GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Omni Hotel — Corpus Christi, Texas

August 20, 2018

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The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi, Texas, Monday afternoon, August 20, 2018, and was called to order by Chairman Leann Bosarge.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN LEANN BOSARGE: The members of this committee are myself, Mr. Dale Diaz, Dr. Tom Frazer, and Ms. Martha Guyas. I do invite though the other members of the council to please chime in if you have any feedback. You know, that's a pretty small committee, and that's the way it's always been run, but feel free to contribute. We would like as much feedback as we can get.

The agenda can be found under Tab I, Number 1. Were there any changes or amendments to the agenda as presented? Seeing none, the agenda is approved as presented. Tab I, Number 2 are our minutes from our June 2018 meeting. Were there any changes that needed to be made to those minutes? Seeing none, I will consider the minutes approved as presented.

Next is our Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab I, Number 3. Dr. Simmons, do you want to take us through that or just dive right into Item IV?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS: I will give a quick overview. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Porch is going to provide a presentation on the new assessment process. We're going to hear some recommendations and feedback from the SSC, and the council should ask questions and discuss this, after the presentation.

The next agenda item, regarding this new process, we're going to try to review and finalize the 2020 schedule, at least, and start looking at the 2021 schedule, and you also have some SSC comments to hear on that as well.

The Steering Committee meeting for SEDAR is in September, and so we're trying to get a good idea of what the council wants in 2020, and so thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: All right, and so that's going to bring us to Agenda Item Number IV, which is our Overview of the Revised SEDAR Process, and, Dr. Porch, do you have a little presentation that you're going to take us through?

OVERVIEW OF REVISED SEDAR PROCESS
PRESENTATION ON RESEARCH, OPERATIONAL, AND INTERIM TRACK ASSESSMENT

DR. CLAY PORCH: Yes, I do. I just need the clicker. All right. Good afternoon, everyone. As you know, we've been talking for quite a few years now about various ways that we could revise the SEDAR process to make it more efficient, and, with some things, we actually have instituted quite a few things we've been talking about for, I think, about three years now and just kind of it stalled, and then it would start up again, but, at this point, I think we've come to some general agreement amongst most of the players, and so I'm just going to try and review those for you and break it down into what fraction we would expect it to improve throughput or improve timeliness and all that sort of thing.

Those of you who have been here as long as I have remember that, when we did assessments back before the millennium, mostly it was done by rather few agency scientists compiling data and running models, and that was back before I had all the gray, and I was one of those people sitting in the dark room there, and the council, for some of the species, appointed assessment advisory panels that would act somewhat like assessment panels do today.

The models were generally simpler, and the data was simpler, or at least fewer of it from fewer sources, and the only real review was the SSC, and so, consequently, the throughput and timeliness were pretty high. Thoroughness, maybe not quite what it could have been, but transparency was really low, and we got criticized for that quite often, and the other things were the undercurrent that was going on is that individual analysts were often vilified in one way or another, and the people, at the time, were wanting to kind of shift that blame from just a single person that's just running the model to a broader group who are actually making consensus decisions.

What we ended up coming up with was SEDAR, and that really started around 2001 or 2002, I think, in response to some heavy criticism from both the red porgy assessment in the South Atlantic and the red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, surprise, surprise, and the keystone of the SEDAR process was the so-called benchmark assessment.

That was comprised of three workshops, the same three workshops that we know of today. There is the data workshop, where, in

particular, we would really emphasize bringing fishermen and other stakeholders into the process to talk through the data that we have with them, and then an assessment workshop, which would focus more on the technical aspects of the assessment, and then, finally, a review workshop, where we would present all the data and all the technical models and everything to a group of independent peers, who would review it for scientific merit, and then there would also be two or three SSC representatives, and so it got a very thorough review, much more thorough than in the past.

Now, after that, then there would be still another level of review, and that was done by the SSC, but each step was open and transparent, and there was exhaustive documentation, as illustrated by this photo by Ken Rose, where he laid all the papers for the -- This was the red snapper assessment in 2004, and he laid all the papers that he had to read from end-to-end and stood his daughter at the end of the papers, and I believe there were about a hundred manuscripts that he had to read, and those aren't pages. That's the individual papers. It just got so unwieldy for the reviewers that we got a lot of complaints, because there is that much material to read.

There were also dozens of participants, both engaged in the decision-making process and in the critiques, and the consequence of all that was the process became very, very slow. We went from a case where we had reasonable throughput and timeliness, but little transparency, to very low throughput and timeliness and very high transparency.

