

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Overview

Oct 18-20, 2016

Charleston Marriott Hotel

Charleston, SC

VERSION
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October 18, 2016

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SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is 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 is 12:00 pm Tuesday, October 11, 2016. 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 will be provided during SSC meetings. The first will be at the beginning of the meeting, and the second near the conclusion, when the SSC reviews its recommendations. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, which may be through a show of hands or a written list if the number of interested parties is extensive, who will then recognize individuals to come forward and provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

The Council requests that the SSC consider providing an opportunity for comment each day, or for each agenda item.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Documents

Agenda

Attachment 1. Minutes of the May 2016 meeting

1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public will be provided an opportunity to comment on SSC agenda items on the afternoon of Tues, Oct 18 and the morning and afternoon of Thurs, Oct 20. The public will also be provided opportunities to comment after each agenda item on Wed, Oct 19. Those wishing to make comment should indicate their desire to do so to the Committee Chair. The SSC is trying several different options for public comment at this meeting per the guidance of the Council. The SSC will use the experience from this meeting to discuss changes to their public comment policy under agenda item 15.

3. STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIZATION

3.1. Documents

Attachment 2. Prioritizing Fish Stock Assessments

Attachment 3. Stock Assessment Prioritization SAFMC

Attachment 4. Stock Prioritization - SAFMC Stocks

Attachment 5. South Atlantic Stock Info 2016

Attachment 6. Landings Trends 2016

3.2. Overview

The Committee was presented with the Stock Assessment Prioritization Tool at their May 2016 meeting. The process of prioritizing stocks using this method requires many decisions to be made regarding factors affecting the rank of individual stocks. Many of these decisions require expert judgement to be applied. The Committee felt it would be best to wait until experts from the fishing industry could be present to help better inform these decisions requiring expert judgement. At this meeting, a representative from each of the Council's Advisory Panels (AP) has been invited to help the SSC determine the appropriate weightings and scaling factors to be applied within the Prioritization Tool. A draft application of the Prioritization Tool has been prepared by Council and Science Center staff to help illustrate how the process works. A brief description of the prioritization process is included below.

Stock assessment prioritization includes first-time assessments for previously unassessed stocks, updating existing assessments using established methods/data, and upgrading assessments to use new types of data/methods. All stocks managed under Federal Fishery Management Plans, as well as additional stocks that may be assessed using NMFS Science Center resources, are included in assessment prioritization. For stocks that have been previously assessed, the prioritization approach sets targets for assessment completeness (level) and frequency and then determines priorities relative to meeting those targets. For stocks that have only been previously assessed with data-poor methods, the system provides an opportunity to periodically examine: (1) fishery importance, (2) ecosystem importance, (3) biological vulnerability to overfishing, (4) preliminary information on fishery impact level (stock status) and (5) data availability to determine which of the stocks, if any, are both sufficiently at risk to warrant an assessment and have sufficient data to conduct a fuller assessment.

There are 14 prioritization factors in the five themes mentioned above. Many of these will require expert judgement and input in order to set them for each of the stocks being considered for prioritization. There are relative scores for each of the factors that weight each factor based on its importance to the region that will require expert opinion to help inform. There are also several factors, such as constituent demand and non-catch importance, which are directly informed by experts such as the AP members that will be in attendance.

There are some factors where scientific input is mostly required, such as the importance of unexpected changes in current model forecasts from previous projections and the importance of new data sources, which the SSC will be able to help inform. Then there are factors where the AP member, the SSC, and perhaps the Council members in attendance can help inform the weightings. These factors include ecosystem importance (where AP members can help fill in holes in existing knowledge) and target assessment frequency (where Council members can help inform the SSC on assessment needs).

All of these factors and their weightings have been filled out with preliminary values in attachment 4. This spreadsheet also explains what each factor is and easily calculates assessment rankings from the input factor weightings and metrics.

3.3. Action

- Provide recommendations for revisions or modifications to the draft application.
- Discuss and provide recommendations on initial inputs, particularly those requiring expert advice, including:
 - Value for ‘time since terminal year’ for unassessed stocks
 - Scoring range for factors (0-2 vs 1-5 vs 1-10)
 - Default values for unknown factors
- Identify stocks to be considered for a data limited SEDAR assessment project.

4. SEDAR ACTIVITIES

4.1. Documents

- Attachment 7. Goliath Grouper Stock Assessment Report
- Attachment 8. SEDAR 50 Assessment Schedule
- Attachment 9. Blueline Tilefish Stock ID Workshop Report
- Attachment 10. Draft Black Grouper ToRs
- Attachment 11. SEDAR Steering Committee Draft report

4.2. Overview

SEDAR 47 was a benchmark assessment for Goliath Grouper with FL FWCC as the agency lead. The assessment has completed its SEDAR review and has now come before the SSC for final review. The lead assessment scientist will not be at the October meeting to present the assessment results due to the outcome of the SEDAR review. The Review Panel (RP) concluded that the assessment does not constitute best scientific information available. The RP had several areas of concern including the data that were available, the treatment of the available data, the high degree of uncertainty associated with the catch and indices of relative abundance, and the structure of the chosen assessment models. The RP recommended that this assessment was not adequate to support status determination and should not be used for management advice.

