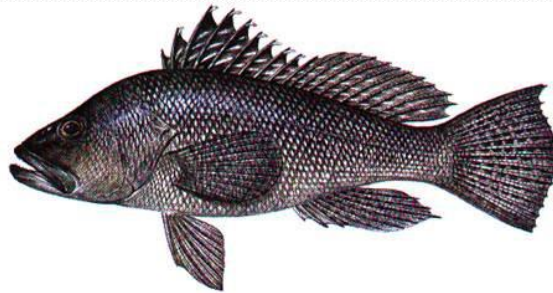




South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16

Changes to the
Seasonal Closure for the Black Sea Bass Pot
Sector



Kari MacLauchlin

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- 13 voting members representing the four South Atlantic states and NMFS
- Develops Fishery Management Plans for federally managed stocks
- Management area is the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from 3 to 200 miles off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and east Florida through Key West
- Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16 – modifications to the seasonal prohibition on black sea bass (BSB) pots in the South Atlantic; gear specifications for black sea bass pots



Why is the SAFMC Considering Action?

- Currently there is a Nov 1-Apr 30 closure for BSB pots
- Closure was included in a previous amendment to minimize delay in implementing the higher BSB annual catch limit (ACL)
- Higher ACL → longer fishing season → overlap with large whale migration and right whale calving in the South Atlantic



Why is the SAFMC Considering Action?

- **Can the timing and/or area of the closure be modified to allow some BSB pot fishing but minimize risk of interaction with right whales and calves?**
- **Additional gear specifications to reduce risk of entanglement, and identify gear from entanglements?**



Black Sea Bass Commercial Pots

- 55-70% of commercial BSB landings
- BSB Pot Endorsement to cap participation—
 - 31 endorsements
 - implemented July 2012)
- Endorsement holders:
 - 16 in North Carolina
 - 8 in South Carolina
 - 7 in Florida



Black Sea Bass Commercial Pots

- Restrictions on pots
 - 35-pot limit
 - must bring pots in every day
- 1000-lb gutted weight daily trip limit
- ALWTRP requirements
- No documented serious injury or mortality for right whales attributed to South Atlantic BSB pots



Considerations for Modifications to the BSB Pot Closure:

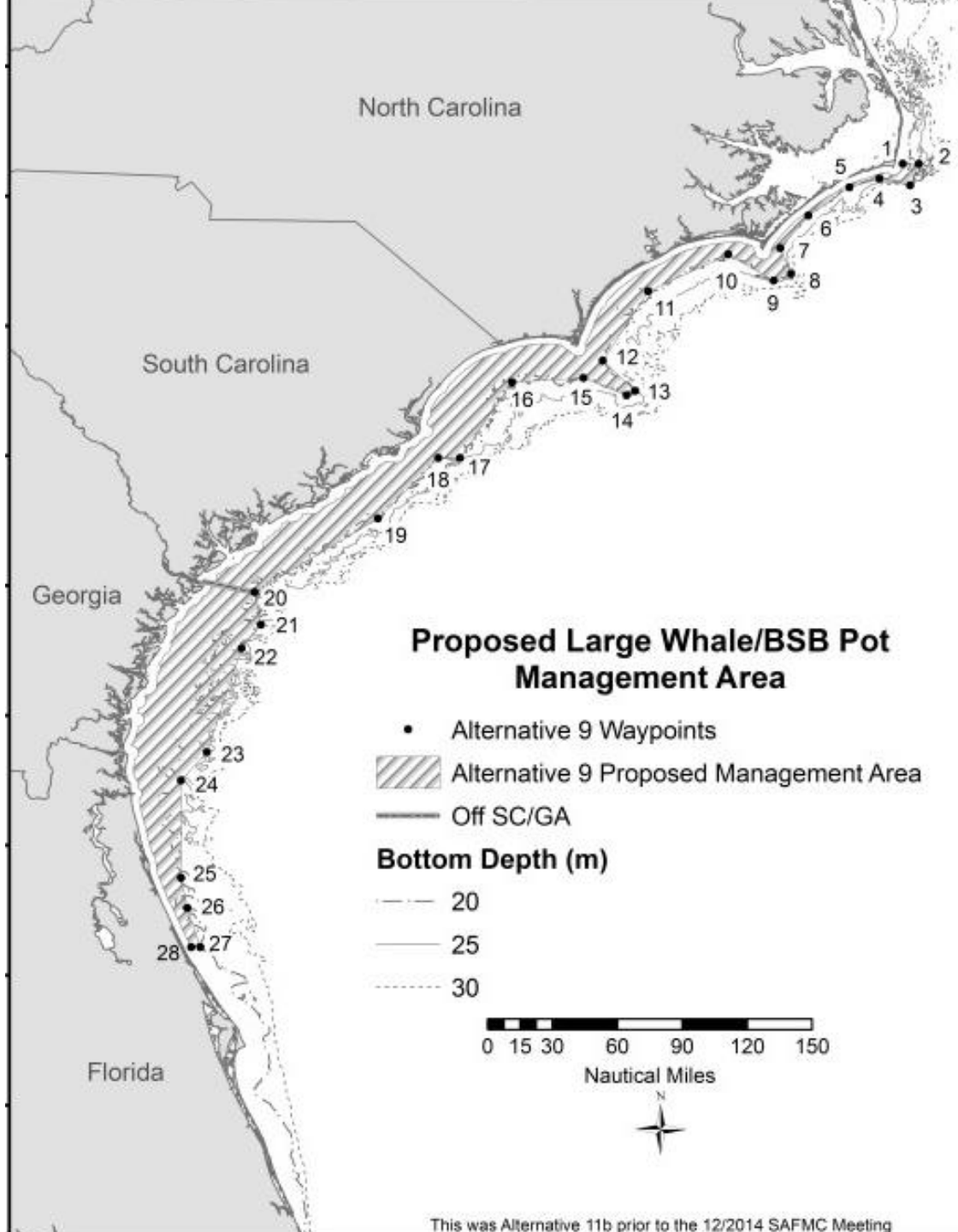
- NARW Critical Habitat (current)
- Calving grounds
- Sightings- depths, distance from shore, location, etc
- Current management areas used in ALWTRP
- Co-occurrence models
- Migration times (for NC/SC)



