



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 16, 2021

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

Council Discusses Scallops, Habitat, Climate Change, NTAP, Congressional Updates, and Ecosystem at April Meeting

The New England Fishery Management Council met [April 13-15, 2021](#) by webinar. Here are some highlights.

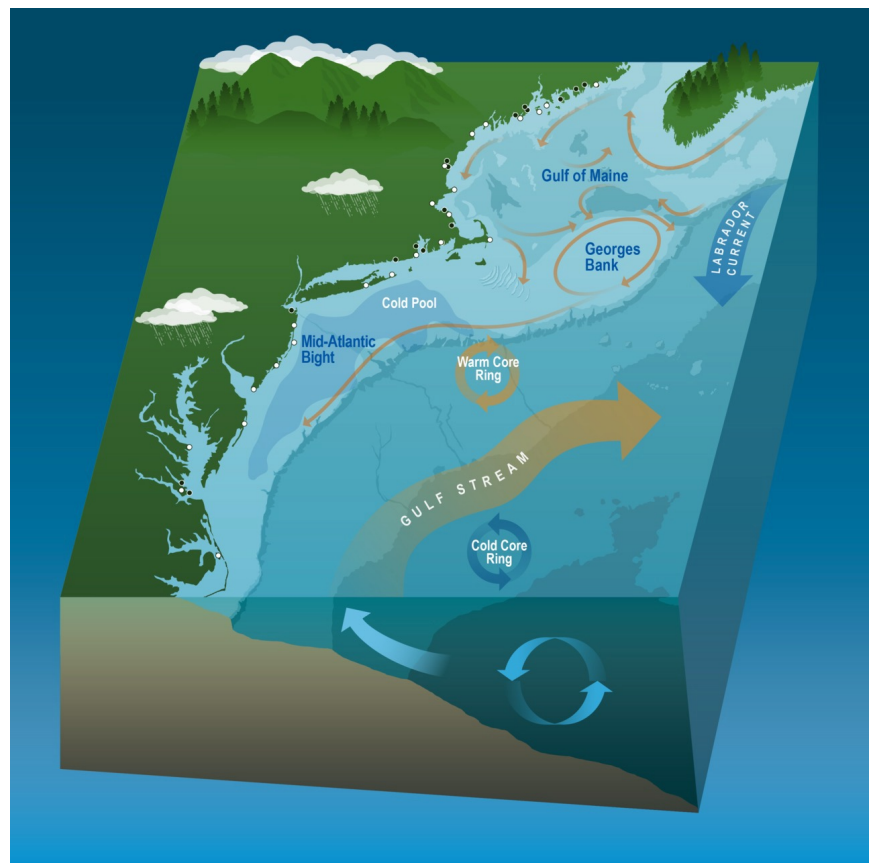
CLIMATE SCIENCE: The Council received a climate science [presentation](#) from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center that covered: observed changes on the Northeast Continental Shelf related to temperature, currents, and pH; NOAA's Climate Science Strategy; the Northeast Regional Action Plan; and more.

NRCC CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING: The Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) is moving forward with an East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative. The NRCC consists of leadership from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The South Atlantic Council, although not an NRCC member, is participating in the climate change scenario planning initiative.

The Core Team supporting this work met for the first time on [March 11, 2021](#). During its April meeting, the New England Council received:

- A general [presentation](#) on the initiative, which is described in the [draft plan](#) being considered by the NRCC in May; and
- An overview of the six phases of work associated with the initiative and approximate timeframes for each phase.

Public workshops are planned as part of this work, possibly later in 2021. Here's the planning initiative [webpage](#).



Shown above, the U.S. Northeast Continental Shelf. A list of upcoming webinars in the NOAA Fisheries U.S. Northeast Climate-Fisheries Seminar Series is posted [here](#). – NOAA Fisheries graphic



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EXECUTIVE ORDER LISTENING SESSION: In conjunction with the New England Council's April meeting, NOAA Fisheries conducted a public listening session on Section 216(c) of [Executive Order 14008](#), Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. This section relates to making fisheries and protected resources more resilient to climate change.