The SSC is asked to review the uncertainties and determine if the assessment can be used for management advice and support of fishing level recommendations. The list of action items pertaining to this assessment are the standard action items when reviewing a stock assessment. The SSC is asked to review the action items and consider how they may apply to Goliath Grouper.

SEDAR 50 will be a joint assessment with the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils with SEDAR/SEFSC/SAFMC having the lead. In late June 2016, a Blueline Tilefish ageing issue was identified. The Life History and Analytical teams determined that an Ageing Workshop was necessary to resolve the issue and the SEDAR 50 schedule was delayed approximately 3 months to accommodate this issue with the Data Workshop rescheduled for January 2017; the Assessment workshop for May 2017; and the Review Workshop for August 2017. The Ageing Workshop was held in late August 2016 and found that Blueline Tilefish cannot currently be reliably aged and recommended that ages not be used in SEDAR 50. A final Ageing Workshop report will be available in the upcoming weeks. Due to these recommendations, SEDAR 50 will not be an age based assessment.

A Stock ID work group meeting was held June 28-30, 2016 in Raleigh, NC. The Work Group recommended that Blueline Tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico and along the entire Atlantic seaboard be considered a single biological population unit and should be included in the SEDAR 50 assessment. The Work Group's final Stock ID recommendations are documented in SEDAR50-DW12 (Attachment 9).

SEDAR 48 will assess the Southeastern U.S. stock of black grouper. The assessment is being conducted by the State of Florida and will follow a benchmark-track approach consisting of a Data Workshop, an Assessment Workshop, as well as a series of webinars, and a Review Workshop. Terms of Reference are provided for your review and comment. The Project schedule will be discussed and the SSC will be asked for volunteers for members to serve as Panelists for the various workshops and webinars.

The SEDAR Steering Committee met September 20-21 in Charleston SC. The Committee recommended moving forward with the proposed research track process for assessment development, and considering its use for all upcoming benchmarks rather than just scamp as initially proposed. Approved SAFMC assessment projects are shown in the table below, through 2018. Details on projects approved for all SEDAR Cooperators are provided in the Steering Committee Meeting report.

The Steering Committee also considered the stock ID recommendations for Blueline Tilefish, particularly the overlap of the Atlantic stock with the Gulf of Mexico management unit. A special webinar meeting of SSC representatives of all 3 Councils now involved in this assessment – MAFMC, SAFMC, and GMFMC – will be convened on October 28 to review the stock id recommendations, the degree of overlap with the GMFMC management unit, and develop recommendations for SEDAR 50 TORs that will ensure management specification needs will be adequately addressed in the assessment. In preparation for the joint meeting, the SAFMC SSC is asked at this meeting to review the Stock ID Work Group report; provide advice on the level of overlap between the Atlantic Blueline Tilefish stock and the management jurisdictions of the GMFMC and SAFMC; and provide guidance on the risks associated with management based on the GMFMC boundary.

Table 1. SAFMC SEDAR Projects Oct 2016

Plan Year	SEDAR #	Stocks	Approach	Terminal Data	Assessment Complete ¹	Lead Agency
2016	47	Goliath Grouper	Benchmark	2014	Jun 2016	FL FWCC
	48	Black Grouper	Standard	2014	Dec 2017	FL FWCC
	S	Red grouper	Standard	2015	Jan 2017	SEFSC
2017	50	Blueline Tilefish	Benchmark	2015	June 2017	SEFSC
	S	Vermilion Snapper	Standard	2016	April 2018	SEFSC
	S	Black Sea Bass	Standard	2016	Oct, 2017	SEFSC
	R	MRIP Revisions ²	Revision	2016	June 2018	SEFSC
2018	RT	Scamp, Gulf + SA	Research Track	2016	Mid-2019	SEFSC
	RT	Atlantic Cobia	Research Track	2016	Mid-2019	SEFSC
	S	Greater Amberjack	Standard	2017	Jan 2019	SEFSC
	S	Red Porgy	Standard	2017	Jan 2019	SEFSC
	B	Hogfish	Benchmark	2016	Spring 2019	FL FWCC
	B	King Mackerel	Benchmark	2016	Mid 2019	SEFSC
2019	S	Snowy Grouper	Standard	2017	Late 2019	SEFSC
	S	Spanish Mackerel	Standard	2017	Late 2019	SEFSC
	S	Gag	Standard	2018	Early 2020	SEFSC
	B	Yellowtail Snapper	Benchmark	2016	Spring 2019	FL FWCC
2020	O	Scamp, Gulf + SA	Operational	2018	Late 2020	SEFSC
	O	Atlantic Cobia	Operational	2019	Late 2020	SEFSC

1. Completion dates for projects after 2017 are tentative.
2. Stocks to be included in the MRIP Revision assessments are Red Snapper, Red Grouper, Blueline Tilefish, and Black Sea Bass.

