

Modern Fish Act Section 102: How are the Councils doing?

Joint Council Workgroup

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- Gulf and South Atlantic Councils are responsible for managing the largest recreational fishing fleets in the Country
- Councils have explored, and continue to explore, many alternatives for recreational management
- Southeastern U.S. management needs are dynamic
 - Shifting stakeholder needs
 - Variable market conditions
 - Climate concerns
- Modern Fish Act created to increase flexibility in recreational management under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)
- So... how are the Councils doing?

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

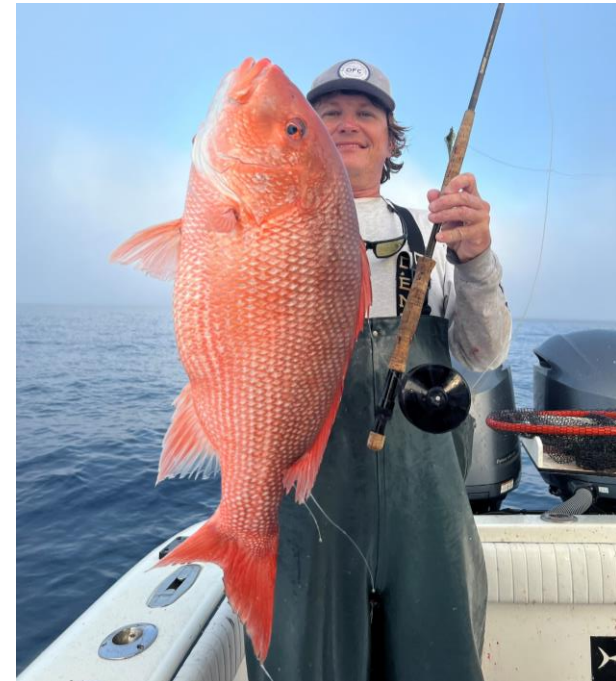
- Regional Management

- The Good:

- Red snapper for private anglers and state for-hire vessels managed by each Gulf state
 - Allows for more reactive adjustments to fishing seasons
 - State-specific minimum size and daily bag limits cater to that state's anglers and biomass

- The Bad:

- Incomparable state data currencies require calibration
 - State-specific allocation process can be contentious



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- Flexible Fishing Seasons

- The Good:

- Gulf Council has been quickly reactive to fishing season modifications
 - Allows for consideration of changing stakeholder paradigms
 - Can be tailored to suit management/rebuilding objectives

- The Bad:

- Can result in complex stratification of landings data for assessments
 - Can alienate regional interests in favor of those from adjacent areas



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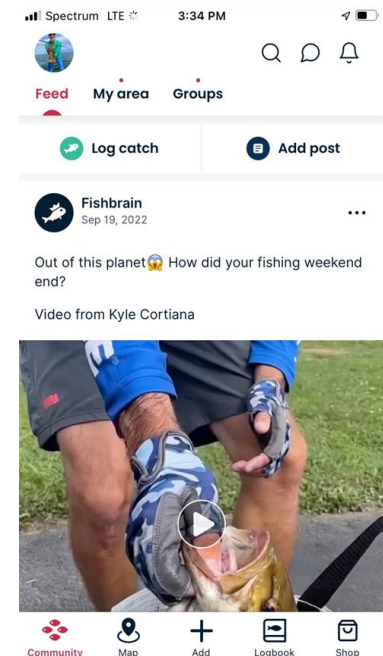
- Reporting through Mobile Applications

- The Good:

- Easy to adopt; almost everyone carries a cellphone
 - Allows for near real-time data collection (e.g., landings, discards, length composition, spatial effort estimation)
 - Can be tailored to suit management/rebuilding objectives

- The Bad:

- If use is not mandatory, gaps in data collected could complicate analyses
 - Enforcement needed to ensure compliance to reduce uncertainty in resultant landings estimates



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- Fleet-specific Catch Allocations
 - The Good:
 - Fosters increased stewardship by fleet for allocated quota
 - Can optimize fishing opportunities for a fleet
 - Allows for more adaptive management tailored to changes in fleet dynamics and stock biological needs
 - Can better tailor regulations to achieve management objectives (e.g., selectivity, retention, discards)
 - The Bad:
 - Stratifies available catch within a sector, which may modify historical fishing opportunities
 - Could decrease fishing opportunities for a fleet
 - Could result in increased administrative burden of quota monitoring
 - Could result in increased fleet-specific landings uncertainty