Current Preferred Alternative

Between Nov 1- Apr 15, no BSB pots in the area shown in the figure.

This area likely represents NARW calving habitat (based on model outputs, SST, bathymetry) and includes depths <20m for NC/SC waters



SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1. Keep closure— No pots in S Atlantic Nov 1- Apr 30.

Alternative 2. No pots in NARW critical habitat Nov 1- Apr 30.

Alternative 3. No pots in right whale calving area Nov 1- Apr 30.

Alternative 4. No pots ≤25m depth GA/FL + ≤ 30m depth NC/SC Nov 1- Apr 30.

Alternative 5. No pots in GA/FL areas based on calving area and sightings and no pots within SC/NC EEZ to 30 nm Nov 1- Apr 30.

Alternative 6. No pots in SC/GA/FL area of the ALWTRP Southeast Seasonal Gillnet Restricted Area + ≤ 30m depth in NC Nov 1- Apr 30

Alternative 7. No pots in NARW critical habitat in GA/FL + < 25m depth NC/SC

Subalternative 7a: Nov 1- Dec 15 and Mar 15- Apr 30.

Subalternative 7b: Nov 15- Apr 15 for GA/FL; Nov 1- Dec 15 and Mar 15- Apr 30 for NC/SC

Subalternative 7c: Nov 15- Apr 15 for GA/FL; Feb 15- Apr 30 for NC/SC



SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONTINUED

Alternative 8. No pots in calving area in GA/FL + < 25m depth NC/SC

Sub-alternative 8a: Nov 1- Apr 15

Sub-alternative 8b: Nov 15- Apr 15 for GA/FL; Nov 1- Dec 15 and Feb 15- Apr 30 for NC/SC

Alternative 9 (Preferred). No pots in calving area in GA/FL + <20m depth NC/SC

Sub-alternative 9a (Preferred) : Nov 1- Apr 15

Sub-alternative 9b: Nov 15- Apr 15 for GA/FL; Nov 1- Dec 15 and Feb 15- Apr 30 for NC/SC

Alternative 10. No pots in calving area in GA/FL Nov 15-Apr 15 + no pots in <20m depth NC/SC Nov 1- Dec 15 and <25m depth NC/SC Feb 15- Apr 30



Alternatives for Enhanced Gear Specifications

Current ALWTRP Requirements:

- Breaking strength of weak links and buoy lines
 - Weak link in buoy lines ≤ 600 lbs nearshore and ≤ 1500 lbs offshore
 - In Southeast Restricted Area north, breaking strength of buoy lines ≤ 2200 lbs and weak links ≤ 600 lbs Nov 15-Apr 15
- Gear marking requirements – three 12-inch markings
 - Green/orange SE Restricted Area North
 - Black- Offshore Trap/Pot
 - Orange- Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot



Alternatives for Enhanced Gear Specifications

- Extend ALWTRP for breaking strength for buoy lines through NC waters (≤ 2200 lbs)
- Lower breaking strength of weak links (≤ 400 lbs)
- Lower breaking strength of buoy lines (≤ 1200 lbs)
- Specify maximum line diameter
- Additional color marking on lines to differentiate South Atlantic BSB pots from other pot/trap fisheries
- Options for year-round or Nov 1- Apr 30



Timeline

January 2014 – Public scoping



Jan 2014- Mar 2015 – Council review, Advisory Panel and Scientific Advisors input



March 2015 – Council selected Preferred Alternative



June 2015 – Council reviews and approves for public hearings



August 2015 – Public hearings



September 2015 – Council reviews public comments; Draft Biological Opinion for the Snapper Grouper Fishery available for review



December 2015 – Council approves for formal review by Secretary of Commerce



Summer 2016 – Implementation



Need more Information?

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Regulatory Amendment 16 Webpage:

<http://safmc.net/resource-library/snapper-grouper-regulatory-amendment-16>

