

Gulf SSC Meeting Summary February 2024

Tab B, No. 7a

April 2024 Council Meeting

Dr. Jim Nance

Discussion: Revised Black Grouper and Yellowfin Grouper Landings and Catch

- **SSC Recommendations:**

- Landings corrected – removed Monroe County from dataset

Motion: The original OFL and ABC values for GOM black and yellowfin grouper provided by the Gulf SSC in May 2023 should be revised to reflect corrected landings that remove recreational landings from Monroe County. The new values are 91,997 lb gw for OFL and 80,717 lb gw for ABC.

SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

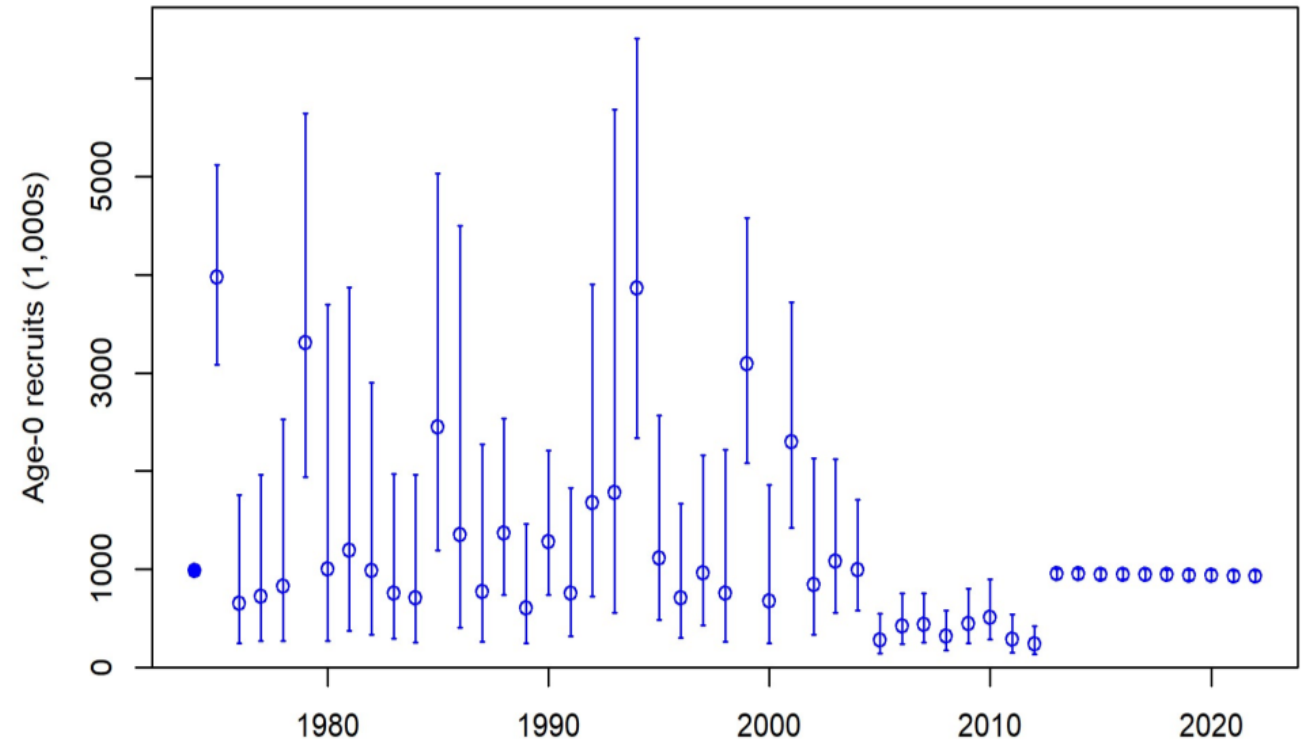
- **General Info:**
- Model completed by SEFSC
- Data inputs, results, diagnostics, and sensitivity analyses
- Terminal data year: 2021
- Several improvements in model relative to SEDAR 22 (2011)
 - Last terminal year was 2009
- Two-region approach: Mississippi River division
 - Different habitat compositions
 - Different groupings of fishing effort

SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Model Inputs and Parameters:**
- Hermaphroditism transition rate fixed
 - 50% chance of transition at 40 years old
- Weight-length relationship updated
 - West fish slightly larger and older on average
- Age and growth curve development
 - Slight differences between east and west

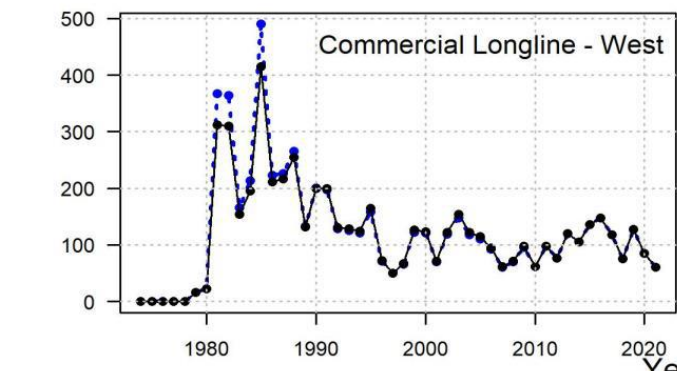
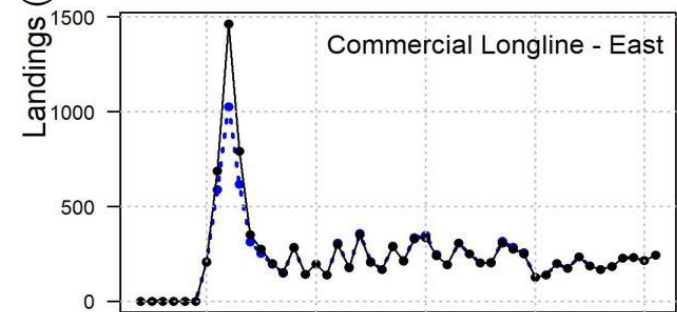
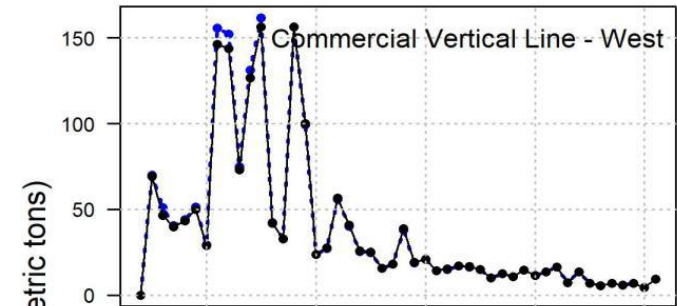
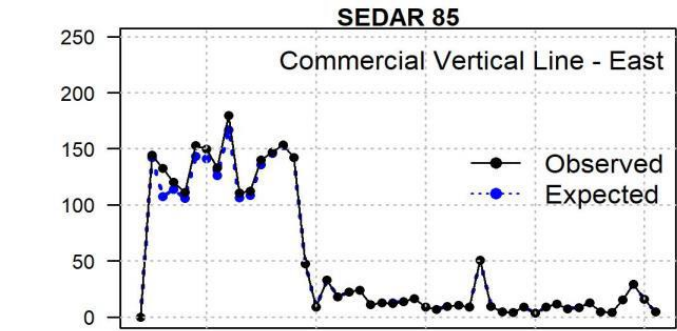
SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Recruitment Modeling:**
- Recruitment begins around 8 years of age
- Steepness value derived externally