4.3. Action

- Goliath Grouper Assessment
 - Review the Goliath Grouper assessment
 - Does the assessment address the ToRs to the SSCs satisfaction?
 - Does the assessment represent Best Scientific Information Available?
 - Does the assessment provide an adequate basis for determining stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations?
 - Identify and discuss assessment uncertainties
 - Are key uncertainties identified, and if not, indicate additional uncertainties.
 - Are risks and consequences of uncertainties identified and evaluated?
 - Are methods of addressing uncertainty consistent with SSC expectations?

- List and comment on the effects of those uncertainties that most contribute to risk and impact status determinations and future yield predictions.
 - Provide fishing level recommendations
 - Apply the ABC control rule and complete the fishing level recommendations table.
 - Provide advice on monitoring the stock until the next assessment
 - What indicators/metrics should the council monitor/SSC evaluate to keep tabs on the stock until the next assessment?
 - Is there a recommended trigger level for these metrics?
 - Provide research recommendations and guidance on the next assessment
 - Review the included research recommendations, and indicate those which are most likely to reduce risk and uncertainty in the next assessment.
 - Provide any additional research recommendations the SSC believes will improve future stock assessments.
 - Provide guidance on the next assessment, addressing its timing and type.
- Review the findings of the Blueline Tilefish Stock ID workshop and provide guidance on this topic for the Joint SSC review sub-committee representatives and SEDAR 50 Data Workshop representatives.
 - Participants for RW (Aug 29-31, 2017)
- Review and approve ToRs for the Black Grouper Assessment.
 - Participants
 - DW (week of March 13th, 2017)
 - AW (June 27-29, 2017)
 - RW (Nov 14-16, 2017)
- Participants for Black Sea Bass assessment.
- Provide guidance on future assessment priorities.

5. 2015-2016 LANDINGS AND ACLS

5.1. Documents

Attachment 12. Landings Report*

5.2. Presentation

Landings and ACLs: Mike Larkin, SERO, via Webinar

5.3. Overview

The SSC will be provided final 2015 and current 2016 landings, catch limits, and application of accountability measures.

5.4. Action

- Review and comment, with attention toward any ABC recommendation updates.
- Consider assessment schedule and research plan implications

6. TILEFISH UPDATE ASSESSMENT

6.1. Documents

Attachment 13. Tilefish Update Assessment Report
Attachment 14. SEDAR 25 Assessment Report for Tilefish
Attachment 15. Tilefish Update vs SEDAR 25
Attachment 16. Tilefish Data Update for the Mid-Atl 2014
Attachment 17. Tilefish Data Update for the Mid-Atl 2015
Attachment 18. Tilefish Market Grades

6.2. Presentation

Tilefish Update vs. SEDAR 25: Dr. Mike Errigo, SAFMC

6.3. Overview

An update of the SEDAR 25 assessment for Tilefish was provided for review during the May 2016 SSC meeting. The SSC determined that Tilefish was not undergoing overfishing and not overfished. Using the ABC Control Rule, a probability of overfishing, or P-star (P^*) value of 30% was used to determine the new Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC).

The resulting ABC for 2017 is an almost 62% decrease from the current ABC projected during SEDAR 25. The Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) value estimated from the update has gone down by 12% from the SEDAR 25 estimate. The update made some changes to the procedures outlined in SEDAR 25 and there were aspects of the new years of data that changed essential model estimates, both of which are reviewed in Attachment 15. The modeling change which had the most influence on the model output was the use of a robust multinomial distribution when fitting the age composition data. The additional years of data shifted the estimated selectivity of the commercial fleets towards older fish. These two changes, along with the additional age comps not supporting such a large recruitment event, resulted in the model no longer estimating an anomalously high recruitment spike in 2001. This subsequently reduced the estimate of R_0 and the estimate of overall stock productivity. The shift in selectivity also resulted in assessment estimates suggesting that overfishing was more prevalent throughout the assessment time period than indicated in the earlier assessment.

After reviewing the SSC recommendations received in June 2016, and noting the drop in recommended future ABC values, the Council directed the SSC to provide further details

and discussion on the Tilefish update to better explain the differences between estimates from SEDAR 25 and the current update.

The Council also raised questions about the size of the buffer between the Overfishing Level (OFL) and the ABC for Tilefish. It is higher than the buffer for any other recently assessed species. The Council directed the SSC to evaluate the buffer and consider to what extent it is related to a model configuration or the uncertainty and data used in the Tilefish assessments. Attachment 15 also addresses factors affecting the uncertainty and, therefore, the outcome of the MCB analysis and probabilistic projections.

