

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

4
5 The Tremont House Galveston, Texas

6
7 OCTOBER 23, 2019

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Tom Frazer.....Florida
11 Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
12 Paul Mickle (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
13 Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas

14
15 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

16 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
17 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
18 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
19 Roy Crabtree.....NMFS
20 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
21 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
22 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
23 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
24 John Sanchez.....Florida
25 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
26 Bob Shipp.....Alabama
27 Greg Stunz.....Texas
28 Ed Swindell.....Louisiana
29 Troy Williamson.....Texas
30 Lt. Mark Zanowicz.....USCG

31
32 **STAFF**

33 Zeenatul Basher.....Coral and Habitat Biologist
34 Assane Diagne.....Economist
35 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
37 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
39 Jessica Matos.....Document Editor & Administrative Assistant
40 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
41 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
42 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
43 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
44 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

45
46 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

47 Greg Ball.....Galveston, TX
48 Luiz Barbieri.....GMFMC SSC

1 Assistant Commander Jarrett Barker.....TPWD
2 Terry Bessinger.....
3 Bubba Cochrane.....Galveston, TX
4 Richard Cody.....NOAA Fisheries
5 Chris Conklin.....SAFMC
6 Katie Fischer.....
7 Troy Frady.....AL
8 Benny Gallaway.....LGL Ecological, Galveston, TX
9 Susan Gerhart.....NMFS
10 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA
11 Max Lee.....Mote Marine Lab, Bradenton, FL
12 John O'Keefe.....
13 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
14 Casey Streeter.....
15 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL
16 Jesse Zepeda.....Galveston, TX

17
18
19

- - -

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Contents.....3
4
5 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes.....4
6
7 Action Guide and Next Steps.....4
8
9 Review of Gulf Stocks Suitable for Interim Analyses.....4
10
11 Summary of August 2019 SEDAR Steering Committee Webinar: NOAA’s
12 Recommended Use of the Current Gulf of Mexico Surveys of Marine
13 Recreational Fishing in Stock Assessments.....18
14
15 Review: Report to Congress Regarding Section 201 of the
16 Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018.....34
17
18 Summary of the 2019 SEDAR Steering Committee Webinar.....38
19
20 Review Gulf of Mexico SEDAR Schedule.....40
21
22 Adjournment.....42
23
24 - - -
25

1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Tremont House, Galveston,
3 Texas, Wednesday morning, October 23, 2019, and was called to
4 order by Chairman Phil Tom Frazer.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** We will convene the Gulf SEDAR Committee.
11 The members of that committee are myself, Lance Robinson, Martha
12 Guyas, and Paul Mickle. The first item is the Adoption of the
13 Agenda, and if I could get a motion to adopt the agenda from one
14 of the committee members.

15
16 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** Motion.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Motion by Paul Mickle. Do we have a second?
19 Second by Mr. Robinson. The agenda is adopted, unless there is
20 any other additions. Seeing none, we'll adopt the agenda. The
21 second item on the agenda is Approval of the June 2019 Minutes.
22 Is there a motion to approve those minutes?

23
24 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** So moved.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's moved by Ms. Guyas. Is there a second?
27 It's seconded by Paul Mickle. Is there any opposition? Seeing
28 none, we'll move right into the Action Guide and Next Steps,
29 and, Dr. Simmons, if you want to walk us through that.

30
31 **REVIEW OF GULF STOCKS SUITABLE FOR INTERIM ANALYSES**
32

33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was
34 planning to do this one item at a time, because we have several
35 things to cover, and so, just really briefly, we're going to
36 start with a review of the Gulf stocks suitable for the interim
37 analyses, and this was presented to the SSC, and I am going to
38 read just a little note that we got from them, so that Dr.
39 Barbieri doesn't have to come up, and Dr. Porch is going to go
40 through that presentation. Just recall that the council
41 requested this in June of this year.

42
43 The SSC did review it, and they didn't have a whole lot of
44 comments, but they did recommend, and this is on page 9 of the
45 report, becoming familiarized with this process and that the
46 user input should be used to fine-tune observations. With that,
47 I will send it over to Dr. Porch.

1 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** As Dr. Simmons said, I'm going to tell you a
2 little bit about these interim ABC analyses that we've been
3 planning and how they will work and the species they can be
4 applied to.

5
6 As all of you are now painfully aware, although stock
7 assessments represent the best scientific information available,
8 an enormous amount of work goes into it, not only on the part of
9 lead analysts like you just saw from Skyler Sagarese, but a
10 whole army of people, from state and federal offices and
11 academia, et cetera.

12
13 A lot of work goes into them, and they use the best data that we
14 have, even if it's not always perfect data, but the problem is
15 they are usually two to three years out of date by the time they
16 even get to the council, and so there's a couple of ways
17 forward. One, we could try to do annual stock assessments, but
18 stock assessments are expensive, and very time consuming, and,
19 honestly, we just don't have the manpower to try and do annual
20 assessments for all these assessments.

21
22 Even if we did, they're still going to be about a year out of
23 date, because it takes that long to process all the data, and so
24 what we have been doing is forecasting from the last year of the
25 assessment, and we have to make a number of assumptions, and we
26 just saw a presentation where Skyler went through some of that.

27
28 The problem is we can't really predict things very well. As the
29 old Danish proverb said, prediction is hard, especially when
30 it's about the future, and we saw, with red grouper, what we had
31 was a big red tide event that was in 2018, and it spilled into
32 2019, and, of course, we couldn't foresee that in our
33 projections, and so the projections are a bit optimistic.
34 Before that, they were optimistic because of that glitch in the
35 data input in this historical catch history.

36
37 Of course, you have other environmental disasters, and you might
38 have a recruitment failure, and you might have a big pulse in
39 recruitment that we couldn't predict, manmade disasters, et
40 cetera, and so we have a hard time forecasting things,
41 especially when you're talking about several years into the
42 future.

43
44 An alternative way of going forward in between assessments is
45 this so-called interim ABC analysis, and, just to take the
46 mystery out of it, all we mean by interim ABC analyses is any
47 quantitative method where you're adjusting the catch advice for
48 a stock between full stock assessments, and so, in order to be

1 called an interim ABC analysis, in the way we're using it here,
2 a completed and accepted stock assessment is required, because
3 that's sort of the hinge point. We're going to get ABC advice
4 from that and then adjust it up or down, based on trends in the
5 most recent reliable data that we have.