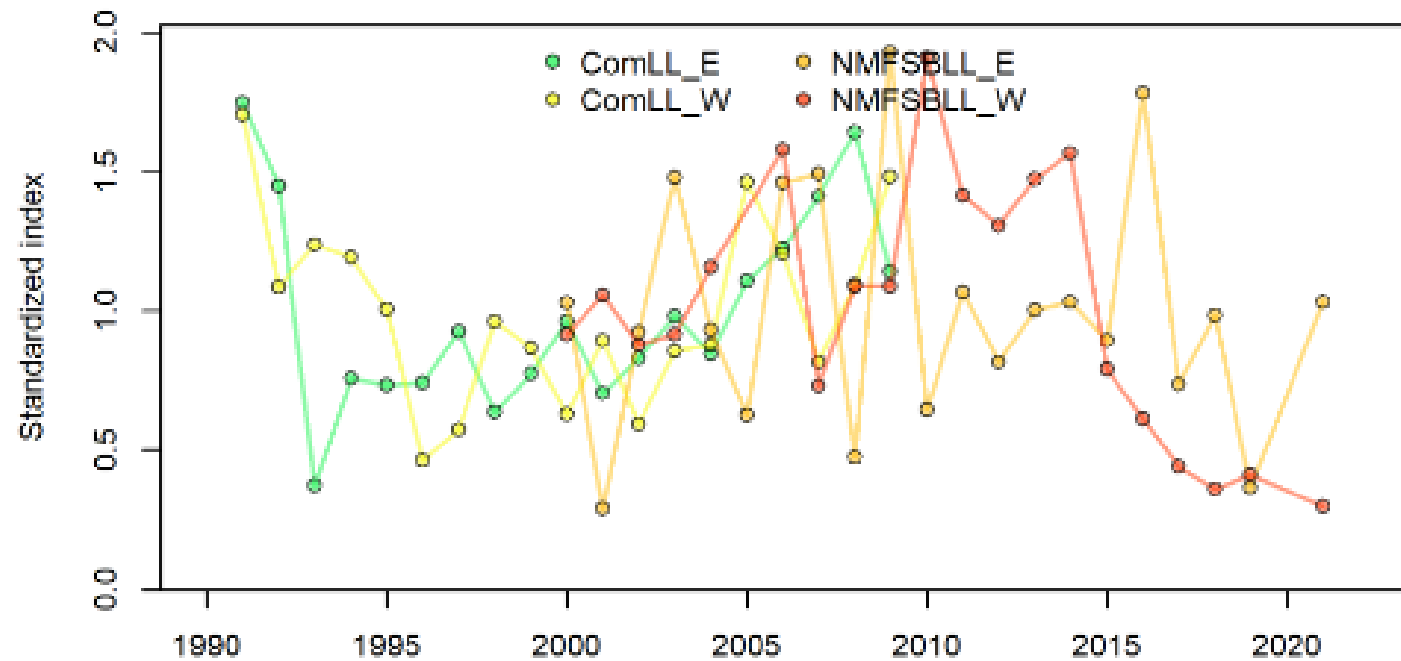
SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Landings and Composition Data:**
- Recreational landings constitute 2% of total removals
- Recreational peak in 1982 averaged over 1981-1985
- Landings characterized as Rec, Comm Vertical line, Comm Longline and dead discard



SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Ecosystem Considerations:**
- Red tide has no measurable impact on yellowedge grouper
- Unclear impact of *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill
- Market stability post-spill confirmed



SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Model Results and Diagnostic:**
- Reviewed continuity and bridging analysis comparisons
- Poor fits to indices in earlier years
- Improvement in length and age composition with time
- Challenges in recruitment modeling
 - Low since 2005
 - No good fishery-independent index
 - Don't recruit to fishery until age 9
 - Any strong recruitment after 2012 not in model landings

SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **MSY Proxy and Model Projections:**
- SSC recommendation: $F_{40\%SPR}$ for F_{MSY} proxy
 - A_{50} at 9 years, max age at 85
 - For comparison, gag: A_{50} at 4, max age 31
- Selection of recruitment time series years
 - SSC recommended using mean of 1998 – 2012 to capture contrast
- SSC recommendation: Model consistent with BSIA
- **NOT OVERFISHED (1.66), UNDERGOING OVERFISHING (1.08)**

SEDAR 85: Yellowedge Grouper

- **Projections:**

- MRIP effect on projections only 2-3%
- Used mean of 2021 – 2022 for 2023 and 2024 landings

- **SSC Catch Level Recommendations:**

For GOM yellowedge grouper, the SSC recommends the OFL based on 5 years (2025-2029) of 487,000 lb gw and an ABC of 372,000 lb gw.

