

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

4
5 Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel Key West, Florida

6
7 June 18, 2018

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
11 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
12 Tom Frazer.....Florida
13 Johnny Greene.....Alabama

14
15 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

16 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
17 Patrick Banks.....Louisiana
18 Doug Boyd.....Texas
19 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
20 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
21 Susan Gerhart (designee for Roy Crabtree).....NMFS
22 Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
23 Campo Matens.....Louisiana
24 Paul Mickle (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
25 Robin Riechers.....Texas
26 John Sanchez.....Florida
27 Bob Shipp.....Alabama
28 Greg Stunz.....Texas
29 LT Mark Zanowicz.....USCG

30
31 **STAFF**

32 Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
34 Douglas Gregory.....Executive Director
35 Morgan Kilgour.....Fishery Biologist
36 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
37 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
38 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
39 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
40 Charlotte Schiaffo.....Administrative & Human Resources Assistant
41 Carrie Simmons.....Deputy Director

42
43 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

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45 J.P. Brooker.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
46 James Bruce.....MS
47 Jamie Cournane.....NH
48 Michael Drexler.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL

1 Captain David Dupree.....FWC
2 Susan Gerhart.....NMFS
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6 Alison Johnson.....Oceana
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9 Bruce McCormack.....Lionfish International, FL
10 Jack McGovern.....NMFS
11 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
12 Bruce Roberts.....NC
13 Lance Robinson.....TX
14 Ashford Rosenberg.....Shareholders Alliance
15
16 - - -
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1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Key West Marriott Beachside
3 Hotel, Key West, Florida, Monday morning, June 18, 2018, and was
4 called to order by Chairman Leann Bosarge.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN LEANN BOSARGE:** I will call to order the Gulf SEDAR
11 Committee. The members of this committee are myself, Mr. Dale
12 Diaz, Dr. Tom Frazer, and Captain Johnny Greene. The agenda can
13 be found under Tab I, Number 1. Were there any changes or
14 modifications to the agenda as presented? Seeing none, we will
15 approve the agenda. The agenda is approved.

16
17 The minutes from our last meeting in October of 2017 can be
18 found under Tab I, Number 2. Does Ms. Mary want to make an
19 amendment to those? We need to change "Mary" to "Mara". Other
20 than that, are there any changes that need to be made to those
21 minutes? Seeing none, the minutes stand approved with that
22 change. Our Action Guide and Next Steps is located under Tab I,
23 Number 3. At this point, I will turn it over to Mr. Gregory to
24 take us through it.

25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've
27 got two items here, and it's the Draft Steering Committee Report
28 and the Updated SEDAR Schedule Review. There is probably more
29 information in the council input and next steps than we need,
30 because I'm going through that with a PowerPoint presentation,
31 but a lot of discussion was had at this year's meeting, and
32 there is some potential changes that I wanted to bring to the
33 council's attention.

34
35 In the Steering Committee report, please review the proposed
36 changes to the SEDAR process. The research, operational, and
37 interim assessment process will begin replacing the current
38 benchmark, standard, and update process this year, starting with
39 the scamp research track assessment.

40
41 In the next paragraph, it reads that the council may want to
42 inquire with the Center regarding changes in specifying
43 assessment availability by data processing weeks rather than the
44 four slots a year that we have been allocated in the past and
45 the proposal to build in a reserve capacity of unallocated weeks
46 each year to accommodate potential unforeseen demands, and, this
47 was a mistake, but the need for an interim assessment on red
48 snapper. I just wanted to bring to your attention that we have

1 requested an interim assessment on red grouper.

2
3 That is being somewhat delayed, because the Center wants to do a
4 management strategy evaluation, which I don't think is a normal
5 part of interim assessments, and what I think we'll request is
6 suggest that the council request that the Center provide, in a
7 presentation at a future meeting, more detail about what the
8 research track, operational, and interim assessment process is
9 going to be.

10
11 Now, we've discussed the research track for a couple of years
12 now, and so it's not a new term for us, but we're getting more
13 details, and we're getting to the point where we're going to
14 make that transition.

