

South Atlantic Update



Published for fishermen and others interested in marine resource conservation issues

Winter 2005

Final Council Action on Amendments Affecting Shrimp, Mackerel Fisheries *Federal permits, bycatch, fishing year changes*

After considering input from its advisory panels, public comments, and committee recommendations, the South Atlantic Council gave final approval to two amendments during its December 2004 meeting for submission to the Secretary of Commerce for review and approval. Amendment 6 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) includes management actions to identify vessels fishing in federal waters and to monitor and assess bycatch in the shrimp fishery. Amendment 15 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (mackerel) FMP establishes a limited access program for the commercial king mackerel fishery in both the Gulf and Atlantic and modifies the commercial fishing year in the Atlantic for king mackerel.

Shrimp Amendment 6

Management measures in the Amendment are designed to help fishery managers identify the types and amounts of bycatch associated with the shrimp trawl fishery and better identify the vessels currently involved in the fishery. This is accomplished by establishing a federal shrimp permit. Bycatch has long

(Continued page 8)



The South Atlantic shrimp fishery generates more revenue for the commercial harvesting sector than any other fishery in the region. Yet, competition from imported shrimp over the past several years has sent shrimp prices on a downward spiral while fuel prices have increased the costs of doing business. Management measures in Shrimp Amendment 6 will help document these economic impacts to the shrimp industry and aid in the collection of social and biological data crucial for sound management.

Spring Reminder! - New Federal Regulations for Dolphin and Wahoo

With warmer weather beckoning, fishermen are preparing for another spring season and perhaps thoughts of catching tuna, dolphin, and wahoo in the blue waters off the Atlantic coast. But before fishing fever hits, a review of the new regulations for dolphin and wahoo in federal waters may be in order. For a complete listing of the new regulations, see page 14.

Public Scoping Meeting Planned for Ecosystem-based Management

The Council is considering a broad range of management measures under its ecosystem approach and your comments are needed.

See page 7 for details.

Inside This Issue:

New Council Member Appointed	2
<i>In The News</i>	3
Council Member Receives Honors	3
Snapper Grouper Amend 13B	4
Fishery Ecosystem Management	6
Waterway Dredging Supported	10
Bluefin Tuna in North Carolina	10
Advisory Panel Update	11
<i>Oculina</i> Evaluation Plan	12
New Dolphin/Wahoo Regs	14
March Meeting Agenda	15
Calendar	16

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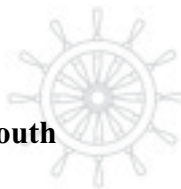
Editor's Note

The South Atlantic Update is published by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the Council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Kim Iverson, Editor, South Atlantic Update, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699, or may be sent via the internet; Email address: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

A publication of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA05NMF4410004.



New Member Appointed by Secretary of Commerce to the South Atlantic Council



The U.S. Department of Commerce recently announced the appointment of Julian M. "Butch" Pendarvis, a recreational fisherman from Edisto Island, S.C. to fill the obligatory South Carolina seat for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. He replaces Richard Gray, Jr., who

resigned from the Council in September 2004. Under this appointment, Pendarvis will serve on the Council until August 10, 2007.

Council member appointments include obligatory seats from each state and at-large appointees. Appointed members serve three-year terms. On behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries solicits nominations from the governors of coastal states and oversees the annual appointment process.

Mr. Pendarvis is no stranger to the South Atlantic Council, having served two consecutive terms as a S.C. member on the Council from 1980 - 1986. Following his terms as a Council member, Pendarvis served as Chairman of the Council's Law Enforcement Advisory Panel.

An avid hunter and fisherman, Mr. Pendarvis has been actively involved with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, serving as a Board member throughout the 1980s and '90s. He also served as Vice-Chairman of the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, an organization dedicated to raising monetary support for South Carolina's natural resources. "I feel that recreational and commercial fishermen should have equal access to the natural resources of the sea," stated Pendarvis. "Congress should properly fund the Coast Guard and other marine enforcement agencies," said Pendarvis in stressing the importance of law enforcement in fisheries management.

Retiring after forty years of management at the family owned Pendarvis Chevrolet-Olds Company in Edgefield, South Carolina, Pendarvis spends his time between his home in Estill, S.C. and the coastal island town of Edisto Beach.

Council members represent diverse fisheries interests and are comprised of members whose combined knowledge and experience represent commercial and recreational fisheries as well as environmental, academic, and other interests from each geographical area concerned.

IN THE NEWS:

National Marine Sanctuary Educator's Workshop

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary will host the annual Sanctuary Educator's Workshop on **May 13-14, 2005** at the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort, Tybee Island, Georgia. Education Coordinators from each of the 14 sites within the National Marine Sanctuary Program will participate in the workshop, bringing their unique programs, materials and perspectives from their part of the country, including Hawaii, American Samoa, California, Washington, Texas, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Michigan.

For more information on the workshop and an application form, visit the Gray's Reef website at www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov



NOAA Introduces nowCOAST Web Mapping Portal Web Site

In a continuing effort to improve maritime safety and commerce and to monitor physical changes in weather, oceanographic and river conditions, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, introduces nowCOAST. nowCoast is a Web mapping portal providing the coastal community with **real-time coastal observations and NOAA forecasts for major U.S. estuaries and seaports, coastal regions and the Great Lakes.** With a few simple clicks of their mouse, users will be able to access thousands of real-time observing stations and forecast locations.

Developed by NOAA's National Ocean Service's Coast Survey Development Lab, nowCoast's real-time observations include meteorological, oceanographic, hydrological and water quality data. The NOAA forecasts include NOAA's National Weather Service marine and weather forecasts, atmospheric, oceanographic, and river forecast guidance from NWS computer models, as well as oceanographic forecast guidance from National Ocean Service estuarine forecast models. Visit: <http://nowcoast.noaa.gov>

South Atlantic Council Soliciting NGO Advisory Panel Members

Interested representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are being asked to apply for open seats on the Council's species specific advisory panels. These include: **Calico Scallop, Coral, Golden Crab, King and Spanish Mackerel, Rock Shrimp, Shrimp, and Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels.**

Recreational and commercial fishermen, scientists, fish house operators, charter captains, and headboat operators are some of the diverse representatives that make up the Council's 14 advisory panels. Each member brings their knowledge, experience and unique perspective to the table.