Stepping back a little bit, to try and figure out what went wrong with that process, we have to first recognize that SEDAR wasn't originally intended for use on all of the stocks. It was intended for just some high-profile stocks like red snapper and red porgy.

What ended up happening is, somewhere along the way, both councils and the Southeast Center somehow agreed that we'll start using it for everything, and that created a systemic overload, because we didn't have the infrastructure to support that many detailed assessments with that level of review, and so the data providers, in particular, had trouble meeting all the deadlines, and this is particular exacerbated by the fact that, during benchmark assessments, we would change the way the data were presented as different decisions were made in the process, like which fleets would we model and which would we combine and which would we model separately, and we might come up with a different stock structure, and then all the data had to be

reconfigured, and it just slowed down the process enormously.

The other thing that was happening is we were getting a lot of changes in the scheduling, and sometimes less than a year out, and so you have all your staff working for one assessment and, all of a sudden, we say, whoops, we're not going to do that assessment anymore and we're going to shift over to this other one, and it creates inefficiencies in the process.

We also noticed that the results were, as thorough as they were, were still often criticized by reviewers, but, because management advice was required of the benchmark assessment, there wasn't any real time to actually address some of those concerns. We would do the best we could, but, at the end of the day, we had to produce management advice in a timely fashion.

One other thing that we noticed is that both councils tended to favor benchmark assessments, because there was a view that that was the best, but those are also the slowest, and then, finally, I would say that we were kind of a victim of our own success, because SEDAR was very successful in bringing more people to the table with more data streams, and we have more partners from more states and academia, and what ended up happening is the assessments got evermore complex, and they used more and more pieces of data, and, the more pieces of data you use, the more potential failure points you have, because one partner may not be able to deliver it on time, and that has a cascading effect that just delays the whole assessment all the way down the line.

Those were the sorts of issues that came up, and we thought, for a while, about how we might revise this process, and, like I said, a lot of this has been in the works for several years, but I think the key things that we've come up with is introducing, one, a sort of research and operational assessment track, and the research assessment is the assessment that creates the tool, but, as I will talk about a little bit later, it actually doesn't produce the management advice. It's focused on developing the best tool.

The operational assessment then is going to apply the tool, and so we'll have a research assessment and then, presumably, several operational assessments over the years after that.

We also want to emphasize advance scheduling more efficiently than the way we've been doing it, to help us manage the workload, and then we're also introducing, as Luiz mentioned, interim analyses, where we can provide more timely advice with the latest data, and this would be performed outside of the

SEDAR process.

For the research assessments, for most intents and purposes, they're most like the current benchmark approach. It's got the three workshops, and it will have independent peer review, et cetera, and it develops the tool that we're going to use down the road, and so this would be including the data streams that we'll use in the assessment and all the analytical methods, but it's not used for providing management advice, and the reason for that is it helps us to have more flexible deadlines, and so, if there is some topic that is identified during this whole research track process, it can actually be followed up, instead of just curtailed and say, well, next time we'll do it, at the next benchmark.

They're not, on the other hand, open-ended research projects. There is a definitive time limit, and it can be longer than the current benchmark process, but it's not that we're going to let it go on for three or four years, and so they're not open-ended research projects, which was a concern that several members of the council and SSC had expressed/

One thing that's important is that they don't rely on the most recent data, because we're developing a tool. We don't need finely-tuned data, and we don't need the last year of data, and what that does is reduce the load on the data providers, and so we're focusing on the types of data streams that are going in, the quality of the data that's going in it, which ones should be used, and also on the life history characteristics and other aspects that would dictate what sort of models we should use. We're not worrying about making sure that we get the data down correctly to every last pound.

The advantage of that is it reduces the load on our data providers, and it allows the project to have more flexibility to develop the best model. You will still have the independent peer review and the SSC review, and, when we looked at this, we think, when you use it in tandem with a cycle of operational assessments, it should give us an increase in throughput of around 10 to 20 percent. That's, again, assuming that we're -- Maybe I will put it this way. If you know you're not getting management advice, there is a little less incentive to keep saying let's just do a benchmark, because we think it's better. The operational assessment will be using a peer-reviewed tool, and it will be the best available science, but we're not just constantly invoking a benchmark assessment, and so it should save us some time just for that.