6
7 Ideally, we would also want easily updated data, like a survey
8 abundance trend, where it's a scientific survey and we can
9 process it very quickly. In some cases, we may be able to use
10 mortality rate information, and there's a whole slew of
11 potential ways of doing an interim ABC analysis. I am going to
12 show you one.

13
14 We would also like it to be relatively simple to explain, and we
15 would like it to account for some measure of uncertainty,
16 because none of the data we have is perfect, and, ideally, we
17 would vet it through management strategy evaluations, because,
18 basically, if you come up with this interim harvest control
19 rule, and it doesn't work well in simulations, it's probably not
20 going to work well in the real world.

21
22 The example that I'm going to show you is about as simple as it
23 gets. It's as close to button-pushing as you can get in a stock
24 assessment, and, yes, I am showing an equation, but this is,
25 again, about as simple of an equation as you can use, and the
26 idea here is that you have an ABC from a reference year, which
27 could come from a full stock assessment, usually the last year
28 in the stock assessment, and then we want to give catch advice
29 for the next year, and so, instead of doing projections and
30 making assumptions, what we do is get a survey index for that
31 year and we look at how much the survey has changed relative to
32 what the survey value was in the reference year, and so that's
33 that ratio. The I is the observed index of biomass, and I_{ref} is
34 the reference year, and I_Y is the observed index of biomass in
35 the year you're interested in.

36
37 You just look to the extent that that index has gone up or down,
38 and you decrease your ABC by that same amount. The advantage of
39 this, of course, is -- Obviously, it's as simple to explain as
40 you can get, and it uses the most current data, ideally
41 something that we can update quickly.

42
43 Now, this formula, however, does not account for uncertainty,
44 and it hadn't, as yet, been vetted through management strategy
45 evaluations, and so we've done a little work, where we actually
46 have a paper in review where we've done the management strategy
47 evaluations, and this is a slightly different version of this
48 formula.

1
2 You see the ABC in any given year that you're interested in
3 would be the reference ABC times a slightly different ratio.
4 You still have the index in year Y and the index value during
5 the reference year, but you have that -- Well, I was told to
6 emphasize that this is the beta sigma factor and not the BS
7 factor, but the idea here is that S is the standard error of the
8 index, and then B is a buffer, and you might determine that
9 buffer by how much you want the catch to change from one year to
10 the next.

11
12 The idea here is that, if you have a big standard error of the
13 index, and if it's going up and down a lot, because you have low
14 sample size, then you probably don't want the catch to go up and
15 down as rapidly as the index does, and I will show you an
16 example of that, to make it a little bit clearer.

17
18 Here now, we're using the most current data, and it's still
19 pretty simple to explain. It accounts for uncertainty, and, as
20 I will show, we vetted it through some management strategy
21 evaluations.

22
23 Now, just to give you kind of a conceptual feel for how it
24 works, if you look in this graph, you see this orange line that
25 says "forecasted biomass", and that big dot would be say the
26 last year of the value, or the last year of the assessment, and
27 the top graph is fish biomass, and the bottom graph would be an
28 ABC, and so, typically, what we do is we have the situation in
29 the last year of the assessment, and we make some assumptions
30 that basically the fishery will operate similar to the way it
31 has in a few years, and recruitment will be similar to what it's
32 been in the last few years.

33
34 Then we project out what the fish biomass would be and what the
35 ABC should be, and, in this case, if you look at the bottom,
36 those little squares in orange would be the ABC, and basically
37 it's FMSY times the biomass and then decremented for scientific
38 uncertainty. Just for simplicity, I am not including P^* in all
39 of this, but the reality is the true trend, in this case, was
40 actually increasing much more rapidly than we forecasted. Of
41 course, we don't know the true value. God knows it, but he
42 hasn't told me, and so all I have is this orange line to go on,
43 at the moment.

44
45 Now, let's suppose that I have an index of abundance, and so
46 this index doesn't count every fish, but it counts how the fish
47 population has changed from one year to the next, because it's
48 impossible to count every fish out there, but, if you can get

1 representative samples, you can see how the density has changed
2 from one year to the next.

3
4 If we have an index like that, in this case a perfect index that
5 tracks the relative abundance of the stock, then what we can do
6 is -- In the graphs in the right, you will see the index. In
7 the graph below it, we're applying the formula to find out what
8 the ABC would be, and you can look -- If you look in your
9 personal versions, you can tell there's a black dot in the
10 middle of that blue square, and the point is it gives you the
11 exact answer. It gives you the exact true ABC.

12
13 The next year, 2022, we get another index value, and then we
14 calculate -- We apply this formula and calculate the ABC, and it
15 goes up, and, again, it matches what the true value is, and we
16 just keep doing that year after year, and so, in principle, if
17 we had a perfect index, we could apply this approach and get the
18 actual ABC, taking into account whatever is really happening in
19 the environment.

20
21 Now, the problem is that our surveys aren't perfect. It's
22 impossible to get a perfect survey, because, again, you would
23 have to count every fish out there, and it would cost more than
24 the fisheries are worth, and so we would have an index that
25 maybe looks more like this green line, which actually would be a
26 really good survey, if you were that close to the true trends.

27
28 Then, if we apply our formula in the graph below, you would get
29 those green dots for ABC recommendations, and you can see it
30 actually works pretty well. It's following the true blue line
31 quite closely, and it's definitely performing better than our
32 projections did, in this case.

33
34 Now, keep in mind that this is all hypothetical examples, but
35 what happens when we get a more realistic case, and, very often,
36 our surveys actually look like this. They might get the overall
37 trend right, but they're going up and down a lot from one year
38 to the next, and it's largely because of sampling issues. We
39 just can't sample enough out there, and so, if we have a highly
40 variable survey, and we try and apply this formula, the simplest
41 version of the formula, with no buffer for uncertainty, then our
42 ABCs are also going to go all over the place.