15
16 The second item we want to present to you is the SEDAR schedule.
17 The 2019 schedule is set. King mackerel will be an update
18 assessment, because a joint assessment with Mexico is not
19 possible. The vermilion snapper is scheduled as a standard
20 assessment, and the cobia is an update assessment. Florida FWC
21 plans to conduct a yellowtail snapper assessment this year also,
22 in 2019.

23
24 The MRIP calibrations due in 2018 may expand into 2019, and, by
25 the August council meeting, the SSC and the council need to
26 confirm that a red snapper research track assessment is desired
27 for 2020, followed by an operational assessment in 2021. If we
28 go that route -- What I said at the Steering Committee was the
29 council, sometimes being impatient, will probably ask for an
30 interim red snapper assessment in the middle of that, and that's
31 why it got put in the report above.

32
33 **SEDAR MAY 2018 DRAFT STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

34
35 Now, you've got the draft committee report, and what I want to
36 do now is give a presentation on that, a short presentation, if
37 we can get that on the screen and have it move forward. Note in
38 the committee report itself that there is sections -- There is a
39 summary of the meeting discussion, and then there is the meeting
40 outcomes, and the meeting outcomes is really what was decided,
41 and sometimes the information in the meeting outcomes is
42 contrary to the information prior to that, because of decisions
43 that were made in the Steering Committee.

44
45 These are the attachments that came with our Steering Committee
46 agenda, and these attachments and all the agendas and
47 information can be found on the SEDAR website, and that's called
48 sedarweb.org.

1
2 Again, there is this research, operational, and interim
3 assessments. The research and operational assessments are going
4 to be SEDAR activities that will be negotiated through the
5 Steering Committee process. The interim assessments, which are
6 to be more frequent, much more frequent, are going to be
7 negotiations between the Science Center and the council itself.

8
9 Now, the operational assessments, which are to be the
10 assessments, other than the research track, the assessments that
11 give us management advice, and recall that the research track
12 assessment is similar to the benchmark, but it's going to be
13 conducted with whatever data is available and not necessarily
14 the most up-to-date data, and so it's not designed to give us
15 management advice. Those research tracks will be followed by an
16 operational assessment.

17
18 Those operational assessments can be either similar to our
19 current update or our standard process, and the Center is asking
20 that our SSC determine, for each operational assessment, which
21 type of operational assessment we want, either an update or a
22 standard, and so that clearly comes back to the council for that
23 decision.

24
25 As it says in the next line, clear and detailed terms of
26 reference are required by February of each year, and so what I
27 am suggesting is that this council have a SEDAR Committee
28 meeting at each meeting for the rest of this year to work
29 through these schedules and to get everything in line, so we
30 don't fall behind, and it may necessitate -- It definitely will
31 necessitate more frequent committee meetings going into the
32 future.

33
34 Now, in red, I've got that the council should build in a reserve
35 capacity in the SEDAR schedule, and this is a request from the
36 Science Center to address emergencies or unforeseen concerns,
37 and that's an important thing to discuss, because the council
38 has historically felt like we didn't have enough opportunities
39 to do assessments, and I don't know how much this would slow
40 down that assessment process or the frequency of assessments.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Can you back up to that last slide? I am
43 just going to recap something, to make sure that everybody was
44 paying full attention. When we get into that SEDAR schedule,
45 we're going to start talking about things as research track
46 assessments or operational track, and so let's -- I just want to
47 make sure that everybody can translate from the old verbiage
48 that we used to use to the new verbiage, and so a benchmark --

1 We used to ask for a benchmark, and that's now a research track.
2 We used to ask for updates and standards, which are somewhere
3 below a benchmark, and not as in-depth as a benchmark, and those
4 are now operational assessments.

5
6 Both of those fall into the operational assessment category, and
7 the SSC and the councils will recommend to the Science Center
8 which way we want to go and whether we want it to be an update
9 or a standard, but we're going to have to do a little work with
10 our terms of reference and justify why it should be one or the
11 other, if we want the bigger of the two.