Operational assessments, these are going to be -- This is where the thorough and timely comes in. They are updating -- We are updating the peer-reviewed tools that we got from the research track, but now with the latest data, and so this where we look at the data very carefully and make sure we do get it down to the nearest pound, as it were.

It will provide the management advice, stock status, OFL, ABC, et cetera. In principle, it merges the existing update and standard assessments, and exactly how much you will look at in an operational assessment would be defined by the terms of reference, which we'll develop in concert with the SSC and the Southeast Center and SEDAR, and that will define the scope of the assessment, and, in principle, we would look at things that the SSC feels comfortable reviewing, because there is not going to be an independent peer review now.

The operational assessment uses the peer-reviewed model, but then the last stage of review for each operational assessment would be the SSC, and so we wouldn't want to do things in the operational assessment that the SSC would be uncomfortable reviewing.

Then, again, this would be expected to increase throughput by 10 to 20 percent. Now, the matter of scheduling, ideally, the scheduling process would look something like this. The first part hasn't really happened yet, but, ideally, the council would identify priorities five years in advance, based on a predictable, rigorous prioritization scheme.

The South Atlantic Council actually has already adopted a prioritization scheme, and, the Gulf of Mexico Council, you all have been looking at it, and, in fact, your staff have been working with our staff to come up with one, and so I think you're in the process there. I don't think you have quite adopted it yet, but, ideally, that's what we would have. We would start looking at these things further out, and I will show you why in a little bit.

Then the SEDAR Steering Committee develops a draft schedule, at least two years out, and that would get circulated to us, so we can make sure that we can actually execute it, and also to the councils. Then, a few months later, the SEDAR Steering Committee would meet and finalize that schedule, and, in principle, we might accommodate some minor changes to that two-year draft and then no further changes after that.

Then the SEDAR and Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff, or

whoever the cooperator is, FWC, would hold scheduling calls to establish the data delivery deadlines and all the other scheduling milestones, and the SEDAR Coordinators would develop draft detailed project schedules.

It looks similar to what we have done in the recent past, but it's a little more rigorous in enforcing limitations on changing the schedule, and this, in itself, should increase throughput by another 10 to 20 percent, and decrease the time to conduct each assessment, because you're not forcing the data providers to keep shifting gears and switching from one species to the next.

This is a little tool that we've come up with that we hope will help the SEDAR Steering Committee try and develop these schedules, and you may not be able to see it on the screen as well, but it should show up on the copy that you have on your computer, but what you can see is we have developed sort of slots for each of several different assessment teams.

The total number of assessments can't exceed what's available for each of these regions, because they are different assessment teams that specialize on the species for those councils, and so we have -- You will see our South Atlantic Team, Gulf and Caribbean Team, the Shark Team, which does HMS sharks, and then an HMS Team that deals with the mackerels. Then FWC also does some assessments, hogfish, black grouper, et cetera.

The idea is each of those entities has a certain number of assessment leads that can conduct assessments, and so we allocate a certain area representing the number of assessment leads, and the size of those boxes basically would reflect the availability of assessment leads, and so you can only accommodate so many boxes in that space.

The other thing that we have to do though is acknowledge that the primary limitation has been data provision. Now, that's one of the things, as the new Science Director, that I am trying to increase our capacity, so this won't be such a big bottleneck, but, right now, it is the primary bottleneck, and so what we've done is compute the total number of weeks that are required to process each type of assessment.

We did it first when we were using benchmarks, standards, and updates, and we figured out that standards can be from three to five weeks, and updates can be a little bit less than that, and benchmarks can be substantially more than five weeks, and so what ends up happening is, if we say there is thirty-four weeks of data provision time available, then you add up the total

number of benchmarks, standards, and updates, so that it doesn't exceed thirty-four weeks.

Now, again, my job is to try and give you more than thirty-four weeks, but, right now, given the capacity we have, that's about what it is, and so the idea here is you have two constraints, the total number of assessment people, but also data provision weeks, and we'll try and increase that, but this sort of scheduling tool would help us figure out how many assessments of each type we can do every year.

Ideally, we would come up with a schedule that is at least five or six years long. This is a hypothetical schedule that depends on a stock prioritization scheme, and, again, don't place any stock in the actual numbers and entries here. It's more the concept, and the idea would be, for a high-priority stock like red snapper, it would get a high score in your prioritization spreadsheet, and that one probably would need to be assessed more frequently, and so what you can see here in this particular example is we started with the research track in year-one.

