

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: July 17, 2019
Subject: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Report

Purpose:

To report on actions from the SAFMC's June 10 through 14 meeting in Stuart, FL.

Summary:

In June, the SAFMC discussed changing future Atlantic red snapper season dates, which are narrowly defined in federal rule. The SAFMC will consider setting recreational and commercial seasons outside of peak spawning (June through September) or distributing the recreational season days differently. The SAFMC will hold meetings to collect input on these ideas this summer.

The SAFMC is re-evaluating the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and may revise the FMP's goals, objectives, and regulations. Potential regulation changes include reducing the 60-dolphin recreational vessel limit and new gear restrictions for commercial longline vessels harvesting dolphin or wahoo. The SAMFC may also consider adjusting dolphin and wahoo quotas at future meetings.

The SAMFC requested NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to increase the Season 2 (October through February) king mackerel commercial vessel limit from 50 to 75 fish off Volusia through Miami-Dade counties because the current vessel limit is too low. The low vessel limit makes fishing trips unprofitable and presents safety at sea issues because captains cannot afford crew. If approved, the emergency action is expected to take effect October 1, 2019. The Commission could consider a complementary increase for state waters through Executive Order.

To increase survival rates of discarded snapper grouper species, the SAFMC discussed requiring anglers to have a descending device, use non-stainless steel hooks, and, in areas where circle hooks are required, ban use of off-set circle hooks. Stakeholders support these best fishing practices, especially descending devices.

Other items from the June SAFMC meeting include the establishing triggers to prompt reviews of sector allocation and final action to adopt a 10-year rebuilding plan for red grouper and a 200-pound red grouper commercial vessel limit. The SAFMC also discussed stakeholder concerns about too many participants in the Spanish mackerel commercial fishery.

Staff Recommendation:

Direct the Executive Director to issue an Executive Order to increase the king mackerel commercial vessel limit in state waters off Volusia through Miami-Dade counties if NOAA Fisheries enacts an increase through emergency action.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management