



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Mel Bell, Chair |, Stephen Poland, Vice Chair
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Joint Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committees

October 30, 2020
Meeting via webinar

Meeting Report

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VERSION
FINAL
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SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics was to be distributed to the Committee through the Council office, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment to be considered by the SSC shall be provided to the Council office no later than one week prior to an SSC meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment was 12:00 pm Friday, October 23, 2020. Submit written comments to:

SAFMC – SSC Comments
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Verbal comment:

Two opportunities for comment on agenda items were provided at set times during this SSC meeting. The first will was at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment.

An opportunity for comment on specific agenda items was also provided as each item came up for discussion. Comments were taken after all the initial presentations were given and before the SSC started discussion of the agenda topic. All comments are part of the record of the meeting and can be found in the meeting minutes.

Friday, October 30, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes from July 2020 Joint Meeting

1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
 - *Approved by Committees.*
- Approve Minutes
 - *Approved by Committees with the following corrections: “weighted age” should be changed to “weight-at-age” throughout the document.*

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

See meeting minutes.

3. DETERMINE FISHING LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SEDAR 64 FOR YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER

3.1. Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR 64 Projections Presentation

Attachment 3. SA P* Analysis and Results for Yellowtail Snapper

Attachment 4. SA ABC Control Rule

Attachment 5. Background Materials

3.2. Presentation

Assessment and Projections Presentation: Shanae Allen & Chris Swanson, FL FWRI

3.3. Overview

The South Atlantic and Gulf SSCs jointly met on July 21-22, 2020 to review the SEDAR 64 Yellowtail Snapper assessment and recommend fishing levels for this stock. The SSCs deemed the assessment best scientific information available and useful for management. The stock was found to be not overfished and not undergoing overfishing, with the biomass indicator being well above its reference point ($SSB/SSB_{F30\%SPR} = 1.69$) and the fishing mortality level indicator being well below its reference point ($F/F_{30\%SPR} = 0.67$).

However, the SSCs did identify issues with the assessment that made it difficult to recommend fishing levels for the stock. One issue was the fact that the resulting projected yields from the assessment were similar or lower than the projected yields from the previous assessment even though the catch levels input into the model were significantly higher than previous assessments due to revised MRIP estimates. The main difference described by the analysts was the ability to estimate weight at age more explicitly for the catch by fleet. The SSCs requested the opportunity to discuss the implications of these issues as well as other concerns (e.g., the buffer between OFL and ABC resulting from projections using the ABC Control Rule in relation to the uncertainty) in more detail before making fishing level recommendations for the stock.

3.4. Public Comment

See meeting minutes.

3.5. Action

- Provide fishing level recommendations and discuss uncertainties.
 - *The SSCs emphasized that uncertainty in the Yellowtail Snapper assessment is likely underestimated and expressed concern regarding several potential biases. Of particular concern were the following sources of uncertainty:*
 - *Uncertainty in the treatment of Yellowtail Snapper as a unit stock given mixing rates between sub-units and differences in fishing capacities between sub-units.*
 - *Change in the estimated magnitude of stock biomass with this assessment. This change was due to the incorporation of variability in catch weights-at-age across fleets.*
 - *Uncertainty in projected recruitment. The terminal year recruitment estimate has high uncertainty as fish in this cohort have not yet entered the fishery. Also, the Committees expressed concern with the apparent declining trend in recruitment despite the increasing trend in spawning stock biomass.*
 - ***The SSCs recommended using the calculated P^* value of 37.5% to produce the ABCs for 2021-2025, and also recommend that the Council consider adjusting the ACL or ACT for management uncertainty (e.g., 75% $F_{30\%SPR}$).***
 - ***The SSCs requested projections used in ABC calculations be rerun assuming 2020 landings were equal to the average landings from 2017-2019 (results from these projections are provided in Table 1 below).***
 - *The SSCs expressed concern with the likely underestimation of uncertainties from certain platforms, particularly Stock Synthesis (as in the case of Yellowtail Snapper), and recommended assessment teams in the Gulf and South Atlantic regions consider and evaluate a) how these models characterize uncertainties in estimated benchmarks, and b) how these uncertainties are carried forward into projections.*

Table 1. Yellowtail Snapper projected landings in millions of pounds under five projection scenarios. ABC recommendation of the SSCs ($P^* = 0.375$ scenario) highlighted in yellow.

Year	Projection Scenario				
	$F_{30\%SPR}$	$P^* = 0.375$	75% of $F_{30\%SPR}$	$F_{current}$	$F_{40\%SPR}$
2021	4.754	4.655	3.758	3.494	3.199
2022	4.301	4.242	3.649	3.454	3.227
2023	4.028	3.991	3.576	3.427	3.247
2024	3.863	3.836	3.526	3.408	3.259
2025	3.756	3.736	3.492	3.393	3.267

4. SEDAR 79 MUTTON SNAPPER ASSESSMENT TORS, SCHEDULE, AND APPOINTMENTS

4.1. Documents

Attachment 6. SEDAR 79 Mutton Snapper ToRs and Schedule

4.2. Overview

The SEDAR 79 Mutton Snapper assessment is being conducted by the state of Florida, starting in the summer of 2021 and completing in the winter of 2023. The South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico SSCs were asked to review and approve the terms of reference (ToRs) and schedule for this assessment. Appointments to the various SEDAR 79 workshops will be made in advance of the start of the assessment.

4.3. Public Comment

4.4. Action

- Review, modify as necessary, and approve the ToRs for the SEDAR 79 Mutton Snapper assessment.
 - *The SSCs approved the ToRs as written.*

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

See meeting minutes.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

None

Adjourned 1:30 PM