Council members and the public asked questions and provided comments on the Executive Order to NOAA Fisheries leadership. More information on how to provide further comments can be found [here](#).

The Council Coordination Committee (CCC), which is made up of the chairs, vice chairs, and executive directors of all eight of the nation's [regional fishery management councils](#), submitted comments on Section 216(a) of the Executive Order. This section refers to the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030, often referred to as the 30x30 initiative. The CCC's letter can be found [here](#).

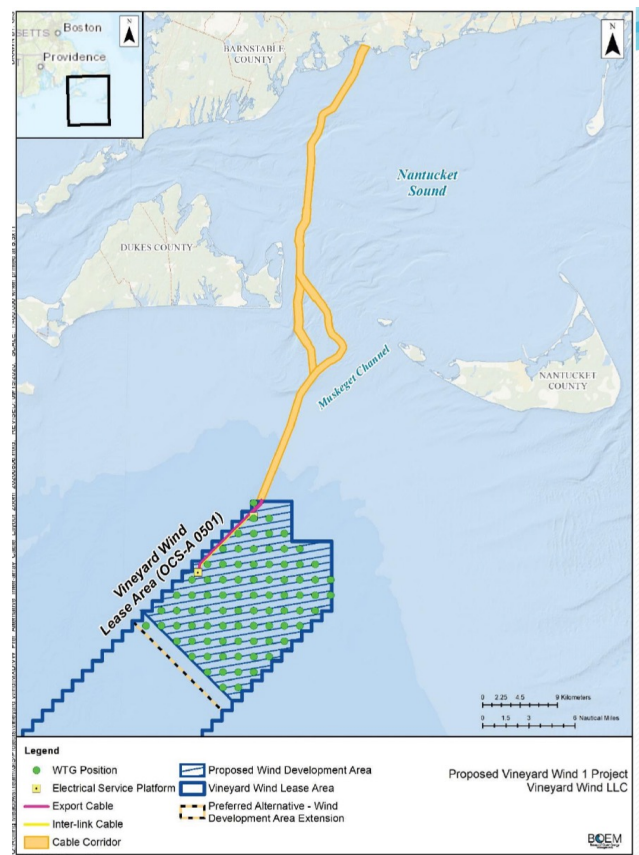
CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE: The Council also received an update on recent congressional activities, which covered: (1) a rundown of new leadership on key marine-related committees in Congress; and (2) an overview of newly introduced and potential bills that will or may be addressed by the current Congress.

HABITAT: Under this report, the Council received updates on three topics – habitat areas on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank, aquaculture, and offshore wind.

Northern Edge – Last fall, the Council approved a 2021 habitat priority to “assess the possibility of and, if possible, develop an action to revise Habitat Management Areas (HMAs) on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank.”

The Council's [Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 \(OHA2\)](#), which became effective in April 2018, proposed revising the HMAs and Closed Areas on Georges Bank and included establishing two new Northern Edge HMAs. One would have been closed to fishing. The other would have been closed to mobile bottom-tending gears, except for groundfish vessels west of 67° 20' W longitude, but would have allowed scallop vessels to fish in a scallop rotational program under certain conditions.

NOAA Fisheries disapproved this portion of the amendment for reasons described in the [OHA2 final rule](#). Since that time, scallop industry members have been asking the Council to revisit the HMAs to investigate options to allow a limited amount of scallop fishing on the Northern Edge. The Council agreed to do so as a 2021 habitat priority, recognizing the undertaking would be a multi-year effort that would require input from many.



Above, the Vineyard Wind I Lease Area and Proposed Development Area. The cable corridor to shore is shown in yellow. – BOEM graphic



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At this point, the Habitat Plan Development Team (PDT) is in the early stages of developing a white paper to: (1) summarize available information; (2) identify issues of concern; and (3) assess the feasibility of revising the Northern Edge HMAs through a new action.