12
13 These interim analyses are kind of different, and this is new.
14 This is something that we're going to start getting, and red
15 grouper will probably be our first one, and that's where --
16 Because we do have a decent gap, a lot of times, between stock
17 assessments on a particular species, we can get interim analyses
18 that may be whatever data stream we have the most confidence in
19 for that particular species, and it may be a CPUE index, or it
20 may be landings, or it may be a multitude of things, a
21 combination of things, but they can bring that to the SSC, and
22 we can take a look at that and say, all right, do we need to
23 make some changes upward or downward in between stock
24 assessments with that particular species, and so I'm just
25 recapping what Doug said, to make sure we're ready for this new
26 terminology when we get into the next agenda item.

27
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Thank you. The SEDAR projects that
29 are ongoing, you heard earlier today that we have a stock ID
30 process for cobia, and there was some discussion as to how
31 involved this has been and how time consuming it's been,
32 particularly in light that it's not a controversial one. There
33 are no disagreements over the science, like there was in
34 bluefin tilefish.

35
36 Scamp will be our first research track assessment, and that will
37 be assigned to slots, or data weeks, for both councils. King
38 mackerel was supposed to be a benchmark assessment jointly with
39 Mexico, but Mexico is not able to provide the data or to
40 cooperate, and so king mackerel was then considered to be a
41 standard assessment, and it now has been decided to be an update
42 assessment in 2019.

43
44 Again, a little bit more detail on updates versus standards, and
45 clearly a standard requires more effort, and both will be
46 replaced by the operational assessment. The MRIP revision
47 assessments will be completed once the revised data are
48 available. There has been another delay in getting that data,

1 and I will talk a little bit about that I think in the next
2 slide, but the council will negotiate directly with the
3 Southeast Science Center to determine delivery schedules and
4 presentations. They are expected to be available, at this time,
5 for SSC review in October of next year.

6
7 Here is a table showing the slippage of the MRIP data and the
8 effect it's having on our projected or planned stock assessments
9 for Gulf red grouper and Gulf gray triggerfish. It's basically
10 about a three-and-a-half-month delay in the data being
11 available, and we assume the estimated completion dates are also
12 about a three-and-a-half-month delay from what we heard the last
13 time we reviewed the schedule.

14
15 How this is going to bump our plans for 2019 and 2020 is hard to
16 say. That's been our problem for the last two or three years,
17 is that the MRIP analyses have been bumping our assessments, and
18 they have been delayed at least twice, and this may be the third
19 delay.

20
21 The assessment schedule review, this was new information from
22 the Science Center that, instead of looking at four slots of
23 assessments, and you might recall that last year we ran into
24 difficulty, and we really didn't discuss it at this meeting, of
25 the same assessment person doing two different assessments and
26 not being able to do two back-to-back, because of that one
27 person. We didn't really discuss that and the need for, I
28 guess, cross-training within the Center, but, right now, we're
29 being told that the Center is capable of processing data for
30 thirty-four weeks out of the year, and that is for all three
31 councils, the Caribbean, the South Atlantic, and the Gulf of
32 Mexico.

33
34 A benchmark assessment requires six weeks. A research track and
35 a standard assessment requires five weeks. An update assessment
36 typically requires three weeks, and so an operational assessment
37 will be between three and five weeks, depending on whether it's
38 going to be a standard-like assessment or an update-like
39 assessment.

40
41 Now, note that red snapper has always been considered, since I
42 have been here, as a double assessment, and so, if we're asking
43 for a research track assessment for red snapper in 2020,
44 according to the information provided to us, that is going to
45 require ten weeks of data processing, which is a third of the
46 entire availability of resources for doing assessments in that
47 year.

1 Therefore, the Center has informed us, after the Steering
2 Committee meeting, that the 2020 preliminary assessment plan
3 requires fifty-nine weeks of data processing, substantially more
4 than they have the resources to do, and so we must adjust our
5 requests, the three councils, by the spring of 2019 meeting, and
6 therein is why I think you're going to need meetings of the
7 SEDAR Committee each time that the council meets for the rest of
8 this year and going up into the spring meeting.