Advisory Panel members are appointed by the Council and serve 3-year terms based on the frequency of meetings. For additional information on the Council's Advisory Panels, visit www.safmc.net.

If you are interested in applying for an advisory panel seat, contact: Kim Iverson at kim.iverson@safmc.net or call 866/SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366.

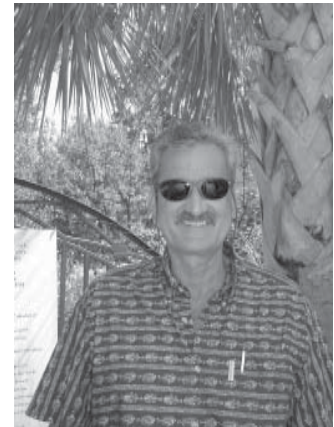
Council Member Tony Iarocci Receives National and International Recognition

Commercial fisherman and conservationist honored for work

2004 was a banner year for Council member and commercial fisherman Tony Iarocci, and not just for the number of spiny lobster he harvested near his home in the Florida Keys. In October, Iarocci was honored as one of three commercial fishermen in the country to be chosen by **National Fisherman magazine** as "**Highliner of the Year**". Following on the heels of the prestigious Highliner Award, Iarocci received word in December from the **World Wildlife Fund** that he had been chosen as a co-winner for the international **J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize**. "I was dumbfounded," said Iarocci referring to receiving the phone call regarding the J. Paul Getty award. "It was such an honor to be recognized by my peers through National Fisherman and the Highliner Award. And then I get this next call and it was overwhelming."

The Highliner Award was established by National Fisherman in 1975 to "recognize fishermen for overarching contribution to their industry and to their communities". Three fishermen are recognized annually by National Fisherman, and awards are presented in conjunction with FishExpo, a commercial fishing trade show held each year, alternating between east and west coasts. In addition to Tony Iarocci, commercial fishermen Jimmy Ruhle who serves on the Mid-Atlantic Council and David Goethal, a member of the New England Fishery Management Council also received the Highliner Award.

"I didn't realize, until after we had selected this year's National Fisherman Highliners, that all three are fishery management council members," said Jerry Fraser, Editor of National Fisherman. "I'm glad its worked out that way. Council critics will be hard pressed to make the case that fishery management will be better off without David Goethel's commitment to science, Tony Iarocci's dedication to conservation and Jimmy Ruhle's forthright good citizenship."



(Continued page 11)

Work Continues on Management Options for Snapper Grouper Species

Gag grouper, schoolmaster, greater amberjack, smallmouth grunt, red snapper, knobbed porgy, goliath grouper, spadefish, vermilion snapper, sailors choice, scamp....

Perhaps you've seen some of these fish on a local menu, caught them on a fishing trip, or encountered them on a dive. Some of these you may have never heard of before, but they all share one common denominator – they are currently included as part of the 73 species of fish that make up the Council's Snapper Grouper Management Complex. Commonly referred to as "reef fish", this large management group has provided the South Atlantic Council with its biggest management challenges because of its mixed species nature. In addition, many snapper/grouper species have complex life histories. Some change sexes during their life cycle and many are slow growing and long lived.

The management complex was first established through the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1983. Initially, FMP regulations consisted of minimum size limits, gear restrictions, and provisions for designations of special management zones. Improved data collection and stock assessment methods have provided more complete management information on some of the more commercially and recreationally valuable species. However, lack of basic management data on many of the species still remains a major obstacle to the Council in achieving their management goals.

Amendment 13B Background

Currently, the Council is developing Amendment 13B to the Snapper Grouper FMP. The Amendment centers on bringing the FMP into full compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act

(SFA) in 1996. While the Council had rebuilding plans for some stocks in place prior to 1996, the SFA requires the identification of maximum sustainable yield and optimum yield for each managed stock. The Council must then define fishing mortality rates that will end overfishing where it is occurring and rebuild overfished stocks to healthy biomass levels within a specific time frame. This mandate applies to all of the species included in the snapper/grouper complex, even those for which little or no data exists.

In an effort to address the lack of data, the Council has included proposed species groupings. These groups consist of snapper/grouper species that are usually targeted collectively due to similar habitats, life histories and/or depth preferences. Within each of these groups, an "indicator species" is identified, serving as a proxy, or representative for species in the

Amendment 13B divides snapper/grouper species into management units. Indicator species are chosen to act as representatives for the units, providing a reference point for stock status and determining the reductions/allowances in harvest for species in the unit. (Goliath and Nassau grouper have been prohibited from harvest since 1990 and 1992, respectively.)

Units	Indicator Species	Overfishing	Overfished	Reduction/allowance
Unit 1A – Shallow Water Grouper	gag grouper	NO	NO	0%
Unit 1B – Shallow Water Grouper – (goliath grouper only)	*goliath grouper	NO	YES	0%
Unit 1C – Shallow Water Grouper – (Nassau grouper only)	Nassau grouper	NO	YES	0%
Unit 2A – Deep Water Grouper, Tilefish, & Snapper	*snowy grouper	YES	YES	Unknown at this time
Unit 2B – Deep Water Grouper, Tilefish, & Snapper	*tilefish (golden)	YES	NO	30%
Unit 3 – Shallow Water Snapper, Sand Tilefish, Wrasses	*yellowtail snapper	NO	NO	0%
Unit 4 – Mid Shelf Snapper	*vermilion snapper	YES	NO	-31%
Unit 5 - Triggerfish/Spadefish	gray triggerfish	YES	NO	-7%
Unit 6 - Jacks	greater amberjack	NO	NO	0%
Unit 7A – Grunt/Porgy (red porgy only)	*red porgy	NO	YES	+102%
Unit 7B - Grunt/Porgy	white grunt	YES	NO	-6%
Unit 8 - Sea Bass	*black sea bass	YES	YES	-30%
Unit 9 - Wreckfish	wreckfish	NO	NO	0%

* These species have been through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review Panel process for stock assessment determination.

