

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Alexandria
Alexandria, Virginia
August 6, 2015

Approved November 5, 2015

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1. **Move to extend the provisions of Addendum I of the Spanish mackerel FMP for another two years with annual reporting to the Board.** Motion by Mr. Estes and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 2).
2. **Move to accept the Terms of Reference for the Atlantic croaker assessment as presented.** Motion by Mr. Boyles and second by Mr. Allen. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 6).
3. **Move to accept the Terms of Reference for the spot assessment as presented.** Motion by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Dr. Duval. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 6).
4. **Move to approve the 2015 Atlantic Croaker FMP Review, state compliance reports, and de minimis status for DE (comm), SC (comm), GA (comm/rec) and FL (comm).** Motion by Dr. Duval and seconded by Mr. Boyles. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 8).
5. **Move to approve the 2015 Red Drum FMP Review, state compliance reports, and de minimis status for NJ and DE.** Motion by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Dr. Duval. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 9).
6. **Move to approve the 2015 Black Drum FMP Review and state compliance reports.** Motion by Dr. Duval and seconded by Dr. Laney. Motion carries unanimously. (Page 11).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

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| Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Asm. Andrzejczak (LA) | Kyle Schick, VA, proxy for Sen. Stuart (LA) |
| Russ Allen, NJ, proxy for D. Chanda (AA) | Michelle Duval, NC, proxy for L. Daniel (AA) |
| Tom FOte, NJ (GA) | Robert Boyles, SC (AA) |
| John Clark, DE, proxy for D. Saveikis (AA) | Sen Thad Altman, GA (LA) |
| Roy Miller, DE (GA) | Patrick Geer, GA, proxy for Rep. Burns (LA) |
| Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA) | Jim Estes, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA) |
| David Sikorksi, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA) | Martin Gary, PRFC |
| Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA) | Wilson Laney, USFWS |
| Lynn Fegley, MD, proxy for D. Goshorn (AA) | John Carmichael, SAFMC |
| Joe Cimino, VA, proxy for J. Bull (AA) | |

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Harry Rickabaugh, Technical Committee

Staff

Megan Ware
Jeff Kipp

Toni Kerns
Robert Beal

Guests

Virginia Fay (NMFS-SE Regional Office)

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Edison Ballroom of The Westin Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia, August 6, 2015, and was called to order at 10:45 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Patrick Geer.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN PATRICK GEER: Let's get started with the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Board. My name is Patrick Geer; I'm the chairman of the board. I welcome you all here today.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The first order of business is to approve the agenda. Are there any changes to the agenda; any additions to the agenda? Seeing none; we will consider it approved.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

Now the proceedings from May 2015; any changes to those proceedings? Any objections to the proceedings? Seeing none; we'll consider those approved as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Is there any public comment? Seeing none and hearing none, we'll move on. Item Number 4 is considering the extension of the provision for Addendum I on Spanish Mackerel FMP for North Carolina.

EXTENSION OF ADDENDUM 1 TO THE SPANISH MACKEREL FMP

Just to give you a quick update on it; North Carolina had asked for an 11.5 inch minimum for their commercial pound net for July through September. They asked it for two years. Michelle Duval is going to give us a report on that, and they we're going to consider extending that.

DR. MICHELLE DUVAL: I'll be pretty brief. I think most folks have had a chance to look at the report. You'll see from the numbers that the overall proportion of harvest of Spanish mackerel from our pound net fishery is really low. It averages anywhere between 3 and 5 percent of our overall Spanish mackerel harvest.

You can see from the tables in the report that Spanish mackerel harvest in 2013, which was the first year this exemption from the minimum size limit was allowed, actually decreased pretty significantly. We're not quite sure why that happened, but in general the overall proportion of Spanish mackerel harvest from pound nets remain the same despite the rather significant decrease in overall commercial harvest.

I think one of the other things we saw was that based on our fishery-dependent sampling; that there actually was a fairly significant percentage of fish that were actually outside of that 11.5 inch limit exemption. If you look at Table 4 in the report, looking at 2013, 23 percent by number, according to our fish house sampling, of fish were below 11.5 inches.