43
44 On average, they are tracking correctly the true ABC, what the
45 ABC should have been, but, in any given year, they're going up
46 and down like that index is, and so do you want a fishery where
47 one year you may say that catch is going to be really low, and
48 then the next year it flies up, and so that's why you might not

1 want to use this formula when you have a highly-variable index.
2 You want to use some buffering for uncertainty.

3
4 Now let's use our buffer formula, and the way this formula is
5 written is, again, that B is a buffer quantity. For those of
6 you who are into statistics, it's inspired by confidence
7 intervals, and so a B of two corresponds to something like a
8 little over 95 percent confidence interval, but the point is
9 what you're saying is, with this buffer up at two, that you
10 don't want to change your catch quota too much, unless you're
11 really pretty confident in the trend.

12
13 When you plug these numbers in now, the comparison I want you to
14 see is in the graph on the left, and that's with no buffer, and
15 the graph on the right, where you actually have a buffer, and
16 you can see those green dots don't go all over the place.

17
18 Now, actually, their average is slightly less, because if I made
19 that buffer say 100, it would be a straight -- The ABC would be
20 a straight line from the reference ABC, and you wouldn't be
21 allowing it to change at all, but, in this case, I am allowing
22 it to change some, and there is some ups and downs that you're
23 going to get, but it's tracking much closer the total trend
24 without giving you totally wild fluctuations in catch, and so
25 that's the sorts of things we can do.

26
27 If we wanted less fluctuation from year to year, we raise that B
28 factor to three or something like that, and that's where
29 management strategy evaluations come in, because you can talk
30 with stakeholders and figure out how much change from year to
31 year they are willing to live with, and then you adjust that B
32 accordingly, and you can do that through simulations, to find
33 out sort of what is the optimum value of B.

34
35 This graph, I won't go into all the details of it, but the
36 vertical axis is just the simulated biomass trends over the
37 biomass at MSY, and the red is basically depicting what happens
38 when you do a forecast approach, and it's a fixed TAC, but it's
39 based on forecast, like what we do, and then the black would be
40 if you had an annual assessment, an annual unbiased assessment,
41 and so that's as close to true as you can get, and those blue
42 lines are basically versions of what I just showed you.

43
44 What you can see is this interim assessment approach tends to
45 track annual assessments really well in the simulations, and so,
46 mathematically, it works, and it seems to be an appropriate way
47 to interpolate in between one assessment to the next, and, in
48 fact, in this case, the assessments are five years apart, and we

1 have made some other runs with the assessment, ten years apart,
2 and the interim approach, again, worked almost as well as having
3 an annual assessment, and so it's a much cheaper way to give
4 catch advice in between stock assessments. I think the key
5 point here though is that you need a good survey index of
6 abundance.

7
8 There are many other types of interim ABC analyses, and I didn't
9 want to go into it and hit you with tons of different formulas.
10 In fact, one of the examples that Skyler showed for lane snapper
11 could be retooled to provide an interim analysis approach, and
12 so there's many ways, and which way you choose would depend on
13 the type of information that you have and what you can process
14 quickly.

15
16 In this case, I am showing you one with a survey index of
17 abundance, where, ideally, it would track the biomass that's
18 vulnerable to the fishery, since you're giving direct catch
19 advice from it, or, if you had a recruitment survey, then you
20 would need to account for the time lag, how long it takes for
21 the recruits to get into the fishery, and so it's a little more
22 complicated formula, but still maybe not too bad.

23
24 We don't want the index to be too, too noisy, because, if it's
25 just all over the place, it doesn't matter that I'm going to
26 have to have a huge buffer or a huge variance, and then it's
27 just going to be a constant catch, and so you need a meaningful
28 survey.

29
30 Ideally, we simulation test all of that, because each survey has
31 its own nuances, and the ecology of the animal has its own
32 nuances, but we could move forward with even just what I've
33 shown you, and it's probably going to be better than
34 forecasting.

35
36 Then, finally, in general, survey-based indices are best,
37 because of the most direct indicator of what the population
38 trends are, but, in certain situations, we might be able to use
39 a catch per unit effort index, and that's what we're using for
40 the index-based approach in the lane snapper example that Skyler
41 showed you.

42
43 The trick there is getting a catch per unit effort index that
44 really tracks abundance, and, as you know very well, fishermen
45 are smart. When abundance goes down, they adjust their way of
46 fishing, and so their catch rates don't go down as fast as
47 abundance, and we call it -- In our lingo, they are hyperstable,
48 and it's hard to get around that. It's hard to disentangle

1 fishing behavior from what's actually going on in the fish
2 population, but, in some cases, we may be able to get something
3 that's suitable, like the headboat index for vermilion snapper.

4
5 Just getting into timelines here, how long does it take us to
6 process this information, the bottom longline survey is probably
7 the fastest. From the time that we complete the last survey,
8 the last vessel trip, it takes us a month, or maybe two months,
9 to process the data, at the outside. The reef fish video survey
10 takes us about a year, because of reading the video, and it's
11 very manpower intensive. There is lots of pictures, where
12 you've got to count and identify fish.

13
14 The reef fish diver survey is a bit faster, because they're
15 already recording species ID when they're on the bottom, but
16 that's only applicable to a couple of species, where most of the
17 catch is in the Keys and the Florida east coast.

18
19 We have our trawl survey, and that takes about two months to
20 process. We have a larval fish survey, but that takes about
21 eighteen months, because they've got to sort all the plankton,
22 and we ship it over to Poland, where it's cost effective to do
23 so, and then fishery catch per unit effort is kind of variable,
24 but, typically, it takes us around six months, by the time the
25 fishing is completed to actually processing all the data and
26 running it through our standardization approach.

27
28 For any given species, and we went through this exercise, to
29 find out which indices seem to be -- Which surveys might be most
30 representative. For red snapper, it's pretty clearly the bottom
31 longline and video surveys that are most representative.
32 Vermilion snapper, believe it or not, we get a fair number of
33 adult-sized fish in the trawls, and so it would be either the
34 video survey or the trawl.