The Habitat PDT is consulting with other PDTs, the Habitat Committee, Habitat Advisory Panel, full Council, and science/management partners. The Council will continue to receive updates as the work progresses.

Aquaculture – The Council reviewed a draft plan outlining ways to better engage and coordinate with federal partners on aquaculture issues. Development of this [Aquaculture Coordination Plan](#) was another 2021 habitat priority. The plan will continue to be refined as needed by the Habitat Committee. Here is the Council’s [Aquaculture Policy](#) and [Aquaculture Background Document](#).

Offshore Wind – The Council received an overview of ongoing offshore wind development activities in the Northeast Region and agreed to submit formal comments on the following projects: Ocean Wind LLC – New Jersey; the New York Bight Wind Energy Areas; and the Port Access Study for Northern New York Bight. The Council supported developing and submitting these comments jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Council if appropriate. The two Council maintain an informational [offshore wind webpage](#) and collaborate frequently on offshore wind issues. Maps of the above projects can be found in the meeting [presentation](#).

ATLANTIC SEA SCALLOPS: The Council received a brief progress report on the status of [2021 scallop work priorities](#) and an introduction to the new [Scallop Survey Working Group](#), which recently held its [first meeting](#). The group is looking into ways to facilitate collaborations for conducting scallop surveys. Documents associated with the Council’s April meeting scallop discussion can be found [here](#).



Atlantic sea scallops caught during a UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) research trip. –SMAST photo

New Biological Opinion (BiOp) for Scallop Fishery – It’s About Turtles



NOAA Fisheries is on the homestretch of revising the 2012 Biological Opinion for the Atlantic sea scallop fishery, which focuses on turtle interactions. The Council received a [brief update](#) on the timeline associated with the new BiOp and is expected to receive a detailed overview during its June or September meeting after the Biological Opinion is completed. More specific information can be found in the [presentation](#) the Council received in April 2020 explaining the reasons why consultation on the BiOp was reinstated.



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NORTHEAST TRAWL ADVISORY PANEL (NTAP) – The Council heard a short recap of NTAP’s [March 19, 2021](#) meeting. (1) NTAP is continuing to work on revisions to its existing [charter](#). The Council will receive more information on this initiative at a future meeting. (2) The Northeast Fisheries Science Center has funds available to support NTAP research. The Council agreed by consensus that these funds should be used to support a project titled “Quantifying the impact of a restrictor rope on the composition, rate, and size-distribution of catch derived from a bottom trawl survey.” More information is available in the [funding memo](#). The Mid-Atlantic Council also supported using the available funds for this project.

STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM – The Northeast Fisheries Science Center presented the [2021 State of the Ecosystem Report for New England](#). Here is the [presentation](#).

The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee reviewed the report during its March meeting and provided [recommendations](#) on possible revisions for incorporation into next year’s report. The SSC briefed the Council on these recommendations.

“Regime shifts and changes in how the multiple system drivers interact can result in ecosystem reorganization as species and humans respond and adapt to the new environment.”