There is probably a number of reasons that led to this. First of all, this is a fishery occurs in a really small area. It is mostly just inside the Outer Banks along the eastern edge of Pamlico Sound. These fish are moving through at a pretty quick clip. This generally for us happens mostly in July in August is what we've heard from industry when these smaller fish are coming through. I think you can see that the majority of our harvest occurs like June, July and August.

Despite the fact that there was this rather higher proportion of undersized fish than what we expected in 2013, one of the other things that might have led to this was some decreased opportunities for fishery-dependent sampling. If those fish are coming through really quickly, that can decrease the ability of our biologists to get out there and get to the fish house before the fish actually leave and are moving out through markets.

I think just talking to staff this appears to have been what happens, which impacts our ability to appropriately characterize the fishery the fewer fish house samples we have. When you do those extrapolations, there is a lot more uncertainty in those numbers. However, you see that in 2014 that proportion of undersized fish did go back down.

I think just to put things in perspective, even if you take those proportions from the July through September time frame and apply them to sort of the overall harvest of fish that occurs during those months, I think it was something like 8,500 pounds total that were harvested underneath the minimum size limit. It is a fairly small proportion.

I think we're asking for the board's indulgence to allow for this program to continue for another two years and come back to you again with a report next year as to the results from 2015 sampling. We've had some mixed reviews from the industry. I think they thought that this might be a little bit more helpful to them.

It may be turning out that it is not saving them as much time as they thought in terms of just bailing the net and being able to visually account for whether or not these fish are within that size-limit exemption as opposed to having to actually take the time to measure them. This is the time of year when the fish tend to die pretty rapidly. The whole intent of this was to minimize those dead discards. With that, I'm happy to answer any questions, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Just to let everybody know and remind everybody since their season began in July and we weren't meeting until August, we had an electronic vote. The vote was unanimous to allow this to continue for this year. I will open the floor to any questions anybody has for Michelle. Seeing none; we will need a motion to approve this extension. Jim Estes.

MR. JIM ESTES: I will see if I can do this pretty concisely. I move that we extend Addendum I to the Spanish Mackerel FMP for another two years

and allow reporting on an annual basis from North Carolina.

CHAIRMAN GEER: I have a second from Marty. This would be for the 2015 and 2016 fishing seasons. It was seconded by Mr. Gary. Jim, was this your intent?

MR. ESTES: Yes.

MR. ROBERT H. BOYLES, JR.: Mr. Chairman, just a clarification and maybe I misunderstand. Is that the proper characteristic or characterization of what we're doing? This isn't the addendum. This is a provision that is allowed under the addendum. I'll look to Dr. Duval for clarification.

DR. DUVAL: Yes; I believe that would be the case that we're simply asking for the provisions that are within the addendum to be extended for another two years.

CHAIRMAN GEER: We would need a rewording of this, Jim.

MR. ESTES: What Robert said; move to extend the provisions of Addendum I of the Spanish Mackerel FMP for another two years with annual reporting to the board.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Marty, that's okay with you? Okay, I'll read it and then we'll take quick vote on that. Move to extend the provisions to Addendum I of the Spanish Mackerel FMP for another two years with annual reporting to the board. Motion by Mr. Estes; seconded by Mr. Gary. All in favor raise your hand; opposed. It's unanimous; the motion is carried.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you to the rest of the board. We very much appreciate this.

TRAFFIC LIGHT ANALYSIS

CHAIRMAN GEER: The next item on the agenda is an update of the traffic light assessment for Atlantic croaker and spot. We've already seen

some of this today. That is going to be given by Harry Rickabaugh.

MR. HARRY RICKABAUGH: The traffic light was adopted in 2013 for both species. It requires that both the harvest and adult abundance composite indices exceed a threshold of either 30 percent for moderate management action or 60 percent for elevated management action. The threshold must be exceeded for two years for spot and three years for croaker.