9
10 A reminder that the operational assessments need scope of work
11 and terms of reference developed three months prior to the
12 spring meeting. Now, the Southeast Center is automating their
13 data processing, and they are hiring new staff, and so their
14 capabilities, i.e., that limit of thirty-four weeks, will change
15 or increase as time goes on, if they're successful in improving
16 their resources.

17
18 That is all of the presentation for the SEDAR Steering
19 Committee, and there was a lot of changes, something for us all
20 to digest, and I know the Center is in transition as well, and,
21 Clay, I welcome any comments that you might want to make on any
22 of this.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Porch.

25
26 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. For the most part, I agree
27 with what Doug has presented. We are in transition, and we're
28 trying to reposition people and hire some new people to process
29 the data. As many of you know, the data processing challenges
30 in the Southeast are much greater than any other region, because
31 we have eight states to deal with and lots of academic partners,
32 and trying to stitch all these pieces of data together is quite
33 challenging, even with the Atlantic States and Gulf States being
34 active partners, and so that's part of the problem there.

35
36 We need to hire a few more people to help us process the data,
37 and we have also already contracted people to try and automate
38 the data processing, to the extent possible, so that we
39 essentially have a one-stop shop in the cloud, where not only
40 our assessment folks could download the data at their
41 convenience, but the public can generally access the data. That
42 is in the works, and that will probably take a couple of years
43 to come to full fruition.

44
45 Doug mentioned the research track, and I think you indicated
46 five weeks for data processing time, and then he suggested that
47 it might take ten weeks for red snapper, and, generally, when
48 we're talking about a benchmark assessment, yes, it takes twice

1 as long for red snapper as any other species, one because we
2 have the east and west assessments, and so we're essentially
3 doing two assessments, plus the sheer number of datasets that
4 are being processed for red snapper, and it's arguably the most
5 complicated assessment in the country, and so it does take a
6 long time to do that.

7
8 For a research track, I don't think it's going to be quite
9 double, and so we probably need to refine those numbers a little
10 bit. I don't think it's ten weeks of data processing time for a
11 research track for red snapper, and so maybe we need to go back
12 and kind of iterate that a little bit more.

13
14 You mentioned the interim red grouper assessment, or analysis,
15 and just interim analyses in general. The reason why we wanted
16 to do an MSE, management strategy evaluation, is to refine how
17 much you might increase catch with an increase in an index or
18 decrease catch with a decrease in an index.

19
20 The concept would be, for instance, if we had a fishery-
21 independent survey and it covered basically the fishable size
22 classes for any species, and pick red grouper, if the index is
23 going up, arguably you should be able to increase catch a little
24 bit.

25
26 If the index is going down, you should decrease, but exactly how
27 much you increase catch or decrease catch with the index is the
28 question, because there is always some observation error in an
29 index. In other words, the index isn't a perfect measure of the
30 trends in the stock, and there is some observation error, or
31 maybe the index doesn't cover the entire range, and so the
32 trends in the stock can be a little bit different from the
33 trends in the index, and so you want to buffer how much you
34 increase or decrease catch in response to the index, and so
35 that's the idea of wanting to do a management strategy
36 evaluation, but I think we can knock out some preliminary
37 evaluations in just a few months.

38
39 The operational assessments, in this case, as Doug said, they
40 can be anywhere on a continuum between updates, where you're
41 just adding years of data and changing nothing else, to what
42 we're calling a standard assessment, and the idea would be the
43 SSC and others would contribute to craft the terms of reference,
44 and presumably the SSC would only add to the terms of reference
45 things that they feel comfortable reviewing.

46
47 In other words, if it was something that they felt was outside
48 their expertise, that might need the additional independent peer

1 review, and that should probably go to a research track, but, if
2 it was just adding a new index of abundance, the SSC might be
3 comfortable reviewing that, and so you would just add that to
4 the terms of reference for the operational assessment.

