

**Standing, Shrimp, Socioeconomic, and Reef Fish SSC  
Meeting Summary  
Tampa, Florida  
March 26-27, 2018**

The meeting of the Standing, Shrimp, Socioeconomic, and Reef Fish SSC was convened at 1:00 pm on March 26, 2018. The agenda was approved with the addition of a review of a report by Jakob Tetzlaff under Other Business and moving the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ review to the first item of business. The summary minutes of the January 9-10, 2018 Standing, Coral, Socioeconomic and Reef fish SSC meeting and the March 27-29, 2017 Standing, Shrimp, Reef Fish, and Socioeconomic SSC meeting were approved as written.

Luiz Barbieri agreed to serve as the SSC representative at the April 16-20, 2018 Council meeting in Gulfport, Mississippi.

***Standing and Socioeconomic SSC Session***

**Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program 5-Year Review**

Staff gave a detailed presentation on the 5-year review of the grouper-tilefish individual fishing quota (GT-IFQ) program and noted that the studies and surveys included in the review were presented during previous SSC meetings. Issues covered during the presentation included goals and objectives of the GT-IFQ program, data collection, participation changes, share and allocation transfers and prices, fishing capacity and technical efficiency, and safety-at sea.

Committee members suggested that while revising the objectives of the program and preparing for the next review, the Council consider that most of the overcapacity reduction has likely already taken place. Committee members inquired about the species targeted by those who left the IFQ program. Staff indicated that although more analysis is needed, it appears that the main target species for former participants are non-IFQ species such as vermilion snapper.

Committee members indicated that some survey responses may be impacted by the inability of respondents to dissociate the red snapper IFQ program from the GT-IFQ program. Committee members therefore recommended that survey responses should be evaluated with caution. Committee members noted that a wealth of information resides within the members of the IFQ Advisory Panel and that it is advisable to take advantage of it. Staff noted that the next step is to convene the Ad Hoc IFQ AP and gather its recommendations for the Council. Committee members discussed the conclusions of the review and made the following motion:

**Based on data, descriptive analyses, and studies described in the review, we move to accept the report as a clear and concise summary of the grouper/tilefish IFQ program. We note that expected outcomes following the implementation of the IFQ are being achieved in the fishery and the grouper/tilefish IFQ program is meeting its objectives. Motion approved with no objection.**

Committee members discussed the significant overlap between the red snapper and GT-IFQ programs and made the following motion:

**The SSC recommends that in the future, the red snapper IFQ and grouper/tilefish IFQ programs be considered to be evaluated together rather than separately.  
Motion carried with no objection.**

### *Standing, Socioeconomic, and Shrimp SSC Session*

#### **Stock Status Review**

Dr. Rick Hart presented the SSC with the stock status reports for brown, pink, and white shrimp. None of the stocks are overfished nor are they undergoing overfishing. These stocks are primarily environmentally driven. The Committee had some concerns about the relative decrease in CPUE and the overall increase in effort that has been occurring (e.g. a nearly tripling of effort in the past 5 years for white shrimp). Dr. Hart notified the Committee that he would verify the information and reevaluate the models if necessary. Dr. Hart also noted that he will be incorporating more environmental information into the stock assessment models such as marsh edge, freshwater inflows, salinity, temperature, et cetera.

#### **Update on the Economic Analysis Requested by Council**

Staff reviewed the status of the economic analysis that was requested by the Council and the Science Center's response. The Committee questioned the impetus for the request. Staff clarified that the Shrimp Advisory Panel would like an updated analysis, as the last one conducted was over ten years old. The state of the fishery has dramatically changed (e.g. decrease in permits, permit moratorium). Thus, the Shrimp AP would like to see if there was still an economic benefit to the Texas closure and if it would be beneficial to the fishery to potentially extend closures to other areas in the Gulf. It was clarified by Dr. Jim Nance that these analyses would extend from Texas to Alabama, not just Texas and Louisiana.

### *Standing and Reef Fish SSC Session*

#### **5-Year Review on Inclusion/Exclusion of Species and Species Groupings in Fishery Management Plans**

Staff noted that in 2011 the Council requested that there be a review on the inclusion/exclusion of species and species groupings in fishery management plans every five years. This is the first such review. Staff reviewed the history of all species that had been included in Council FMPs, including species which have been subsequently removed. In several FMPs the Council currently has a number of species that have little to no information suitable for active management. It is unclear what criteria the Council wishes to use when considering which species to include in (or remove from) FMPs, but a standardized process is needed. Committee members recommended that the Council draft a set of criteria for species inclusion/exclusion, including a procedure with indicators to signal when species

(especially those unlikely to have formal stock assessments) may have a problem, and establish some method of deciding when to take a more detailed look at those species

Some Committee members suggested that ecosystem component species such as menhaden be considered. It was pointed out that menhaden are managed under the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and a stock assessment was planned for later this year. The Council has not previously used the ecosystem component species designation because of vagueness of the criteria, but those criteria may have changed with recent revisions to the National Standard guidelines.

