Executive Director will work to develop a way to manage these species that clearly identifies each groups roles/responsibility without any group losing any authority. This group should meet more frequently as needed via conference calls, webinars, and additional in-person meetings in conjunction with other meetings of the partners (e.g., NRCC meetings). The CCC/ASMFC group will designate staff from their respective organizations to evaluate the following approaches: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Options included in Attachment A5 from this meeting. b. Scenario Planning Exercise used by the Pacific Council. c. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) approach used to consider potential military base closures. d. Identify roles for each group in this “obligatory partnership”. <p>Debra Hernandez, Executive Director of the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) provided the Committee an overview of the organization composed of coastal and ocean scientists, businesses and stakeholders working together to monitor and observe the ocean to understand change and enable better decision-making.</p>	<p>The Council will have further talks with the NEFMC, MAFMC and ASMFC at various meetings in 2019 meeting.</p> <p>The NEFSC and SEFSC will be hosting a meeting in the near future to discuss data issues and the Council will participate.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
SEDAR	<p>The Council received an update on projects and the impacts of the government closure. The Council also discussed concerns raised by the State of Florida and others about the new MRIP numbers. The Council directed staff to organize an SSC workshop to identify MRIP data concerns across the South Atlantic, identify specific uncertainties or potential bias, and develop recommendations on how to proceed in the short-term for using the data in stock assessments, in developing ABC recommendations, and evaluating ACLs; include representatives from each State, MRIP/S&T, and SEFSC. The Council also approved the king mackerel assessment terms of reference.</p>	<p>The SSC will discuss the proposed MRIP workshop at their April 2019 meeting.</p> <p>The next SEDAR Steering Committee meeting will be May 16-17, 2019 in Charleston, SC to discuss project planning, long-term priorities, and other issues.</p>
AP Selection	<p>The Council made appointments for the SMP Workgroup and for the Coral, Dolphin Wahoo, Habitat, Law Enforcement, Mackerel Cobia, and Snapper Grouper Advisory Panels. Discussions will continue on options for having a GA Commercial representative on the SMP Workgroup and a designated Research/Geologist At-Large seat on the Habitat AP during its June 2019 meeting.</p>	<p>Discussions will continue on options for having a GA Commercial representative on the SMP Workgroup and a designated Research/Geologist At-Large seat on the Habitat AP during its June 2019 meeting.</p>
MyFishCount	<p>Kelsey Dick, Council staff, gave an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 862 users/member profiles • 915 trips logged • App & web portal continue to be promoted; webinar trainings are underway • Cooperation with SC Wildlife Federation on a Best Fishing Practices tutorial • Shiny app (data.safmc.net/MyFishCount) that allows anglers to access information collected through MyFishCount • Survey to understand angler perceptions & opinions • Data are being edited and uploaded to ACCSP 	<p>Council staff will continue working with private recreational fishermen to have them report, especially during the red snapper season. This experience will be used by the Council as they continue to work on the permitting and reporting amendment at the September 2019 meeting.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Mackerel	<p>The Council reviewed stakeholder and Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MCAP) concerns about the low commercial trip limit in the Atlantic Southern Zone during season two (October to the end of February) and directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to increase the trip limits; staff will work with the Mackerel AP to develop a range of trip limit alternatives.</p> <p>The Council reviewed concerns expressed by the AP regarding increased participation in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and closures that have occurred recently in the Atlantic northern zone (NY through NC) and southern zone (SC through Miami-Dade/Monroe, Florida). The Council discussed options to address commercial closures and directed staff to take the issue to the AP for discussion.</p>	<p>The Council directed staff to hold a Mackerel Cobia AP meeting via webinar prior to the June 2019 Council meeting to discuss Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limits, closures in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, and CMP Framework Amendment 7.</p> <p>The Council will review an Options Paper on king mackerel trip limits and receive an update on items in CMP Amendment 24 (Spanish mackerel allocations) at the June 2019 meeting.</p>