5
6 Of course, the more complicated you make that, the more things
7 you add to the terms of reference, it starts getting towards a
8 standard, and it takes more data processing time, and so we
9 would have to adjust that schedule to account for the fact that
10 you have more data processing time. Thanks.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Just a couple of observations. I want to say
13 the thirty-four weeks of data processing and actually -- We
14 utilized that when we went to the SEDAR Steering Committee
15 meeting, and that's the first time that really we've tried to
16 plug in the different types of assessments and get that schedule
17 honed-in on using that type of strategy, where you understand
18 what your bottleneck is, and you're always going to have a
19 bottleneck at some point in the process, no matter what the
20 process is.

21
22 At this point, that's our weakest link. That's our bottleneck,
23 but if we understand that and that is very transparent and you
24 understand that's what it is and you can put a number on it,
25 thirty-four weeks, then you don't go into a process and try and
26 pick and choose things and think you're going to get something
27 and then you don't. You know what it is, and you work towards
28 it, and hopefully one day we can work through it, but this makes
29 it very clear what we're up against and what we can expect to
30 get, and then we make better decisions as to what species and
31 types of assessment, what level of assessment, you want to put
32 on that schedule.

33
34 I really actually thought that, although some people may see it
35 as a negative thing, I think it was a very positive thing at
36 that meeting, that we understood that and we worked around it,
37 and we worked within it.

38
39 The other thing that I wanted to say is I think this MSE that
40 you're talking about going through that process with red
41 grouper, I think that will be very helpful, actually, to the
42 SSC, because I think that was one of the kind of gray areas
43 where they had some questions of, well, okay, yes, we can see
44 this, but how far do we go in one direction or the other and how
45 do we come up with that percent change that you would want to
46 offset, and so I think that's going to be helpful.

47
48 Then the question that will put you on the spot is when are you

1 going to have that ready for them? Do you think they will be
2 able to see that at their next meeting, which would be in July,
3 so that the council could have some feedback on it from them for
4 our August meeting, so that we could, hopefully by October, get
5 a document started on red grouper, because that's kind of the
6 whole point. We know we're a little behind the curve on this,
7 and the fishermen have been telling us for a couple of years now
8 that we have a problem.

9
10 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, I think by July we could have some preliminary
11 analyses, but not a full-blown management strategy evaluation.
12 Those typically take some time, but we can look at what's been
13 done in the literature for similar situations, and maybe we can
14 do some preliminary analyses to give us some guidance on that
15 for the short-term, and then we will refine it over the long-
16 term.

17
18 The only other thing I would add is, with the thirty-four weeks,
19 that's recognizing, as the Chair recognized, it's accounting for
20 the bottleneck that we have in data processing. Right now, it's
21 not with the assessment leads, and so, when you see all those
22 slots that we're giving, those aren't the primary bottleneck
23 anymore. It's actually the data processing. That's my job, to
24 figure out how we can give you guys more weeks in the data
25 processing, and so my goal is to make the assessment leads the
26 limit again and handle all that data processing.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Frazer.

29
30 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you. If we work backwards from thirty-
31 four weeks, and earlier on in the presentation we were asking
32 for some discretionary time to deal with kind of unforeseen
33 things, how many weeks would you want, from the Science Center's
34 perspective, for discretionary issues?

35
36 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Porch.

37
38 **DR. PORCH:** I don't think that was actually originally raised by
39 the Science Center, but the idea is, if you want some more
40 flexibility in the scheduling, you need to have a little bit of
41 wiggle room in there, and when you schedule everything to the
42 hilt and then something unforeseen happens, then, since there is
43 no wiggle room, it's really hard to respond to that, and
44 something has to give.

45
46 The only thing I would add to that, probably even more important
47 than that wiggle room, is being consistent in the scheduling,
48 and one of the things that we have insisted on is we can't

1 change the schedule less than a year out, because there is too
2 many inefficiencies introduced when you do that. You have your
3 data processors trying to get all the datasets ready, whether
4 it's your ageing, reading otoliths, whether it's processing
5 fisheries statistics, and then, all of a sudden, you say, no,
6 we're not going to do that and shift gears and go to another
7 species, and I can see Dave nodding his head.