During a time when we have a research track, we could still provide management advice, but we would use it -- We would do it by using an interim analysis that hinges off the previous stock assessment, and so the research track, in that sense, is kind of happening in the background. Then, after that, in the next year, you would have your operational assessment alternating with an interim assessment and then another operational, interim, et cetera.

Then, for something that's maybe not quite as high priority as red snapper, maybe you would have -- It looks very much like, in this case, say greater amberjack and gray trigger. It looks a lot like red snapper, except you see a somewhat longer interval between the operational assessments. It's two years instead of one, and we would just have consecutive interim analyses.

Then, if you look down the list here, you will see something that might be lower priority still, like Spanish mackerel, could have maybe as many as three interim analyses in three consecutive years between operational assessments, and so you don't need to conduct the intense operational assessments as frequently for some species as others.

That's the idea, in concept. In practice, it may be a little challenging to develop a schedule like this, but I think it will increase the efficiency a great deal, and especially going to these interim analyses.

If you look at -- Well, I think we're going to hear a little bit from Luiz about what we showed them at the SSC, but the gist of an interim analysis is that you're updating the ABC advice based on the most recent trends in surveys and abundance or indices of mortality, whichever is your most reliable data.

If you think of it as a survey of abundance, basically, if the survey indicates there are more fish out there, then, arguably, you could take a higher level of catch than was recommended from the assessment before that. It's basically conducted outside of the SEDAR process, very fast turnaround, and, depending on how often we implement the interim analyses, they could as much as double the total throughput, in terms of the amount of management advice we're providing.

Just to give you kind of conceptually what an interim analysis might look like, this is the simplest form if we have a reliable fishery-independent survey. Let's suppose, for the last assessment, the ABC advice was more or less constant. That would be this straight line at the top of the interim analysis graph that you see there, and so that's representing a constant ABC of five-million pounds for whatever species. This is all hypothetical.

Let's suppose though that we, say as we saw with red grouper, we start seeing the indices of abundance are going down since the last assessment that we had. That would argue that the ABC should also go down in some proportion to that abundance, and, in this case, it's almost in linear proportion to the abundance, in this particular example.

Now, if you found that the index of abundance was going up faster than you anticipated, you could also use the same method to increase the ABC, and so it's a very conceptually simple way to adjust the ABC. If the index goes up, you increase the ABC. If the index goes down, you decrease it.

Then we talked about a few other improvements to the SEDAR process. One of them is that we probably need to think a little bit more about right-sizing the assessments. They really should be -- The complexity of the assessments should really be commensurate with the quality of the data and the value of the fishery.

We don't always need complex models, especially if the data don't warrant it, and so I think we need to think, both as an agency and as a council, how vested we are in things like multi-

fleet Stock Synthesis models.

Second, I think we need to consider a different way of doing some of our data-limited analyses. We have kind of started along that road with the last data-limited assessment that we did for the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, but the idea is those are relatively simple techniques. What we really need to do is kind of vet the methodology first, and then, once you have vetted the methodology, you can apply it to fifteen species at once or something, just to make the whole process more efficient.

We started along those lines in the Caribbean and the Gulf, and we haven't done it for the South Atlantic yet, but I think we need to think a little bit more about how we can, maybe using the SEDAR methods working group, to actually focus more on the methodology and vet it and then get those peer reviewed and then just apply it to a lot of stocks, and so sort of like what our research track operational assessments do, but looking at more species at once, because they are simpler methods.

We also think that the reports, and I think everybody thinks this, that the reports of the operational assessments should be streamlined, mostly citing research track documentation, but they also need to have a more effective executive summary.

I got a call from a fisherman just a couple of months ago asking about the gray snapper assessment and trying to figure out where the ABC and OFL advice was in that, and it took me five or ten minutes to find it, and so I can't imagine how difficult it is for somebody else, who is not familiar with these reports, to try and dig this information out.

I think we really need to come up with some effective executive summaries, and that's something we need to work with the councils on, what is the best format and what pieces of information you want to see in there.

Then, finally, something that is near and dear to my heart is being more proactive in our communications with stakeholders. There is obviously a lot of misunderstandings out there, and so that would involve things like the Marine Resource Education Program and investing in things like that more, where you're educating stakeholders.

