

Summary of Ad Hoc Review Panel for Red Drum Recommendations

**New Orleans Airport Hilton
Kenner, Louisiana
October 9-10, 2007**

Attendees:

Panel Members:

Randall Pausina, LDWF - V. Chair
Harry Blanchet, LDWF
Mike Buchanan, MDMR
Mark Fisher, TPWD
Philip Horn
Jessica McCawley FFWCC
Mark Van Hoose, ADCNR

Council/Staff:

Karen Foote
Tom McIlwain
Harlon Pearce
Charlotte Schiaffo
Wayne Swingle

Others

Nancie Cummings SEFSC, SFD
Dave Donaldson GSMFC
Erick Porche MDMR

The Review Panel adopted the minutes of their July 23-24, 2007 meeting with revisions suggested by the panel chair, **Mike Murphy**. The revised minutes are attached.

Mr. Swingle presented the Council's charge to the Review Panel as follows:

To begin to establish a long-term research program to collect age structure information by cooperative research program (CRP), MARFIN, or similar programs that could use recreational and commercial harvesters to collect samples and associated data.

Dr. Paul Perra (NMFS) joined the meeting by conference call and gave an overview of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (MAFMC) Research Set-Aside quota program. This program established Set-Aside Quotas for each of their fishery stocks which allowed up to 3% of the TAC to be sold for compensating vessel owners for carrying out the research.

Mr. Swingle then discussed the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) program in which for some stocks and some occasions they issued Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) to fishing vessels to carry out research. The catch was then sold to compensate the owner of the vessel.

Mr. Teehan (FFWCC) joined the meeting by conference call, and gave a summary of the proposed FFWCC/NMFS sampling programs for Goliath grouper, in which recreational and commercial harvesters would be selected by lottery. They would be required to turn in their catch, or portions thereof, to FFWCC or NMFS personnel.

Mr. Swingle summarized the MARFIN and Cooperative Research Programs (CRP) administered by NMFS, pointing that both programs limited research or data collection activities funded to short periods. (i.e., 3 years or less). He then presented the following suggestions for the panel:

Alternatives for Implementing Stakeholder Involvement in Long-Term Programs

- a) **Follow the Goliath Grouper model of selecting recipients allowed to catch the fish by lottery. Said recipients must provide carcass of the fish or portions thereof to scientific personnel or agency (FFWC or NMFS).**
- b) **Create annual research quota (or TAC) in terms of numbers of fish that can be: (1) distributed by lottery to charter and/or private vessels in return for use of the vessel in carrying out research and/or (2) distributed by lottery to commercial vessels for sale to compensate for use of vessels for research.**
- c) **Create annual research quotas in pounds that would be sold by auction to the highest bidder and the funds then used to support one or more Cooperative Research Programs (CRP).**

The Review Panel took no action on the proposed alternatives initially, but subsequently suggested they be included in a scoping document for amending the FMP to provide for a long-term research program.

Ms. Cummings then presented the Panel with the following summarization from the minutes of the previous meeting:

The panel discussed the critical need for mechanism that would allow collection of important data needed to reduce the uncertainty in the recent stock assessments (see Porch 2000). Several data deficiencies were identified based on Porch's 2000 assessment and in this Panel's previous discussions (see draft minutes from Ad Hoc review Panel for Red Drum meeting dated 9/12/2007).

Short Term research Needs:

- 1. Abundance estimates needed to calibrate the population model.**
- 2. Age composition of offshore component of stock.**
- 3. Continued tagging studies to refine spatial uncertainty in stock dynamics including movements and size of schools.**
- 4. Discards and size composition of recreational catch and information on release sizes and release mortality**

The Panel noted that some of the research needs could be met through current existing research funding mechanisms. Those programs identified and strongly encouraged to be considered included the following. There were two types identified:

- A. Programs currently being utilized and**
- B. Programs not being used for red drum at present.**

It was recommended to possibly increase data collections from these efforts where possible:

A. Programs currently being used which are ongoing (continuing) efforts that could possibly contribute to long term time series of data:

- 1. Existing state programs**
- 2. FIN- especially as related to collection of size and age information for inshore individuals.**

B. Those research funding mechanisms in place but not being currently used to address red drum research needs which should be considered in the future were the following. It was recognized that these programs should mainly be considered for obtaining short term data needs, as typically these programs considered research efforts planned for 1-3 years in duration.