8
9 When you do that, you are always introducing inefficiencies into
10 the system that slow us down, and so we need to do a much better
11 job of consistent planning, preferably at least two years in
12 advance, and hopefully we get to a point, for certain key
13 stocks, that we actually have a fairly regular schedule, and
14 that will make the whole process more efficient.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Anson.

17
18 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not on your
19 committee, obviously, but I had a question, based on Dr. Porch's
20 comments. Related to terms of reference and the operational and
21 whether or not specific questions that are added to the terms of
22 reference that come from the SSC, as to whether or not it would
23 change that from operational to a standard and then, thus,
24 change the time.

25
26 This is kind of a big turning wheel, and there are lots of
27 things going on relative to limited resources and trying to
28 squeeze that all in within the year, and so it's my
29 understanding that there was already, in the older way of doing
30 things, there was a process by which terms of reference were
31 developed, and that was primarily developed in the SSC and not
32 so much input from the council.

33
34 Do you see this new change -- Will that guide a lot of the
35 decisions that the SSC makes relative to specific terms of
36 reference for specific assessments, whereas now, with this new
37 process and everything, that they may not include terms of
38 reference, only because it's going to slow that process down
39 now, and do you see that changing at all from the way it was
40 before and whether or not moving it from operational and
41 standard kind of on the fly or within this working window --

42
43 If there is some new data that comes along or something comes
44 along that poses some interest to SSC members that might help
45 address or provide a better assessment, I am just wondering if
46 they wouldn't ask for that one or two items, because it's going
47 to now be bumped up into a standard, which is going to throw off
48 the timing and then everything else kind of trickles back.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Porch.

3
4 **DR. PORCH:** All we're doing is replacing update and standard
5 with operational, and then exactly what you're going to look at
6 in the operational assessment will be dictated by the terms of
7 reference, and so, in that sense, it's almost just semantics,
8 but an operational assessment is really reflecting the continuum
9 of what we call a strict update now up to what we're calling a
10 standard.

11
12 The only caveat that I would place there is sometimes some of
13 our standards have almost risen to a benchmark assessment, and
14 we would want to avoid that. In other words, there could be
15 some pressure that, in order to avoid a research track, we just
16 call it an operational and then add tons of things in the terms
17 of reference, and so one of the jobs of the staff will be to
18 look at what is being asked in the standard and then calculate
19 how many weeks of data preparation time are going to go along
20 with it.

21
22 Then that would have to figure into our scheduling, but,
23 essentially, I don't see it being fundamentally different from
24 what we're doing now, because we are still developing terms of
25 reference for a standard, but it's just a name change.
26 Operational can be anything from an update to equivalent to what
27 we call a standard.

28
29 It's preferably more towards an update, unless there is some
30 compelling reason to change, and, not only that, but you would
31 want to make sure the SSC is comfortable reviewing it, because
32 they are the only review body at that point, unless you go to a
33 research track. Does that answer your question?

34
35 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Donaldson.

38
39 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not on your
40 committee, but, Clay, to your point, and I think it's worth
41 mentioning about streamlining the data processing, we have
42 received some funding through FIS to kind of modernize our data
43 management system to help along those lines, because I agree
44 that we want to make sure that we get that process as
45 streamlined as possible, and so we're trying to update it so
46 that we can provide the information in a more timely manner, and
47 so I just wanted to mention that.

1 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Along those lines, I heard, I guess
2 anecdotally I heard, that eventually the game plan is to get to
3 a system that is, and I don't really know who to look at when I
4 say this, and so I apologize, but to get to a system where it's
5 almost mechanized.