Tilefish is also assessed in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England region. They had been using the ASPIC Surplus Production Model up until the most recent 2014 assessment, when they switched to the ASAP age structured model (Attachments 16 & 17). They also use market categories to help fill out the commercial size composition data and to track cohorts and recruitment events. The Council is interested in getting the SSC's advice on the feasibility of using market categories in this manner to help supplement data in South Atlantic assessments.

Table 2. Tilefish Recommendations from the May 2016 SSC Meeting

Criteria	Deterministic	
Overfished evaluation (SSB_{2014}/SSB_{MSY})	1.13	
Overfishing evaluation (F_{12-14}/F_{MSY})	1.22	
MFMT	0.24	
SSB_{MSY} (mature female gonad weight, lbs)	48,347	
MSST (mature female gonad weight, lbs)	36,266	
MSY (1000 lbs)	560	
Y at 75% F_{MSY} (1000 lbs)	551	
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	0.2	
P-Star	0.3	
M	0.1	
OFL RECOMMENDATIONS ¹ (probabilistic projections)		
Year	Landed lbs gw	Landed Number
2017	377,000	48,000
2018	402,000	52,000
2019	426,000	55,000
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS ¹ (probabilistic projections)		
Year	Landed lbs gw	Landed Number
2017	233,000	30,000
2018	267,000	34,000
2019	302,000	38,000

- Discards are not listed here as they are assumed to be negligible in the assessment and not handled separately.

6.4. Action

- Review estimates of productivity from past assessments and the current update
 - Identify uncertainties and factors that impact estimates of productivity.
 - Comment on how well stock productivity is estimated at this point in time.
 - Identify research or data needs that could improve future estimates of productivity.
- Review the application of the P* analysis to Tilefish for the update
 - Provide an explanation for the apparent unusually large difference in yield between the projections of OFL (P*=0.5) and those of ABC (P*=0.3).
 - Compare the buffer between OFL and ABC estimated for Tilefish with those of other species with similar P* values.
 - Identify which factors are most influential in determining the buffer between OFL and ABC.
 - Consider whether the P* analysis is appropriate for this assessment and whether basing the ABC on yield at 75% of F_{MSY} and OFL on the yield at F_{MSY} is a viable alternative.
- Review the performance and accuracy of projections from past Tilefish assessments
 - There is concern with the impact of the high age of the fishery selectivity, combined with the lack of fishery independent data for younger fish, on stock projections
 - Consider the use of market categories in tracking cohorts and recruitment events, as is done in the Mid-Atlantic.
- Comment on the biological risk and socio-economic impacts of a phased-in approach to implementing the reduced catch levels recommended by the SSC from the Tilefish update
 - The ACL would be set equal to the OFL in the first year, and then the ABC in subsequent years.
 - Also consider providing a constant ABC for later years, specified in 3-year blocks.

7. SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 43 - RED SNAPPER

7.1. Documents

Attachment 19. SEDAR 41 SAR, Red Snapper

Attachment 20. SEDAR 41 Supplemental Projections Apr2016

Attachment 21. SEDAR 41 Proj Runs at F_{MAX} and $F_{20\%SPR}$ Aug 2016

Attachment 22. SEDAR 41 Projection Overview Presentation

Attachment 23. Amendment 43 Options Paper

Attachment 24a. MRIP Int Reliability RS

7.2. Presentation

Projections Overview: Dr. Kate Siegfried, SEFSC
Amendment 43 ACT alternative: Chip Collier, SAFMC

7.3. Overview

The Committee reviewed the Red Snapper Benchmark assessment prepared through SEDAR 41 and provided fishing level recommendations at their May 2016 meeting. The base assessment run suggested that in the terminal year of 2014 the stock remained overfished. The SSC did not have confidence in the terminal fishing mortality estimates; however they recommended that the assessment results suggested overfishing was likely occurring in the terminal years of the assessment (2012-2014), although the degree to which overfishing was occurring at that time could not be reliably quantified from the assessment results. Status determination and catch level recommendations provided by the SSC in May 2016 were based on the current F_{MSY} proxy of $F_{30\%SPR}$.

SEDAR 41 estimated the long-term sustainable yield at MSY to be about 25% of what it was estimated to be in SEDAR 24, and projected catch levels from SEDAR 41 at $F_{Rebuild}$ were approximately 21% of the catch levels projected for 2017 based on SEDAR 24. Given the lack of an estimated stock recruitment relationship and the need to fix steepness in SEDAR 41 at a level different than that used for SEDAR 24, and considering the importance of the stock-recruit parameters to the reference point recommendations, the Council directed the SSC to recommend an appropriate F_{MSY} proxy for red snapper that reflects the most recent assessment results. The Council requested additional projection runs and reference point criteria at F_{MAX} and $F_{20\%SPR}$, for the SSC to consider.

There was also concern over the amount of uncertainty in the recreational landings and discard estimates used in SEDAR 41. Recent landings estimates have a high degree of error associated with them, which is partially due to the difficulties of generating estimates during the recent moratoriums and short mini-seasons. Discard estimates also exhibit high sampling error. Due to these recreational data uncertainties the Council requested that the SSC evaluate the current MRIP estimates (landings and discards) for Red Snapper to determine if they are reliable and adequate for management.