Atlantic Croaker

I'm going to start by going through croaker first. The whole presentation is basically going to be these charts. They're color-proportion charts. Just as a quick refresher; the way the traffic light works is the green to yellow proportion line is the long-term mean from the reference period. One confidence limit below from the mean to long confidence limit below is the yellow proportion.

This indicates an area where it is below average but still within acceptable range of variation. Then as you move into red; that would be two confidence limits below the mean of the reference period. As you move below that is when the proportion of red begins to increase. This first slide is the harvest component for the croaker, but it is the two different components that make up the composite.

The top graph is commercial only; the bottom graph is recreational only. Commercial landings in 2014 declined 41 percent from those of 2013. This is a continued decline that began in 2005. The commercial landings were above 60 percent proportion of red for the past two years. The recreational landings also declined by 22 percent. This was the third lowest value of the MRIP estimate time series.

Again, these are the individual and not the ones that would trigger the management. The next slide is the composite of those two. You can see the 30 percent level is on the graph. For croaker, for the harvest composite, the past four years

have been above the 30 percent. Since the analysis was initiated in 2013, only years from 2013 on are considered tripped so we have two years for the commercial that is tripped. Again, for croaker it requires three.

Next we'll go through the fishery independent. These are the two indices used for the adult abundance, the Fisheries Service fall groundfish survey and the SEAMAP survey. The first one on the board here is the groundfish survey. It was showing basically around the near mean levels for several years; still is here, but now is starting to show a little bit of red. The next survey is the SEAMAP survey. This one also was indicating above average catches through 2012 and '13, but declined sharply in 2014 by 64 percent.

We also look at two juvenile indices for croaker. Now, these aren't part of the hard trigger, but are looked at to give us an idea of potential recruitment. The first one is the North Carolina Juvenile Index. It indicates strong year classes in 2010 and 2012 with a more moderate to average year class in 2014.

The second one is the VIMS Trawl Survey; and it indicates also fairly strong year classes in 2010 and '12 but extremely poor year class in 2014. The two composites for the fishery-independent indices; the top one is the adult, which is the one that is part of the trigger. As you can see, it did not cross the 30 percent proportion in any recent years, but has shown a declining trend in the past couple of years.

The juvenile indices, as you would expect, are split for 2014 with a high proportion of red, which is driven by the VIMS index. When you combine the two together, you do see those strong 2010 and 2012 year classes. To sum it up, the harvest adult indices did not trigger. However, the declining trends in all the indices, because they all were down in 2014, does bear further watching for the next few years.

The technical committee is hoping to get better stock status for the current population and updated reference points from the stock

assessment that was just initiated. Do you want me to continue going through spot or do I stop for croaker?

CHAIRMAN GEER: Why don't we take any questions anybody has right now. Do we have any questions, any discussion? I just had one real quickly. Is there explanation of what happened with the VIMS Trawl Survey, with the juveniles that it was that bad?

MR. RICKABAUGH: One possible explanation is a hard winter we had in the northern region. Croaker are very susceptible to winter kill as juveniles; and that might be why you see that poor year class in the north and not in the south.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Any other questions? Let's go on to spot.

Spot

MR. RICKABAUGH: Okay, the same structure for this part of the presentation just as for spot. The commercial is on the top again; the recreational on the bottom. These are the individual and not the composite index. Commercial landings were down 76 percent in 2014. That is continuing a decline that began in 2004. If you look at the graph, it is basically been on a declining trend with alternating years with increasing declines.

The recreational harvest on the bottom did increase by about 10 percent in 2014, but is still below the long-term mean and is still showing a small proportion of red. When you look that combined composite index, you'll see that every other year for the past five years has been above the 30 percent threshold but 2013 was not; so technically this would not have tripped as part of the trigger exercise. Again, we'll look at the same two trawl surveys that were used for the abundance characteristics for adults.

