

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Update and Liaison Report



June 2024

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) met in Daytona Beach Shores, Florida, on June 10-14, 2024. Below is a summary of salient discussions.

Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER)

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has been undertaking a for-hire methodology technical review with goals that include more fully utilizing for-hire logbooks in MRIP catch statistics and setting specifications that allow Atlantic Coast logbook programs to adopt MRIP certified design requirements. The Council received an overview of this effort. Council staff then reviewed information requested at the March 2024 meeting as well as options to potentially obtain higher compliance with SEFHIER reporting requirements. The Council directed staff to initiate a SEFHIER Improvement Amendment, considering the ACCSP project and actions and alternatives that the Gulf Council is considering. The Council also approved a charge for an ad hoc for-hire reporting AP and gave staff additional guidance to advertise seats for this AP. The Council intends to make AP appointments in September 2024.

For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment

The Council received a summary of comments on the requested control dates (December 5, 2023, and December 8, 2023) as well as an overview of possible options for a moratorium on for-hire permits and elements of a limited access program. The Council decided to postpone further development of the amendment pending resolution of the issue with the NMFS Southeast Regional Office permits systems that is preventing data from being obtained and used in developing the amendment. In the meantime, the Council will work on a purpose and need statement for the amendment, developing a discussion of OY in the context of limiting access in for-hire fisheries, and obtain additional input from the appropriate APs.

Snapper Grouper Amendments and Projects

Wreckfish (Amendment 48)

The Council completed work on this amendment, which was initiated to respond to the 2019 review of the ITQ program. The 2019 review found that the program has been relatively successful in achieving its stated objectives, although there is still room for improvement, particularly with respect to moving away from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic

program; cost recovery; wreckfish permit requirement; allocation issues; and monitoring and enforcement. The Council approved Amendment 48 for formal review.

Private Recreational Permitting (Amendment 46)

The Council received input from the Snapper Grouper Permitting and Reporting Technical AP, Private Angler AP, and Outreach and Communications AP. The Council decided to postpone development of the amendment until December 2024 pending discussion of the planned MRIP revisioning and improvements to the program at the September 2024 meeting. Additionally, the Council intends to obtain more information from NMFS on potential measures that can be taken to improve recreational data, available tools to improve such data, and sources for dedicated funds to support education and outreach. The Council will also consider preliminary information on the red snapper exempted fishing permits (EFPs) and request feedback from FWC on how the State Reef Fish Survey could be modified to accommodate a federal permit requirement.

Black Sea Bass Management (Amendment 56)

Amendment 56 responds to the SEDAR 76 stock assessment of black sea bass, which indicates the stock is depleted. NMFS sent a letter on May 30, 2024, indicating that black sea bass will continue to be listed as not overfished and not overfishing, pending the adoption of new status determination criteria that have been recommended by the assessment panel and endorsed by the SSC. Council staff presented information requested at the previous meeting and updated the Committee on additional assessment model projections being developed by the SEFSC, which will be reviewed by the SSC at their August 2024 webinar meeting. These projections could affect the SSC's acceptable biological catch recommendations for black sea bass, affecting catch level options that could be considered in the amendment. The Council requested additional projections from the SEFSC that incorporate a phase-in approach and projections that would allocate total yield and subtract sector discards from the allocated yields. The Council also directed staff on initial regulations beyond catch level changes that should be considered during scoping, approved the amendment for scoping, and directed scoping meetings to be conducted following the September 2024 meeting.

Headboat and Black Grouper Regulations

The Council considered recommendations from the Snapper Grouper AP as well as public comment regarding different regulations for headboats. To inform future discussions, the Council directed staff to develop a report exploring current recreational regulations for snapper grouper species and potential ways in which headboat-specific regulations could be feasible. Additionally, the Council will explore potential different regulations for black grouper in South Florida. The Council intends to engage in discussion regarding headboats in December 2024 and address any changes to black grouper regulations in March 2025.