



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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SEPTEMBER 16-20, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The following summary highlights the major issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's September 2019 meeting in Charleston, South 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 September 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 September 2019 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=ed2e53f896dc41498fcfa6e1d4d6d2c1f>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Mackerel Emergency Action	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.	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 st). NMFS reported that the emergency action request is under review at NOAA Headquarters .
CMP Framework Amendment 8 – the Council approved various alternatives to permanently increase the trip limit in the southern zone.	Alternative trip limits for Season 2 include: 1. 75 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 100 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed 2. 100 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 150 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed 3. 150 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 175 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed 4. Preferred: 100 fish 10/1 to the end of February	Staff and the IPT will prepare CMP Framework Amendment 8 for public hearings prior to December . Bring public comments and document back to the Council at the December Council meeting to approve for formal review. 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 st).

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Commercial effort	<p>The Council reviewed the staff white paper and approved development of a framework amendment to revise the Spanish mackerel accountability measures so that when the northern zone commercial sector quota is met, a stepdown to 500-pounds will occur. The Spanish mackerel fishery will close when the total annual catch limit (ACL), commercial and recreational combined, is met or projected to be met. The Council requested trip limit analyses for the Northern Zone of 1,500, 2,000, 2,500, and 3,500 pounds (no action).</p> <p>During the June meeting, the Council approved a control date of March 7, 2019 when they began considering effort controls for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.</p>	<p>The Committee & Council will review the framework amendment in December and have scheduled a special webinar Council meeting before the March 2020 meeting to approve for formal review.</p> <p>The request is currently being reviewed at NOAA Headquarters.</p>
Mackerel Advisory Panel	The Council approved adding 2 seats to the Mackerel Advisory Panel.	Seats will be advertised and appointments made at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.
Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 (South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish ACL)	<p>The Council gave guidance to staff to revise the annual catch limits (ACLs) and the recreational annual catch target (ACT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the total ACL from 174,798 to 233,968 lbs ww • Increase the commercial ACL from 87,521 to 117,148 lbs ww • Increase the recreational ACL from 87,277 to 116,820 lbs ww • Increase the recreational ACT from 54,653 to 70,886 lbs ww 	<p>Public comments will be taken at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC. The Council will make any necessary revisions and consider approving for formal review at the December meeting.</p>
Wreckfish ITQ Review	The Council discussed and accepted the final review document and directed staff to begin a plan amendment for the wreckfish fishery to consider the recommendations.	The Council will review a draft plan amendment at the June 8-12, 2020 meeting in Key West, FL.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 33 (Red Snapper Season Modifications)	Options being considered: 1.Remove minimum #days (3) for a season – keep or remove (Preferred) 2.Modify commercial season: a. No Action – 2 nd Monday in July, unless otherwise specified. b. Preferred: May 1, unless otherwise specified. c. 2 nd Monday in June, unless otherwise specified.	The Council will consider approving the amendment for formal review at the December 2-6, 2019 Council meeting in Wilmington, NC.
Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices & Powerheads)	The Council reviewed the amendment and: 1.Require a descending device be on board a commercial, private, and for-hire vessel fishing for or possessing species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit. For the purpose of this requirement, “descending device” means an instrument to which is attached a minimum of a 16-oz weight and a length of line that will release the fish at the depth from which the fish was caught or a minimum of 50-feet. The descending device attaches to the fish’s mouth or is a container that will hold the fish. The device MUST be capable of releasing the fish automatically, by the actions of the operator of the device, or by allowing the fish to escape on its own. Since minimizing surface time is critical to increasing survival, descending devices shall be readily available for use while engaged in fishing. 2.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). 3.Require use of non-stainless-steel hooks when fishing with hook-and-line gear and natural baits in the EEZ. 4.Allow powerheads in the EEZ off SC with the exception of within SMZs where they will remain prohibited.	The Council approved the amendment for formal review. The document will be sent to NMFS by mid-October.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 34 (SMZs in NC & SC)	The Council directed staff to continue to develop the amendment to establish special management zones (SMZs) around artificial reefs in NC & SC, and to conduct scoping webinars with listening stations prior to and at the December 2019 meeting.	Scoping meetings prior to and at the December 2019 meeting. The Council will review scoping comments at the special webinar Council meeting prior to the March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.
Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Protected Resources The Council reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NMFS and the Council and received updates on biological opinions.	The Council directed staff to work with the Southeast Regional Office Protected Resources Division to provide information for the Dolphin Wahoo biological opinion and to track development of the opinion.	Staff will track development of the biological opinion as the dolphin wahoo amendment proceed.
Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Habitat Protection & Ecosystem-Based Management	The Council reviewed the Advisory Panel (AP) report. Art Sapp, Council member, reviewed video and photograph documenting a large oil spill associated with Hurricane Dorian on Grand Bahama, Bahamas. Concern was raised on the potential impact of the spill on both the Bahamas and potentially habitat and species managed by the Council. The Council directed staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with the AP to help identify sites to monitor oceanographic changes in the region. • Engage appropriate organizations and agencies (e.g., SECOORA, etc.) to brief the Council in December or March on the potential impacts of the Bahamian oil spill on habitats and species under Council jurisdiction. • Facilitate review of state activities addressing climate change and extreme weather events. • Facilitate a presentation in December on innovative technologies to characterize fish habitat and spawning events. 	The Council will receive reports at the December 2019 meeting.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Joint Golden Crab, Habitat & Ecosystem, and Shrimp	<p>The Council discussed Coral Amendment 10/Golden Crab Amendment 10/Shrimp Amendment 11 and directed staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove golden crab options from the document and contact permitted fishermen in the northern zone to discuss the possibility of developing an exempted fishing permit. • Separate the shrimp vessel transit through cold-weather closed areas issue into a separate document • Separate Oculina Bank Coral Habitat Area of Particular Concern boundary and new coral habitat areas of particular concern into a separate document <p>The Council also discussed ways to obtain input from Advisory Panels on changes to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in preparation for the Council's review at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.</p>	<p>Shrimp Vessel Transit – scoping in fall 2019, then hearings with the intent to approve for formal review at the March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.</p> <p>Oculina Bank & Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern – a revised options paper will be presented to the Committee & Council at the June 8-12, 2020 meeting in Key West, FL.</p> <p>Council staff are organizing presentations to the Habitat, Snapper Grouper, Spiny Lobster, Shrimp, Mackerel, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coral Advisory Panels. The Council will receive a presentation and make decisions at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Dolphin Wahoo Goals and Objectives Amendment 10	<p>The Council discussed and provided some changes to the goals and objectives. The final committee report shows the revisions.</p> <p>The Council reviewed Amendment 10 and provided guidance to staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Actions 1-8, no changes. • In Action 9 (Commercial Accountability Measures (AMs) for Dolphin), removed language discussing recreational AMs and modified alternatives that would reduce the likelihood of a commercial closure. • Approved adding Action 10 (Recreational AMs for Dolphin) and modified the alternatives to share unharvested allocations and modify the post-season AM. • Approved adding Action 11 (Recreational AMs for Wahoo) and modified the post-season AM. • Moved Action 12 (Announce starting and ending dates before recreational season for dolphin and wahoo) to the considered but rejected appendix. • Approved edits to Action 13 (Allowable gear for dolphin wahoo) to allow retention of 250, 500, 750 or 1,000 pounds gutted weight of dolphin caught by rod and reel; the trip limit remains 500 pounds gutted weight for wahoo. • Retained Action 14 (Remove operator card requirement) • Retained Action 15 (Modify the recreational vessel limit for dolphin) • Modified Action 16 (Gear, bait, and training requirements in the commercial longline fishery to align with HMS) by adding 3 new alternatives. • Added Action 17 (Allow filleting of dolphin at sea onboard for-hire vessels in the waters north of the Virginia/North Carolina border), with a range of alternatives including skin on entire fillet, 2 fillets = 1 fish, and no frames need to be retained). 	<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 goals and objectives, at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 12 (Bullet & Frigate Mackerel)	<p>The Council approved adding Action 1 (Designating bullet & frigate mackerel as ecosystem component species in the dolphin wahoo FMP).</p> <p>The Council also requested NMFS provide the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility of the additional actions in the amendment (beyond Action 1). • Jurisdictional Issue – examine the precedent of extending CMP management through the MAFMC; if including as an action in an amendment will not work, then how does the SAFMC gain authority for a species along the entire east coast? • From an ecosystem component species perspective, what are appropriate regulatory actions that could prevent development of an unregulated fishery before the Council can develop an amendment to determine whether management is needed? For example, commercial trip limits and a total quota. • Allowable gear for dolphin includes automatic reel, bandit gear, handline, pelagic longline, rod and reel, and spear (including powerheads). If bullet and frigate mackerel are added to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP, would this list of allowable gears apply? (Note: current commercial fishery (non-FMP) allowable gear includes trawl, gillnet, hook and line, longline, handline, rod and reel, bandit gear, cast net, lampara net, and spear.) 	<p>The Council will review a revised Amendment 12 at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.</p> <p>The Council will receive a response from NMFS at the March 2-6, 2020 meeting in Jekyll Island, GA.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
MyFishCount	<p>Dr. Chip Collier, Council staff, gave an update on Years 1 & 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 1,000 users/member profiles. • Pilot project demonstrated voluntary electronic reporting. Aid in development of Amendment 46. • Information has already been used in management. • Retention and recruitment is crucial for electronic reporting projects. • Validation is needed. • 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; the API is now complete. <p>BeBe Harrison is working with private recreational fishermen to have them report and updated the Council on outreach efforts.</p>	<p>Council staff are continuing to work on MyFishCount during the 3rd 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>
Citizen Science Program	<p>Julia Byrd, Program Manager, gave an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlined 2019 activities of the various teams and partners. • SAFMC Release app to collect discard data on Scamp Grouper launched on June 20th. Data collected will be considered for use in the upcoming scamp assessment and for future management. Commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen are currently being recruited to participate in this project. • FISHstory, a pilot project to document the historical catch and length distribution for early headboat catches is under development and will launch in early 2020. Thanks to Rusty Hudson for all the pictures from the early years of the fishery. • Continuing Partnership Development. 	<p>Work will continue on the program and these two projects.</p> <p>Scamp results will be available for 2020 scamp assessment. The length data will be available for future assessments once the project is completed.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
For-Hire Recreational Reporting	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 September meeting, the Council was told the final rule is still being reviewed as they work out some final technical issues between NMFS and ACCSP. No specific timing was available.
Full Council Actions: 1. Special Webinar Council Meeting	The Council requested staff schedule a Webinar Council meeting in late January or early February 2020 to address: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Spanish mackerel framework2. NC & SC SMZs	Council staff is working on the dates and will post the information as soon as possible.
2. Scientific & Statistical Committee	The Council appointed Dr. Jared Flowers to the Georgia DNR seat and Dustin Addis to the Florida FWC seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee.	Appointment letters will be distributed and they will attend the SSC meeting October 15-17, 2019 in Charleston, SC.
3. 2020 Topics	The Council developed their work plan for the remainder of 2019 and for 2020.	
4. Next Executive Director	The Council announced hiring John Carmichael as the next Executive Director effective December 13 th at 5:01 p.m.	