That is the fall groundfish survey that is on the screen now indicated above average catches; actually the highest catch or the highest index on record was in 2012, but it has declined sharply the past two years. 2014 was a 90 percent

decline from 2013. The short-live species like spot, some of these rapid changes aren't out of the usual.

SEAMAP, on the other hand, was also down in 2013; had an increase in 2014, but still was around 30 percent proportion of red. For spot we only used one juvenile index. It is the Maryland Striped Bass Seine Survey. As you can see it is pretty variable as you would expect with a juvenile index, but the past four years have been average to below average, including a very poor year in 2011.

The composite index on the top, this would be for the adult abundance characteristic, it was above the 30 percent proportion of red in both 2013 and 2014; so this part of the trigger did trip. However, since the commercial did not trip, management action would not be required at this time. Given that all composite indices are showing increases proportions of red, there is cause for concern with spot.

Given that the benchmark stock assessment has begun, much like croaker this is the initial stock assessment for spot, however, so the PRT is hoping that we can get a better picture of stock status and hopefully some biological reference points to compare those two from the stock assessment. With that, I'm happy to take any other questions.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Any questions for Harry? Seeing none; thank you very much, Harry. We're looking forward to seeing these assessments and what comes out of those in the next couple of years. All right, the next item on the agenda is the stock assessment updates by Jeff Kipp.

ASSESSMENT UPDATES

MR. JEFF J. KIPP: I'm going to be giving two updates on current assessments. The first, red drum, is wrapping up now. That assessment will be peer reviewed August 24th through the 27th in Charleston. That is undergoing a SEDAR peer review. Again, those results from that

assessment and peer review will be presented at the annual meeting.

The other assessments are the Atlantic Croaker and Spot Assessments. Those assessments will be going through joint assessments. The data workshop for those assessments will be occurring the end of September down in Raleigh, North Carolina. Again, for those assessments, they will be going under a SEDAR peer review next year; and those also will be made available at the annual meeting in 2016. If there are any questions about those assessments, I'd be glad to take them now.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Any questions? We're all waiting for that annual meeting when we get to sit here for red drum. That will give us a little bit more than 90 minutes for the meeting. Are you ready to move on to the terms for croaker?

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ATLANTIC CROAKER AND SPOT ASSESSMENTS

MR. KIPP: Revisiting the Spot and Croaker Stock Assessment, I'll be going over the terms of reference for those stock assessments; again a joint stock assessment for both those species. Just a review of the terms of reference, as you've seen for all or our previous assessments are to guide the stock assessment and peer review of that assessment.

These were developed by the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee, Spot Plan Review Team and the Atlantic Croaker and Spot Joint Stock Assessment Subcommittee. These will be the same TORs for both species. These are the ones for Atlantic croaker here; but, again, it is just the same TORs for spot. I'll be going over a summarized set of the TORs that you've got in your meeting materials.

The first term of reference will be to characterize uncertainty of all the fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data used in the assessments; review estimates of PSEs and MRIP recreational fishing estimates; request participation of MRIP staff in the data workshop

process to compare historical and current data collection and estimation procedures and to describe data caveats that may affect the assessment.

Develop estimates of Atlantic croaker discards in the South Atlantic Shrimp Trawl Fishery; develop estimates of bycatch and discards in other fisheries where possible; and characterize uncertainty of all discards and bycatch estimates. Again, we will have this same TOR for spot. Develop models used to estimate population parameters and biological reference points and analyze model performance.

State assumptions made for all models and explain the likely effects of assumption violations on synthesis of input data and all model outputs. Characterize the uncertainty of model estimates and biological and empirical reference points; perform retrospective analyses; assess magnitude and direction of retrospective patterns detected; and discuss implications of any observed retrospective patterns for uncertainty in population parameters, reference points and/or management measures.

Recommend stock status as related to reference points and also evaluate other potential scientific issues specific for spot and croaker. We'll compare trends and population parameters and reference points with the current and proposed modeling approaches and assessment to the traffic light approach, which Harry just went over. If outcomes differ, discuss potential causes of observed discrepancies.