Snapper Grouper (Continued)

group. Management decisions for the species groups will be based on the indicator species data. As additional data become available for individual species, the Council will re-evaluate and update these selections. Options are also included in the Amendment that allow for removal of some species from the management unit that are found in state waters in order to transfer management to state agencies.

Current Status

The Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel (AP), Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Snapper Grouper Committee and scientists from NOAA Fisheries have been involved in the development and review of Amendment 13B thus far. With input from the AP and SSC, the Snapper Grouper Committee has spent several meetings reviewing criteria used to determine stock status for indicator species in the various management units, projected reductions in harvest needed for those stocks where overfishing is occurring, and stock rebuilding time frames.

In December, the Snapper Grouper Committee reviewed various management options that individually or cumulatively would provide the percent reductions needed for some species and, when possible, allow for an increase in harvest for others. Combinations of traditional management measures, such as size limits, bag limits, seasonal closures, commercial trip limits, and annual quotas are included in management alternatives. In meeting the mandates to end overfishing immediately, the Council must consider the short-term and long-term economic and social impacts of the proposed management alternatives. Often this is a balancing



A commercial snapper/grouper boat docks in Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina. New regulations are being proposed in Amendment 13B that will affect both commercial and recreational fishermen.

act, trying to weigh the impacts of reducing catches over various periods of time to rebuild stocks while having the least impact to fishermen and fishing communities.

With the different combinations of management options and rebuilding schedules being considered, the number of alternatives has grown quickly, expanding the size and complexity of the document. These management alternatives have been reviewed and refined by the Snapper Grouper Committee based on practicality, including the ability to meet mandates to end overfishing immediately and rebuild overfished stocks within given time periods. The Committee also considered earlier recommendations from the Snapper Grouper AP. Management alternatives that have been removed from detailed analyses and further consideration will be included in a separate document along with the rationale for removal.

What's Next

To address the size, complexity, and technical nature of the amendment, the Committee has approved the drafting of two volumes of Amendment 13B. Intended for easier understanding, Volume 1 will be written in "plain language" and be shorter than Volume 2. The second Volume will contain the more detailed technical material and language,

including in-depth analyses, reference materials, and summation of scientific studies. Both documents will be available to the public and will contain identical numbering systems for easier referencing and review. A similar approach was used in 1983, when the Council drafted both a Source Document and Management Plan Document for the original Snapper Grouper FMP. "We've made a lot of progress on 13B," said Mac Currin, Chairman of the Snapper Grouper Committee. "The Council's decision to restructure the document, along with narrowing the number of management options, should make the document more easily understood by fishermen and the public."

The Snapper Grouper Committee will meet again during the February 28 - March 4 meeting of the Council in Savannah to continue development of management alternatives. The SSC and Advisory Panel will have opportunities to review the alternatives and make recommendations before going out to public hearings. The Council currently anticipates approval for public hearing at its June 2005 meeting in Cape Canaveral, Florida. If approved in June, public hearings on all proposed measures are tentatively scheduled for August and September. ¶

Fishery Ecosystem Management – *Where Are We?*

The Council continued work on their Action Plan for Ecosystem-based Management during a joint meeting of its Habitat and Ecosystem-based Management Committees in December. The Council approved the draft Action Plan in June 2004. The Action Plan outlines development of the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plan — a comprehensive source document for the South Atlantic Bight ecosystem including updated life history and stock status information on managed species and detailed ecological and socioeconomic information from an ecosystem perspective. During the joint meeting, Committee members received an update on data workshops regarding development of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan, advisory panel recommendations, and public comment to date.

Why Ecosystem-based Management?

Recently, use of ecosystem-based management principles to complement current management practices has been emphasized and included in recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the recent Presidential U.S. Ocean Action Plan. It is believed that incorporation of ecosystem-based principles will improve a system that has largely been based on single-species stock assessment and management. Ecosystem principles include information that may not have been considered in the past when managing fish stocks. Examples include predator-prey interactions, the influence of weather and climate changes, the condition of the habitat, and the role of species diversity on ecosystem functions.

Developing the Fishery Ecosystem Plan
The Fishery Ecosystem Plan is being developed with the Council's 1998 Habitat Plan as the foundation. The Habitat Plan was created to act as a source document for all species managed by the Council and

consolidated the best available information on essential fish habitat, including estuarine and nearshore habitats as well as adjacent offshore marine habitats such as coral reefs, live/hard bottom habitat, artificial reefs, and *Sargassum*. Similar to the Habitat Plan, the Fishery Ecosystem Plan will act as a source document for ecosystem-based management. Also similar to the Habitat Plan is the developmental process for the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Writing teams (composed of advisory panel members, experts from state and federal agencies, universities, and Council staff) will review, update and expand existing chapters of the Habitat Plan and incorporate this material into new chapters for the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Public comment and recommendations will also play a key role in the process.

Incorporating the Fishery Ecosystem Plan into the Management Process

The FEP will provide reference information for ecosystem-based management and cover all of the Council's Fishery Management Plans and species, but will not



The Council is developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan that will act as a source document for future management decisions. Regulation changes will be made through a Comprehensive Amendment. The Council is holding public scoping meetings to get input on several measures proposed for inclusion in the first Comprehensive Amendment (see meeting notice on next page).

have any *regulatory* function. Management actions will take place through a Comprehensive Amendment, using the Fishery Ecosystem Plan as a source document. The Comprehensive Amendment will affect all Fishery Management Plans. This same approach was used with the original Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan in 1983 and again with the Habitat Plan and subsequent Comprehensive Amendment in 1998.