Also, on our part, regularly updating these key indices that I've been talking about, so that people can go to a website and see, in close to real time, the trends in stocks, because it is

true that assessments tend to be behind what the fishermen are seeing. By the time we implement the regulations, it might be three years behind what the fishermen are seeing on the water, and so it would be helpful if we, whether it's the FWC or the Southeast Center or whoever the cooperator is, update those key indices and surveys of abundance regularly.

Then, of course, taking advantage of citizen science initiatives in a more effective way. Obviously, just having a bunch of people telling us conflicting stories doesn't help so much with the assessment, but, if we can find a way to manage that information flow and glean the nuggets that are in it and then figure out how to use an assessment, that would be a very positive thing that I think would not only improve the quality of the assessment, but also lead to a more efficient process.

That's all I had for you today. That's the gist of what we're planning to do to try and revitalize SEDAR, and our ultimate goal, going from that sort of pre-millennial era, one person, one computer, one dark office, and, moving from that, we went through the SEDAR process, where we are so transparent and tried to uncover every stone that it became painstakingly slow, and we're trying now to kind of achieve the right balance between those things and have a more efficient process. With that, I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: All right. Are there questions for Dr. Porch? Mr. Anson.

MR. KEVIN ANSON: I'm not on your committee, and thank you. Dr. Porch, if we were doing an assessment under the current SEDAR process, how quickly would 2018's biological data, age data, be available? When would that be available, typically?

DR. PORCH: Again, it would depend on how many assessments we tried to schedule, but usually we can have most of the biological data for 2018 by -- In most cases, by August or so of the following year.

MR. ANSON: You mentioned front-loading and sticking to a hard schedule, and the 10 to 20 percent you talk about the savings, I guess, would that then be realized in that you would have that data available a month or two earlier, at the least, under a best-case scenario, if you implemented this fully?

DR. PORCH: That wouldn't -- Changing the SEDAR process itself probably wouldn't help that so much, and so there is two issues there. One, we could have all the data for all the stock

assessments prepared by that date. You have to stagger them a little bit, because you have limited personnel, and so they can't all work at the same thing at once, and so there would be some staggering.

The data can be available, for many stocks, close to August of the following year. Some pieces of data can be processed much quicker, and that's the advantage of interim analyses. For instance, if we were using fishery-independent surveys, we can usually process those much faster, and a lot of things depend on the states' ability to produce the data, depending on what the data stream is, and so it's not as simple as that.

The other thing that -- I guess the main point is the data provision deadlines aren't really the things that are slowed by SEDAR. What is slowed by the current way the SEDAR process operates is that you shift -- You are forcing the data providers to shift gears when you change the schedule or, in the case of a benchmark, you change -- You make different decisions on how to process the data mid-stream. Those are the things that slow the data provision process down. Do you follow what I mean?

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: Any other questions? All right. If there are no other questions, that is going to lead us to Dr. Barbieri and the SSC discussion on the staff-proposed modifications to the SEDAR process.

SSC RECOMMENDATIONS ON AND STAFF-PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE SEDAR PROCESS

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members. I did not actually put together a presentation or any slides with summaries for this one. I thought this one would be more conversational in nature, and I don't know, Ryan, if you actually have already presented to the council what those summary recommendations or suggestions --

MR. RYAN RINDONE: No, we haven't. Staff received direction to do this, to run it through you guys, before bringing it to the council, and that's essentially what is happening here. The presentation that we gave you guys is in the background information, and it's Tab I, Number 4(b). The first couple of pages there, you can see the discussion that the SSC had about the schedule, and then the subsequent slides are what we showed the SSC.

DR. BARBIERI: Madam Chair, I don't know if you want to go over that presentation that Ryan gave at the SSC meeting, to kind of

give the committee an overview, but, in general, I would say the bottom line is that council staff put together, I thought, and the committee agreed, a good number of good suggestions or recommendations for improvement of the SEDAR process.

I think that this has been a process that has been going on within the council staff for a while, for maybe a year now, give or take, and it looks like several of those recommendations are already being implemented through some of these revisions of the SEDAR process, as presented by Dr. Porch and summarized before.

In that case, the committee felt like, well, there are some good recommendations here that could achieve good ends, but most of them, if not all of them, are already being incorporated in the revised SEDAR process through those tiers of assessments that Dr. Porch just went through.

Now, there are a few things that the committee discussed, in terms of sort of like operational improvements for the process, that would be development of the ability for, in the data workshop or throughout the SEDAR assessment process, that you could have like an IPT-like interagency kind of group that would be working on resolving issues and summarizing data and addressing problems throughout the process without having to have the formally-noticed meetings that really take a lot of time and slow down the process quite a bit.