35
36 Gray snapper, the video survey or the diver-based survey. Red
37 grouper, it would be the bottom longline and video. Gag
38 grouper, it's only the video, and the same thing with scamp. It
39 looks like we only get enough fish in the video survey.
40 Yellowedge grouper, it would be the bottom longline, and greater
41 amberjack is the video.

42
43 Gray trigger, the jury is still out. We're doing some work
44 there, and we think we might be able to get a good enough index
45 from the video survey. King mackerel, the only options would be
46 the larval survey, which we treat as a survey of spawning
47 biomass or fisheries CPUE, and we're still looking at that, but,
48 then again, if it's the larval survey, that's eighteen months,

1 and so it's not as advantageous for an interim analysis. Then,
2 for something like yellowtail snapper, it would be either the
3 diver or the video survey.

4
5 What does this translate to then in actual months? I will go
6 back and look at this figure, and so, for red grouper, and
7 remember we did an interim analysis last year for red grouper,
8 using the bottom longline survey, again, it's a processing time
9 of about a month, and that survey typically ends around
10 September, or sometimes into October, and, of course, you've got
11 the holidays coming up, but we should be able to deliver data
12 with 2019 information by January of 2020, the full interim
13 analysis.

14
15 The reef fish video survey, this would be a few species, like
16 amberjack, and there's going to be at least a twelve-month time
17 lag, and so the next time we could update that would be May of
18 2020, because that's typically completed around May or June.
19 When you're looking at something like gag grouper, again, that's
20 going to be -- You have 2019 data in May or June of 2020, and
21 the same thing for scamp.

22
23 Yellowedge grouper, being bottom longline, that's going to be
24 available in January as well, and so a number of them we can
25 have -- Anything that says bottom longline, basically we can
26 have this January of 2019 data. Anything that relies on the
27 video is going to be like May or June of 2020, to have 2019
28 data. It's still much, much faster than a full assessment, and
29 that's all I have, and so any questions.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. Dr. Mickle.

32
33 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. That was a great
34 presentation, and I think it's really valuable, and I appreciate
35 the information. My question is, and I think it's on Slide 10,
36 when you talked about I guess identifying B and letting that
37 drive the ABC, as far as its variability, and so, inherently, B
38 is the variability, right, because that's what you're driving
39 into the equation there.

40
41 You mentioned a little bit about what the decision factors are
42 behind identifying the metric for B, and I think, with
43 recruitment, or species that are highly variable in recruitment,
44 if you've got a big wavy ABC, and recruitment is doing
45 everything else, then everything is just crazy, and the Type II
46 error becomes very high.

47
48 My question is, when you look at your timeline, and I think I

1 know why the larval isn't brought in, because the timeline is so
2 long on it, but just you touched a little bit on what drives the
3 metric of B, but would you tell a little bit more of really what
4 maybe all could go into there, or I know you talk to the
5 fishermen and everything else, but just elaborate on what drives
6 the identification of how you determine the number of B.

7
8 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. The variability actually is characterized by
9 that S, and that's the standard error of the index, and so
10 that's how much it's -- That basically measures how much it goes
11 up and down from one year to the next, just due to sampling
12 variability, because you don't have an infinite sample size, and
13 you couldn't count every single fish.

14
15 The B is basically your tolerance for that variability, and so
16 it scales how much you are willing to change from one year to
17 the next. Let's say you have -- In this case, this actually was
18 based on an index with a coefficient of variation of about 0.5,
19 which is on the high side for some of our surveys, but we do use
20 data that have CVs that high.

21
22 In that case, you can kind of -- Just from this, you can see the
23 effect of it. If we said, look, we don't want to buffer it at
24 all, we would be telling the fishermen that, any given year, you
25 can go up tremendously up or down, based on just sampling
26 variability in the survey, and we don't know how much of that up
27 and down is real or not. Like I said, it may get the overall
28 trend over time, but, in any given year, some of it is
29 population trend, and some of it is just the vagaries of not
30 having enough samples out there.

31
32 This would be a discussion that the council could have, as far
33 as how much do they want to follow an index like this, follow
34 each annual trend, when you know there is some sampling
35 variability in it, and it's not all population, and it's really
36 a measure of, again, what is your tolerance for changing catch
37 limits from one year to the next, because we don't have the
38 luxury, in this case, of just saying, okay, we're going to set
39 the catch for three years out and just use the average, like we
40 do with projections a lot of times.

41
42 We will just average across it, but, here, you don't actually
43 know what the catch advice is until each year, when you do the
44 interim analysis, and so the way you mitigate against changing
45 too much from one year to the next is just specifying that B
46 parameter, and, again, it's really up to the council on how much
47 change they're willing to make, and what we can do, any time we
48 do an interim analysis, is we can say -- We can calculate that

1 value of S, and then we can show you what the trends would be,
2 theoretically, or even just looking historically.

3

4 If we had applied this approach in the past, and so we actually
5 are looking at past index trends, what would the catch have
6 been, and how variable would it be? Then you could kind of
7 decide that, okay, maybe we don't want to change as much as this
8 each year, and so we'll specify that B parameter so that it
9 dampens down the year-to-year changes. Again, we can't -- It's
10 really a choice at the council level of how much do they want to
11 allow these catch limits to change from one year to the next,
12 and so it's hard to give advice beyond that.

13

14 It really needs the council feel for what do you want to do
15 here. If you wanted to be constant, you just set B to a huge
16 value, and it's going to be the reference level of ABC from the
17 last year of the assessment for the whole time period.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Paul.

20

21 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you. At least the question of, if S is so
22 high, is there a tipping point where you don't use B, or --
23 That's what I'm getting at. When does the biological, or the
24 life history, show up to say that maybe B is uninformative?

25

26 **DR. PORCH:** If S is much bigger than -- Well, this is a scale
27 where the index values are around the order of one, because of
28 relative trends, and, if S is on the order of 0.5, or higher
29 than 0.5, you probably wouldn't use the index.

30

31 It's just too variable, and it might give you long-term trends,
32 but it's not going to be informative from one year to the next,
33 and so that's why I said that, whatever index survey we use, we
34 want it to be a relatively stable survey, in the sense that you
35 get enough sampling size that you're really tracking abundance,
36 and so we'll do that screening first, but, even so, even if you
37 have a survey with a CV of 0.3 or 0.4, there is a couple of
38 things that could happen.