The Fishery Ecosystem Plan will be reviewed, amended, and updated every 5 years with new scientific knowledge about ecosystem interactions. Concurrent with each update of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan will be a determination of whether new regulations are necessary. If needed, the Council's existing Fishery Management Plans will be amended through a Fishery Ecosystem Plan Comprehensive Amendment. This 5-year evaluation cycle will also help the Council meet its requirements for periodic updates to areas designated

(Continued next page)



Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Comprehensive Amendment Public Scoping Meeting

Monday, February 28, 2005 6:00 p.m.
Hilton Savannah Desoto
Savannah, GA

Contact the Council office for copies of the scoping meeting document or visit www.safmc.net

as Essential Fish Habitat and Habitat Areas of Particular Concerns.

Recommendations and Timelines

Because of the large amount of information and activities surrounding the current trend in ecosystem-based management approaches, the committees reiterated the need to inventory existing regional fishery information and identify agencies and current projects involved in the process. Funding concerns for long-term support of the current ecosystem-based pilot project involving four councils was also discussed. Specific to the South Atlantic Council's Action Plan, members of the joint committees reviewed a preliminary list of potential management measures being considered for inclusion in the initial Comprehensive Amendment. These measures were proposed to begin addressing the eight actions for ecosystem-based management recommended by the Ecosystem Principles Advisory Panel for regional fishery management councils (see sidebar).

These draft measures were reviewed during the joint meeting of the Council's Habitat and Coral Advisory Panels in October 2004. "The Habitat and Coral Advisory Panels both are very excited over the prospect of this plan and the progress that's been made," reported Dr. Doug Rader, Chairman of the Habitat

Advisory Panel. "We're very eager to engage, as widely as time and resources allow, [in the process] and the recommendations that you see before you reflect that general emphatic endorsement." Dr. Rader, Senior Scientist with Environmental Defense, reported on the Advisory Panels' recommendations regarding Fishery Ecosystem Plan development and the preliminary list of management measures.

Deepwater Corals

In addition, the Advisory Panels received presentations of recent research on deepwater coral distribution and characterization in the South Atlantic region. The research by Dr. Steve Ross with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and John Reed with Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute provided detailed information on several deepwater coral areas and impressive video footage of these unique habitats and associated snapper/grouper species. At the recommendation of the advisory panels and committees, the Council approved inclusion of the newly discovered deepwater coral areas for potential designation as Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern in the initial Comprehensive Amendment. Public scoping meetings on possible measures for inclusion into the Comprehensive Fishery Ecosystem Plan Amendment are planned, beginning with the March
(Continued page 13)

In 2004, NOAA Fisheries began an Ecosystem-Based Management Pilot Program with four Fishery Management Councils. Participants include the New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Gulf of Mexico Councils. Using the 8 Ecosystem Principles defined by NOAA Fisheries' Ecosystem Principles Advisory Committee, each Council is developing a regional approach to ecosystem-based management.

Principles for Developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan:

- 1. Define the geographical boundaries of the ecosystem, including characterization of its biological, chemical, and physical dynamics;**
- 2. Assess ecological, human, and institutional elements of the ecosystem;**
- 3. Develop a conceptual model of the food web;**
- 4. Describe the habitat needs of different life history stages for all managed species (including protected resources);**
- 5. Calculate and characterize removals (i.e., landings, effort, catch location, discards, and bycatch);**
- 6. Develop indices of ecosystem health (e.g., biological indicators);**
- 7. Establish long-term monitoring;**
- 8. Develop appropriate management including catch limits, gear regulations, zoning, etc.**



Final Action (Continued from page 1)

been an issue in the trawl fishery, and fishermen have worked closely with managers in the development and use of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) to reduce bycatch. These triangular shaped metal openings in nets allow finfish and other marine animals to escape while minimizing the loss of shrimp. Yet, under federal mandates, data on the quantity and types of species still being caught as bycatch in the fishery must be collected. A cooperative program to collect such data has been proposed by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), but has not yet been funded. The Council supports using ACCSP data collection, but meanwhile alternative methods for assessing bycatch such as on board observers, logbooks, state cooperation, grant funded projects, and federal permits are needed.

Amendment 6 also promotes development of more effective Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) through changes in the current framework system for testing and design approval, and addresses criteria used for determining stock status as outlined by the Sustainable Fisheries Act. The Amendment will require the use of BRDs on all rock shrimp vessels as well. The majority of rock shrimp vessels currently use approved BRDs.

Shrimp Permits

Perhaps one of the more controversial management measures included in Amendment 6 is the establishment of a federal permit for shrimp vessels fishing in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The EEZ includes federal waters from three to 200 miles offshore. Fishermen attending the public hearings questioned the need for a federal permit and expressed concerns over possible qualifying criteria in the future and the cost of the permits. "I think we



have enough paperwork and permits that we have to deal with in order to fish/shrimp for a living," stated Nancy Edens, of Sneads Ferry, N.C. "In order to make a living on the water you must be versatile and you are stopping us from doing so by placing limitations on us. A permit is not always the answer," said Edens.

As proposed in the Amendment, a South Atlantic federal penaeid shrimp permit would be issued to any vessel owner who applies for one. The permitting system is managed by NOAA Fisheries, and the estimated permit cost would be \$50/year. Fishermen holding existing commercial permits in the South Atlantic would be charged a lesser annual fee of \$20. Federal permits will be part of a comprehensive data collection program to enable managers to identify the numbers and types of vessels as well as document fishing effort by shrimp fishermen in federal waters.

The Council's Shrimp Advisory Panel met during the October 2004 Council meeting to review the Amendment and provide recommendations. Advisory Panel members also expressed concerns about the permit requirement as well as the use of onboard

"It is in your best interest to have correct documentation of shrimp fishing effort. You've been telling us that effort is down and we need to document this."

Dr. Roy Crabtree, Council member and Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries addressing the Shrimp Advisory Panel

observers and the possible duplication of state logbook reporting. "It is in your best interest to have correct documentation of shrimp fishing effort. You've been telling us that effort is down and we need to document this," explained Dr. Roy Crabtree, Regional Administrator with NOAA Fisheries speaking to the Shrimp AP. "We can't ask you guys to document what species are in your bycatch, so we need observers on board to look at bycatch. I think it is in your best interest to have the best data that we can get."

