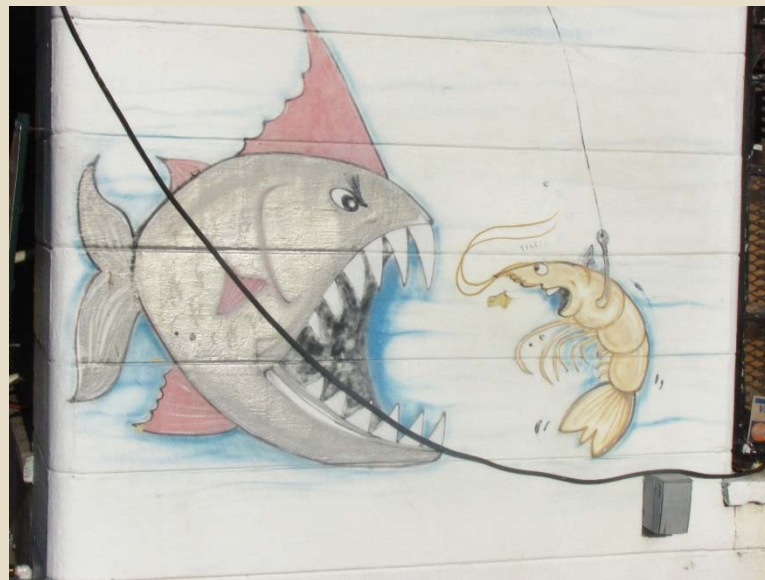


SSC Best Practices and Procedures

Thoughts on framing a discussion on communication between the SSC and the Council.

Lee G. Anderson

GMFMC SSC meeting Oct 2018



Oct. 1, 2018

Presentation Outline

- Background
- Case Study – Cobia Framework Action
- Thought Process
- Thought Process continued
- Case Study continued
- Best Practices
- Summary and Potential Action Points



Background

- At the Aug 2018 SSC meeting - some concern and frustration expressed from SSC members, Staff, and Council members about appropriate action needed from the SSC
- Goal is to implement clear “communication between the Council and the SSC”



What the SSC {(said, didn't say), (should say, shouldn't say)}

Thoughts on

Framing a discussion on Communication between the SSC and the Council

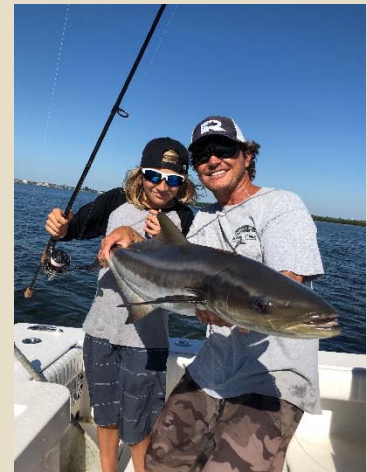
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Cobia Framework Action - Case Study

Despite the scope of work (specific marching orders) from the Council to provide specific suggestions for the cobia analysis, we find the following statement in the relevant section of the last SSC report.

The SSC found the impact analyses in the Cobia Framework to be scientifically sound, appropriate for management and the Council's consideration of the proposed actions and alternatives. ***However, the SSC did not make a specific recommendation as to the degree to which any of the proposed management alternatives was preferable, as this management decision is best determined by the Council given the data provided.***



Thought Process

Goal of SSC is to:

- Help Council achieve stated objectives
- Outline pros and cons of the action or even specific options or alternatives that could best achieve stated objectives
- Provide guidance about likely effects of various management alternatives:
 - For example, if the Council wanted to accomplish X, alternatives Y would most likely meet the biological goals and or changes in incentives for participants behavior

Thought Process: There are at least two categories of advice that the SSC can give the council:

The SSC found the impact analyses in the Cobia Framework to be scientifically sound, appropriate for management and the Council's consideration of the proposed actions and alternatives.

Is the science properly done?



•However, the SSC did not make a specific recommendation as to the degree to which any of the proposed management alternatives was preferable, as this management decision is best determined by the Council given the data provided.

What does the science mean for practical policy?