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- SEFHIER
 - The Good:
 - Allows for more precise data collection from the federal for-hire fleet
 - Management can adapt to changes in fleet dynamics
 - Decreased uncertainty in landings, observed age and length compositions, discards, spatial distributions of effort
 - The Bad:
 - Substantial increase in stakeholder burden to comply with reporting requirements
 - Substantial (unsustainable?) financial resources needed for administration



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- Interim Analyses

- The Good:

- Can quickly use a representative index of relative abundance to examine general stock health relative to landings
 - Can serve as a health check of the condition of a targeted stock, allowing for more responsive management
 - Can allow for greater temporal responsiveness to catch limit changes

- The Bad:

- Does not inform stock status determination criteria
 - Ignores possible changes in selectivity and retention from management changes
 - Ignores any changes in the stock-recruit relationship

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- Something's Fishy/Fisherman Feedback
 - The Good:
 - Collects stakeholder feedback on species ahead of stock assessment
 - Can be used as a check against survey-observed estimates of abundance and distribution
 - Can help explain variations in data not otherwise explained by empirical surveys or management biases
 - The Bad:
 - Currently hamstrung by the Paperwork Reduction Act, limiting real-world potential
 - Limited to those who provide feedback when the tool is available
 - Requires large sample sizes for effective model learning of responses



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- Future Considerations:
 - Fish tags
 - Likely too administratively burdensome for species with substantial catch limits (e.g., red snapper, king mackerel, vermilion snapper)
 - May be worth considering for species of concern (i.e., depleted, or in a rebuilding plan)
 - Gulf examples: cobia, greater amberjack
 - Would require a centralized system for tag allotment and monitoring



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- Future Considerations:
 - Conditional Accountability Measures
 - Can be designed to modify size and bag limits, seasons, spatial closures, or other measures, dependent on stock condition
 - Carryover and Phase-in Strategies
 - Can carry over unused catch in one year to the next without harming the stock
 - Can phase in reductions in catch over a short period of years to alleviate shock to user groups
 - Gulf SSC is evaluating changes to current ABC Control Rule



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- State Data Collection

- SC DNR Charter reporting since 1993
- FL Reef Fish Expansion to the Atlantic 2020

- Regional Data Collection

- Citizen Science Program

- Goal is to fill data holes (discards and historic conditions so far), NOT compete with existing catch surveys (MRIP)

- SEFHIER

- Concerns due to lack of financial support by NMFS (sampling, validation, enforcement)
- Open access removes primary consequence (permit loss)
- Extended reporting window (1 week) may increase recall bias, hinder enforcement
- Lack of VMS removes a preferred validation tool

- Considering Private Recreational Snapper Grouper Permit and Reporting

- Federal Permit preferred, but resources a likely issue
- Integration with other programs essential (FL RFS, MRIP)
- Lower productivity relative to Gulf reduces state incentive

- MyFishCount

- All Purpose Reporting app Pilot effort

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Creel Cards & Tags

Considered in the past, but never made it to FMP actions

- Creel Cards

- Cost prohibitive if developed to replace MRIP
- Logistic challenges abound
- Supplanted by electronic reporting programs

- Tags

- Considered for some low ACL stocks (snowy grouper, red snapper)
- Numerous logistical concerns: “considered but rejected”
 - Tags issued cannot exceed ACL
 - Cannot address discards in a multi-species fishery
 - Cannot replace MRIP for catch estimate unless each tag accounted for
 - Concerns over fairness National Standards
 - High cost

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Interim Assessments

- None completed in the South Atlantic
- Representative, robust surveys have been a primary impediment
- Anticipate receiving first, Vermilion Snapper, later this month
- Better Informing Council
 - Shiny Apps to present fishery and stock data
 - Fishery Performance Reports developed through APs, tied to assessment schedule, can be more frequent
 - Council staff developing online SAFE report
 - Public Information Tool “PIT” online portal for gathering info on a variety of topics

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- Carry Over and Phase In
 - Added to recent ABC CR Amendment
- Spatial (Zones, e.g. Mackerel)
 - Effective for addressing regional fishery differences
 - Various “Area Based Management” actions in place – spawners, corals, etc
 - Area-based management of shared Blueline Tilefish stock with MAFMC

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Reducing recreational catch efficiency (to preserve access and reduce discards)