Advisory Panel member Bill Daniels of Bellhaven, N.C. told the Shrimp Committee of his concerns about observers. "I think that some of the operators already operating on a shoestring may really have difficulty getting [vessel safety] documentation. I'm not necessarily against observers. But it is an inconvenience. I urge the Council to take this into consideration when determining the criteria for any observer program."

Members of the Shrimp Committee assured Advisory Panel members that every effort would be made to minimize duplication

(Continued next page)

Final Action (Continued)

of state reporting requirements. However, information collected through current state license programs is inadequate to complete data analysis required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other federal mandates. Basic information regarding the number of vessels fishing in federal waters is needed along with more detailed data for economic analysis. Economic data needs include business information on incorporation and revenue profiles by vessel size and capacity. Other crucial information lacking includes whether or not the vessel is used for a fishery other than the shrimp fishery and if the shrimping effort is in state waters, federal waters, or both. In light of current data systems and federal mandates, the Council has recognized that establishment of a commercial federal permit is a prerequisite for a comprehensive data collection program.

During discussion of Amendment 6 at the December Council meeting, John Wallace, Georgia Council member and commercial shrimp fisherman voiced his opposition to the permit requirement and voted against approval of the Amendment. Wallace was particularly concerned about possible use of law enforcement sanctions against permitted vessels, especially those vessels not operated by their current owner. NOAA Fisheries will be responsible for determining the details regarding the permit system, including development of penalty schedules for violations.

Florida Council member and commercial fisherman Tony Iarocci acknowledged Wallace's concerns and advocated continued industry involvement throughout the process. Referring to a similar program now under way in the Gulf of Mexico, Iarocci stated, "A lot of

Mackerel Management and the Fishery Ecosystem Plan



The Council approved a motion in December to include mackerel management in the Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Comprehensive Amendment, including items proposed in Amendment 16 affecting the Atlantic. "It was exciting to have the actions remaining in Amendment 16 melded into and now a part of the comprehensive Fishery Ecosystem Plan under the new Ecosystem-based Management Plan," said Council Vice-Chairman George Geiger. These include a broad range of management measures that would allow for comprehensive management to better address cumulative impacts and sustainable fisheries. "This

Council has demonstrated its desire to manage fishery resources in a comprehensive manner for sustainability," stated Geiger. "Certainly when we're doing that, we would like to manage all fisheries in the future with a clear understanding of the comprehensive and complete impacts that new regulations would have across the fisheries in our respective areas."

people had grave concerns about the permitting process for the [Gulf] shrimp fishery when it first started, but now, after all the misconceptions, the misinformation, and rumors - a lot of the shrimpers that I'm dealing with are very happy with the permitting process and what's going on there".

Mackerel Amendment 15 - Permits and Fishing Year Modifications

In the Atlantic, king and Spanish mackerel are managed jointly by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils through the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (Mackerel) FMP. In 1996, a moratorium was put into place for the commercial king mackerel fishery to address overfishing of the Gulf king mackerel stock (the South Atlantic stock is not overfished). The moratorium was issued to provide stability and prevent speculative entry into the fishery while the councils developed a limited access program. The moratorium was extended in 2000 under Amendment 12 to the FMP for another 5 years and is scheduled to expire in October 2005.

Through Amendment 15 to the Mackerel FMP, the Councils have developed a limited access system for the commercial king mackerel fishery in both the Gulf and Atlantic by indefinitely establishing a moratorium on king mackerel permits. Comments received from fishermen during scoping and public hearings generally supported continuance of the permit moratorium and the limited access program. Under the Amendment, a commercial king mackerel limited access permit will replace the existing commercial permit.

Amendment 15 will also change the fishing year for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to begin March 1st rather than April 1st each year. The April 1 through March 31 fishing year has worked well in the past and the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) was reached only once for the Atlantic. However, if the TAC is lowered in the future, there is a potential for the quota to be filled and the fishery closed in March. A March closure would have adverse impacts on fishermen due to other March commercial closures

(Continued page 13)

Waterway Dredging a Concern for Vessel Safety and Whale Protection

Council Supports Funding for Needed Maintenance



Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association

Lack of funding for proper dredging along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway could force vessels offshore, increasing safety risks for both vessels and migrating whales caught in their paths.

The Council recently submitted a letter to the Army Corp of Engineers expressing concern over the dredging and maintenance of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. The Council is concerned that failure to keep the Waterway dredged will force boat traffic offshore, a move that could threaten vessel safety and increase interactions with endangered North Atlantic right whales. In recent years, funding for dredging of the federally maintained Waterway has been severely cut and in some cases eliminated completely. Without proper dredging both commercial and recreational boat traffic dependent on the Waterway face running aground or are forced to venture offshore into less protected waters.

In its letter, the Council expressed particular concern regarding a stretch of the Waterway between Port Royal, South Carolina and Cumberland Island, Georgia, where according to the Savannah

District of the Corp of Engineers, there is no funding appropriated in 2005 to dredge. The southern portion of this Waterway occurs in a management area proposed by NOAA Fisheries to protect right whales by tailoring vessel traffic patterns off the coasts of southern Georgia and northern Florida. Female whales migrate to this area to calve and nurse their young over the winter months. As the Waterway continues to fill in, offshore vessel traffic will increase into areas where right whales occur, increasing the risk of collisions.

The recent deaths of four North Atlantic right whales have triggered national media attention to the problems facing these vulnerable creatures. The Northern right whale is among the rarest of all large whales, with an estimated population of 300 animals. Though protected from hunting for nearly a century, right whales remain vulnerable to ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. In developing fishery management plans, the Council incorporates measures to reduce fishery interactions with protected species such as whales, dolphins, and sea turtles and works closely with other agencies and organizations in these efforts. ⚓

For additional information, visit www.noaa.gov or www.coastalstudies.org.



Bluefin Tuna Season Reopens During December Council Meeting in North Carolina



Council members and staff had an opportunity to visit the docks in Morehead City, N.C. as the South Atlantic bluefin tuna season reopened on December 8, 2004. Boats from up and down the east coast came to fish on opening day.