The Council has also begun work on Amendment 43 to address alternative management strategies for Red Snapper. Although the Amendment is still in the early stages, there are items the Council would like the SSC's feedback on, such as the MSY (Action 1 in Amendment 43), specifying ABC and Annual Catch Limit (ACL) in landings versus landings and discards (Action 3), and calculating the annual catch target (ACT; Action 4). Attachment 23 has the three actions highlighted here for SSC review copied to the front of the document after the purpose and need for the amendment for ease of SSC review. The full options paper is provided after the Actions 1, 3 and 4 to provide background information and all other proposed action and alternatives.

The Council requested the SSC discuss the risk associated with using different values of MSY (Action 1). The MSY alternatives in the options paper include F_{MAX} , $F_{20\%}$, $F_{26\%}$, $F_{30\%}$, and $F_{40\%}$. Projections are provided for F_{MAX} , $F_{20\%}$, $F_{27\%}$, and $F_{30\%}$ in Attachment 21.

There are slight differences between the alternatives and the projections because the alternatives in the amendment were developed after the request for projections was sent the SEFSC.

The Council requested the SSC comment on the risk of specifying the ABC and ACL in landings or landings + discards (Action 3). The current ABC is based on landings and dead discards and the ACL is based on landings only. The discards are not tracked for any other fish in the South Atlantic and compared to the ABC, which includes landings and dead discards. However, the largest component of fishing mortality for Red Snapper in the last five years came from the dead discards in the recreational fishery.

The calculation of the ACT (Action 5) includes a new method for review by the SSC (Alternative 4). The new method reduces the ACT from the ACL based on the average percentage the annual landings exceeded the ACL based on a selected timeframe. The timeframe for the ACT calculation was based on 2012 to 2014 when short seasons were opened for Red Snapper.

Table 3. Red Snapper Recommendations from the May 2016 SSC Meeting

Criteria	Deterministic	Probabilistic		
Overfished evaluation (SSB ₂₀₁₄ /SSB _{30%})	0.16	0.17		
Overfishing evaluation	$F_{12-14}/F_{30\%} > 1$	$F_{12-14}/F_{30\%} > 1$		
MFMT (F _{30%})	0.15	0.15		
SSB _{30%} (Eggs 1E8)	328,552	294,166		
MSST (Eggs 1E8)	246,414	220,624		
MSY (1000 lb)	430	419		
Y at 75% F _{30%} (1000 lb)	398	397		
ABC Control Rule Adjustment	Under Rebuilding			
P-Star	Under Rebuilding			
M	0.134			
Management starting in 2017 (probabilistic projection results)				
OFL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number
2017	174,000	189,000	18,000	35,000
2018	204,000	210,000	19,000	37,000
2019	230,000	227,000	21,000	39,000
ABC RECOMMENDATIONS				
Year	Landed LBS	Discard LBS	Landed Number	Discard Number
2017	165,000	179,000	17,000	33,000
2018	195,000	200,000	18,000	35,000
2019	220,000	218,000	20,000	37,000

7.4. Action

- Evaluate the MRIP estimates for Red Snapper

- Determine if they are reliable and adequate for management, including quota monitoring and discard information.
- Consider alternative reference points
 - Comment on the risk of using alternative SPR metrics in lieu of $F_{30\%SPR}$ in determining stock status and running projections.
 - Review the projections at F_{MAX} and $F_{20\%SPR}$.
 - Update or revise fishing level recommendations as appropriate.
- Amendment 43 ACT alternative (Action 4)
 - Discuss the pros and cons of the proposed alternative method for calculating the ACT.
 - What are the benefits to using the proposed methodology over the Council's current ACT rule of $(1-PSE)*ACL$?

8. ABC CONTROL RULE MODIFICATIONS

8.1. Documents

Attachment 25. ABC Control Rule Modifications DD

Attachment 26. ABC Control Rules from Other Jurisdictions

Attachment 27. ABC Control Rule Presentation

Attachment 28. ABC Control Rule Background Information

8.2. Presentation

Changes to the ABC Control Rule: John Carmichael, SAFMC

8.3. Overview

During the October 2014 ABC Workshop, several issues with the ABC Control Rule were identified, including the use of stock status, MRAG Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis scores and catch adequacy in determining the P^* value for Tier 1 stocks. Other concerns include the overly prescriptive nature of Levels 2 and 3 that could be viewed as precluding consideration of newly developed data poor assessment methods and the lack of clarity on application of the ABC Control Rule in developing annual catch level recommendations for stocks in a rebuilding plan. The SSC created a sub-committee to develop recommendations for control rule revisions. At the May 2016 meeting, the SSC discussed the results of analyses that had been put together by the ABC Control Rule sub-Committee. The sub-committee focused on evaluating ABC control rule performance in preventing overfishing, and determined that there hasn't been enough time and assessments of stock conditions based on management under the ABC Control rule to definitively evaluate its effectiveness. The sub-Committee was then charged with looking at different performance metrics for evaluating the success of ABC recommendations. The sub-Committee has not made any additional progress since the May 2016 SSC meeting.