If there was a way for things to be done, with the tradeoff that Dr. Porch talked about, perhaps not as transparent as the current SEDAR process, but more efficient, and then those recommendations and suggestions and analysis would be brought to the formal, open, publicly-noticed workshops to be vetted, but not have to wait for those meetings for those changes to be known and then discussed further, and so that's just a way to kind of add a little more speed and efficiency to the process, but, overall, we like the recommendations.

I think, in terms of the research and operational assessments and the interim analysis, the committee responded well. There was a lot of interest, actually so much interest, so many questions and discussion points, during the SSC meeting that we had to basically ask for them to hold back, and, in the interest of time, perhaps come back some other time, perhaps when you can come over, and have, again, this overview for them to be able to provide the input that they have in mind.

Some committee members, and I think this is to be expected, are still feeling a little I would say cautious or not as

comfortable with the proposed structure, and they have questions too about the ability of the research assessment to really increase productivity and help resolve some of the problems, but other committee members are fully onboard with the research assessment process and the operational, together with the interim, and so I think it's a matter of waiting a little bit, and the committee appreciates these interim presentations, but it's just a matter of waiting for the Steering Committee meeting to get to the point where it has a better-defined framework and can present it to us. This is like my short version, Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: I'm glad you didn't have any slides, Luiz. No, in all seriousness, anything else, Luiz, from the SSC on this one?

DR. BARBIERI: No, Madam Chair. We're going to talk a little bit later about the schedule, right, and I can talk about it now if you want, or you can go through the schedule first.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: How about can we get into it and then we'll call you back up? Let's take a look. All right. So Luiz brought us right into the last agenda item, which is our SEDAR schedule, and I think staff is going to get that on the board for us. Ryan, do you want to give us, generally, the quick version of what has changed?

REVIEW AND FINALIZE 2020 AND 2021 GULF OF MEXICO SEDAR SCHEDULE

MR. RINDONE: Sure, Madam Chair. The MRIP calibrations have seen delays on deliveries since 2015, and that hasn't changed much. We now have those updated data that are starting to come in, and they will start to be able to be used in assessments now, but, with trying to get everything plugged in, we saw some additional delays that have resulted from that, and, notably, scamp is going to start now, and this is just projected to start, at the end of 2019 as a research track, instead of the beginning.

You guys likely won't get the results of that effort from the scamp research track and subsequent operational assessment, which is where you will get your management advice, until the end of 2021.

We have requested a red snapper research track and subsequent operational assessment to start in 2020. The SSC discussed the appropriateness of doing a research track assessment, which Dr. Barbieri can expand upon, but, ultimately, with the input from

the Science Center and what we know from past assessments, there are plenty of things that could be worked on to try to make that assessment better, and so a research track assessment is certainly appropriate, and it may just be more a matter of timing and, like Dr. Porch referred to, the available data weeks to be able to actually put everything together. That is our current bottleneck.

Then we talked some about the gag and greater amberjack operational assessments, but the SSC is going to revisit the potential terms of reference for that in October, I believe, and so that's what you have.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: All right. Thank you, sir. Our red grouper, with the MRIP recalibrations, our results from that are going to be delayed a little bit, to try and incorporate those into the assessment, and gray triggerfish, and so we'll be a little later getting those assessments, but I think we updated you all on that last time.

Red grouper, we hope to see the final report on that in the second quarter of next year, and so maybe we'll see it -- I don't think we would see it in June. Maybe we would see it in our August meeting, and so about a year from now. Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Yes, ma'am, and that's the important thing to remember. When you guys are looking at this and you see the end date is Q-whatever for a certain year, that is when the stock assessment process is over, but there still has to be an SSC review, and then it comes to you guys, and so there is still time on the backend before management.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: Ms. Guyas.

MS. MARTHA GUYAS: If red grouper is going to be a little bit late, does that mean we have the possibility of grabbing another year's worth of landings data for that assessment?

MR. RINDONE: We have red grouper listed as starting Q4 of this year, and we're still trying to get 2017 data, and so that's about as current as we're going to be able to be, and so, like Dr. Porch mentioned, most of the ageing data are available roughly by August. Usually by August, we have the finalized MRIP numbers, and we have all the state data, and so that is -- Anything that happens beyond August of Year X can usually include the previous year's data, usually.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: For red grouper, I think the Science Center

is trying their best to have some sort of management strategy evaluation, AKA an interim assessment, for the SSC to evaluate at their next meeting, which would be late September or early October. It's the first week in October.