### **Further Development of a Stock Assessment Prioritization Spreadsheet**

Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay reviewed the stock prioritization spreadsheet that is currently under development. The spreadsheet is used to develop scores for each of 12 prioritization factors, which are then weighted and ranked in consultation with managers. The resulting ranks are used as objective guidance in selecting assessments for upcoming cycle. Under the current spreadsheet inputs, the top ranked stocks are red snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish. These were likely the most highly ranked because of their overfished status (at the time the spreadsheet was last updated). Dr. Cass-Calay noted that she had difficulty in determining how to score the penaeid shrimps. Committee members suggested that penaeid shrimps be excluded from the spreadsheet. One change that needs to be made in the spreadsheet is to revise the MSST definition for some stocks in light of recent Council actions.

One of the inputs is the stock's value. National guidance says to use the price per pound as the value ranking, but the South Atlantic SSC decided instead to use the average landings in weight over the last 5 years. The Committee was divided over which way to rank value. Average landings incorporate both commercial and recreational landings, but price per pound only accounts for commercial landings. For this reason some Committee members preferred to use landings. However, other Committee members suggested that the value of the recreational catch could vary not only between species, but even within the same species. For this reason, other Committee members felt that price per pound was a more stable representation of value. Whichever is used, the Committee agreed that if the landings were based on a 5-year average, the price per pound should also be a 5-year average.

Another input factor is the importance of unexpected changes in stock indicators. These were ranked by Council staff from 0 to 5 for each stock, but some Committee members had concerns about how they were ranked.

Subsistence fishing was an input factor in the spreadsheet, but given that Council-managed stocks are offshore, it was felt that this was not a relevant factor. However, the sliders used to set the ranking would only go down to a value of 1 for some stocks, and zero for others. This appears to be a problem with the spreadsheet that can be corrected.

One Committee member asked if the spreadsheet took into account regional differences in demand. It does not currently do so, but it might be a future consideration.

In general, Committee members felt that the spreadsheet was very complicated. One suggestion was made to document the final rankings in a plain language summary. Another question was how often the spreadsheet should be updated. Dr. Cass-Calay noted that the National guidance suggested it be updated annually, but it would more likely be used to make assessment priorities for three years at a time.

The Science Center will continue to work on the spreadsheet and will bring a revised version to a subsequent SSC meeting.

### **Update on MRIP Fishing Effort Survey and Status of Certification of State Data Collection Programs**

John Foster and Kelly Denit of NMFS/HQ presented an update on the MRIP and the transition from a coastal household telephone survey (CHTS) to a mail-based fishing effort survey (FES). The CHTS was a landline random-digit-dial telephone survey that suffered from poor coverage, declining response rates, inaccurate reporting of fishing activity, and it was inefficient for reaching anglers. This survey was discontinued on December 31, 2017. The FES uses USPS records and state-based license and registration information. It reaches more anglers, has an improved questionnaire, and has 3 times the response rate. The FES was implemented over three years to provide side-by-side benchmarking with the CHTS so that the historical catch estimates could be calibrated into estimates compatible with new survey estimates. FES estimates are several times higher than CHTS estimates, but this does not necessarily mean that overfishing is occurring. Improvements to the access point angler intercept survey (APAIS) have also been made and calibrated with the old methods. Using these new methods, re-calculation of private, charter, and shore mode recreational catches will be completed by July 1, 2018 and available for stock assessments.

Mr. Foster also gave an overview on the status of NMFS certification of state data collection programs.

- The LA Creel program was certified on December 29, 2017, and a calibration with MRIP is expected to be completed shortly.
- The Mississippi Tails n' Scales certification process is in the final stages of completion. The data collection program has been reviewed by independent reviewers, and Mississippi is in the process of responding to the reviewer's comments.
- The Alabama Snapper Check certification process is also in the final stages of completion. The data collection program has been reviewed by independent reviewers, and Mississippi is in the process of responding to the reviewer's comments.
- Florida's supplemental reef fish survey was peer reviewed at a workshop in February. Reviewers' comments are expected within the next few weeks.
- Texas has never participated in MRIP, and its creel survey program has not been evaluated.

### **Habitat Mapping and Characterization on the West Florida Shelf**

Dr. Steve Murawski, a professor at the University of South Florida, gave a presentation on habitat mapping and characterization on the west Florida shelf. He stated that initial priorities for mapping habitats were informed by fishery-dependent vessel monitoring system (VMS) location information. His presentation outlined the project progress to date, including tools and techniques

for bathymetric mapping (multi-beam), habitat characterization and fish and sea turtle density estimates using a towed video system known as C-BASS (Camera-Based Assessment Survey System) as well as water column acoustic density estimates using scientific echo sounders (EK-60/80). The goal of the project is to obtain and convert all known high-resolution multi-beam data as well as collect additional data, and synthesize it into useful habitat maps that will be useful to fishery and environmental managers (<http://www.marine.usf.edu/scamp/>).