Also compare reference points derived in this assessment with what is known about the general life history of the exploited stocks and explain any inconsistencies. If a minority report has been filed, explain the majority reasoning against adopting the approach suggested in that report. The minority report should explain reasoning against adopting approach suggested by the majority.

Develop detailed short- and long-term prioritized list of recommendations for future

research, data collection and assessment methodology; and highlight improvements to be made by the next benchmark review.

The final TOR is to recommend timing of next benchmark assessments and intermediate updates if necessary relative to the biology and current management of spot and Atlantic croaker. That covers all the TORs for the stock assessment. If there are any questions on this, I'd be glad to take those.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Are there any questions? Robert.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, I move that we approve the terms of reference as presented.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Do I see a second; Russ Allen. Are there any objections? Any other comments on the motion? Seeing no objections; it is moved that we accept the terms of reference. Motion by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Allen. Toni.
MS. TONI KERNS: Just a quick update for the board. The Spot and Croaker Committee had requested that instead of going through a SEDAR Review; that we go through an ASMFC External Peer Review. Without objection from this board, we would have the ASC look at that and then talk to SEDAR about potentially removing 2016 for this peer review approach.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Is there any objection to that? We don't have to do a motion or anything; do we?

MS. KERNS: We will take that to the ASC and then it would be considered at the Policy Board at the annual meeting.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Move to accept the terms of reference for the Atlantic Croaker Assessment as presented. Motion by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Allen. The motion was carried unanimously.

MS. KERNS: Since that motion didn't include spot, we'll need –

CHAIRMAN GEER: That is what I was thinking, too.

MS. KERNS: We'll need a second motion for spot.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, I move that we accept the terms of reference for Spot as presented.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Seconded by Michelle. All right, move to accept the terms of reference for the Spot Assessment as presented. Motion by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Dr. Duval. Any objection? Seeing none; motion approved. Jeff, is there anything else? All right, thank you very much, Jeff; we appreciate it. The last item on the agenda is the Fishery Management Plan Reviews. We've got three of them, so Megan is going to go through each one and then we're going to approve the plan and the compliance reports and de minimis for each one just to keep it a little bit cleaner.

ATLANTIC CROAKER FMP REVIEW

MS. MEGAN WARE: The first one that I'll be going through is Atlantic croaker. In terms of status of the fishery, this graph here showing total harvest with blue bar is commercial harvest and the recreational harvest in red. Overall there has been a decrease in landings in the Atlantic croaker fishery since 2003. This figure shows the total catch of both commercial and recreational landings.

In 2014 Atlantic croaker harvest was estimated at 10.07 million pounds; and this represents a 75 percent decline since the peak of 41.2 million pounds in 2001. Looking specifically at the trends in the commercial sector, which is again those blue bars, landings have decreased from a high of 30.1 million pounds in 2001 to 7 million pounds in 2014; and this does register below the time series of 13.4 million pounds.

The majority of commercial landings came from Virginia and North Carolina. Looking specifically at recreational catch, we have a graph here that

shows the number of fish, not pounds but number. The blue bars are landings and the green bars are those that were released alive. The number of fish recreationally caught has declined in the last decade. The 2014 landings are estimated at 6.2 million fish. Virginia was responsible for the majority of this; and that was then followed by Maryland.

In 2014 anglers released roughly 10 million fish, which is 62 percent of the croaker catch. In terms of status of the stock, our latest assessment is the 2010 assessment. This found that the stock is not experiencing overfishing. However, model estimates of the spawning stock biomass were too uncertain to be used to precisely determine an overfished stock status.

As we just saw from Harry, the traffic light analysis shows a declining harvest and abundance indices. We will be looking forward to the 2016 stock assessments for information. In terms of state compliance and de minimis requests, we are currently under Amendment 1. Since there are no specific management measures restricting harvest in Amendment 1, the PRT finds that all states have fulfilled the requirements of Amendment 1.