39

40 You still have sampling variability, and so do you want -- It
41 may mean the catch advice could vary from one year to the next
42 by a factor of 50 percent, and do you want to allow that? If
43 you don't, you just raise this B value, and, like I said, we can
44 look at the historical trends in an index and give you an idea
45 of how variable the catch might be, and then you can scale B
46 according to how much you want to allow that change, but, beyond
47 that, it's hard to give concrete advice on what B should be,
48 because it's really up to the council on how much they want to

1 allow the catch to change from one year to the next.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** There's a couple of people, and I just want to
4 follow-up real quick on Paul's question. It seems to me, if
5 you're going to do an interim analysis, or take that approach,
6 you almost have to commit to it year after year after year,
7 right, because -- Every year. All right. Cool. Kevin.

8
9 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** I have several questions, if I can. To that
10 topic or point, I am just curious as to whether or not it would
11 be possibly better to not do it in year-one, but maybe do it
12 after year-two, and get kind of a backtrack, an average, of the
13 previous year and then go into that year, to maybe help smooth
14 out that line, at least at the year-two point.

15
16 Then is this iterative? If you had the opportunity where there
17 were two defensible surveys that everyone felt comfortable with
18 doing, would you just add that in addition to the second
19 variable there, or the second computation, on the right-side of
20 the equation?

21
22 **DR. PORCH:** You can combine two surveys, and it could be an
23 average of two surveys, or a weighted average, and so you
24 wouldn't -- In other words, that I_Y might be something like Index
25 1 in Year Y plus Index 2 in Year Y, and then I_{ref} would be Index
26 1, something like that. You can certainly do that, and maybe,
27 for some indices, that would be advisable, if they are highly
28 variable, and you do some sort of weighted average.

29
30 Of course, if one index takes one month, and the other index
31 takes a year, then that means it's going to be a year lag
32 between when we can do the analysis and when the data was
33 collected.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** One more, Kevin.

36
37 **MR. ANSON:** Last one. The idea of defensible, I guess, in light
38 of choosing a survey and such -- Defensible would be one that
39 provides a comprehensive or significant coverage of the range of
40 the species of which it's prosecuted, as well as occurs?

41
42 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, absolutely. You don't want a precise index
43 that precisely measures one reef. It really needs to be
44 representative of the whole area that you're applying the ACL
45 to.

46
47 **MR. ANSON:** Or one side of the Gulf and leave out the other side
48 of the Gulf, right.

1
2 **DR. PORCH:** Unless you were doing something like red snapper,
3 where we actually explicitly are given catch advice for the
4 eastern and western Gulf.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Dyskow.

7
8 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Porch, I think you're on
9 to a really great solution to our dilemma of how do we get
10 accurate survey information on every species in the Gulf with
11 100 percent accuracy all the time. It's impossible, and so this
12 approach gives you some information that we can use to make
13 decisions on that is achievable within your resource, both human
14 and dollar.

15
16 I come from a business background, and I can assure you that, in
17 business, forecasting is a key part of what we do. We know the
18 past real well, and we have some indication of the future, and
19 we apply a formula, and that allows us to forecast, and, in the
20 business community, money is perhaps more precious even than
21 fish is to us, and so they get pretty good at this, but,
22 ultimately, no formula-driven forecasting tool is ever going to
23 be 100 percent accurate, and you have to rely, at some point, on
24 the intuitive insight of the person analyzing it.

25
26 In other words, you can look at this and say, well, the fishery
27 is not going to -- It can't possibly vary by 30 percent in a
28 year, and it can't, and so you have to use your insight to say
29 what is probably happening here, and how can we adjust this
30 outcome to make it more reasonable, and so there's a human
31 element that has to be part of this process, in order to have it
32 be statistically valuable to us as a council, for example.

33
34 I don't think the formula is going to -- Just by your example
35 there, and, obviously, those kinds of variations probably won't
36 exist in the real world, and you might have to make these
37 adjustments throughout the process, to get closer to reality.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Clay, do you want to respond to that?

40
41 **DR. PORCH:** Certainly there is some truth to that, although I
42 would say that red tide has knocked stocks down by 30 percent
43 before, and so sometimes it does happen, and so sometimes -- You
44 know, you could actually get trends -- Normally, you don't see
45 populations trending the same way as this more extreme example
46 that I showed here in the green, although, occasionally, it
47 does, and some populations are highly variable, from especially
48 short-lived populations, from one year to the next, but the idea

1 here is at least you're using the most recent, most reliable
2 data to give you more current updates than waiting from one
3 assessment to the next and where you're making a lot of
4 assumptions, and it doesn't account at all for something like a
5 red tide event.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Phil, did you want a quick follow-up?

8

9 **MR. DYSKOW:** I just want to comment to that. Obviously, any
10 forecasting tool you have is going to operate within some
11 parameters that you set on the frontend. Red tide is not within
12 those parameters, probably, nor would be a heavy storm season
13 that would prohibit people from fishing, and so those pluses and
14 minuses have to be adjusted at some point with the human
15 element. You have to use your best insight into what's causing
16 this to happen.

17

18 Elements outside of your parameters are going to occur all the
19 time, and so I'm just saying that, at some point, someone has to
20 use their own sense to adjust these numbers appropriately, or
21 you're going to be making decisions with wildly inaccurate
22 results, and the only way you can correct that is with some
23 human insight, frankly.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Stunz.

26

27 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not on your
28 committee, and so thanks for recognizing me, and I will save
29 some of it for I guess Full Council, but I just want to get my
30 two-cents in here, as a fisheries scientist.

31

32 Clay, I am really supportive of this, and I think it's great,
33 following this adaptive management paradigm or whatever we're
34 talking about, but it allows us to be most responsive to the
35 fishery, and these are just clever, analytical ways to move us
36 down the road, so we're not constrained by this three-year
37 timeline or more or whatever it is for these assessments, and so
38 I would fully support it if we move on, and I would definitely
39 encourage the committee to look heavily at these methodologies.

40

41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Bosarge.

