

Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: Data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion at the Assessment webinar VI are as follows:

- Review projection results for finalized reference case model run(s) and finalize any changes to the projections.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to the meeting.

Note: The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 9, 2020.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XA245]

Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 70 Assessment Webinar II for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 70 stock assessment process for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack will consist of a series of data and assessment webinars. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The SEDAR 70 Assessment Webinar II will be held Thursday, July 30, 2020, from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. Eastern Time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julie A. Neer at SEDAR (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

SEDAR address: 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366; email: Julie.neer@safmnc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a multi-step process including: (1) Data Workshop, (2) a series of assessment webinars, and (3) A Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends

which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The assessment webinars produce a report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The product of the Review Workshop is an Assessment Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion during the Assessment Webinar are as follows:

1. Using datasets and initial assessment analysis recommended from the data webinars, panelists will employ assessment models to evaluate stock status, estimate population benchmarks and management criteria, and project future conditions.

2. Participants will recommend the most appropriate methods and configurations for determining stock status and estimating population parameters.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to each workshop.

Note: The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 9, 2020.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XS033]

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Exempted Fishing Permits

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of an application for exempted fishing permit; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the University of Georgia Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant. If granted, the EFP would authorize the applicant to deploy modified black sea bass pots with Acoustic Subsea Buoy Retrieval Systems (ASBRS) in Federal waters off Georgia. The project would examine the potential usefulness of the ASBRSs for use in the black sea bass pot component for the commercial sector of the snapper-grouper fishery while minimizing impacts to protected species.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before August 14, 2020.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the application, identified by “NOAA-NMFS-2020-0090” by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2020-0090, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

• *Mail:* Frank Helies, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying

information (e.g., name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of the application and may be obtained from the Southeast Regional Office website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/black-sea-bass-pot-pilot-project-exempted-fishing-permit-application/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Frank Helies, 727-824-5305; email: frank.helies@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

Currently, vertical end lines and buoys, such as those utilized with black sea bass pots in the South Atlantic, present an entanglement risk to the North Atlantic right whale, a species that is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and that annually migrates and in the winter calves off the coast of Georgia in Federal and state waters. ASBRSs are a type of fishing gear that allows fish traps, including black sea bass pots, buoys, and their retrieval devices to be stored at depth until triggered for retrieval at the surface. These gear systems allow for trap and pot buoys and vertical lines to exist in the water column for minutes instead of hours or days, as they are activated via acoustic release only when fishers are present. As described in the application, the applicant believes that adaptation of ASBRSs or “ropeless” systems for black sea bass pot fishing in the South Atlantic could reduce the risk to these whales and other marine animals that are subject to entanglements from vertical lines and buoys.

If granted, the EFP would exempt limited fishing gear testing activities from certain regulations for the black sea bass pot component for the commercial sector of the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery, specifically gear identification at 50 CFR 622.177(a)(4), the sea bass pot configuration restriction at 50 CFR 622.189(b), and restrictions and requirements for sea bass pot buoy line marking at 50 CFR 622.189(g).

The applicant seeks an EFP to determine the following: If the ASBRS gear will show a greater than 99 percent

successful deployment and retrieval rate; if ASBRS gear significantly increases the time and/or expense for gear retrieval and recovery versus the current fishing method such that it might affect profitability; if ASBRS gear significantly increases time and/or expense for the repacking of gear for redeployment versus the current fishing method such that it might affect profitability; and if bycatch rates for the modified black sea bass pot fishing configuration described below are greater than those for the traditional single pots.

Under the EFP, the applicant would collect data through an ongoing collaborative effort among different ASBRS manufacturers and fishery industry partners. In addition to this EFP request for exemption from Magnuson-Stevens Act regulations, the applicant would consult with NMFS to ensure the EFP would be consistent with North Atlantic right whale conservation measures currently in place through the ESA and Marine Mammal Protection Act. Fishers participating in this project would self-fund the trial and would keep and sell all catch lawfully harvested by black sea bass pots. The proposed testing area has an approximate perimeter of 87 nm and an area of 501 nm in Federal waters 10 to 32 nm off Townsend, Georgia. Testing would occur in Federal waters in depths between 10 and 30 m. The proposed testing area is outside the November 1 through April 30 area prohibition on the use of black sea bass pots. The testing would not occur in special management zones listed in 50 CFR 622.182((a)(l)(i) and (ii)) or the North Atlantic Right Whale Critical Habitat Area.

Black sea bass pots would be fished as singles with a traditional configuration (control pots) during August and September 2020. The control pots would yield data relative to the time used to retrieve and rebait traditional black sea bass pots that are fished per current regulations.

Experimental configurations of black sea bass pots (described below) would be fished without vertical buoy lines on live bottom in the vicinity with the control pots. Using the ASBRS, the applicant would utilize virtual gear marking of the pots (marking of gear deployment location with chartplotters, GPS, and manufacturer-provided software). The applicant would also evaluate the feasibility of use of various virtual gear marking systems and share the results with fishery management partners.

Each pot deployment (ASBRS and control combined) under the EFP would be limited to 35 total pots with up to