Although the sub-Committee focused mainly on performance, it also noted that the 2014 workshop included a number of recommendations to improve the Control Rule that have yet to be acted upon. Recently, the Council requested the SSC reconsider eliminating stock status as a factor used in determining the P* for assessed stocks. This is largely based on the fact that NMFS makes the final determination of stock status and not the SSC.

Council staff prepared a document for SSC consideration that addresses the Council request regarding stock status determinations, suggestions from the 2014 workshop for refining the ABC Control Rule criteria, and a number of other issues and inconsistencies created by the multiple addenda to the original rule. The Committee is asked to consider this as a starting point for resolving issues with the ABC Control Rule.

8.4. Action

- Provide recommendations on control rule revisions, if appropriate and necessary.
 - See the ABC Control Rule Modifications Decision Document for specific suggestions on modifying the current ABC Control Rule.
- Provide guidance on next steps to be taken in considering revisions to the control rule.

9. BLACK SEA BASS POT MESH SIZE STUDY

9.1. Documents

Attachment 29. BSB Selectivity Study Presentation

9.2. Presentation

BSB Selectivity Study: Paul Rudershausen, NCSU

9.3. Overview

Paul Rudershausen, North Carolina State University, will present results of a study to explore the selectivity of different mesh sizes in commercial black sea bass pot gear. The commercial black sea bass minimum size in the South Atlantic was increased to 11 inches without a concurrent increase in the minimum size of trap mesh to harvest the species.

The researchers worked with a commercial fisherman out of Sneads Ferry, NC in cooperative research funded by a North Carolina Fisheries Resource Grant to determine whether larger mesh traps would optimize selectivity. The optimization was based on maximizing escape of sub-legal fish while maintaining catch of legal fish. Traps with uniform mesh sizes of 2, 2.25, and 2.5 inches were tested.

The study found that at the current minimum size limit of 11 inches the 2.25-inch mesh trap would optimize selectivity. The research also showed that the current minimum trap mesh configuration retains a higher number of sub-legal fish than traps of larger mesh sizes. Researchers developed a regression equation to predict approximate black sea bass sizes at first retention for larger trap mesh sizes; this is useful information given any future changes in the minimum size limit for this species.

9.4. Action

- Discuss the uncertainties associated with this study.
- Recommend whether this study is the Best Scientific Information Available and is appropriate for use in managing fisheries resources.

10. MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS REVIEW PROCESS

10.1. Documents

Attachment 30. SAFMC SSC Peer Review Process

10.2. Presentation

SAFMC SSC Peer Review Process: John Carmichael, SAMFC

10.3. Overview

At the June 2016 meeting, the Council directed staff to develop a proposal for conducting SSC peer review of complex analyses used in amendments and management decisions. The proposed SSC peer review process, presented in attachment 29, outlines an SSC working group process that would take a greater role in evaluating complex analyses while they are developed. Working groups would work closely with those conducting the analyses to provide an SSC perspective while reporting regularly to the SSC. Efforts of the workgroup would not replace review by the SSC, as final analytical products would still be presented to the entire SSC for review. The SSC is asked to review and comment on the proposed peer review process before it is presented to the Council in December 2016 and possibly adopted.

10.4. Action

- Comment on the proposed peer review process for evaluating complex analyses.

11. SPINY LOBSTER REVIEW

11.1. Documents

Attachment 31. Spiny Lobster Overview

11.2. Presentation

Spiny Lobster Overview: Dr. Kari MacLauchlin, SAFMC

11.3. Overview

The Council requests that the SSC review the OFL and ABC for spiny lobster, and determine if the OFL and ABC values can be updated based on current conditions of the fishery and changes over the past few years. Amendment 10 to the Spiny Lobster FMP (2011) established the ACL for spiny lobster at 7.32 million pounds (mp, ACL=ABC) and an annual catch target (ACT) at 6.59 mp. The overfishing threshold was specified as the overfishing level (OFL) and was designated at 7.9 mp.

When the SSCs reviewed spiny lobster to make recommendations to the Councils for the OFL and ABC for Amendment 10, the MSY was unknown. The Gulf Council proposed using the Gulf SSC recommendations for the overfishing limit in Amendment 10. The MSY proxy, also designated as the OFL recommended by the Gulf SSC (at their January 2010 meeting), was derived in the following manner: Using Tier 3a of the Gulf ABC Control Rule, the Gulf SSC recommended an OFL be set as the mean of the most recent landings in the last 10 years (i.e., fishing years 2000/2001-2009/2010) plus two standard deviations from the mean. These years were selected because they represented a period of at least ten years that reflected the most recent conditions of the fishery, and were also relatively stable. Both Councils approved the OFL and ABC recommended by the Gulf SSC in Spiny Lobster Amendment 10.