For de minimis status, states are permitted to request de minimis status if for the preceding three years their average commercial landings or recreational landings constitute less than 1 percent of the coast-wide commercial or recreational landings for that same three-year period. We had requests from four states.

We had requests from Delaware in the commercial fishery; South Carolina in their commercial fishery; Georgia in their commercial and recreational fishery; and Florida in their commercial fishery. We found that all of these states did qualify for de minimis. However, de minimis does not exempt any of the states from compliance requirements.

In terms of recommendations, the PRT does recommend the board approve the 2014 Atlantic Croaker FMP Review, state compliance reports and de minimis status for Delaware, South

Carolina, Georgia and Florida. They suggest that the board review the stock status after the 2016 assessment.

For research, their top three priorities were to develop and implement sampling programs for the South Atlantic Shrimp Trawl Fishery in order to analyze Atlantic croaker bycatch; to continue fishery-independent surveys throughout the range but especially in the southern range; and then to determine migratory patterns through cooperative tagging studies. With that, I will take any questions and wait for board action.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Any questions for Megan? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Mr. Chairman, I was just prepared to offer a motion if there were no questions.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Are there any questions or comments? We'll take that motion at this time.

DR. DUVAL: I would move to approve the Atlantic Croaker FMP Review, the state compliance reports and the de minimis requests for Delaware, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Second to that motion by Robert Boyles.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Pat, I think we may need to clarify commercial and recreational because I think Delaware, South Carolina and Florida were just commercial and Georgia was both or something along those lines.

MS. WARE: Yes; that's correct.

CHAIRMAN GEER: I was going to say if it said de minimis requests, would that cover that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Either way, but I think Max is almost done.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Dr. Duval; are you okay with that; Mr. Boyles? All right, let me read the motion: Move to approve the 2015 Atlantic

Croaker FMP Review, state compliance reports and de minimis status for Delaware, commercial; South Carolina, commercial; Georgia, commercial and recreational; and Florida, commercial. Motion by Dr. Duval; seconded by Mr. Boyles. Any opposition to that? Everyone is in favor? Seeing no opposition; the motion carried unanimously. We'll move on to red drum.

RED DRUM FMP REVIEW

MS. WARE: This is now the FMP Review for red drum. This shows total landings of red drum in kind of that pink color from New Jersey through the east coast of Florida. The total landing estimates for 2014 are 2.45 million pounds. This represents roughly a 650,000 pound decrease from 2013; but it is above the ten-year average.

Looking just at commercial landings, which are the black bars at the bottom of the graph, they represent just 4 percent of landings in 2014. They really showed no particular temporal trends ranging from approximately 55,440 over the last 50 years. In 2014 the coast-wide commercial harvest decreased from just over 400,000 pounds in 2013 to just over 100,000 pounds; and 88 percent of these landings are coming from North Carolina.

In North Carolina the commercial harvest is unique in that it is capped by a 258,000 pound annual cap; and their fishing season is from September 1st through August 31st. Just as a reminder, in November 2013 the harvest exceeded the cap for the 2013/2014 fishing year; and it was closed. The annual cap for the 2014/2015 season has been reduced to account for this overage.

Looking specifically at recreational catch, this graph shows catch again in numbers of fish with the releases in yellow and harvest in blue. Recreational harvest of red drum peaked in 1984 at just over one million fish. Since 1988 that number has fluctuated between 250,000 and 760,000 fish. In 2014 we are at the higher end of

that range with just over 641,000 fish. This is higher than the ten-year average.

Florida anglers landed the largest share of this coast-wide recreational harvest followed by North Carolina and then South Carolina. Anglers released far more red drum than they keep; and the percentage of catch has generally been around 80 percent. Specifically for 2014 anglers released 83 percent.

In terms of the location of the catch, 57 percent of total landings are from the South Atlantic Region in 2014; and this is where the fishery is exclusively recreational. Just as a reminder, Florida prohibited commercial harvest in 1988. South Carolina banned commercial harvest or sale of native-caught red drum in 1987; and then most recently in 2013 Georgia designated red drum as game fish status.