- We did very well on the first question and punted on the second question
- The Council should communicate the nature of the review requested from the SSC
- And the SSC should identify the nature of the recommendation given to the Council

Case Study Continued:

The SSC found the impact analyses in the Cobia Framework to be scientifically sound, appropriate for management and the Council's consideration of the proposed actions and alternatives. However, the SSC did not make a specific recommendation as to the degree to which any of the proposed management alternatives was preferable, as this management decision is **best determined** by the Council given the data provided.

A cynic might interpret this statement as:

After looking at the data, the SSC, with all its aggregate wisdom and range of backgrounds, could (or would) not choose a preferable alternative using the existing data. However, we think the council can make a proper decision using the same information.

Remember I was at the meeting and I am as responsible for this wording as any one at the meeting.

Best Practices

This raises the question of why is the choice of a preferred alternative “*best determined*” by the council?

Two possible reasons come to mind?

1. Council members are better informed.
2. There is a clear dichotomy between the role of the Council and the role of the SSC. It is the Council’s role to make policy and it is the SSC’s role to interpret science but not to take part in policy discussions.



Best Practices

This raises the question of how the role of the SSC is *determined* by the evidence. I do not think either of these reasons are valid. Alternative “best

Two possible reasons:
But there may be others.

1. Council members will explain why I do think neither is a good or a good answer.

2. There is a clear role for the SSC. It is the role of the SSC to interpret science and the role of the SSC to explain the role of the SSC. I will also suggest one policy relevant explanation of why the statement turned out as it did.



Two issues in detail

Council members are better informed. True and Not True.

- In many ways this is true especially with respect to predictions of the specific operational and distributional effects of different management alternatives.
- In many ways this is not true. With notable personal exceptions, SSC members will be better at performing and evaluating the science.
- I want to be very careful here but I would say that the statement that the choice of the best alternatives should be left to the Council cannot be justified on the grounds that Council members are better informed. But this does not imply that they are uninformed.

Sidelight

Possible explanation of why the statement is formulated as it showed up in the final report.

The different parts of the statement were not written by the same person nor were they written at the same time.

It is an example of writing by committee under time constraints

Two issues in detail

It is the Council's role to make policy and it is the SSC's role to interpret science but not to take part in policy discussions.

- It is the role of the Council members to make the final call on policy but their ability to do so can be enhanced by proper advice which the SSC should strive to provide.

Answering questions can assist with needs of the Council:

- What are the likely effects of implementing the different alternatives taking into account the direct biological and operational effects? Also what are the likely secondary biological and operational effects by changes in fishing behavior incentivized by the alternative?
- If the Council has stated a goal or an objective relative to the proposed policy, the next step would be predict or describe whether the likely effects will achieve the goal?
- If the Council has not stated a goal, a statement of the short and long term distributional, stock productivity or other effects will still be useful to Council members as they make the policy choice.

Answering questions can assist with needs of the Council:

It can be accomplished by answering questions such as:

What are the likely effects of implementing the different alternatives taking into account the direct biological and operational effects. Also what are the likely secondary biological and operational effects by changes in fishing behavior incentivized by the alternative.

If the Council has stated a goal or an objective relative to the proposed policy, the next step would be predict or describe whether the likely effects will achieve the goal.

If the Council has not stated a goal, a statement of the short and long term distributional, stock productivity or other effects will still be useful to Council members as they make the policy choice.

OK I know that this may only be possible in special cases, but we should try to do the best we can.

If it is not possible to predict the likely effects then the honest thing to do would be to tell the council we do not know.

Summary and Possible Action Points

- Move beyond the mindset of a 30 minute around the table group writing session to come up with recommendations
- Staff can continue to work toward developing a better more clearly defined scope of work for the SSC
- Ask the SSC Chair and Council Chair to review the scope of work and provide feedback
- If the Council asks for a specific recommendation, request that staff provide the description of the goals or objectives of the management action, if developed.
- Provide Policy advice in terms of describing the likely biological and economic effects and how those effects are related to stated or implicit objectives
- More discussion on the “if” “then” related to the scientific and biological aspects of the proposed actions may help inform the Council

Summary and Possible Action Points.

Move beyond the mindset of a 30 minute around the table group writing session to come up with recommendations.

Appoint a staff assisted subcommittee to write a draft recommendation prior to the meeting.

After detailed discussion at SSC meeting, appoint a staff assisted subcommittee (or single person) to write the a draft statement to be approved by SSC by email or webinar.

Questions