A bluefin tuna is being transported from the dock to be processed at Homer Smith Seafood Co. Fish ranged in size from 170 lbs. to over 400 lbs. Once cleaned, graded and put on ice, most of the fish are shipped to Japan within 24 hours.



Sections of the tuna's meat are inspected by a broker and the quality is determined. Fishermen are provided handbooks on handling techniques of the fish. Prices this year averaged \$12 - \$14 per pound. The Council supports a bluefin tuna fishery for the South Atlantic. The Highly Migratory Species Committee will meet during the March Council meeting to discuss tuna and shark issues.

Advisory Panel Members Appointed in December

The Council appointed members to a number of advisory panels during its June meeting. Advisory panels are comprised of experienced and knowledgeable members of the public that provide information and guidance in the development and implementation of fishery management plans.

The Council convenes meetings of its advisory panels on an as needed basis, dependent upon current fishery issues.

The Council welcomes the following members appointed in December:

Coral Advisory Panel

Reappointment: Dr. Henry Feddern

Habitat Advisory Panel

New Appointment: Cameron Sebastian, Myrtle Beach, SC

Reappointment: Jenkins Mikell, Jr. and James Harvey

King and Spanish Mackerel Advisory Panel

New Appointment: Terry Adkins, Saint Mary's, GA

Reappointments: Paul Dunn, Jodie Gay, Richard Thomas, Carl Erickson, and Ronnie Houck.

Protected Resources Advisory Panel

New Appointment: Brad Winn, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

Shrimp Advisory Panel

New Appointment: Mike Cowdrey, Sneads Ferry, NC and Jack Collins, Lithia, FL

Snapper/Grouper Advisory Panel

New Appointment: Bo Stokes, Georgetown, SC

Reappointments: Phil Conklin, Paul Reiss, Dr. Ken Lindeman, Charlie Phillips, and Greg DeBrango.

Note: Additional seats have been created for each species related advisory panel for Non-Government Organization (NGO) representatives. These positions will continue to be advertised until open seats are filled. Please contact the Council office if you are interested in serving on any of the Council's advisory panels.

Iarocci Honors (Continued from page 2)



National Fisherman magazine Highliner Award recipients (L-R), Jimmy Ruhle, Tony Iarocci, David Goethel pose with Editor in Chief, Jerry Frazer at FishExpo in Providence, RI. Iarocci also received international recognition in December, winning the J. Paul Getty Conservation Prize, the only commercial fisherman to ever win the award and the second American to do so.

Serving his second term as a member of the South Atlantic Council, Iarocci has been instrumental in the Council's efforts to use marine protected areas as a fishery management tool. As Chairman of the Council's Marine Protected Area Committee, he has been a strong advocate for having all user groups involved in the management process. He was a member of the Tortugas 2000 workgroup, whose members helped design and win governmental approval for the Tortugas Marine Reserve, the largest fully-protected marine reserve in North America. Located in the remote waters of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the reserve is intended to safeguard the region's healthiest coral reefs and help replenish depleted fisheries throughout south Florida. Iarocci also serves on the Advisory Council for the Sanctuary.

In recognition of his work with marine reserves and fishery management efforts in the Florida Keys as well as Alaska, Mexico and Nicaragua, Iarocci shares the international **J. Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Award**.

The annual prize, which carries with it an award of \$100,000 is being shared between Iarocci and Billy Arjan Singh, a farmer who has led the establishment of tiger reserves in India. "The Getty Prize, which the World Wildlife Fund administers on behalf of the Getty family, recognizes conservation pioneers and their work," said Kathryn S. Fuller, president of the WWF-US. "This year's awardees are role models for their bold leadership, untiring efforts and major accomplishments in wildlife and habitat conservation."

Iarocci is the first commercial fisherman to ever receive the award and only the second American. Previous winners include chimpanzee researcher Jane Goodall, famed British conservationist Sir Peter Scott, and the Charles Darwin Foundation.

"As a commercial fisherman serving on the South Atlantic Council, I was proud to accept these awards," stated Iarocci. "It's time that commercial fishermen are seen as conservationists as well. Without working together there isn't a bright future for any of our marine resources." ¶

Evaluation Plan for *Oculina* Closed Area Under Review in March

Law Enforcement Efforts Increased in 2004

An Evaluation Plan for the *Oculina* Closed Area that incorporates outreach, research and monitoring, and law enforcement activities will be reviewed and approved during the Council's March meeting in Savannah. The evaluation plan is the result of the indefinite extension of the designated *Oculina* Experimental Closed Area, a 93-square mile protected area approximately 15 miles off the coast of Ft. Pierce, Florida. Restrictions prohibiting fishing for snapper/grouper species and anchoring have been in place since 1995 to protect the fragile and unique *Oculina* coral habitat and the snapper/grouper species found there.

In April 2004, new rules were finalized that extend the closure indefinitely and call for a 3-year review of the size and configuration of the area, and a 10-year re-evaluation. The Council also stipulated that a comprehensive Evaluation Plan for the *Oculina*

Closed Area be developed to increase public awareness of the need for protection of the coral habitat and fishery resources, establish a research and monitoring strategy for the area, and provide increased law enforcement efforts. Outreach meetings have been held in the Ft. Pierce and Port Canaveral area to get local input on development of the plan and workshops held to begin laying out research and monitoring strategies.

In addition, the Council is working closely with members of its Law Enforcement Advisory Panel to incorporate recommendations into the Evaluation Plan for continued interagency cooperation in patrolling the area. In 2004 additional patrols, including those by the recently commissioned Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) vessel, the *C.T. Randall*, resulted in increased law enforcement cases. ⚓



A small piece of fragile *Oculina varicosa* coral is collected for study. Off the east central coast of Florida, from Ft. Pierce to Cape Canaveral, dense coral growths appear in some areas forming tall coral pinnacles. Found in depths ranging from 180 to 400 feet, the deepwater coral provides essential fish habitat for many species. Designated in 1995, The *Oculina* Closed Area provides protection for both the coral and associated snapper/grouper species. Fishing for snapper/grouper is prohibited and all fishing vessels are prohibited from anchoring in the 93-square mile Closed Area.