42

43 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** I will be quick. Thanks. Clay, I just
44 wanted to say thanks a lot for this. I know, under you reign, I
45 guess we would call it, you came in and spearheaded this idea of
46 having research assessments and operational assessments and then
47 supplementing those with these interim assessments, and we
48 really weren't sure how that would work until we finally used

1 one, and we used it for red grouper, and it was wonderful.

2
3 With red grouper, we kind of knew what we wanted to do, but,
4 because not everybody around this table is a scientist, we were
5 just starting at each other and saying we know we want to go
6 down, but how much do we go down, and so you all prepared that
7 MSE for us, and you gave it to the SSC, and they were able to
8 come up with a quota and said, hey, this is probably about where
9 you want to be.

10
11 Once we had that threshold, that ballpark, to look at from them,
12 we said, okay, well, let's go slightly lower than that, and
13 let's use last year's landings, but that really helped us hone-
14 in. Otherwise, it was just a blank slate for us.

15
16 I say that to say that, you know, if we do go into this
17 buffering, I think it would probably be helpful for us, although
18 it may be a council decision, to have it go through the SSC and
19 let them take a look at it and give that buffer some feedback
20 for us, maybe give us a ballpark and say, between this and this,
21 this is what we think that buffer ought to be, and then we'll
22 have a starting point to figure out where it would be, if we go
23 that route.

24
25 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you for that, and maybe "term" is better than
26 "reign", but I also want to give credit where credit is due. I
27 have a lot of talented people to work with, and so they have all
28 contributed to these discussions, but thank you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. We're going to go ahead and move on to
31 our next item on the agenda, and that will be the summary of the
32 August 2019 SEDAR Steering Committee webinar, and that would be
33 NOAA's recommended use of the current Gulf of Mexico surveys of
34 marine recreational fishing in stock assessments, and, again,
35 that's Dr. Porch, and so that will be Tab I, Number 5.

36
37 **SUMMARY OF AUGUST 2019 SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE WEBINAR: NOAA'S**
38 **RECOMMENDED USE OF THE CURRENT GULF OF MEXICO SURVEYS OF MARINE**
39 **RECREATIONAL FISHING IN STOCK ASSESSMENTS**

40
41 **DR. PORCH:** There's not really a presentation, and so she's just
42 bringing up the so-called white paper, but more like the white
43 album. I didn't intend to talk about this too long. I think
44 you guys were -- Unless somebody was living under a rock, you
45 know that we have had some major changes in the recreational
46 fishing statistics, two major ones that I will highlight here.

47
48 One, MRIP, the Marine Recreational Information Program, has gone

1 from a telephone survey, the old CHTS, Coastal Household
2 Telephone Survey, to a mail survey, where they get a lot better
3 response rate, and, after much review, it's been determined that
4 it's a much less biased approach. When they do the fishing
5 effort survey, based on a mail survey, they get much higher
6 estimates of fishing effort, about twice as high in the private
7 boating sector and several times higher for the shore mode than
8 the old CHTS estimates.

9
10 When you multiply your intercept data by higher effort
11 estimates, you're going to get higher catch rate estimates from
12 this new FES survey.

13
14 At the same time, as you know very well, several states have
15 implemented their own programs, and some of them are
16 supplemental surveys, like Alabama Snapper Check, that just
17 focuses on landed red snapper, and it doesn't worry about
18 discarded red snapper or any other species, and then you've got
19 some like LA Creel, which focuses on all the species, and so
20 it's, in many ways, kind of like MRIP, and then you've got
21 Florida GRFS, which is also similar, but it focuses on certain
22 reef fish species and not all the species that are caught.

23
24 I won't go into all the details of the surveys, but MRIP did --
25 The Office of Science and Technology has certified those other
26 programs, but I just want to remind folks that certified isn't
27 even a judgment of whether the survey is good or bad, but it's
28 saying, if all the assumptions the survey makes are met, if, and
29 it hasn't evaluated all of the assumptions, but if those
30 assumptions are met, and the survey is executed properly, then
31 it's a valid survey, but what has to go into it further is
32 evaluating some of the specific assumptions.

33
34 One that I can think of off the top of my head is almost all the
35 surveys assume that the intercept information, the catch rates
36 of different species, for the fraction of the fishing effort
37 that comes out of people's homes, private dock sites, et cetera,
38 is the same as what they're getting when they go to public dock
39 sites, and it's because it's hard to sample everybody's house.
40 You can't just go to everybody's dock and sample.

41
42 A lot of the surveys make that assumption, and there's a number
43 of other assumptions, and, depending on the method, they make
44 different assumptions. Whether they are all equally valid,
45 that's something that still remains to be evaluated, and so I
46 just wanted to make it clear that, when MRIP certifies a
47 program, they are not actually making an explicit judgment that
48 it's good or bad. It's just saying, if all the assumptions are

1 met, and it's executed properly, then it would be a good survey.
2
3 Obviously, you've heard this before, and so I don't want to
4 spend a lot of time on it, but we've had a lot of peer review of
5 the new FES estimates, and so we endeavored to put together this
6 white paper, to sort of chart a way forward, recognizing there
7 is still a lot of work to be done to figure out why these state
8 surveys are getting different estimates than the MRIP survey
9 with the FES, and those differences, as you know, are pretty
10 large. In many cases, for the private recreational fleets, the
11 catch rates -- The catch estimates from the MRIP FES are twofold
12 higher than the catch estimates coming from some of the state
13 surveys.
14
15 That's a pretty big difference, and we definitely want to
16 understand why, and, as Richard Cody here can attest, we are
17 trying to work with the states to understand why those estimates
18 are so different, but, until we do, we reviewed several
19 different options.
20
21 Option 1 is our preferred option at this point, from the
22 National Marine Fisheries Service point of view, where we're
23 using a time series of catch estimates that are fully calibrated
24 back in time, and we've put a lot of effort into trying to
25 calibrate the new FES survey to the estimates from the old
26 Coastal Household Telephone survey that go back to 1981.
27
28 That survey exists, that calibration exists, and we have FES-
29 calibrated estimates all the way back to 1981, and so we propose
30 that those estimates, having been heavily reviewed and are
31 complete back in time, be used for the time being in all of our
32 stock assessments.
33
34 We can't use the state estimates for that, because they're not
35 calibrated back in time. They just started, and we don't have
36 any way to calibrate them back in time, whereas, with the FES
37 survey, what they did is look at things like cellphone use and
38 how it has changed. I mean, that's one of the reasons that we
39 moved away from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, is it's
40 gotten to the point where most people use their landlines just
41 to screen calls, or they don't even have landlines anymore.
42
43 When the phone rings at my house, and it's the landline, I don't
44 pick it up. I wait to hear the answering machine and see if
45 it's somebody that I want to talk to, and this is a common
46 phenomenon, and it's gotten to the point that only I think a
47 small group of retirees answer their phone anymore, and so your
48 sampling universe has changed quite a lot, and so it's really

1 not a valid approach anymore.