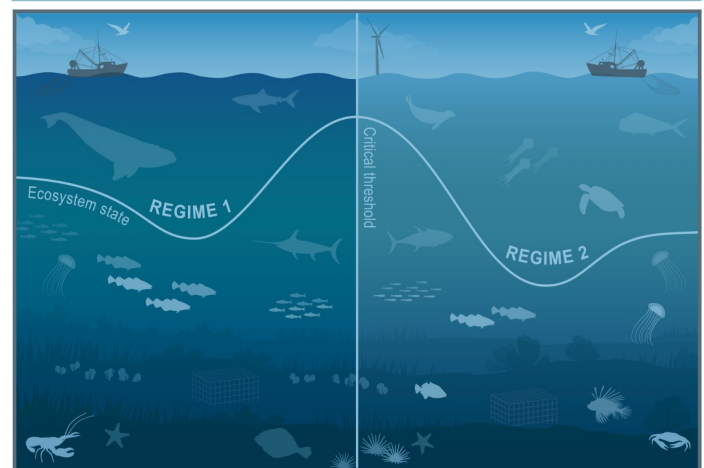
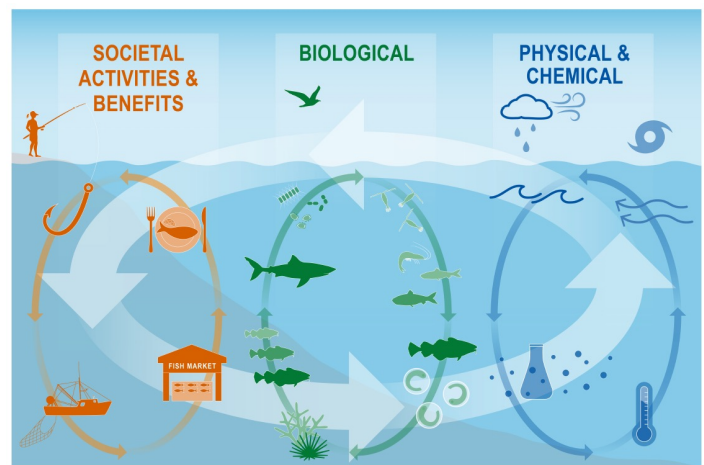
– 2021 State of the Ecosystem Report, New England

EBFM: The Council received a short update on a recent meeting of the Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Steering Committee, which now has [five new industry members](#).

The committee is developing guidance about how the Council should conduct public information workshops on EBFM using the example Fishery Ecosystem Plan ([eFEP](#)) for Georges Bank, science [communication tools](#), and tangible worked example [tools](#). Here is the [meeting summary](#).

MORE COMING: News on actions regarding herring, skates, and the party/charter recreational groundfish fishery will follow soon. Visit the [April 13-15, 2021 meeting webpage](#) for additional info.

Characterizing Ecosystem Change for Fishery Management



(1) Societal, biological, physical, and chemical factors comprise the multiple system drivers that influence marine ecosystems through a variety of different pathways. (2) Changes in the multiple drivers can lead to regime shifts — large, abrupt and persistent changes in the structure and function of an ecosystem. – Excerpt from 2021 report



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Council Decides Against Limited Entry for Party/Charter Component of Recreational Groundfish Fishery

The New England Fishery Management Council will not be developing a limited entry program for party/charter vessels that participate in the recreational groundfish fishery. The decision was made during the Council's [April 13-15, 2021](#) webinar meeting.

The Council debated a motion to move ahead with limited entry and thoroughly discussed the advantages and potential drawbacks of using limited entry to manage the for-hire groundfish fleet. The final vote was 7-to-7 with two abstentions. Therefore, the motion failed for lack of a majority and, as such, the Council will not pursue work on a limited entry amendment. Here is a recap of how the Council got to this point.

- The Council voted in January 2018 to ask NOAA Fisheries to publish a [revised control date](#) for the party/charter fishery. The new control date became [March 19, 2018](#), replacing March 30, 2006.
- The Council conducted [listening sessions](#) in April and May of 2019 to gauge public support for potential party/charter limited entry and then received a summery report about those sessions in December 2019.
- The Council made it a [2020 groundfish priority](#) to develop a simple strawman limited entry program for the party/charter fleet and hired a contractor to help with this work.
- The Council made it a [2021 priority](#) to receive the strawman report and decide if an amendment should be initiated.
- The Council received a [presentation](#) during its January 2021 meeting on the Party/Charter Limited Entry [Strawman Proposal](#), which was prepared by [Tidal Bay Consulting](#).
- The Council took time following its January meeting to consider feedback on the proposal and next steps before casting its deciding vote on April 15, 2021.
- Here are the April 2021 [meeting materials](#) and [audio](#) related to this discussion.
- Questions? Contact Dr. Jamie Cournane, the Council's groundfish coordinator, at (978) 465-0492 ext. 103, jcournane@nefmc.org.



