

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: December 11, 2019
Subject: Staff Report – South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Report

Purpose:

Report on actions from the SAFMC’s Dec. 2–8 meeting in Wilmington, NC.

Why:

At its December meeting, the SAFMC will discuss several items relevant to Florida’s recreational and commercial fisheries.

Top Points:

- 1) The SAFMC is scheduled to take final action to approve changing the start date of the commercial red snapper season. Not all Florida fishermen and dealers support the Council’s proposed May 1 start date.
- 2) The SAFMC is also scheduled to take final action to approve an increase to the October through February commercial vessel limit for king mackerel off Volusia through Miami-Dade counties.

Affected Parties:

SAFMC discussions and actions affect people who fish for federally-managed species off Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Decisions may also affect commercial seafood dealers and retailers, fishing tackle manufacturers and retailers, and others with interests in fish stocks in Atlantic federal waters.

Summary:

At their December meeting, the SAFMC is expected to take final action to revise the start date of the commercial red snapper season, with the intent of increasing socio-economic benefits to fishermen. The SAFMC is proposing to move the start from the second Monday in July to May 1, to align with the opening of shallow-water grouper. Florida commercial fishermen and dealers have divergent opinions on the best start date. The rationales behind the varied preferences relate to concerns over discards, weather, availability of other fish, market demand, and harvesting spawning fish.

The SAFMC is also expected to take final action to increase the October through February commercial vessel limit for king mackerel off Volusia through Miami-Dade counties. The SAFMC is proposing a 100-fish vessel limit to address fishermen’s concerns that the current 50-fish limit minimizes profit and discourages fishermen from carrying crew, which affects safety-at-sea issues.

Anticipated SAFMC discussion topics include several items related to the dolphin wahoo fishery, such as revising management measures and modifying the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan.

Staff Recommendation:

No direction requested at this time; however, input on SAFMC items is always welcome.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management