2
3 That has been the agency's position, is that, for the time
4 being, we'll use these FES estimates in our stock assessments.
5 There is an Option 1B there that, once we get the calibrations
6 from FES to the various state currencies, if the council wants
7 to manage using the state currencies, we'll do the assessments
8 with FES, but, if the council wants to manage using the state
9 currencies, we'll get these calibrations and convert our FES-
10 based ACL into the various state currencies, but we have to get
11 those calibrations, and I think the timeline has been moved a
12 little bit, but we expect it to be available by -- Richard, is
13 it now towards the end of 2020, or can we get it a little
14 sooner?

15
16 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** (Dr. Cody's response is not audible on the
17 recording.)

18
19 **DR. PORCH:** So it might be mid-2020 that we'll have the
20 calibrations available. Then there's an Option 1C, and this
21 might take a little bit longer, but this is where we hope to
22 find a way to integrate all the various surveys, and so LA Creel
23 -- Well, LA Creel, I think, is the only game in town now, and so
24 there's still the calibration factor that has to be developed,
25 but, for GRFS, for instance, we have MRIP and GRFS going on at
26 the same time, and so what's the best way to integrate those two
27 surveys, and we probably could integrate some of the other
28 supplemental surveys, like Snapper Check, and so there's work
29 that still needs to be done there, and the timeline isn't
30 exactly clear. I know the states are meeting and trying to
31 think about how they want to move forward on that.

32
33 We did look at other options of rescaling the MRIP time series
34 to various state surveys, and some had suggested just continuing
35 on with the old CHTS estimates, which tend to be much lower than
36 the FES estimates, but the problem is, like I said, the CHTS,
37 the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, is now sampling a very
38 limited frame, basically some older people that still use a
39 landline, and it's just not valid anymore, and so, really, the
40 only way forward at this time is to use the FES in the
41 assessments, and then we will keep moving towards trying to
42 integrate all the surveys, to have one estimate, instead of all
43 these different ones, but that remains to be seen.

44
45 That is where we are with regard to the white paper, if we want
46 to talk a little bit about the Steering Committee meeting that
47 we had in August, where I basically said the same thing as I
48 just said now.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons, real quick. Hold on, Clay.

3
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie,
5 could you please pull up Tab I, Number 5(a)? That's the August
6 2019 webinar report. I think you want to go to page 5.

7
8 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, exactly. I laid out basically the same spiel
9 that I just gave you, and the gist of it is the committee
10 appreciated receiving a clear path forward, regarding how we
11 move forward with the recreational landings in the short term,
12 and it really is the only defensible approach at this time.

13
14 Several folks raised some concerns that the report doesn't go
15 far enough, in the sense of not providing clear direction for
16 developing a plan to integrate the different Gulf of Mexico
17 state surveys, and, honestly, that wasn't the intent of the
18 report.

19
20 The report was really focused on the short term for how are we
21 going to move forward with assessments, and I was one of the
22 ones pressing that we needed an answer, because we have all
23 these assessments coming up, and we can't have each different
24 working group making different decisions of what statistics they
25 want to use, and so we really need to decide what the best
26 statistics are.

27
28 On the other hand, we do need to move forward, and I know the
29 Office of Science and Technology and our end and various state
30 personnel have been meeting and trying to figure out how we can
31 reconcile these surveys and understand, again, what the
32 differences are, and the reality is that we don't have a true
33 estimate. There is no way to know exactly what the catch is.
34 They are all surveys, and they are all estimates, but, until we
35 can employ satellites to spy on every single individual at every
36 moment to find out when they're fishing, we're not going to get
37 the exact effort in catch estimates. I am not sure we want
38 that.

39
40 Other things that came up during the Steering Committee meeting
41 was that the group did encourage that those efforts that we're
42 making with the states to try and reconcile these surveys
43 continue. There was a discussion about a workshop that was, at
44 the time, being planned for September, between Florida and MRIP,
45 to figure out how to integrate GRFS, and I think that's been
46 postponed a little bit, and it's still in the planning stage,
47 and there was some discussion about the impact that these
48 current MRIP estimates will have on allocations, just like we've

1 been having just yesterday.

2
3 Ideally, I think the group felt an approach would be developed
4 for updating and modifying allocations across multiple species,
5 and so you have the same sort of rationale and then not have to
6 make plan amendments for every single species, but you come up
7 with a rationale for specifying what those allocations should be
8 that would apply to not one species at a time, but multiple, and
9 that was it. It was a relatively short Steering Committee
10 meeting, I think just a couple hours long, and so I don't know,
11 Carrie, if you wanted to add anything.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** No, thank you, but we could have
14 Dr. Barbieri come up and discuss the SSC recommendations, and
15 then the committee could probably ask questions.

16
17 **DR. LUIZ BARBIERI:** Thank you. Good morning, everybody. I have
18 just one slide, and this is an issue that is of great interest
19 to the SSC, because it involves data that goes into stock
20 assessments and is then used to manage the stock and provide
21 catch advice to the council, and so this is something that the
22 committee is really interested in.

23
24 I gave a presentation to them at this last meeting that
25 basically summarized what Dr. Porch just talked about, about the
26 white paper and then what came out of the SEDAR Steering
27 Committee, and we recognize, the SSC recognizes, all the
28 limitations that are on the table with use of the state surveys
29 for stock assessments immediately, and that, right now, the only
30 option, really, is Option 1A, for the most immediate situation.

