

March 2018



Food and Agriculture
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**2nd MEETING OF THE CFMC/WECAFC/OSPESCA/CRFM WORKING GROUP ON
FISH SPAWNING AGGREGATIONS**

Miami, Florida, USA, 27-29 March, 2018



Attendees: Front row left to right: Alejandro Acosta, Ana Salceda, Ruth Gomez, Nicanor Requena, Araceli Acevedo Yvonne Sadovy, Diana Martino; Standing left to right: John Claydon, Alfonso Aguilar-Perera, Lionel Reynal, Carlos Farchette, Michelle Schärer, Stephanía Bolden, Chelsey Young, Jim Loscasio, Georgina Bustamante, Bradley Johnson, Will Heyman, Shinichi Kobara, Maren Headley, Vinicius Giglio, Tyler Loughgran, Celestine Moe, Chris Malanowski, Don DeMaria, Mauro Gongora, Krista Sherman, Orian Tzadik, Miguel Rolon, Chris Koenig, James Azueta, Maria de los Angeles Irizarry. Missing: Gladys Martinez, Áthila Bertoncini, Ken Lindeman, and Laurent Cherubin. Photo by Áthila Bertoncini

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Recommendations

Members of the WECAFC, belonging to the Spawning Aggregation Working Group (SAWG), reviewed and reaffirmed support for the Declaration of Miami (2013) and adopted the following recommendations during the 2018 meeting:

1. Members of WECAFC identify and determine the status of all known and exploited Fish Spawning Aggregation (FSA) sites of groupers and snappers and inform the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) of any changes in these areas.
2. WECAFC Secretariat and Members invest resources to engage fishers more directly in FSA conservation and management including SAWG meeting participation.
3. Members of WECAFC call for international action to protect FSAs, including strengthening enforcement of closed seasons, closed areas, and sales bans during the closed season.
4. Members of WECAFC agree upon and adopt a regional seasonal closure for all commercial and recreational fishing of Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), at least for the period 1 December – 31 March.
5. Members of WECAFC not permit any export of Nassau grouper or its products (e.g. roe, fillets) for the duration of the regional seasonal closure.
6. WECAFC Secretariat support an assessment to ascertain the economic value of spawning aggregations and socio-economic impacts of the proposed management measures to inform future management decision-making.
7. WECAFC, CFMC, and as appropriate CRFM, OSPESCA, and CEP-SPAW support the development of a regional Fisheries Management Plan (for national adoption throughout the region) for species forming FSAs (targeting groupers and snappers), in accordance with the best available scientific evidence to be presented to WECAFC Secretariat in final form in 2020.
8. Members develop and adopt national fisheries management and conservation plans for grouper and snapper species that aggregate to spawn.
9. The WECAFC Secretariat will support a regional outreach and communication strategy on conservation and management of FSAs.
10. The WECAFC Secretariat, together with the Members of WECAFC, will seek to mobilize resources to assist the Members in the implementation of research, monitoring, enforcement, and management for FSAs.
11. Members of WECAFC take note that boundaries of the identified spawning areas, spawning seasons and conditions to fish therein, as referred to in previous paragraphs, may change on the basis of the SAWG and SAG advice coming from additional knowledge and due to natural variation over time; hence buffer areas and timing need to be considered for management planning.
12. Members of WECAFC prioritize FSAs areas for monitoring, conservation, and management based on status and institutional capacity for management in each member country.
13. Members of WECAFC conduct FSA assessments and stakeholder consultations, along with local fishers who are presently fishing those aggregations, in part to gather their support and in part to determine suitable economic alternatives to fishers who exploit FSAs.
14. WECAFC Secretariat takes action to assist the country members in the Wider Caribbean Region to implement the above-listed recommendations.
15. The SAWG will create an email list on the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) network to share information regarding FSAs and will host meetings at the GCFI Conference.
16. The SAWG meeting participants will share updates regularly on the GCFI email list, via annual meetings of the SAWG at the GCFI conference, and bi-annually to inform the WECAFC Secretariat of the progress on and measures taken to adhere to the above paragraphs.