6
7 In other words, we don't wait to read the otoliths or do this or
8 do that until the council says, well, I want a cobia assessment
9 and then we go start trying to process however many years' worth
10 of data that it and that it would actually be mechanized, and
11 those things would be done every year, to take some of that
12 burden off. Now, I realize that's probably far in the future,
13 because first we have to catch up from where we are, but is that
14 the game plan?

15
16 **MR. DONALDSON:** Well, through GulfFIN, we already do that. When
17 we collect -- When the states collect the otoliths, they process
18 them, and that's part of the program. It's to not only collect
19 them, but to process them and put that in a database.
20 Unfortunately, funding for that activity has been inconsistent.
21 It appears that we've got funding to begin it again later this
22 year or next year, which is good, but that's always been part of
23 the GulfFIN program.

24
25 National Marine Fisheries Service has taken a different
26 approach, but they are working on erasing that backlog, and so
27 it would be -- I think that's part of the streamlining process
28 that Clay is talking about, is getting all the stuff ready and,
29 instead of waiting, have it ready to push a button and go.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Anything else on this topic? If
32 not, we're going to proceed on in our agenda, and that is going
33 to take us to our Updated SEDAR Schedule Review, and I think Mr.
34 Rindone is going to lead us through that discussion.

35
36 **UPDATED SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW**

37
38 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am. You will see that we updated the
39 schedule at the end of May, and it notes the last SEDAR Steering
40 Committee date in that little bar underneath the main heading.
41 2018 is final, which means that we're not looking for any
42 changes for 2018, and the same goes for 2019.

43
44 Our terminal years and start dates were also updated for all of
45 these species that are listed, and so you can keep an eye on
46 those to see when the council should anticipate receiving some
47 of these stock assessments.

1 Most of the body of work for 2018 -- Well, I guess not most, but
2 about half the body of work for 2018 has been completed. The
3 gray triggerfish and red grouper assessments are going to begin
4 this winter, and we expect the MRIP calibration updates to
5 really kick off in the next couple of months, and that will
6 continue into 2019, and then the FWC will begin a yellowtail
7 snapper benchmark assessment this winter as well. Any questions
8 on the rest of 2018?

9
10 Then 2019, and, again, this one is also final. It sees us
11 finishing gray triggerfish and red grouper round about the
12 summertime. Then it's finishing the MRIP calibration updates in
13 the spring. Our scamp research track will begin in the early
14 months of 2019, and it will continue all the way into late
15 spring of 2020.

16
17 We have a vermilion snapper standard assessment, which the
18 council had been trying to squeeze onto the SEDAR schedule for
19 some time, beginning in the fall of 2019 and then a cobia update
20 beginning about the same time. The yellowtail snapper
21 assessment with FWC will be finishing up at the end of 2019, and
22 we will have an update assessment for king mackerel done by the
23 NMFS HMS branch that will run the course of the year, but it
24 could take less time. It just depends on what they have to deal
25 with to update that assessment.

26
27 2020 is currently proposed, but we would like to get this
28 finalized as soon as we can, because it helps plan things out
29 for the Science Center, and we have a research track/operational
30 track, and basically what this means is that the operational
31 assessment is going to immediately follow the research track for
32 red snapper, and that will take all of 2020 and 2021. There is
33 a long list of things that the analysts have wanted to do with
34 the red snapper assessment for some time, and they think that
35 this will give them the opportunity to do those things.

36
37 We have an operational assessment also for greater amberjack,
38 gag, and scamp, and you will remember that we will have recently
39 finished our scamp research track assessment, and so we will get
40 new information and yield streams for those three stocks, and
41 they are all beginning mid to late 2020, and with gag ending
42 sometime in the early spring of 2021. Then FWC will do a
43 benchmark assessment for mutton snapper, which will begin in the
44 winter of 2020 and continue through the winter of 2021. Any
45 questions for 2020?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Diaz.

48

1 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** I am still trying to grasp all of this.
2 Sometimes we've got a research track, and we follow it right up
3 with an operational assessment, but, in the case of scamp, we're
4 taking up a slot in two different years to do this, and is that
5 the way it's always going to be, is it's going to take two slots
6 to -- Once you do a research track, you're going to have to
7 obligate another slot the following year or another slot to that
8 assessment?

