South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Federal Fisheries Managers Hold Meetings of Public Interest

Public Scoping and Hearings for Snapper Grouper Species, Dolphin and Wahoo Begin January 22

If you fish in federal waters more than three miles off the South Atlantic coast, chances are there is a meeting scheduled in the coming weeks that is of interest to you. Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council are considering changes to regulations for fishermen targeting species in the snapper grouper management complex. Measures include changes to crew member limits for dual (for-hire and commercial) permitted vessels, bag limit retentions for captain and crew on for-hire vessels, and requirements to harvest and sell blue runner, a species commonly caught in conjunction with Spanish mackerel and a popular baitfish. In addition, the Council is seeking public input on measures proposed for both dolphin and wahoo. A series of public scoping/hearings are being held in January to provide information and solicit public input. In February, the Council will hold a Marine Protected Area (MPA) Workgroup meeting and advisory panel meetings. Please see the list below and mark your calendars. All meetings are open to the public. Additional information, including public scoping/hearing documents, meeting agendas, overviews and briefing book materials are posted on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web site at www.safmc.net as they become available.

January 22 – 30, 2013 – Public Scoping /Hearing Meeting Series

The Council will hold a series of meetings from New Bern, NC to Key Largo, FL to get input on two fishery plan amendments. The Council is soliciting public input as part of the scoping process for Amendment 5 to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan. The amendment would revise management parameters such as Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), sector allocations, and other values for dolphin and wahoo based on updated recreational estimates, modify the dolphin sector allocations, and other measures. Public hearings will be held on Amendment 27 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. The amendment includes measures to modify crew limits for dual federally permitted snapper grouper vessels, bag limit retention for captain and crew on for-hire vessels, alternatives for the harvest of blue runner, and more. Copies of the public scoping/amendment documents are now available from the website or Council office. Meetings will be held from **4:00 PM until 7:00 PM.**

January 22
Mighty Eight Air Force Museum
175 Bourne Avenue
Pooler, GA 31322
912/748-8888

January 23
Hilton Garden Inn
5265 International Boulevard
North Charleston, SC 29418
843/308-9330

January 24
New Bern Riverfront Convention Center
203 South Front Street
New Bern, NC 28563
252/637-1551

January 28
Jacksonville Marriott
4670 Salisbury Road
Jacksonville, FL 32256
904/296-2222

January 29
Doubletree by Hilton Cocoa Beach
2080 North Atlantic Avenue
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931
321/783-9222

January 30
Holiday Inn Key Largo
99701 Overseas Highway
Key Largo, FL 33037
305/451-2121

(Over)

Meetings ***(continued)***

February 4-6, 2013 – Marine Protected Area Workgroup Meeting

The Council will host a Marine Protected Area Expert Workgroup meeting February 4-6 in North Charleston, SC. Experts from across the country will gather to address the use of MPAs to reduce bycatch mortality associated with speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. Both species are highly susceptible to overfishing, and because they are caught in deeper waters, few survive when captured and released. The Council is considering using MPAs, including modification of current deepwater MPAs, to help reduce bycatch mortality. This is the second meeting of the MPA Expert Workgroup. An earlier meeting was held in April 2012 and recommendations provided to the Council. Meeting details and briefing book materials are available from the Council's website. Meeting location: Crowne Plaza Airport Hotel, 4381 Tanger Outlet Boulevard, North Charleston, SC 29418; phone 800/503-5762 or 843/744-4422.

February 6-7– Joint Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and Information and Education Advisory Panel Meeting

The advisory panels will meet jointly from 1:00 PM until 5:00 PM on February 6th to receive updates on development of a regulations application (app) for smart phones, discuss outreach and enforcement issues associated with the use of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), possible use of FAQs for enforcement outreach, and other issues. The two APs will meet separately on the following day. Meeting agendas and briefing book materials will be posted online as they become available. Meeting location: Crowne Plaza Airport Hotel, 4381 Tanger Outlet Boulevard, North Charleston, SC 29418; phone 800/503-5762 or 843/744-4422.

The next meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will be held March 4-9, 2013 at the Sea Palms Resort & Conference Center, 5445 Frederica Road, St. Simons Island, GA 31522. Meeting information will be available from the Council's website at it becomes available.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.