That way, hopefully we could get some advice from them and maybe take some action, instead of having to wait until, essentially, a year from now to see the results of the assessment and begin a document to take some action, because we've heard enough feedback on that particular species that we know we have an issue, and so hopefully the Science Center is going to be able to do that for the next SSC meeting.

Were there any other questions or comments about the SEDAR schedule? As you heard the Science Center say, we are going to try and set it and forget it, if we can, which that's always been tough for us. That's been a challenge.

I did have one question. We originally had red snapper in 2019, and, at the SEDAR Committee meeting, we pushed that to 2020, and there are several reasons for that. We want it to be a research track, and we have the big project, and I don't know the official name of it, but the ten-million-dollar project, and we want to make sure that we can set the model up in a way that it can handle that, and, with a research track, if you start that in 2020, you're not actually going to have to have the results from any of that research until almost two years later, right, because the research track goes on for a year-and-a-half to two years before you actually plug the data in, but we want to be set up to handle that kind of stuff.

In 2020, with red snapper on there and scamp on there, that's two research tracks in the same year, and they're starting one quarter apart, essentially. Is that doable, or is that going to cause an issue on your end, Dr. Porch?

DR. PORCH: No, Chair, that won't be a problem. We already anticipated that, and we've been talking with the SEDAR folks about it, about the scheduling.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: All right. Any other questions? Yes, Mr. Diaz.

MR. DALE DIAZ: I am not sure who to direct this to, Mr. Rindone or Dr. Porch or Mr. Strelcheck, but red snapper is way down there in 2021, as a data-poor, and it's proposed -- I'm talking about red drum. I'm sorry.

We've talked about red drum, and we tried to do them in a data-poor stock assessment a couple of years ago, and there wasn't even enough data to do them under data-poor, and is anybody trying to get funds right now to collect the data that we need to do an assessment on red drum in the future, because my fear is we're going to get to 2021 and we're going to be in the same situation we are right now, where there is not enough data to do anything with, and it's a pretty important fishery, and, anyway, does anybody know anything about what's being done to pursue that data?

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: Dr. Stunz.

DR. GREG STUNZ: Well, I can comment a little, and maybe follow-up at Full Council, Dale, but I do know there is some groups out of Dauphin Island that were doing some work, as well as I think FWC, in fact, and trying to get some data based upon some work that they've been doing, but I don't know the details or the latest, but I can find out, hopefully between now and Full Council.

MR. RINDONE: Just to corroborate that, both of those groups do have active, funded projects that are underway.

MR. DIAZ: As a follow-up, the last time we talked about this, there was concerns about maybe just data coming from one portion of the Gulf, and that might not be applicable across the whole Gulf. Is the work that's being done going to be substantial enough and cover a wide enough area of the Gulf where it's actually going to be something that's usable for a stock assessment?

MR. RINDONE: That is yet to be determined. We'll have to see what kind of data they're able to collect and the space and time that it covers, but that's not to say that it can't be looked at in 2021 or at some appropriate time, and so they're trying to get at least a few years, I think, under the belt of each of those projects.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: Mr. Anson, did you have any details?

MR. ANSON: Yes, and I believe the geographic scope includes western Louisiana through Alabama as their primary sampling points, and then what Florida is doing, I'm assuming, might be to supplement the western shelf of Florida for some of those populations that are not within that core area of the northern Gulf, which was identified as having the largest concentration of brood stock.

Now, as Ryan pointed out, whether they can get enough samples over that geographic area, that remains to be seen, and I don't have an update on that information, but their intent was to try to cover the core area of red drum brook stock.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: Are the samples hook-and-line samples?

MR. ANSON: Primarily purse seine, as I recall.

CHAIRMAN BOSARGE: All right. I think that's pretty much -- That was one of the weak points before, is what does that age composition look like offshore and being able to compare that to the prior age composition that you had when there was a fishery there. In order to compare the two, if you use the same method of capture, then it helps a lot. Okay. Well, that sounds great, and so then maybe there is traction moving in that direction, Dale. Maybe we'll get a better result next time.

All right. Any other questions or comments on the SEDAR schedule? All right, and so we're not too far behind schedule. Let's go ahead and take our fifteen-minute break, guys, and so at 3:40 we'll pick back up.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 20, 2018.)

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