

**Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report  
January 30, 2024  
Dr. CJ Sweetman, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab E, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab E, No. 2**) of the August 2023 meeting as written.

*Allocations and Allocation Review Policy (Tab E, No. 4)*

Staff presented expected start dates for initial allocation reviews set by the Council and discussed completed and implemented reallocation amendments that included allocation reviews. Examples include Reef Fish Amendments 53, 54, and 56 which reviewed and revised allocations between the recreational and commercial sectors for red grouper, greater amberjack, and gag, respectively. For each of these species, the next allocation review was scheduled based on the date upon which the final rule implementing the amendment became effective and the predetermined time interval between reviews. For example, because Reef Fish Amendment 54 became effective July 17, 2023, and a six-year interval between reviews was set by the Council, the next review of the greater amberjack recreational and commercial allocation will begin no later than July, 17, 2029.

Staff discussed ongoing amendments with allocation reviews and noted that state directors plan to meet to discuss the apportionment of the private angling component of the recreational red snapper annual catch limit (ACL) between Gulf states. Staff discussed an October 2023 Council motion which stated that the Council will delay commercial and recreational allocation changes for fishery resources subject to the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) until the 2024 pilot study has been completed and deemed consistent with the best scientific information available (BSIA) by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). Staff then presented a revised allocation review schedule consistent with the Council motion, and completed and ongoing allocation amendments. The Committee discussed the proposed revisions to the schedule for allocations that are not between the recreational and commercial sectors. Staff indicated that potential adjustments to recreational data are expected to affect several allocations. Staff also noted that the revised schedule assumes that the 2024 MRIP pilot study and subsequent SSC evaluation are expected to be concluded by January 2026. Committee members inquired about the planned completion date for the pilot study. Dr. Richard Cody indicated that study results and updated recreational data should be available in 2025 and available for use in management in 2026, respectively.

The Committee recommends and I so move, **to recommend the Council approve the updated allocation review schedule.**

*Motion carried with one abstention.*

The Committee directed staff to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing revisions to the allocation review schedule.

*Summary of SSC Discussion on Incorporating Social Science Theory and Methods in Ecosystem Assessments Recommendations (Tab E, No. 5)*

Staff summarized the SSC's discussion on incorporating social science theory and methods in ecosystem assessments. The SSC received this information, presented by Dr. David Griffith (Standing SSC) at its September 2023 meeting. The SSC discussion included illustrative examples related to social data and methods including conventional methods such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys and other approaches, such as cultural consensus analysis and the conversion of qualitative data into quantitative data to create dependence and vulnerability indices. Of note, Dr. Griffith said that timely and systematic data collection programs and syntheses of data collected would be very informative, such as interviews with fishermen and their inputs relative to fishing effort and areas fished, and constraints relative to their ability to fish could be utilized to inform stock assessments. SSC members noted that social science data and analyses could be more prominently included in the Council process, but social information is not routinely collected in some regions, and that research funding is usually reactive to present needs.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.