9
10 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Porch.

11
12 **DR. PORCH:** Thanks for the question. The idea with the research
13 track is you're taking away the pressure to end the analysis
14 early so that you can produce the management advice, because,
15 the way the current benchmarks are, you have a hard stop where
16 you have to produce the management advice, and so what that ends
17 up doing is it often cuts premature all the analyses that you
18 would want to conduct for especially a first-time assessment or
19 if you have some really fundamental new questions that you want
20 to ask.

21
22 Essentially, by having a research track, you remove those hard
23 deadlines, but, at the same time, you may want to get management
24 advice as soon as possible after the research track, and so then
25 you can schedule that operational assessment shortly after, and
26 it would typically be three or four months or something like
27 that after the research track is completed, and so, yes, the
28 short answer is, for species or stocks where you want to have a
29 research track, then you would have to schedule an operational
30 assessment sometime after that.

31
32 It sounds like it prolongs the process, but, to some extent, the
33 research track is kind of running in the background. A lot of
34 the work is running in the background, and we're still going to
35 have the data workshop, the same as we do for SEDAR benchmarks,
36 because I think that's where we get the most bang for the buck
37 in terms of participation from stakeholders, and then you can
38 still have an assessment workshop, if it's needed, and then the
39 review workshop, if needed, but the gist of it is it's much less
40 demanding on the data providers, because they don't have to, for
41 a research track, give you the most recent data, or even a
42 perfect dataset, because you are just trying to vet,
43 conceptually, all the inputs and model structures, but then,
44 when you come to the operational assessment, that's where you
45 want basically perfect data that's going into it. You want the
46 most recent years of data, and then you want to make sure that
47 everything is processed in the best way possible, according to
48 best practices.

1
2 That is my long-winded way of saying that, yes, you would
3 typically have a research track, and then you could schedule an
4 operational assessment right on the heels of that, so it extends
5 your timeline, but it also preserves the scientific integrity of
6 that research track process, so it doesn't get cut short because
7 you know you have a management deadline, and so, as often
8 happens, we say, okay, we can't look at this anymore, because we
9 have to produce the management advice.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dale, just to follow-up on that, it may look
12 a little funny on the schedule, but it is kind of lined up that
13 way. If you actually look at the quarters -- You've got, in
14 2019, Scamp RT, research track, and, if you go out to the start
15 and end, that's Q1 of 2019 through Q2 of 2020, and then, when
16 you go down to the 2020 row down here, you see Scamp OA, and
17 that picks up Q3 of 2020, and so right after the research track
18 ended, and goes through Q4 of 2020.

19
20 The same type of scenario is being proposed right now for red
21 snapper, and Red Snapper RT, research track/operational
22 assessment, in 2020, which carries through to 2021, and, at the
23 end of 2021, that is when you finish the research track and then
24 the operational assessment that follows, where you will actually
25 get some hard numbers to manage by. Dr. Porch, is that right?

26
27 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, that's exactly right, and I also want to make
28 it clear that, because the research track is a more thorough
29 process, presumably we won't have to have research tracks very
30 often, and so you will have -- Instead of research
31 track/operational assessment repeated over and over, it's every
32 now and again there might be a research track, if there is a
33 compelling reason to do so. The rest of the time, it will be
34 operational assessments.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** I just want to remind the council
37 that the next SSC meeting and the August council meeting need to
38 start thinking about what's needed on scamp, gag, and greater
39 amberjack.

40
41 If you recall, if they are listed as standard type assessments,
42 they're going to require more data time than is available, and
43 so it's time to start prioritizing them at the next meeting, and
44 we'll start with the SSC meeting and get their input and also
45 address does red snapper need to be a research track or not, and
46 I think that's still a question that we're thinking about.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Any other feedback from the

1 group? Seeing none, is there any other business to come before
2 the SEDAR Committee? That gets us right back on schedule.

3

4 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 18, 2018.)

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