A successful recreational fishing trip aboard the Lady Tracey Ann, which sails from Eastman's Docks in Seabrook, NH. The large cod were caught in May 2007 on Jeffrey's Ledge in the Gulf of Maine. – Mark Godfroy photo



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Atlantic Herring: Council Provides Guidance on Actions to Rebuild Stock, Consider Spawning Protection on Georges Bank

The New England Fishery Management Council received a progress report during its [April 13-15, 2021](#) webinar meeting on two evolving framework adjustments to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. The Council discussed both actions and provided feedback to guide the Herring Plan Development Team (PDT), Herring Committee, and Herring Advisory Panel (AP) on the work these groups will continue to conduct in the months ahead.

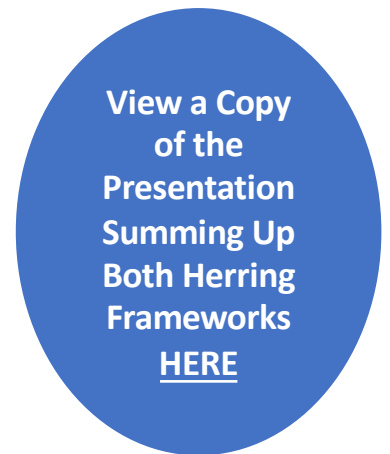
FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 9 – This framework includes two components:

- Measures to rebuild the Atlantic herring resource; and
- Measures to potentially adjust accountability measures (AMs) in the fishery.

In October 2020, the Council received [a letter](#) stating that “NOAA’s Assistant Administrator for Fisheries formally determined the Atlantic herring stock is overfished based on the [best scientific information available](#).” The agency asked the Council to develop and submit a rebuilding program within 15 months, which would give NOAA Fisheries time to review and implement the program within the two-year timeframe required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for stocks in an overfished condition.

Despite the current low biomass of Atlantic herring, overfishing is not occurring. This factor led several Council members to question whether environmental factors beyond the Council’s control were impacting the status of the stock and whether there were ways to account for environmental impacts in the rebuilding program.

At present, Framework 9 includes



Atlantic herring. – Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries photo



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two rebuilding options that need further development and analyses. These focus on: (1) using the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) control rule that the Council approved in [Amendment 8](#) to the herring plan; or (2) using a constant fishing mortality rate (F) based on rebuilding the resource in seven years instead. More information on both approaches will become available at future meetings.

Regarding accountability measures, the herring plan currently includes AMs to adjust sub-annual catch limits (sub-ACLs) due to quota overages and/or to potentially allow carryover of unharvested catch.

As part of Framework 9, the Council will consider options to adjust AMs when overages occur. However, due to concerns about unintended distributional impacts among the different herring management areas and given the current status of the stock, the Council will not pursue options to allow more flexibility for carryover. This way, unharvested fish will remain in the water to contribute to stock rebuilding. The Council will receive more information about Framework 9 at its June meeting, when it is scheduled to approve the range of alternatives for further development. Final action is expected to take place during the September meeting.

