SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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SEDAR (TBD)
Atlantic Spanish Mackerel
Terms of Reference

Final: 3/6/26

1. Update the SEDAR 78 Atlantic Spanish Mackerel assessment model with data using a terminal year of the 2026-2027 fishing year. Data providers may include preliminary or partial data for more recent years that could be used in the stock assessment model or projection analyses, with inclusion in the stock assessment model determined by the lead analyst based on the quantity and quality of the most recent data.
2. Incorporate the latest BAM model configurations and data calculation methods, detailing the changes made between the SEDAR 78 operational assessment model and the proposed assessment model. Provide a model run using the SEDAR 78 assessment configuration, including recent years' data (following NMFS Procedure 01-101-11).
3. Consider new and updated information on life history, natural mortality, discard mortality, the stock-recruit relationship, commercial and recreational landings and discards. Document any changes or corrections made and provide updated input data tables.
    a. Provide commercial, recreational, and combined landings and discards in pounds and numbers.
    b. Consider MRIP recommended approaches for recreational catch data to reduce PSEs below 50%. Investigate potential outliers for wave-specific estimates of catch throughout the time series and consider statistically valid methods for modifying the data to limit potential outlier influence on stock assessment model estimates.
    c. Consider the newest and best methods for estimating natural mortality. Consider estimation of natural mortality within the stock assessment model.
4. Evaluate and document the following specific changes in input data or deviations from the previous assessment model:
    a. Provide sensitivity analyses as needed to compare assessment results between new values in this assessment and values from the SEDAR 78 stock assessment model.
    b. Incorporate fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data streams north of Cape Hatteras, NC. Investigate the use of fishery-independent data to develop a relative abundance index for the coastwide stock.
    c. Apply the best method to estimate commercial discards, considering observer program and commercial discard logbook information.
    d. Use data from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center observer program to expand bycatch observations in the gillnet fishery.

5. Update model parameter estimates and their variances, model uncertainties, estimates of stock status and management benchmarks, and provide the probability of overfishing occurring at specified future harvest and exploitation levels.
    a. Explore the use of recent average recruitment with recruitment deviates instead of model-derived recruitment from the stock-recruit relationship. Determine an appropriate MSY proxy and timeseries for average recruitment.
    b. Determine the best estimate to use as a management benchmark (e.g., direct estimate of MSY or a proxy). Include appropriate characterization of the uncertainty for the chosen management benchmark. If a proxy is chosen:
        i. Include sufficient justification for the decision to use a proxy.
        ii. Provide range of plausible proxy values and their associated uncertainties.
        iii. Provide run using the default proxy value or direct estimate of MSY (if available) as specified in the FMP.
    c. Provide F, yield, discards, biomass, SSB, and recruitment levels and associated uncertainty levels that correspond to MSY or its chosen proxy.

6. Compute short-term and long-term population projections as necessary to provide OFL estimates and ABC advice. Provide additional population projections as necessary to address overfishing or overfished stock conditions (e.g., rebuilding). Address as many of the recommendations as possible of the South Atlantic SSC Catch Level Projections workgroup outlined on page 16 of the final workgroup report found here.

7. Convene a virtual data workshop or data webinar that includes NEFSC, Mid-Atlantic state representatives, industry representatives, and other technical experts to discuss a comprehensive inclusion of relevant data sources north of Cape Hatteras.

8. Convene an Assessment Technical Team, including SSC and industry representatives and outside technical experts, to meet via webinar or in person as needed to review model development and provide guidance.

9. Schedule a pre-decisional briefing (i.e., SSC “check-in”) to review model development and discuss assessment uncertainties.

10. Develop a stock assessment report to address these TORs and fully document the input data, methods, and results. Discuss assessment outcomes, primary uncertainties, and any problems encountered during the assessment process.