Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
and
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Joint Workgroup for Section 102
of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018

Webinar
May 18, 2020
9 AM – 12 PM, eastern time

The Committee adopted the agenda **(Item I)** as modified, moving the Development of a Workgroup Charge and work plan and timeline (**Item IV**, becoming **Item IX**) to just before Other Business (**Item X**).

Election of a Workgroup Chair (Item II)

Mr. Steve Poland (SAFMC-North Carolina) was elected Chair of the Joint Workgroup by acclamation.

Scope of Work (Item III)

Mr. Rindone (GMFMC-Staff) reviewed the Scope of Work with the Joint Workgroup, outlining the items and the anticipated actions and deliverables pertinent to each item.

Overview of Section 102: Fishery Management Measures of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 (Item IV)

Mr. Russell Dunn of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provided an overview of the key components of Section 102 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 (MFA), including the report to Congress authored by NMFS on the measures being taken by the Councils that address directives in the MFA. Section 102 of the MFA amended the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson – Stevens Act) to explicitly grant Regional Fishery Management Councils the authority to use fishery management measures in managing recreational fisheries, such as extraction rates, fishing mortality targets, harvest control rules, and traditional or cultural practices of native communities. The use of flexible and adaptable management tools such as these for meeting the needs of the recreational fishing sector is strongly supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The report to Congress provides examples of actions that demonstrate how NOAA and the Councils can use such management approaches to meet the needs of America's recreational fishing communities while adhering to the legal requirements of the Magnuson – Stevens Act.

The Joint Workgroup noted the many directives in both the MFA and the Magnuson – Stevens Act, and asked about the degree of flexibility that would be permissible by NMFS under these Acts. Mr. Dunn replied that the expansion of the National Standard guidelines in 2015 allowed for additional flexibility, but that fisheries will still be managed under annual catch limits per the Magnuson – Stevens Act. So, alternative recreational fisheries management strategies would still need to operate within the bounds of the existing fisheries management requirements of the Councils.

Review of PowerPoint presentations made to the Council Coordinating Committee in November 2019 (Item V)

Mr. John Carmichael (SAFMC-Staff) provided an overview of four presentations given at the Council Coordination Committee meeting held in November 2019. The purpose of these presentations was to highlight novel approaches to recreational fishery management, with some specific case studies throughout the United States, that align with goals outlined in the MFA. Broadly, these approaches focused on allowing more flexibility in traditional management to tailor accountability measures to specific species, implement spatial management, and develop effective approaches to account for uncertainty in recreational data collection. For example, the Pacific Fishery Management Council implemented a spatial approach for management (based on season, geography, and depth) of boccacio that has been successful in rebuilding the stock. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission are exploring the use of envelopes of uncertainty, rather than point estimates and discrete temporal averages, to account for highly variable recreational data when monitoring harvest relative to catch targets. These approaches allow fisheries managers to reassess management measures and create more stability for recreational participants.

Given the variety of ideas provided by the presentations, the Joint Workgroup agreed that continued cooperation between the GMFMC and the SAFMC on novel fishery management approaches is critical. The Joint Workgroup also reiterated the exclusive challenges encountered in the two regions. One example discussed was the difficulties associated with establishing discrete zone demarcations needed for spatial management that was applied on the Pacific Coast. Additionally, the southeastern United States experience much more recreational fishing effort than other regions, so self-reporting recreational fishery surveys are more difficult to implement. The Joint Workgroup agreed that timely collection of recreational fisheries data would be crucial to the success of any future novel approach to managing recreational fisheries in the southeastern United States.

Review of proposals put forward at the 2018 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit (Item VI)

Mr. Russell Dunn (NMFS) summarized the proposals and discussions from the 2018 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit. This Summit convened fishery managers and leaders in the recreational fishing community to discuss key obstacles and opportunities to improve recreational fisheries. Stakeholders were able to provide suggestions on innovative management

strategies that could be considered by managers. These included implementing pilot studies (e.g., through exempted fishing permits), developing tools to manage recreational fishing quotas, implementing harvest tag programs, and developing region-specific solutions. Other topics discussed included challenges associated with data collection and interpretation. At the Summit, the SAFMC emphasized the utility of annual catch limits (ACLs) in fisheries management, including how beneficial it can be to forecast stock recruitment, and the issues that may rise when used for stocks that go through a "boom and bust" cycle. Managers are striving to better understand stock recruitment so that that ACLs more accurately reflect current stock realities. Participants also highlighted the need to increase trust between anglers and managers. Data transparency and increased communication are key elements needed to enhance angler engagement in the fishery management process. Additionally, participants recognized the need for funding to collect more robust data that will inform management measures. The participants concluded that collaboration is key and encouraged cooperative research partnerships between the fishing community, scientists, and managers.

After Mr. Dunn's presentation, Mr. Poland (SAFMC-North Carolina), mentioned that some of the recommendations from the Summit have also been brought up during their Council meetings, such as the integration of regional pilot programs and managing by the number of fish instead of pounds. The recommendations received by stakeholders need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and make sure that they are consistent with National Standard 1.