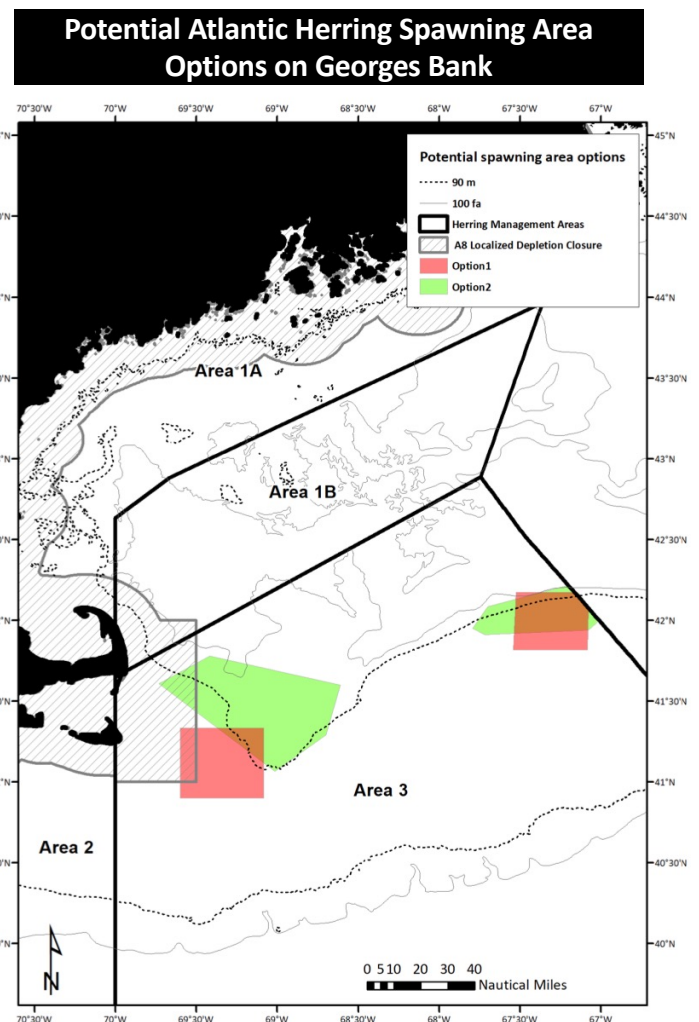
FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENT 7 – This framework focuses on protecting spawning herring on Georges Bank and is on a longer timeline than Framework 9. The Council will receive another progress report on this action in June.

During the April meeting, the Council took two votes to clarify the scope of the action, which now will allow the Herring PDT, Committee, and AP to proceed with their work. The Council agreed to:

- Specify that any ultimate restrictions related to spawning protection apply only to vessels on a declared Atlantic herring trip; and
- Refine the goals and objectives of [Framework 7](#) to specify that this action will focus only on measures that minimize potential impacts on adult spawning aggregations of herring.

➤ *Copies of all herring-related materials used during the Council's discussion are available [here](#).*

➤ *Questions? Contact Deirdre Boelke, the Council's herring plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492 ext. 105, dboelke@nefmc.org.*



*Potential options for Georges Bank spawning closures. **Option 1** is colored **red** and **Option 2** is **green**. The gray hatched area is the Inshore Midwater Trawl Restricted Area approved in [Amendment 8](#).*



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Melvin Bell, Chair | Stephen J. Poland, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

SAFMC Meeting Agenda Revised

June 14-18, 2021

Meeting Via Webinar

(SAFMC website webinar registration:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4049457759372649999>)

Except for advertised (scheduled) public hearings and public comment sessions, the times indicated on the agenda may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the completion of agenda items. Interested parties should be aware that meetings may start earlier or later than indicated.

Use the online comment form at: <https://safmc.wufoo.com/forms/m9mrll0e1fm0f/> to submit comment on items on this agenda. Comments will be accepted from May 31 to June 18, 2021. These comments are accessible to the public, part of the Administrative Record of the meeting, and immediately available for Council consideration.

View submitted comments at <https://safmc.wufoo.com/reports/2021-june-council-meeting-public-comment-report/>.

Webinar startup and soundchecks will begin 30 minutes prior to each session.

Monday, June 14, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Law Enforcement Committee (CLOSED)/Spud Woodward 10:00 am – 10:30 am

- Selection of 2020 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Monday, June 14, 2021

COUNCIL SESSION

COUNCIL SESSION I (CLOSED)/Mel Bell 10:30 am – 12:00 noon

- AP and SSC selection

12:00 noon to 1:30 pm Lunch

COUNCIL SESSION I/Mel Bell 1:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Call to order and introductions

Adopt agenda

Approve minutes

- Reports (state agencies, Council liaisons, NOAA OLE, USCG)