- 1. NOAA, Cooperative Research Program**
- 2. MARFIN**

The panel also discussed in great detail the need for a framework which would incorporate both the short and long term research needs and collection efforts into the red drum stock assessment process. There was a great deal of discussion about the need to assimilate information on the offshore component of the stock and the difficulty in obtaining this information due to the EEZ closure. There was much discussion related to the use of some similar type research data collecting effort as used in the Mid-Atlantic, for a number of species. Those programs make use of a portion of the TAC which is 'set-aside' for research data collection needs. The Panel noted that the "set-aside" programs in place for the mid-Atlantic stocks would have to be modified to work for red drum since that mechanism was in place for stocks that are not currently closed to fishing in the Atlantic. It was recognized that these type programs ("set-aside" and compensation) provide a direct link to industry and enabled all interested persons to contribute much needed scientific data. The Panel noted however, that the assistance of individuals knowledgeable in determining precise sample levels for research requirements and developing sample designs (i.e., sample sizes) was needed and should be requested by the Council as related the harvest of offshore stock for research purposes. The Panel discussed the need for having a risk/benefit analysis conducted to evaluate potential harvest options and subsequent impact on the stock. The Panel requested that calculations comparable to those recently made by Porch and Barbieri for calculating the effect of potential harvest on Goliath grouper stocks also be made for red drum, and that those calculations be made by knowledgeable persons.

The panel also discussed the importance of conducting risk analyses to examine impacts from a variety of research harvest scenarios.

The Panel then made the following motion:

The Panel recommends that the Council request that the SEFSC and/or a select committee formed from the Finfish SAP conduct a risk/benefit study to evaluate potential impacts of allowing harvesting in the EEZ of red drum for research purposes.

Motion passed unanimously.

In discussing this motion, the panel noted that it wanted this information to increase the precision of the 2009 SEDAR stock assessment.

The Panel, without objection, suggested the following recommendation:

The Panel recommends that the Council have the SEFSC and/or a select committee formed from the Finfish SAP panel determine how many fish would need to be taken in the EEZ to increase the precision of the 2009 SEDAR stock assessment.

The Panel recommends that Council have staff develop a scoping document to amend the Red Drum plan for the purpose of developing a long-term research program.

Motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

**Draft Minutes
Ad Hoc Review Panel for Red Drum**

**July 23-24, 2007
W Hotel
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Panel Members:

Mike Murphy, FFWCC – Chair
Randall Pausina, LDWF - V. Chair
Mike Buchanan, MDMR
Guy Davenport, NMFS
Mark Fisher, TPWD
Harry Blanchet, LDWF
Mark Van Hoose, ADCNR
Elbert Whorton, SSC GMFMC

Council/Staff:

Harlon Pearce, GMFMC Red Drum Subcom
Corky Perret, GMFMC
Charlotte Schiaffo, GMFMC
Wayne Swingle, GMFMC

Others:

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC
Two members of the public

The first meeting of the Ad Hoc Review Panel for Red Drum was called to order by **Mr. Harlon Pearce** at 1:00 p.m. He noted that he had been actively involved in the red drum fishery for many years. He stated that the fishery had needed controls, yet none were given, and this had damaged the fishery, causing its closure for 20 years in federal waters. He noted that when closing a fishery, it was very important to help stakeholders to fish other species that were not overfished, which would ensure financial and stock stability. He added that a stock assessment for red drum was due in 2009, and that this panel needed good information in order to reopen the fishery.

I. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr. Mike Murphy asked if it was preferred that someone from the Northern Gulf States be elected to the chair position.

Mr. Wayne Swingle replied that the state origin of the chair was not addressed in the Council's charge to the panel, so anyone could be nominated.