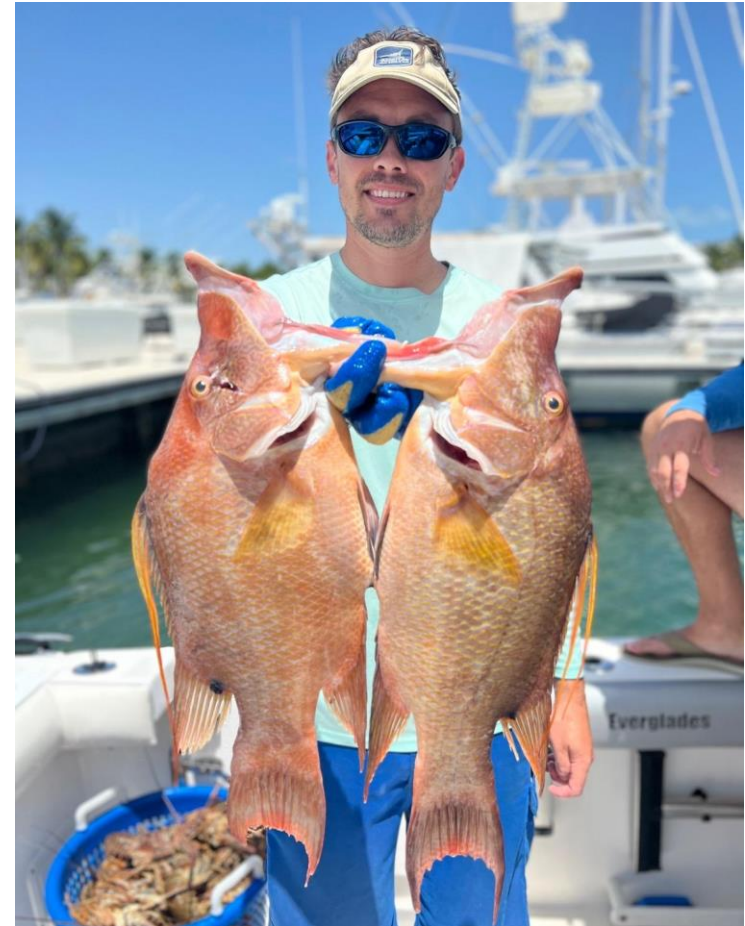
- Gear Changes – Single hook chicken rigs, Electric Reels
- Outreach and Education to promote “best practices”
 - Handling, descending
 - Also behavior – avoid aggregations, reduce deepwater effort
- Aggregate limits
 - Used now for a large group of “other” snapper grouper species
 - Expand to all species in the complex, by vessel or angler??

OY Flexibility and Alternatives?

- Defining yield in terms other than fish harvest
- Discussed at first meeting of this group

Consideration for BOTH Councils

- Optimum Yield (OY)
 - Councils are required to manage towards OY, per the MSA
 - OY and MSY commonly defined in terms of pounds
 - MSA written in 1976, when marine landscape dominated by commercial fishing
 - Commercial fishing OY most easily correlated to pounds
 - Pounds landed = revenue





Consideration for BOTH Councils

- Optimum Yield (OY)
 - Recreational definition of OY may vary by fleet and species, but “time to fish” always matters
 - Time = opportunity to participate in fishing
 - For-hire: more time means more opportunity to sell trips
 - Private: more time means more days to get on the water
 - Consider how to maximize time and/or opportunity with allocated catch available
 - Set target for desired time or opportunity
 - Adjust management measures to achieve desired OY target
- Council discussions of OY by fleet are necessary to better understand fleet-specific needs, and to effect the best possible management strategies

Consideration for BOTH Councils

SAFMC Staff discussions on flexibility in what is Maximized (MSY) and Optimized (OY)

- As noted – MSY and OY defined as fish removals from a stock, but recreational fisheries may place higher value on other things such as access and experiences – per the group’s earlier discussions
- Adding to the challenge, OY demands reduced effort
 - OY stock > MSY stock
 - OY F < MSY F
 - OY effort << MSY effort: bigger stock+ lower F
- **Effort is Access in a recreational fishery**
- **Bigger stock =  discards unless effort **

Consideration for BOTH Councils

SAFMC Staff discussions on flexibility in what is Maximized (MSY) and Optimized (OY)

- A letter to Secretary Raimondo, July 27 2022, signed by a number of Southeast Congress members offered another view of “yield”:
“... the Magnuson-Stevens Act’s first National Standard requires NMFS to allow for the optimum, or maximum sustainable, yield from a fishery. Put simply, this means to allow for as much fishing as is sustainable for the population...”
- SEFSC Director Clay Porch pointed out at the September 2022 SAFMC Meeting that attempting to optimize EFFORT, and allow for as much fishing as possible, is the mathematical equivalent of achieving the MINIMUM sustained yield.
- To actually achieve flexibility to meet recreational fishery needs, managers need the ability choose whether to optimize YIELD or EFFORT within the constraints of ensuring sustainable stocks.

As long as catch is sustainable, managers should decide where to land between maximizing yield and maximizing effort.