Review of outcomes from the SAFMC workshop and regional meetings on alternative recreational management strategies (Item VII)

A joint presentation was given by Ms. Kellie Ralston and Mr. Mike Waine of the American Sportfishing Association, reviewing new ideas for private recreational management in the South Atlantic. Ms. Ralston provided an overview of new approaches to manage the private recreational sector with the overall goal of identifying feasible strategies for best management practices, while also gaining a better understanding of recreational anglers' perspectives. Specific focus was placed on the snapper-grouper complex managed by the SAFMC. An initial workshop with the SAFMC was held in 2018 to determine topics to focus on in the subsequent regional workshops, prior to the workshop material being considered by the SAFMC in March of 2019. Management strategies discussed with anglers included harvest rate management, harvest tags for certain deep-water species, seasonal management, and management accounting for regional differences. Electronic reporting, angler registries and reducing release mortality were also discussed. Overall, anglers in the South Atlantic were open to new management measures, but they would prefer to see management strategies that directly reflect what is happening on the water. South Atlantic anglers appreciated when managers account for seasonality and provide sufficient opportunity and flexibility to catch enough of a variety of species to make fishing trips worthwhile and satisfactory. Anglers were encouraged by results based on a harvest rate management approach as this method allowed for timely integration of recreational effort and fishing population data.

Mr. Mike Waine focused on reforming recreational management using a harvest control rule (HCR) approaches. He noted anglers were amenable to outcomes based on this approach, as it

allows response to changes in recreational effort and fish populations using the most recent information. The use of interim analyses should also be considered. A suite of options was presented to the SAFMC as final recommendations that were region-dependent to better fine-tune regulations across regions within the South Atlantic. Anglers wanted more exploration of harvest rate management, exempted fishing permits or pilot programs for harvest tag programs, cooperation among state agencies to establish angler registries, and to explore other reporting methods detailed within SAFMC Snapper Grouper Amendment 46.

Mr. Waine (ASA) concluded the presentation by providing information on HCR approaches which has been developed and presented to the MAFMC for consideration. Since the uncertainty in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimation process in recreational catch estimates is difficult to quantify using traditional management approaches, other methods may better account for uncertainty in MRIP sampling. Accounting for uncertainty may be accomplished through a HCR, whereby allocation or access can be defined through season, size and bag limits; access can be more or less restrictive, in a step-wise fashion, within a given range based on stock condition. For the analysis phase, management history was gathered along with MRIP recreational removals data which were then matched to stock status. This phase was aimed at producing a range of alternatives for recreational management measures and commercial quotas for each step through two- to three-year cycles. This HCR would allow for managers to be proactive in adjusting or adding steps based on stock condition. Mr. Waine acknowledged this HCR is still in development and that stakeholder involvement will be critical as steps in the process are refined.

The Joint Workgroup asked for a synopsis of the HCR; Mr. Waine clarified that the HCR modifies steps as needed based more on stock condition and less on catch levels, as there can be year-to-year changes in catch levels. As this process progresses, it will be important to consider the impacts that effort has on access to the fishery. Dr. Roy Crabtree (NMFS) noted that the success rate of recreational anglers continues to increase with access to new technology while productivity of the stock can often remain the same.

Characteristics of potential candidate species for alternative management strategies (Item VIII)

Mr. Rindone (GMFMC-Staff) discussed some characteristics of different species in the Gulf and South Atlantic that might make those species attractive for certain alternative recreational fisheries management strategies. Some species may be better managed by certain strategies than others; however, consideration should be given to how a strategy will be implemented and enforced, and the current risk of exceeding the ACL for a given species. The Joint Workgroup discussed several programs and strategies which have already been attempted or implemented in the southeastern US, including the Headboat Collaborative Program in the Gulf and the interim analysis process used by the GMFMC and SAFMC. Harvest tags may be an option for species with a lower frequency of interaction by anglers; however, the Joint Workgroup expressed concern over how tags would be distributed, how tag use and compliance would be monitored, and how to amalgamate tag data across several states.

The Joint Workgroup agreed that the goal(s) to be achieved through alternative management for a species needed to be identified to better understand which strategy might be best for a species. Stability, accessibility, and flexibility were offered as desirable traits of any strategy, acknowledging that all three are not likely mutually achievable. A better understanding of the tools currently in use was decided to be a necessary first step, including the following topics:

- Interim analyses
- Gulf headboat collaborative
- Gulf state data collection programs
- Carryover and phase-in
- Extraction rates
- Conditional accountability measures
- Harvest control rules

Develop a Workgroup Charge and Work Plan and Timeline (Item IX)

The Joint Workgroup agreed that being responsive to the needs of stakeholders was a key motivation for investigating alternative management strategies. In lieu of establishing a formal charge at this time, and in consideration of the additional material requested for review under Item VIII, the Joint Workgroup identified the following goals:

- Greater accessibility for recreational fishermen in the red snapper fishery
- Stability in management annually
- Avoidance of in-season closures, when possible
- Accounting for uncertainty in MRIP
- Flexibility in management techniques
- Improving data collection on harvest and discards
- Managing public expectations and striving for high levels of public buy-in

Other Business (Item X)

No items were brought up by the Joint Workgroup.

The webinar was adjourned at 12:20 PM eastern time.

Membership:

Steve Poland (SAFMC) – Chair
Kevin Anson (GMFMC)
Mel Bell (SAFMC)
Susan Boggs (GMFMC)
Chester Brewer (SAFMC)
Thomas Frazer (GMFMC)

Martha Guyas (GMFMC)
Jessica McCawley (SAFMC)
Chris Schieble (GMFMC)
Troy Williamson (GMFMC)
Spud Woodward (SAFMC)

Staff: John Carmichael (SAFMC) / Ryan Rindone (GMFMC)