- South Atlantic Research Priorities
 - Status of research to meet 2019 priorities
 - Approval of 2021-2022 South Atlantic Research Priorities
- Southeast Longline Surveys Presentation (SEFSC)
- Commercial Electronic Logbook Update (SEFSC)
- Dolphin Participatory Workshops Presentation (SEFSC)
- Recreational Workgroup Updates
 - Joint Workgroup with the GMFMC on Section 102 Update
 - SAFMC Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup
- HMS AP and ICCAT Update
- Protected Resources Report

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Snapper Grouper Committee/Jessica McCawley 8:30 am – 12 noon

- Gag
 - Assessment presentation (SEFSC Staff)
 - SSC recommendations (Genny Nessler, SSC Chair)
 - Fishery overview
 - Management response
- Red Porgy (Amendment 50)
 - AP recommendations (Jimmy Hull, AP Chair)
 - Review and approve for public hearings

12:00 noon to 1:30 pm Lunch

Snapper Grouper Committee/Jessica McCawley 1:30 pm – 5:30 pm

- Golden Tilefish
 - Assessment presentation (SEFSC Staff)
 - SSC recommendations (Genny Nessler)
 - Fishery overview
 - Management response
- Yellowtail Snapper
 - Fishery Overview
 - AP recommendations (Jimmy Hull)
 - Review options paper

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Snapper Grouper Committee/Jessica McCawley 8:30 am – 12:00 noon

- Red Snapper

- Assessment presentation (SEFSC Staff)
- SSC recommendations (Genny Nesslage)
- Fishery overview
- Management response
- AP recommendations on items not already covered (Jimmy Hull)
- Updates on South Atlantic Red Snapper Count and Greater Amberjack Count

12:00 noon to 1:30 pm Lunch

Dolphin Wahoo Committee/Anna Beckwith 1:30 pm – 3:45 pm

- Amendment 10 – review and approve for formal review

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

PUBLIC COMMENTS

**4:00 pm If you would like to provide comment during the live public comment session, please sign up at the following link:
<https://safmc.wufoo.com/forms/mm6cio00x6jk33/>
 Public comment will be accepted regarding any of the items on the Council agenda. The Council Chair, based on the number of individuals wishing to comment, will determine the amount of time provided to each commenter.**

Approval for Public Hearings:

- (1) Red Pogy (SG Amendment 50)
- (2) King Mackerel (CMP Amendment 34)

Final Approval:

- (1) Dolphin Wahoo (Amendment 10)

Thursday, June 17, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Dolphin Wahoo Committee/Anna Beckwith 8:30 am – 10:00 am

- Amendment 10 (continued)
- Project plan for Dolphin Wahoo amendments – provide guidance on type of amendments and overall topics for inclusion.

Mackerel Committee/Steve Poland 10:00 am – 12:00 noon

- AP report (Ira Laks, AP Chair)
- King Mackerel (Amendment 34) – approve for public hearings

- Gulf Cobia (Amendment 32)

12:00 noon to 1:30 pm Lunch

Executive Committee/Mel Bell 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

- CCC Report
- 2021 budget update and approval
- FMP workplan review

Habitat & Ecosystem Committee/Steve Poland 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

- Coral 10 – review public hearing comments and approve all actions
- Habitat Blueprint update
- AP report (Anne Deaton, AP Chair)

Friday, June 18, 2021

COUNCIL SESSION

COUNCIL SESSION II /Mel Bell 8:30 am – 12:00 noon

1. Council staff reports
 - a. Executive Director
 - b. Allocation Decision Tool update
 - c. Climate Change Scenario Planning update
 - d. Citizen Science Update
 - e. Outreach and Communications update
2. Outreach and Communications AP report (Scott Baker, AP Chair)
3. NMFS SERO Reports
 - a. Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology
 - b. For-Hire Electronic Reporting Update
 - c. Landings Update
4. Committee Reports
5. SSC and AP Appointments
6. Executive Order 14008
7. Other business
8. Upcoming meetings

Adjourn