Other Deepwater Grouper

- Snowy Grouper, Speckled Hind, Warsaw Grouper
- Recommended keeping YEG in DWG along with other 3 species

- SSC Catch Limit Recommendations for Other DWG:

The SSC recommends that the OFL (244,035 lbs gw) for snowy, warsaw and speckled hind be based on tier 3b of the control rule, and the time series be between 2010-2022, and that the ABC (183,026 lbs gw) be 75% of the OFL.

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- Response to December 2023 review
- Recommendations made for follow-on benchmark assessment
- Simplification of modeling approach suggested
- **Bottom Line:**
 - Reviewers did not recommend S74 model for informing management
 - Recommended another peer-review of next planned assessment

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Stock Structure:**
- S74 recommended return to 2-region model
- SSC recommendation for 3-region model
 - SSC discussed this at length; lots of debate
- Data limitations in eastern Gulf region
 - Several indices require “mirroring”
 - Combines east and central regions for those indices
- SSC acknowledged communication improvements needed
- Feedback from Assessment Development Team helpful

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Handling Recreational Landings Data:**
- SSC opposed to inputting data without error consideration
- Consideration of National Standard 1 for transparency
- Exploration of Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC) data integration
- Further review and exploration warranted for rec data
- Concerns about potential MRIP-FES changes (i.e., pilot study)
- Recreational working group suggested for input at next assessment

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Other Points:**
- SSC disagreed with reviewers on steepness and natural mortality
- TORs need to balance prescription with flexibility
- Creation of topical working groups proposed
 - Minimally: recreational data, commercial data, life history, GRSC, indices
 - Direct participation from regional GRSC PIs suggested
 - Documentation of integration process for transparency

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Process Recommendations:**
- Need additional flexibility in the SEDAR process
- Preference for assessing key stocks on regular schedule
- Avoidance of prescribing specific types of assessments in advance

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Research Track Assessment:**
- Limited efficiency gains observed
- Increased workload on data provisioning process
- Discussion on independent peer-review necessity
- Ultimately did not recommend continued use of RT

Review of SEDAR 74 Research Track

- **Peer Review and Working Groups:**
 - Case-by-case determination of peer review necessity
 - Inclusion of peer review in Terms of Reference
 - Consideration of need for Topical Working Groups
- **Future Plans:**
 - Continued discussion planned at future SSC meeting
 - Potential modifications to improve efficiency and effectiveness
 - Input from SEDAR Steering Committee meeting anticipated

Comparison of the Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fisheries of the Southeastern US

- **Annual Economic Reports:**
 - Provide financial overview of fisheries since 2014
 - Include cash flow, income, and budget statements
- **Management Regimes Comparison:**
 - Input control measures in South Atlantic
 - Catch share management in Gulf of Mexico
 - Higher # of trips and vessels in South Atlantic

Comparison of the Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fisheries of the Southeastern US

- **Economic Effects Analysis:**
- Lower revenue in South Atlantic fishery
- IFQ can increase resource rent in fishery
- Allocation and share prices reflect fishermen's outlook

Comparison of the Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fisheries of the Southeastern US

- **Question and Answer Session:**
- Inquiry about crew wage decrease
 - Variability in vessels sampled each year
 - Crew wage questions challenging for respondents
- Fleet reduction prior to IFQ program
 - Quota is limiting factor, not vessels
 - Consideration of policy regime change impact
- Use of economic data as stock health indicator?
 - Allocation and share prices could reflect fishermen's outlook for the future

2024 Red Grouper Interim Analysis

- **No catch advice offered**
- Based on NMFS Bottom Longline survey data
- SEDAR 88 stock assessment underway
 - Expected review at October 2024 SSC meeting

2024 Red Grouper Interim Analysis

- **Data and Methodology:**
- Extended time series of previous IA
- Use of NMFS Bottom Longline and Summer Groundfish Trawl indices
- Stability of Bottom Longline Index
 - Tracks larger, older members of SSB
- Increase in Summer Groundfish Trawl index
 - Tracks age-1 and age-2 fish

2024 Red Grouper Interim Analysis

- **Potential Implications:**
- Reports of increased juvenile abundance by fishery participants
- May indicate an upcoming pulse in fishery