Then of these; 43 percent of total landings are coming from the Mid-Atlantic; and those are shown in the darker gray colors with the commercial sector shown in the darkest gray. In terms of status of the stock, our most recent approved assessment is the 2009 stock assessment, which found that overfishing is not occurring.

However, there was relatively known about the adult population of red drum since the fish are found primarily found offshore in waters where red drum are prohibited being caught under federal law. The end result of this was a limitation in the stock assessment that did not adequately describe the adult component of the population.

Right now, as just mentioned, we have the 2015 stock assessment underway; and it will be going through peer review later this month. In terms of the status of management, we're currently under Amendment 2, which considers a static spawning potential ratio of 40 percent a target and a static spawning potential ratio below 30 percent to result in an overfishing determination.

All states in the management area were required to implement appropriate recreational bag and size limit combinations needed to achieve this target. Amendment 2 also required states to maintain or implement more restrictive commercial fishery regulations and then also required a maximum size of 27 inches. All states have implemented these regulations and found to be in compliance.

The PRT finds that all states have fulfilled the core requirements of Amendment 2 in terms of de minimis status. Amendment 2 states that a state may be granted de minimis if the board determines that action by a state would not contribute significantly to the overall management program. However, no time period or percent of fishery is specified.

What the PRT has been using is to evaluate the state's contribution to the fishery by comparing each state's two-year average of combined commercial and recreational landings to the management unit. We had two de minimis requests; one from New Jersey and one from Delaware. We found that they qualify for de minimis. However, again this does not exempt any states from compliance requirements.

Recommendations from the PRT are to approve the FMP Review, state compliance reports and de minimis status. For research their top two priorities are to improve catch-and-effort estimates and biological sampling to determine the size and age structure; regulatory discards; and also to explore methods to effectively sample the adult population. With that, we'll take any questions and then board action.

MR. BOYLES: Megan, good presentation. On your slide that depicted the proportion of the recreational take, you characterized it as Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic. Is that parallel to what is considered under the last stock assessment, the '09 stock assessment, the northern sub-stock and the southern sub-stock. Maybe the better way to ask that question is what is considered Mid-Atlantic; is it Virginia north?

MS. WARE: The northern stock is from North Carolina up.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, with no more questions, I would offer a motion that we approve the FMP Review as well as the de minimis requests from New Jersey and Delaware for red drum.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Seconded by Michelle. All right, the motion is move to approve the 2015 Red Drum FMP Review, state compliance reports and de minimis status for New Jersey and Delaware. Motion by Mr. Boyles; seconded by Dr. Duval. Is that separated into commercial and recreational?

MS. WARE: It is combined commercial and recreational.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Okay, any other discussion on the motion? Any opposition? Consider the motion carried unanimously. Now we're onto the last one, black drum.

BLACK DRUM FMP REVIEW

MS. WARE: This is the first FMP Review for black drum. The compliance reports were due March 1st; so there wasn't enough time for states to get their 2014 recreational and commercial harvest information together; so this is going to be on 2013 landings; just so you know. Total black drum harvest in 2013 is estimated at 1.8 million pounds.

This represents an 84 percent increase from total harvest in 2012; but it is still below the previous ten-year average. The fishery is primarily recreational, which is shown in the white bars here, with 84 percent of harvest coming from the recreational sector. If we look at the black bars, which is the commercial sector, landing show no particular temporal trends over the last ten years.

In 2013 coast-wide commercial harvest increased from roughly 237,000 pounds in 2012 to 284,000 pounds in 2013. The majority of this catch is coming from North Carolina. Looking specifically a recreational catch of black drum – again this is in number of fish – we have those released in yellow and the harvest in blue.

Recreational harvest of black drum peaked in 2008 with 789,000 fish; and then the 2013 harvest was just over 600,000 fish. North Carolina anglers landed the largest share of this coast-wide recreational harvest followed by Florida. Anglers released approximately the same number of black drum that they keep; and this proportion was 47 percent in 2013.