Commercial and Recreational Fishermen Fined for *Oculina* Bank Violations



On September 29-30, 2004, NOAA's satellite-based Vessel Monitoring System alerted law enforcement of a vessel's presence in the *Oculina* Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC). A NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement special agent, with assistance from U.S. Coast Guard – Port Canaveral, boarded the vessel to investigate. A \$30,000 civil penalty was issued to Brent Zirlott Jr., operator of the fishing vessel *Miss Rosa Marie* and the vessel's owner, Rosa Marie, Inc., for using a bottom trawl to fish for rock shrimp within the HAPC, a federal violation. The vessel and the Alabama owner were assessed a Notice of Violation and

Assessment and a potential 45-day permit sanction. The permit sanction forbids the vessel and any other vessel/dealership for which the owner holds a permit, from fishing or dealing in federally regulated species of fish that require a federal permit. The case is pending.

A \$5,000 Notice of Violation and Assessment was issued against the owners/operators of a recreational fishing boat. David and Kendra Moreau of Montverde, Florida were cited for violating federal regulations prohibiting fishing for or retention of snapper/grouper species within the *Oculina* Closed Area. The violation took place on June 13, 2004, when the FWC patrol vessel *C.T. Randall* located a sport fishing boat with three people on board in the Closed Area. Enforcement officers boarded the boat and discovered undersized snapper and grouper on board. As federally deputized officers, they forwarded the case to NOAA enforcement agents for a follow-up investigation. According to NOAA Office for Law Enforcement, the Moreau's agreed to settle the case for \$3,500.

Ecosystem-Based Management
(Continued from page 9)

Council meeting in Savannah. The Council approved the timeline in the Action Plan for development of the draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan in late 2005 accompanied by the Comprehensive Amendment in late 2005 or early 2006.

Gaining a Better Understanding of the South Atlantic Bight Ecosystem

Technical workshops play an important role in development of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. In 2003 a series of 15 workshops were held to integrate and update habitat information and begin development of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Additional workshops were held in 2004 on research and monitoring needs for deepwater coral/ habitat, development of an internet-based mapping system, and socio-economic needs. Workshops are being planned in 2005 on such topics as artificial reefs, marine zoning, and impacts of fishing on habitat to provide further insight into ecosystem function, and help identify research necessary to better define populations, fisheries, and their interrelationships.

Innovative approaches such as Ecopath modeling will be used to explore food web dynamics and help identify data gaps. Cooperative research will continue with partners such as the National Undersea Research Center at UNC-Wilmington for multi-beam sonar mapping of habitat areas and the Florida Wildlife and Research Institute for development and refinement of a Comprehensive Habitat and Fishery Ecosystem Plan web page and internet mapping system for coral and benthic habitats. The site is accessible through the Council's web site at www.safmc.net.



Please Join Us!

March 24-26, 2005

**Omni Shoreham Hotel and Conference Center
Washington, D.C.**

www.managingfisheries.org

Managing our Nation's Fisheries II: Focus on the Future is the second conference in a series designed to improve the management of marine fisheries in the United States. The first conference, held in 2003, focused on regional fishery management programs, their successes, and remaining challenges. The 2005 conference will focus on those challenges, on key issues for reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and on the recent recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

Conference Topics Include:

- Developing an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries**
- Strengthening Scientific Advice for Management**
- Criteria for IFQ Programs**
- Marine Protected Areas and Cold Water Corals**
- Overfishing and Stock Rebuilding**
- Fisheries Governance**

Pre-Registration is Required

See www.managingfisheries.org for more information

Final Action

(Continued from page 9)

already in place. For example, red porgy is closed January through April and gag and black grouper are closed March and April. The change in the fishing year will primarily benefit fishermen in the Carolinas, as Florida king mackerel fishermen harvest mostly Gulf migratory group king mackerel from November through March 31 each year.

“Speaking as Chairman of the Mackerel Committee, I am pleased that the Council approved the overwhelming wishes of the public and voted unanimously to approve Amendment 15 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic FMP that extends the permit moratorium to maintain present effort, and changed the fishing year to March 1st,” stated Council Vice-Chairman George Geiger. ⚓

Visit

www.safmc.net

for the latest information on:

- Council Members**
- Advisory Panel Members**
- News Releases**
- Public Hearing Documents**
- Meeting Agendas**
- Regulation Changes**



New Federal Regulations for Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery in the Atlantic

The Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan was developed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils, and represents a proactive approach to maintaining healthy stocks of dolphin and wahoo, with action intended to maintain the current effort and landings in the fishery. The actions are applicable to the dolphin and wahoo fishery in federal waters off the Atlantic states (Maine through the east coast of Florida).

Allowable gear for the fishery includes: hook-and-line gear including manual, electric, and hydraulic rods and reels; bandit gear; handlines; longlines; and spearfishing (including powerheads) gear.

Recreational Regulations:

20-inch fork length minimum size limit for dolphin off the coasts of Georgia and Florida;

Recreational bag limit of 10 dolphin and 2 wahoo per person per day, with a limit of 60 dolphin per boat per day (headboats are excluded from the boat limit);

Recreational sale of dolphin and wahoo is prohibited.

Commercial/Charter/Headboat Regulations:

Owners of commercial vessels and/or charter vessels/headboats must have vessel permits and, if selected, submit reports;

Operators of commercial vessels, charter vessels, and headboats that are required to have a federal vessel permit for dolphin and wahoo must have and display operator permits.

Dealers must have permits and, if selected, submit reports;

Longline fishing for dolphin and wahoo is prohibited in areas closed to the use of such gear for highly migratory pelagic species (HMS); Longline vessels must comply with sea turtle protection measures;

There will be a commercial trip limit of 500 pounds for wahoo.

For a commercially permitted vessel fishing north of 39 degrees N. latitude, that does not have a federal commercial vessel permit for dolphin or wahoo, there is a trip limit of 200 pounds of dolphin and wahoo, combined.

To apply for a vessel, dealer or operator permit, interested parties should contact the Permits Office, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St. Petersburg, Florida, 33702, or by phone at 727-570-5326.