The OFL, ABC, ACL, and ACT for spiny lobster went into effect on January 3, 2012, and below are the landings in the years following implementation (the fishing year is August 6 through March 31).

- 2012/2013: 5,623,212 lbs
- 2013/2014: 7,956,947 lbs (exceeded the ACT, ABC/ACL and OFL)
- 2014/2015: 7,032,422 lbs (exceeded the ACT)
- 2015/2016: 7,577,550 lbs (exceeded the ACT and ABC/ACL)

The Accountability Measure (AM) for Spiny Lobster is to convene a Review Panel if the landings exceed the ACT in any given year. Following notification of the 2013/2014 landings, the Spiny Lobster Review Panel was convened in February 2015. The Review Panel made the following recommendations:

- The Panel does not recommend that a new stock assessment be conducted.
- The Panel discussed and concluded that the ACL is the wrong methodology to manage this fishery. It recommended that spiny lobster be considered as having a unique life history to be exempted from having an ACL.
- The Panel recommends that the OFL be redefined as MFMT.

The 2015 report is available here:

http://safmc.net/sites/default/files/meetings/pdf/Council/2015/03-2015/splobster/Att3_SpinyLobReviewPanelReport_Feb2015.pdf.

Following notification of the 2014/2015 overage, the Councils convened the Review Panel again via webinar in January 2016. The 2016 Review Panel reviewed landings and other factors that may affect spiny lobster catch, and viewed possible catch limits based on different time periods using a tool developed by Gulf Council staff (available here: <http://portal.gulfcouncil.org/SpinyLobster/>)

The 2016 Review Panel made the following recommendations:

- Calculate the ABC/ACL based on the landings from 1991 through the most recent landings (2015-2016).
- Examine setting the annual catch limit based on a rolling average.
- Examine setting the ACL trigger based on landings and the landings to effort index.

Note that the recommendations are from motions, which were not unanimously approved. The 2016 Review Panel report is available here: http://blog.safmc.net/download/BriefingBookJune2016/SpinyLobster/Att2_SpinyLobReviewPanelReport_032816.pdf

Additionally, the South Atlantic and Gulf Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels met jointly on April 25, 2016. The Joint APs recommended the following relevant to the ABC/ACL:

- To recommend that the Council accept the recommendation of the review panel “to calculate the ACL based on landings from 1991 through the most recent landings (2015-2016)”
- To recommend that there be a lower landing trigger based on the average of the three low landings years (2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004) that would initiate a review panel, if below this average for two consecutive years (5.3 mp total catch)

The 2016 Joint AP report is available here: http://blog.safmc.net/download/BriefingBookJune2016/SpinyLobster/Att3_SpinyLobJointAPReportApr2016_FINAL.pdf

The Gulf Council’s Spiny Lobster SSC met in June 2016, and made a recommendation to use the time series of 1991-2015/2016 for an ABC/OFL calculation for Spiny Lobster. The meeting summary is available here: http://gulfcouncil.org/council_meetings/BriefingMaterials/BB-06-2016/SSCmeetingsummary06-2016.pdf

In June 2016, the NMFS Southeast Regional Administrator sent a letter notifying the South Atlantic Council that 2015/2016 spiny lobster landings had exceeded the ACT for the third year in a row. The letter outlined the recommendations from the Review Panel, Joint Advisory Panels, and the Gulf Spiny Lobster SSC, and specified that if the South Atlantic SSC concurred with those recommendations, that the Councils could revise the ACL for spiny lobster.

The South Atlantic Council will be reviewing an options paper at the December 2016 meeting, which will include actions to revise the OFL, ABC and ACL for spiny lobster based on the SSC recommendations. The Gulf Council will review the options paper at their January 2017 meeting.

11.4. Action

- Provide recommendations for ABC and OFL for Spiny Lobster.

12. **SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 41**

12.1. Documents

Attachment 32. Amendment 41 (Mutton Snapper) Analyses

12.2. Overview

The Council is considering the following actions in Amendment 41:

- Specifying MSY and MSST for Mutton Snapper.
- Setting ABCs, ACLs, and a recreational ACT for Mutton Snapper.
- Designating “spawning months” during which stricter management measures would apply.
- Modifying commercial trip limit and minimum size limit.
- Modifying recreational bag limit and minimum size limit.

The Council is scheduled to take final action on the amendment at their December 2016 meeting. Appendices K and L of the draft amendment, detailing the analyses and methodology, are included as Attachment 20 along with the list of proposed actions and alternatives. The Committee is asked to review the analyses and comment on their utility and appropriateness.

12.3. Action

- Review and comment on any actions as necessary.

13. **NATIONAL SSC AGENDA**

13.1. Documents

None.