Mr. Murphy stated that he would volunteer for the position if being from Florida were not an obstacle.

There being no objections or other nominations, **Mr. Murphy** was elected chair.

Mr. Pearce recommended **Mr. Randall Pausina** as vice-chair.

There being no objections or other nominations, **Mr. Pausina** was elected vice-chair.

II. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Murphy suggested discussing what support NMFS would provide for the new panel.

Mr. Swingle noted that SEDAR and SEFSC stock assessments had always been a part of the NMFS process and that **Dr. Clay Porch** of the SEFSC would probably be assigned by the center to oversee these processes.

It was decided by the panel to put this discussion under Section IV- Review of the SEDAR Process. The agenda was then adopted as written.

III. Discussion of Council Charge

The Council set as your charge to assess the availability of the information needed to conduct a SEDAR Assessment for Red Drum, which is scheduled in 2009. In doing this, we ask you to assess the available data, current research and monitoring programs, and whether they provide adequate information for that purpose, or if additional information is needed. If you think additional research on data collection is needed, we ask that you design short-term research that could be completed by the fall of 2009.

Mr. Swingle reviewed the Council's charge of the panel, emphasizing that any new information would need to be reviewed and presented by the 2009 SEDAR stock assessment. He noted that the latest date additional information could be collected and implemented would be in 2008, and added that funding for this research was not assured. He referred the panel to page 10 of the MARFIN proposal, cited below:

Gulf of Mexico Red Drum

Gulf of Mexico red drum are not experiencing overfishing but it is unknown if they are overfished. Most of the data for assessments comes from studies conducted by NMFS and state fishery management agencies. Specific research needs for red drum include:

1. Estimates of the absolute abundance of red drum from the Gulf of Mexico.
2. Age composition of adults in offshore waters.
3. Standardized stock assessment methodology that can accept state specific data within the context of a Gulf-wide stock assessment.

He added that if any suggestions did not fall into one of these three proposed categories, the panel needed to review it jointly so its feasibility could be assessed.

Mr. Murphy posited that the SEDAR study in 2009 might be somewhat hampered by information it received in 2008, because that might not be enough time for a thorough review.

Mr. Swingle replied that some MRFSS data might not be available in 2008.

Mr. Murphy added that if there were large gaps in the 2008 information, 2007 information might have to be used, and he wanted it made clear to the Council that this might be the case.

Mr. Swingle noted that the last assessment was done by **Dr. Porch** in 2001, and that a large portion of the assessment results submitted had uncertainties.

Mr. Davenport later summarized the uncertainty **Dr. Porch** referred to in his report. He noted that these levels of uncertainty resulted in the SAP's recommendation for the zero ABC level (See Section V).

Mr. Swingle then referred to the conclusions in the report of the 6th Red Drum Stock Assessment Panel (SAP) meeting that red drum was overfished and that the SAP recommendation had been to keep the acceptable biological catch (ABC) at zero in federal waters. He concurred that the 2007 data would probably be the last full year for which information could be assessed for the 2009 review.

Mr. Perret asked what the primary areas were for the assessments done in the 1980's.

Mr. Swingle replied that the NMFS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) completed in the early 80's concluded that red drum was an overfished stock, and should be pursued only as a bycatch industry. He noted that the commercial and recreational sectors were limited to a bycatch allocation of 300,000lbs each in the primary area of the Gulf off Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He noted that no harvest was allowed in the secondary areas off the coasts of Florida and Texas because growth overfishing was occurring off those areas. The program had depended on aerial surveys to locate stock complexes. He added that a tagging program with purse seines had been initiated to estimate the stock. That resulted in a statistically valid estimate of offshore standing stock which was multiplied by a 14 lb average size to determined total biomass weight. He explained that duplication of the tag/recapture data program was tried in 1996, based on funding that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) had obtained, from Congress. He added that the results were vastly different from the 1986 assessment, thus no statistically valid standing stock estimate was possible, and the stock TAC was again set at zero.

IV. SEDAR Process

Mr. Swingle reviewed the SEDAR portion of the Council SOPPs provided as a Panel Handout.