If we look at the status of the stock, we have our most recent stock assessment from 2015, which said that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. However, the median biomass is estimated to be slowly declining, although it is estimated to be well above that level necessary to produce maximum sustainable yield.

In terms of the status of management, we are looking at the 2013 Interstate Fishery Management Plan. Some of the measures of that plan requires states to implement a maximum possession limit and also a minimum size; so it had to be 12 inches by January 1, 2014; and it must be 14 inches by January 1, 2016.

As of January 1, 2014, all states have implemented a minimum size of 14 inches, so everyone is in compliance and ahead of schedule. The PRT finds that all states have fulfilled the requirements of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Black Drum. For de minimis, it is qualified that a state can apply for de minimis if for the three preceding years for which data is available their average combined commercial and recreational landings constitute less than 1 percent of the coast-wide landings. However, we did not get any requests for de minimis status.

The PRT recommends that the board approve the 2014 Black Drum Fishery Management Plan Review and state compliance reports. They also suggested that as more data becomes available and the size increases that are there for a couple of years, to really review the impact of the increased minimum size. For research their top two priorities are to collect information to characterize the size composition of fish discarded; to collect age samples, especially in states where the maximum size regulations preclude the collection of adults; and to obtain estimates of selectivity at age for the commercial fisheries by gear. With that, I'll take any questions and wait for board action.

MR. BOYLES: Megan, you mentioned the compliance report due date precluded us looking at the '14 data. Is that something that we need to consider changing, the due date?

MS. WARE: Potentially I'm not sure that board action would require that, but that is a question for the board.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Yes; we've had that problem, too, Robert.

MS. KERNS: If the board would like to change the compliance date, we can do that. You don't have to have a motion. If there is consensus of the board, we can update that in our documents and make the changes to when we send out the memos. We may need to confer back with maybe your technical committee members to see what would be the appropriate time for folks to be able to get the data in. We may have to line it up.

MR. BOYLES: I'm not clear whether it might have been a problem for my folks; I don't know. I'm a little ignorant, but I'd to guidance from the other members of the board on what might be a better date so that we're looking at more recent data. I think we could make a March 1st deadline for the previous year. I'm a little in dark. I'm not quite sure; and maybe, Toni, you can help me out.

MS. KERNS: I believe what Megan said is that the data were not available yet; and so it is when the data come in and not necessarily that you couldn't work it up. That is why I suggested maybe get some information back from the technical committee folks or the individuals that are submitting and then come back at the annual meeting and suggest a new compliance date.

CHAIRMAN GEER: That sounds like a good idea. I see heads nodding. We don't want to go ahead and create a date and find out it is worse than the one we have now. Any other questions or comments on the black drum? I'm going to need a motion. Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Mr. Chairman, I move that we approve the Black Drum FMP Review and state compliance reports.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Second from Wilson Laney. The motion is to approve the 2015 Black Drum FMP Review and state compliance reports. Motion by Dr. Duval; seconded by Dr. Laney. Any further discussion? Hearing none; no opposition? Everyone is okay? The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF FEDERAL ACTION ON SPANISH MACKEREL

MS. WARE: There is just one other piece of other business. This is included in I believe your briefing materials, but I just wanted to let everyone know that NMFS did implement management measures in Framework Amendment 2 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region. This does impact Spanish mackerel.

The final rule establishes a commercial trip limit of 3,500 pounds for Spanish mackerel in federal waters offshore of South Carolina, Georgia and Eastern Florida. Then when 75 percent of this adjusted Southern Zone quota is met, the commercial trip limit will be reduced to 1,500 pounds. Then when 100 percent of the adjusted quota is met, the commercial trip limit will be

reduced to 500 pounds. I just wanted to let everyone know that information is in your briefing materials in case states have to make any changes.

CHAIRMAN GEER: Is there any new business in front of this board at this time? Hearing none; we are adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 o'clock a.m., August 6, 2015.)

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