13.2. Overview

The next National SSC meeting will be held sometime in late 2017 or early 2018 and hosted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Since it is very early in the planning stage, the SSC has the opportunity to weigh in on what topics will be addressed at the meeting. At this early stage, the Science Coordination Subcommittee (SCS) thinks it would be very helpful for each region to assign a score of 1-3 for each of the proposed topics: 1 represents a priority topic for your region and one the SSC would be happy with if the NSSC were organized around, 2 is neutral/acceptable, and 3 means the SSC considers it a bad idea to organize the meeting around a particular theme. It is also not too late to add potential topics to the list.

Topics identified to date, in alphabetical order:

- Dealing explicitly with model uncertainty

- Defining Optimum Yield in a way that integrates ecosystem, climate change, social, and economic considerations
- Discussion about “Best Available Scientific Information” and the consequences of applying this
- Effective communication and coordination among SSCs, Councils, and stakeholders
- Estimating uncertainty in the OFL and its components (stock biomass and fishing mortality)
- How to adjust Harvest Control Rules in a changing environment and/or otherwise deal with the concept of non-static MSY
- Identifying representative fishery pathways for climate and fishery impacts analyses
- Improved processes for setting spex
- Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs) and their use in evaluating and modifying harvest control rules
- Managing "choke" species
- Protected species
- Re-evaluation of the performance of ABC control rules
- Recreational fisheries management

The SCS felt it would also be helpful to point out items that could sensibly be combined, for example there have already been suggestions to pair "Defining OY in a way that integrates ecosystem, climate change, social, and economic considerations" with "Identifying representative fishery pathways for climate and fishery impacts analyses"; or grouping together "Re-evaluation of the performance of ABC control rules", "Dealing explicitly with model uncertainty", and "Estimating uncertainty in the OFL and its components (stock biomass and fishing mortality)".

13.3. Action

- Discuss and recommend topics and rankings for the next National SSC meeting.

14. COUNCIL WORKPLAN UPDATE

14.1. Documents

Attachment 33. SAFMC Work Plan, Sept 2016

Attachment 34. SAFMC Amendments Overview, Oct 2016

14.2. Overview

The Committee is provided these documents at each meeting to stay informed of Council activities. Regular detailed reviews of each amendment are no longer requested of the SSC as amendments are developed; instead the Committee is asked to comment on

specific technical items that may arise. However, members are welcome to review any ongoing amendments and to provide comments and suggestions directly to staff. Current versions of each amendment are included in the Council Briefing Books distributed to SSC members. Questions or comments about specific items should be addressed to the staff assigned to each FMP, as summarized below.

- Coastal Migratory Pelagic - Kari MacLauchlin
- Corals – Chip Collier
- Fishery Ecosystem Plan - Roger Pugliese
- Snapper Grouper - Myra Brouwer
- Snapper Grouper Amendment 43 (Red Snapper) – Chip Collier
- Spiny Lobster - Kari MacLauchlin
- Golden Crab - Brian Chevront
- Dolphin-Wahoo - Brian Chevront & John Hadley
- South Atlantic For-Hire Reporting Amendment – John Carmichael

14.3. Action

- No specific actions required

15. **SSC PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

15.1. Documents

Attachment 35. SSC Job Description

Attachment 36. SSC Policy

15.2. Overview

During their Sept 2016 meeting, the Council discussed and approved changes to their public comment policy. There were some concerns expressed about the current SSC public comment policy, which allows for public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting. Those interested in making comment may find it difficult to attend the SSC meeting during both the public comment period and the deliberation of a topic they are interested in that is held on another day. The Council directed the SSC to consider taking comment daily or during each agenda topic, so that comments may be more useful to the SSC and their deliberations. The Council requested that the SSC consider revisions to the public comment policy that would, for example, allow the public to comment on a specific agenda item when that item is being addressed by the SSC. The Council will consider changes to the SSC public comment policy at the December meeting. SSC input on the topic is requested during this meeting, and additional comment opportunities were added to the agenda for this meeting to gather some direct experience.

15.3. Action

- Discuss and consider revisions to the public comment policy.

16. PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is provided an additional opportunity to comment on SSC recommendations and agenda items.

17. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

The Committee is provided an opportunity to review its report and final recommendations.

The Final SSC report will be provided to the Council by 9 am on Tuesday, November 1, 2016 for inclusion in the first briefing book for the December Council meeting.

18. NEXT MEETINGS

18.1. SAFMC SSC MEETINGS

2017 Meeting Dates (Tentative)

April 25 – 27 or May 2 – 4 in Charleston, SC

- Pending the outcome of the Gray Snapper stock ID workshop.

October 24 – 26 in Charleston, SC

18.2. SAFMC Meetings

2016-2017 Council Meetings

December 5-9, 2016 in Atlantic Beach, NC

March 6-10, 2017 in Jekyll Island, GA

June 12-16, 2017 in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

September 11-15, 2017 in Charleston, SC

December 4-8, 2017 in Atlantic Beach, NC

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