

Sustainable Fisheries Committee: Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab E

Agenda Item IV: Presentation on NOAA’s Climate Southeast Regional Action Plan

Timeline Status: Presentation, discussion, and comment

Council input and next steps: NMFS staff will provide an overview on a draft Southeast Regional Action Plan to address climate change influences on marine and coastal environments. In 2015, the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy (NCSS) identified seven key objectives to fulfill the agency’s mandates (i.e. fisheries management, assess protected species etc.) in the face of changing climate. The draft Regional Action Plan identifies climate-related actions to be carried out over the next three years (2022-2024) to continue to address regional and overall needs first described by the NCSS. NOAA is accepting public comment from the Council on the Regional Action Plan and a draft comment letter has been developed for Committee review. The Committee should read the draft Regional Action Plan, listen to the presentation, and provide feedback on a draft comment letter to be submit NMFS.

Agenda Item V: Draft Comment Letter on NOAA’s Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Strategy

Timeline Status: Discussion and comment

Council input and next steps: Staff have provided a draft comment letter on NOAA’s Equity and Environmental (EEJ) Strategy that reflects the Committee’s discussion at its June 2022 meeting and some proposed feedback from staff for consideration. Yesterday morning, Mr. Rauch also presented on the agency’s priorities for the draft EEJ strategy. The Committee should review the draft letter and provide staff with comments, edits, or further suggestions, as appropriate. Staff will revise the draft letter accordingly for submission by the August 31 deadline.

Agenda Item VI: SSC Recommendations on Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule

Timeline Status: Presentation and discussion

Council input and next steps: Dr. Jim Nance (Chair, Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC]) will review the SSC’s July 2022 discussions about the development of revisions to the Council’s ABC Control Rule. The SSC began revisionary work with the aid of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center at its May 2022 and July 2022 meetings, and will continue this work during 2022 and early 2023. This presentation is provided for the Committee’s information only, and no recommendations are requested at this time; however, the Committee is encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: Presentation on Mechanisms and Options for Automating Catch Advice from Interim Analysis

Timeline Status: Presentation and discussion

Council input and next steps: Council staff will provide a presentation on how updates to catch advice following interim analyses might be implemented in a more automated fashion. Interim analyses typically use data, such as a fishery-independent index, from the previous year to inform any proposed modifications to catch advice. Interim Analysis are a tool the Science Center has developed for understanding stock health and trends between stock assessments. The purpose of this tool is to capture a more real time understanding of what is occurring on the water as stock assessment often have a terminal year of data that is 1-2 years old.

Currently, interim analyses that result in SSC-recommended changes to the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for a species are presented to the Council, and then the Council requests that staff initiate a framework action (Reef Fish) or framework amendment (CMP) to modify the annual catch limits (ACL) and, if applicable, annual catch targets (ACT), for the subject species. This process usually takes two Council meetings to progress from options to a final document (about 6-8 months, depending on time of year), followed by another six-month review, comment period, and implementation process for NMFS. By the time the catch advice resulting from the interim analysis or full stock assessment is able to be implemented, it is already two years old (or more). Council staff will demonstrate options for automating the implementation of SSC-approved changes to the OFL and ABC, and the resultant changes on the ACLs and ACTs, within certain thresholds for consideration by the Council, bypassing the need for the Council to initiate and review a document under every instance. The aim is to develop an automated process that will reduce the time between the SSC's recommendations being finalized and catch limits being updated via regulatory document, without defraying transparency and opportunity for stakeholder input on the proposed changes. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions as appropriate, and provide feedback for next steps.

Agenda Item VIII: Overview of Research Set-Asides (RSA) Timeline, Composition, and Draft Objectives

Timeline Status: Presentation and discussion

Council input and next steps: Staff will present an overview of draft objectives, workgroup composition, and anticipated timeline for evaluating the potential for establishing a Research Set Aside in the Gulf of Mexico. The Committee should consider the presentation, ask questions, and provide feedback.

Agenda Item IX: Discussion on the Florida Pompano Petition for Federal Rulemaking Letter

Timeline Status: Discussion

Council input and next steps: Florida pompano is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) which has established a number of management measures for the stock. A stock assessment finalized by FWC in 2006 indicated that the stock was not overfished and not undergoing overfishing. In May 2022, NOAA Fisheries received a petition for rulemaking and the development of a fishery management plan for Florida pompano in the Economic Exclusive Zone and requested the Committee discuss management of Florida pompano at its August 2022 meeting. The Committee should review the various background materials, ask questions regarding current approaches to Florida pompano management, and consider if pompano is appropriate for federal management.

Agenda Item X: Other Business

Timeline Status: Potential Additional items

Council Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by the Committee, time permitting. If the Committee wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future Council meeting.