WECAFC-SAWG Work Plan 2018-2020

1. Complete and publish [FAO/WECAFC/CFMC/OSPESCA/CRFM](#) meeting report (C. Moe, W. Heyman, C. Young, S. Bolden, and M. Rolon)
2. Develop a draft Regional Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for FSA-forming species (Y. Sadovy, J. Azueta, M. Prada and K. Lindeman with support from M. Rolon and CFMC), including:
 - a. Develop FMP for Nassau grouper and mutton snapper with modular framework
 - b. Share draft and framework at the WECAFC biannual meeting in January 2019 and depending on feedback, full final FMP to be completed in 2020
 - c. Criteria for species and site selection
 - d. Protocol to manage and conserve known FSA sites
 - e. Best governance and law enforcement practices including outreach & education
 - f. Sustainable financing methods to implement FMP
 - g. Research priorities plan, including larval and adult connectivity research
 - h. Importance of no-take marine reserves to protect FSAs in the region
 - i. Include information on international commercial trade of aggregating fish
3. Develop and produce a regional protocol to characterize and monitor FSAs (W. Heyman; funding dependent)
 - a. Produce a cooperative manual of standardized survey methods and data sheets to characterize poorly documented FSA sites and to monitor known sites over time.
4. Present results of 2nd SAWG meeting at UN Environment [CEP-SPAW](#) meeting 2018 (G. Bustamante & C. Young)
 - a. Present proposed work plan of the SAWG at the next Scientific and Technical Advisory Group Meeting to raise awareness and garner support
 - b. Seek SPAW funding support for relevant SAWG projects
5. Conduct a regional and national status and needs assessment of FSA sites in the WECAFC region (W. Heyman, C. Young, S. Bolden, J. Azueta, R. Claro and others as appropriate; funding dependent)
 - a. Share FSA survey tools widely via WECAFC (R. Gomez)
 - b. Site status report (developed through site management survey (W. Heyman)
 - c. Legal framework and management and enforcement capacity (from Management Survey (C. Young, S. Bolden and G. Martinez)
 - d. Criteria for species and site selection for future characterization, monitoring and protection at the national level and regional levels
6. Share technical capacity to identify FSAs in regions where FSAs have not been documented, such as the Southern and Eastern Caribbean, Central and South America (L. Reynal; funding dependent)
7. Improve outreach and education efforts regarding the urgent need to conserve FSAs
 - a. Develop communications strategy including messaging and branding to fishers, consumers, decision makers and youngsters (A. Salceda, funding dependent)
 - b. Collect, curate, and make available existing FSA awareness materials for use in outreach campaigns (A. Salceda, funding dependent)
 - c. Produce two short videos about the urgency to protect FSAs. To screen at GCFI, other international meetings, and post online. (A. Salceda, with support from CFMC)

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8. Mobilize resources from bilateral and international agencies to assist Members of WECAFC in implementing their stated commitments to the FSA assessment, monitoring, and management. (WECAFC Secretariat and Members).
 - a. SAWG members will seek financial support from WECAFC, and other sources, to train fishers, managers and young researchers in FSA monitoring and conservation.
 - b. Encourage Members of WECAFC to realize the critical importance of conserving FSAs and enforce existing regulations that prohibit removal of fish from FSAs.
 9. Maintain the SAWG network intersessional communications by regularly posting FSA news and events to the [GCFI](#) email list, [CAMPAM](#) and other lists & social media outlets (SAWG members)
 - a. Create GCFI email list to share information among members (A. Acosta, completed)
 - b. Hold SAWG meetings at annual GCFI conferences (A. Acosta, in progress)
 - c. The SAWG will report on progress to WECAFC Secretariat bi-annually