Mr. Murphy commented that the SEDAR process seemed very involved, and that perhaps a statistical catch and age type of analyses could be used to determine the abundance of red drum. He questioned what type of data could be expected from the states in new assessments.

Dr. Whorton added that the adequacy of the models and data used in the process needed to be questioned in determining if there was enough data to do a SEDAR assessment of

red drum. He suggested if not, then the information had to be accumulated; otherwise, the SSC would not be able to recommend the actions were based on the best available science. He added that it appeared there was little valid abundance data, and the panel would need to assess this in order to recommend correct actions.

Mr. Swingle noted that getting money for collection of such data for use in the models might not be in the Council's purview, and that the cost might run ½ million dollars or more.

Dr. Whorton reiterated that without such financial support, the collection of the data might not be feasible.

Mr. Pearce noted that a similar quandary was faced by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) concerning dependent data. He pointed out that their Council process already had a protocol in place, and perhaps the Gulf Council could pattern their information needs on the North Pacific's assessment process. He indicated that the NPFMC set aside part of their stocks TAC for research and data collection, with that portion of TAC being sold to pay fishermen for collection of the data or sampling the stocks.

V. State Data

Mr. Murphy commented that it was difficult to interpret the data in **Dr. Porph's** report without him being at the meeting to explain his research.

Mr. Swingle explained that **Dr. Porph** had a scheduling conflict with the current meeting, but should be able to attend subsequent ones.

Mr. Blanchet noted that **Dr. Porph's** last assessment, the 2.1 version, had modifications and data added from previous analyses that addressed questions from various panels. He noted that several people on these panels had examined the results of the models and questioned how the models interacted with their states findings.

Mr. Murphy stated that Florida was collecting small samples of adults from purse seine fisheries, around 100-200 each year. He added that he was not sure if this was representative of the states for the entire Gulf, or just for Florida. He felt that the data collection process in the Gulf was not as haphazard as that in the Atlantic, and while there were gaps in the data from the Gulf, he was more comfortable with the result.

Mr. Donaldson noted that the Fisheries Initiative Network (FIN) program model was set up to be representative and that a model for red drum had been set up recently.

Mr. Blanchet noted that some states had a 3-mile limit and others a 9-mile limit, which could cause variations in data.

Mr. Murphy replied that the unique ecological situation of each state contributed to the variety of data, and that all the data had to be assessed to get adequate and consistent data.

Mr. Blanchet concurred that cooperation between states and federal jurisdictions, while at times difficult, would be beneficial and a plan to incorporate data from all areas should be designed. He added that fishery dependent samples to characterize age-structure of stock must be looked at very carefully, as it could change data results.

Mr. Murphy asked if Texas caught adult red drum.

Dr. Fisher replied that usually only smaller fish were caught in Texas.

Mr. Van Hoose noted that there were MRFSS surveys done in his area, and that it was not uncommon for red drum to be caught in his state (AL).

Mr. Murphy emphasized the need for a fishery independent survey.

Mr. Pausina commented that with all the various agencies involved, chances were slim that any new research could be completed by 2009 in time for the SEDAR assessment.

Mr. Swingle replied that the date at least gave time to give the panel's recommendations to the Council and the SEDAR Steering Committee on proceeding with a SEDAR assessment.

Mr. Murphy stated that enormous financial backing would be needed for the suggested research programs. He added that duplicating the tag/recapture program would be a good idea, but that there might not be enough time to implement such a data collection program.

Mr. Swingle concurred, and added that there might not be enough vessels available for use in such a program.

Mr. Pearce suggested that the fishery dependent process needed to be reviewed, and that part of the process was how the fishery would be controlled. He stated that perpetual stock assessments needed to be put in motion.

Mr. Murphy posited that such assessments would be useful in age-competitive monitoring. He added however, that such monitoring could not be fishery dependent because an enormous amount of fish would have to be tagged.

Mr. Blanchet agreed that age-competitive assessments would be useful and provide important information, but that they had to be done right.

