

# South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Update and Liaison Report



June 2023

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in St. Augustine, Florida, June 12-16, 2023. Below is a summary of salient discussions.

## **Commercial Electronic Logbook Amendment**

This amendment is being developed jointly with the Gulf Council to require commercial logbooks be submitted via electronic reporting forms instead of the currently used paper-based forms for the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Gulf Reef Fish Fishery management plans. The Council received a presentation from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) on the Coastal Logbook Program and a demonstration of the currently available software (eTRIPS) for commercial reporting. The Council requested participation from the SEFSC and the software developer during upcoming webinar public hearings (in late July or early August) as well as a presentation from the Southeast Region regarding ongoing issues with the permits system for its September 2023.

## **Snapper Grouper Amendments and Projects**

### *Wreckfish (Amendment 48)*

A review of the Wreckfish ITQ Program was completed in 2019 and included recommendations for improvement, particularly with respect to confidentiality issues and related constraints; moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; offloading sites and times; and economic data collection. Modernizing the wreckfish ITQ program continues to be a complex process. To help facilitate continued development of SG Amendment 48, the Council established a Wreckfish Sub-Committee and an Ad-Hoc Wreckfish Advisory Group.

### *Yellowtail Snapper (Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55)*

The Council reviewed the results of the SEDAR 68 Interim Analysis and instructed staff to resume work on this joint plan amendment in September 2022. This amendment will modify catch levels for South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico yellowtail snapper as well as update the jurisdictional allocation of the stock acceptable biological catch, total South Atlantic annual catch limit, Gulf of Mexico annual catch limit, and South Atlantic sector allocations. At their

April 2023 meeting, the Snapper Grouper AP discussed this amendment, and the AP Chair presented their feedback to the Council. It was clarified that a data coding error in the mid-2000s resulted in incorrectly assigning recreational landings from the Tortugas and staff confirmed that the issue did affect the data used to calculate the current jurisdictional allocation of the acceptable biological catch between the South Atlantic and Gulf. However, data being used for this amendment are not affected. The Council reviewed the updated actions and alternatives and directed staff to include an additional jurisdictional allocation option as well as status quo with the corrected data.

#### *Scamp and Yellowmouth Grouper (Amendment 55)*

SEFSC staff presented the results of the SEDAR 68 stock assessment for scamp and yellowmouth grouper in March 2023. Staff provided an overview of management changes that are needed to incorporate the results from SEDAR 68 into management. The amendment will reorganize and update the Other South Atlantic Shallow Water Grouper Complex, establish the Scamp Yellowmouth Grouper Complex and establish the following for the new complex: stock determination criteria, a rebuilding plan, annual catch limits, sector allocations, and accountability measures. The Council approved the amendment for scoping.

#### *Private Recreational Permitting (Amendment 46)*

Amendment 46 considers establishing a private recreational permit and education component for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery to address deficiencies in recreational data and to encourage best fishing practices that help reduce discard mortality. The Council reviewed AP comments, the revised amendment, and approved the purpose and need statements and revised actions for inclusion in the amendment.

#### *Black Sea Bass*

SEFSC staff presented results of the SEDAR 76 stock assessment for black sea bass. The stock was determined to be depleted/overfished and experiencing overfishing. Additional projections have been requested by the SSC to determine recommendations for ABC, OFL, and rebuilding timeframes. These projections are expected to be provided at the July 2023 SSC webinar meeting. The Council directed staff to initiate work on the amendment, recognizing the need for SSC recommendations to develop catch level and rebuilding plan alternatives.

### **Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendments and Projects**

#### *Atlantic Spanish Mackerel*

The SSC met in April 2023 and determined that SEDAR 78 was sufficient for providing stock status and for providing catch level recommendations using model output but not projections. At the June 2023 meeting, the Council was provided details of the SSC discussion and catch level recommendations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. The Council directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to update catch levels (CMP Framework Amendment 13), but to hold off on development of a full plan amendment to address management measures until after mackerel port meetings have been completed.

#### *Port Meetings*

Based on recommendations from the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the Council directed staff to begin work on a plan to conduct port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel to gain a

comprehensive understanding of the fisheries to improve management efforts. At the June 2023 meeting, the Council reviewed the current CMP FMP goals and objectives, established goals and objectives for port meetings, approved a draft timeline, and approved development of a planning team that would consist of staff from interested councils, state agencies, and regional commissions.

### **Citizen Science Program**

#### *Citizen Science Project Portal Tool*

Staff provided an overview of the Citizen Science Project Portal that is being developed as an online tool to gather citizen science project ideas from stakeholders. The portal will be monitored by staff and include a feedback mechanism to follow up with stakeholders that submit ideas. The information gathered through the tool will be compiled and considered when updating citizen science research priorities. It could also help connect fishermen and scientists with similar citizen science research interests. The SAFMC provided feedback on questions to include within the tool and guidance on implementation. The Council approved a motion to adopt the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal Online Tool for use with the modifications suggested.

#### *Citizen Science Program Update*

Staff provided an overview on Citizen Science Program and project activities highlighting current efforts on the SAFMC Release project, upcoming FISHstory scanning nights that will be held this fall, and an overview of the Program Evaluation work being conducted by Rick Bonney, Jennifer Sweeney Tookes, Tracey Yandle, and Bryan Fluech.

### **Dolphin Wahoo Amendments and Projects**

#### *Minimum Size Limit and Recreational Retention Limits for Dolphin (Regulatory Amendment 3)*

This amendment includes actions that would extend the applicable geographic range of the minimum size limit, modify recreational bag and vessel limits, and remove captain and crew bag limits for dolphin. The Council reviewed comments received during the recently completed Dolphin MSE stakeholder workshops and postponed further development of the amendment until the Dolphin MSE report is available. The MSE report is expected to be available by December 2024.

### **Other Items**

#### *Allocation Review Guidelines*

The Council is developing allocation review guidelines to better document efforts to address the GAO's allocation-related recommendations over the past couple of years including the allocation review trigger policy, developing an allocation decision tool, allocation discussions when developing amendments, updating Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives, and providing research recommendations. The guidelines will outline the Council's process for allocation reviews, including the allocation decision tool process, the updated allocation review trigger policy, and the types of information that will be documented following an allocation trigger and subsequent review. This document will present a record of the basis for the Council's decisions and will be made accessible to the public on the Council's website. Council staff will prepare a draft of this document for review at the September 2023 Council meeting and Council approval at the December 2023 meeting.