SOUTH ATLANTIC SEASONAL CLOSURE AND POSSESSION LIMITS

Red Porgy

During **January, February, March and April** each year, the harvest or possession of red porgy in or from the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on board a vessel with a Federal snapper-grouper permit (charter/headboat or commercial) is limited to **one per person per day or one per person per trip**, whichever is more restrictive. Also, **red porgy can neither be sold nor purchased during the closed season**. The minimum size limit for red porgy is 14 inches total length.

Black Grouper and Gag

During **March and April** each year, the possession of black grouper and gag in or from the South Atlantic EEZ on board a vessel with a Federal snapper-grouper permit (charter/headboat or commercial) is limited to **two black grouper or gag, combined, per person per day or two per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive**. Also, black grouper and gag **cannot be purchased or sold during the closed season**. The minimum size limit for black grouper and gag is 24 inches total length.



Amberjack

During **April** each year, the possession of greater amberjack in or from the South Atlantic EEZ on board a vessel with a Federal snapper-grouper permit (charter/headboat or commercial) is limited to **one per person per day or one per person per trip**, whichever is more restrictive. Also, greater amberjack **can neither be sold nor purchased during the closed season**. The recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack is 28 inches fork length; the commercial size limit is 36 inches fork length.

Mutton Snapper

During **May and June** each year, the possession of mutton snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ on vessels with a commercial snapper-grouper permit is limited to **10 per person per day or 10 per person per trip**, whichever is more restrictive. The minimum size limit for mutton snapper is 16 inches total length.

Cobia

No person may possess more than **two cobia per day** in or from the Gulf, Mid-Atlantic, or South Atlantic EEZ, **regardless of the number of trips or duration of a trip**.

The prohibitions listed above on sale/purchase do not apply to fish that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold **prior** to the start of the seasonal closure and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor. **The trip restrictions apply to all federally permitted vessels regardless of where harvested. Bag limits also apply to recreational fishermen.**

Did You Know?

The king mackerel is the largest mackerel in the western Atlantic, reaching a length of 5 1/2 feet and a weight of 100 pounds. The size led to the species name *cavalla*, derived from the Spanish word for horse.

(from Fishes of the Southeastern United States - by Charles Manooch, illustrations by Duane Raver)



king mackerel
Scomberomorus cavalla

SAFMC Meeting Dates and Locations 2005 Schedule

February 28 - March 4, 2005

Hilton Savannah DeSoto
15 East Liberty Street
Savannah, GA 31401
800/426-8483

September 19-23, 2005

Town & Country Inn
2008 Savannah Highway
Charleston, SC 29407
800/334-6660

June 13-17, 2005

Radisson Resort at the Port
8701 Astronaut Blvd.
Cape Canaveral, FL 32920
800/333-3333 or 321-784-0000

December 5-9, 2005

Courtyard Marriott
100 Charlotte Avenue
Carolina Beach, NC 28428
800/458-3606

Acronyms

ACCSP - Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program

AP - Advisory Panel

ASMFC - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

BRD - Bycatch Reduction Device

CPUE - Catch Per Unit Effort

EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone

EFH - Essential Fish Habitat

EFH/HAPC - Essential Fish Habitat/Habitat Area of Particular Concern

FMP - Fishery Management Plan

HMS - Highly Migratory Species

ITQ - Individual Transferable Quota

MSY - Maximum Sustainable Yield

MRFSS - Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey

NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service

OY - Optimum Yield

SEDAR - Southeast Data, Assessment and Review

SSC - Scientific & Statistical Committee

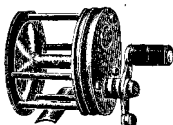
SFA - Sustainable Fisheries Act

TAC - Total Allowable Catch

VMS - Vessel Monitoring System

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting

February 28 - March 4, 2005



Hilton Savannah DeSoto

15 East Liberty Street

Savannah, GA 31401

1-800/426-8483 or 912/232-9000

For a detailed agenda contact the Council office toll free at 1-866 SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366. The agenda is also available on the Council's web site www.safmc.net

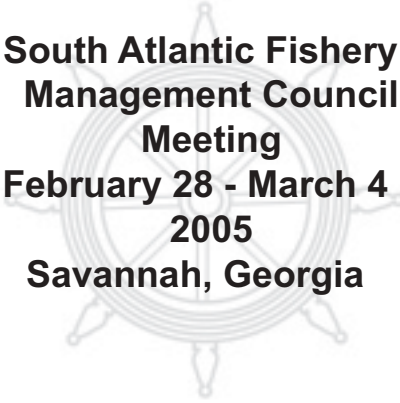
PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Monday	1:30 - 5:00 6:00 p.m.	Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting Public Scoping Meeting on Ecosystem-based Management
Tuesday	8:30 - 5:00	Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting (cont.)
Wednesday	8:30 - 10:30 10:30 - 12:00 1:30 - 5:00	Advisory Panel Selection Committee Meeting Executive/Finance Committee Meeting Controlled Access Committee Meeting
Thursday	8:30 - 12:00 1:30 - 5:00	Highly Migratory Species Committee Meeting Council Session
Friday	8:30 - 12:00	Council Session

2005

Mark your calendar...

- March 7-10** *Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting*
Birmingham, AL, www.gulfcouncil.org
- March 15-17** *Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting,*
Kill Devil Hills, NC, www.mafmc.org
- March 24-26** *Managing our Nations Fisheries II Conference*
Washington, D.C., www.managingfisheries.org
- May 3-5** *Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting*
Ocean City, MD, www.mafmc.org
- May 9-12** *Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting*
Biloxi, MS, www.gulfcouncil.org
- May 11-12** *SAFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings*
Charleston, SC, www.safmc.net
- May 13-14** *Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary*
Annual Educator's Workshop, Tybee Island, GA
www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov



**South Atlantic Fishery
Management Council
Meeting
February 28 - March 4
2005
Savannah, Georgia**

Register now for *Managing our Nation's Fisheries II*, March 24-26, 2005 (see p.13 for details)

Visit the Council's Web Site at www.safmc.net