There were several questions asked regarding the methods used to review habitat video and the state of the art computer software that reduced the need to have people review all the videos of the habitats for associated species identification. Dr. Murawski asked if the SSC had any suggestions for prioritization of areas to be mapped in 2018 and 2019 under this project, relative to the Gulf Council's priorities for habitat protection, HAPCs and fishery management. It was suggested that he work with Council staff to discuss the current efforts in Coral Amendment 9 that explore several HAPCs in deep-water areas of the Gulf of Mexico. Council staff plan to meet with him in the coming weeks.

### **Tentative 2018 SSC Meeting Dates**

Staff noted that the tentative dates for the next SSC meeting are Tuesday-Thursday, May 29-31, which would mean starting the day after Memorial Day. In order to avoid conflicts with holiday weekend plans, this meeting will be moved back a day, changing the dates of the meeting to Wednesday-Friday, May 30-June 1. If it's a 2-day meeting, it will meet on Thursday and Friday. The meeting cannot be moved to the following week because there is a cobia stock ID workshop scheduled that week.

### **Other Business – Review of Report by Jake Tetzlaff**

Bob Gill noted that a report prepared by Jakob Tetzlaff (QC Consulting) evaluated alternative assumptions used for projections of Gulf of Mexico red snapper. The report evaluated changes in assumptions about selectivity and recreational discard mortality and found that projections were sensitive to those assumptions. Jeff Isely reported that the next red snapper assessment (SEDAR 52) is currently underway but has not reached the point of making projections. On behalf of the SSC, Luiz Barbieri requested that changes to these assumptions be evaluated as sensitivity runs in SEDAR 52.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

**SSC Members Present****Standing SSC**

Luiz Barbieri, Chair  
Harry Blanchet<sup>2</sup>  
Mary Christman  
Bob Gill  
David Griffith  
Jack Isaacs  
Jeff Isely  
Walter Keithly  
Kai Lorenzen<sup>1,2</sup>  
Joe Powers<sup>1,2</sup>  
Ken Roberts  
Steven Scyphers<sup>1,2</sup>  
Jim Tolan  
Lee Anderson<sup>2</sup>

**Shrimp SSC**

Richard Burris<sup>1</sup>  
Jeffrey Marx<sup>1</sup>  
Jim Nance<sup>3</sup>

**Socioeconomic SSC**

Steve Jacob<sup>3</sup>

**Reef Fish SSC**

Jason Adriance<sup>1,2</sup>  
Marcus (James) Drymon  
Jennifer Herbig  
John Mareska<sup>1,2</sup>

**Council Representative**

Tom Frazer

**Council Staff**

Steven Atran  
Karen Hoak  
Morgan Kilgour  
Ava Lasseter  
Jessica Matos  
Carrie Simmons  
Matt Freeman  
Bernie Roy  
John Froeschke  
Claire Roberts

**Legend for SSC attendance**

1 – Attended via webinar, day 1  
2 – Attended via webinar, day 2  
3 – Attended in-person, day 1 only

**Presenters**

Shannon Cass-Calay, NMFS/SEFSC  
Kelly Denit, NOAA  
John Foster, NOAA  
Rick Hart, NOAA  
Steve Murawski, USF  
Jessica Stephen, NMFS/SERO

**Others**

Dave Bard, NOAA  
Leann Bosarge, Gulf Council  
MS Commercial Fisheries United  
William Corbin  
Roy Crabtree, NMFS/SERO  
Jane DiCosimo, NOAA  
Laura Diederick, NOAA  
Michael Drexler, Ocean Conservancy  
Kelsi Furman, NEU  
Sue Gerhart, NMFS/SERO  
Chad Hanson, Pew Trusts  
Sepp Haukebo, EDF

Frank Helies, NMFS/SERO  
Peter Hood, NMFS/SERO  
Ed Hughes, USF College of Marine Science  
Amanda Jefferson, MS State  
Michael Jepson, NMFS/SERO  
Mike Larkin, NMFS/SERO  
Julien Lartigue, NOAA  
Mara Levy, NOAA GC  
Rich Malinowski, NMFS/SERO  
Jim McKay  
Jerry Mooney  
Julie Neer, SEDAR  
Michael Norberg, FWC  
Frank Parker, NOAA  
Larry Perruso, NMFS/SEFSC  
James Primrose, NMFS/SEFSC  
Jeff Pulver, NMFS/SERO  
Ashford Rosenberg, Shareholders Allian.  
Bob Trumble  
Lauren Waters, NMFS/SERO