31
32 However, it is disappointing, because there was nothing in
33 place, that we could tell, that clearly identifies a path. We
34 have a lot of effort and a lot of resources being spent by a lot
35 of states and organizations in collecting vast amounts of data,
36 and we know how much additional data can help our stock
37 assessments and help our management of species, and so the
38 committee was a bit disappointed that there wasn't really a
39 clear path identified in this report to let us know what are the
40 timelines for making this data in a way that can be integrated
41 into stock assessments.

42
43 There are some ideas there in Option 1C, but those ideas are
44 projected to be completed in the future, and no clear path was
45 identified, and the committee had concerns about that.

46
47 Obviously, there are concerns that remain about how do we handle
48 the different currencies that now exist between what is being

1 used for monitoring the landings and the catch level that is in
2 place. It's difficult for us to understand, really, how those
3 relationships work between what's being collected by the
4 different states, in terms of quota monitoring, and what the
5 catch advice is.

6
7 I think, because the SSC is charged, under NS 2, National
8 Standard Guidelines 2, to really identify what is the best
9 scientific information available that can be used for stock
10 assessments and management, this is something that was of great
11 interest to us.

12
13 We have then discussed this issue that having these
14 discrepancies resolved, having some way to get to this bottom
15 line, is needed, and we would like to request an accelerated
16 process to the Office of Science and Technology and the Office
17 of MRIP, the MRIP staff program, that they can continue working
18 with us in trying to address and understand better what are
19 these differences in results that are coming out of the
20 different state surveys and MRIP.

21
22 We have, since the report, the white paper, we have been
23 discussing this with NMFS, and they are really committing
24 themselves to work with us and get this issue resolved, but this
25 is something that we would like to see, moving forward. Then,
26 finally, the committee made that motion that we would like to
27 have an in-person workshop that would bring to us the MRIP
28 program staff to kind of give us an overview of the survey as a
29 whole, both the APAIS and the FES components.

30
31 A similar workshop was presented to the South Atlantic SSC, and
32 it was very productive, and the committee was very appreciative
33 of that, and it has a much better understanding of how the
34 survey works. By having this workshop, it will also help us
35 better evaluate how these different types of data that are in
36 these other surveys can also connect into the MRIP.

37
38 We made that motion, and I am hereby requesting that you support
39 that request from your SSC to have the MRIP program schedule, at
40 their convenience, a meeting that they can come and organize
41 with us to give us an overview of the new MRIP program and how
42 that ties -- Really give us an update on how that ties into the
43 different state surveys that are collecting, in some situations,
44 information, data, just on red snapper, and, in other
45 situations, on a variety of species.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. A couple of things.
48 I mean, we can certainly make that request on behalf of the SSC

1 to address the broader issue. I think, for the purposes of
2 today, what I would like to do is -- I mean, the obvious
3 implication here is for state management and what's going to
4 happen in the short term, and, if I can, I will put Roy on the
5 spot a little bit. Give me your thoughts on where we might go.

6
7 **DR. CRABTREE:** The issue of the different currencies and how to
8 deal with that is a very important issue, and we've talked about
9 it on a number of occasions, and I agree with Dr. Barbieri that
10 there is an urgency for us to resolve this as quickly as we can.
11 At the same time, given the importance of red snapper to our
12 constituencies and our fisheries and the council, the states, we
13 want to make sure that we have a sufficiently rigorous
14 calibration model that has been fully peer reviewed, so that we
15 have confidence that we are doing this with the best information
16 that's available.

17
18 We kind of want to get through this issue one time, and we don't
19 want to have to chip away at it. Given Richard's comments, we
20 expect to see these calibrations at some point next year, and,
21 depending on the timing of that, we may be able to address this
22 next year, or it may be too late in the year in order to do
23 that, and then it could be the 2021 season, but I think everyone
24 should be expecting that, at some point, we're going to take the
25 state allocations and convert them into the currency of that
26 state's state survey, and that's what these calibrations are
27 designed to enable us to do.

28
29 I would think we would certainly address this issue prior to the
30 2021 season, and, depending on when get the calibrations, we can
31 perhaps deal with this next year, and then, depending on the
32 delivery of the assessment, we may be able to deal with all of
33 this at once, or we may deal with getting the currency issue
34 resolved prior to the assessment results, and I just don't know
35 at this stage how the timing is going to be worked up, but we
36 are going to have to resolve it, and we're going to have to deal
37 with it in as timely a fashion as we can, and so this is a real
38 priority, and I just want everybody to be thinking about it.

39
40 I appreciate the efforts by the MRIP folks and Richard and the
41 Science Center and Dr. Barbieri to bring everybody together, and
42 we want the states to take a look at some of these calibrations,
43 and we want everybody to be in agreement that what we had is the
44 best that could be done, and then we'll come in and resolve this
45 issue.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, just to recap here, I think, as
48 Clay pointed out, moving forward, using the FES approach is the

1 only really defensible way, as we move through the new
2 assessments. Until we get that assessment, obviously, we're
3 going to have to deal with a status quo situation, but we'll
4 make an expedited effort, or every effort, to get the calibrated
5 data in place. We may get that for 2020, but, if not, certainly
6 for 2021.

7
8 **DR. CRABTREE:** Yes, I think that's correct, and it may be that
9 we address the currencies before the assessment results come in,
10 because I think that could be done once we have the calibration
11 models, and so we'll see how that all works out, but as quickly
12 as we can I think is the key issue.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Roy. Dr. Mickle.

15
16 **DR. MICKLE:** I have two questions, and they are very different
17 from each other. The first one is I guess the protocol for NS 2
18 -- I'm glad that you brought up National Standard 2, because
19 that's the charge of the SSC, and it's a great charge, but what
20 is the need for a calibration?

21
22 Let's say you have a really good survey, and I don't know which
23 survey is really great, but let's say we have a great one, and,
24 if there is not a need for a calibration and the best available
25 science is deemed by the SSC as a certain survey, is there a
26 reason that we have to do a calibration? Does the SSC have the
27 ability to identify a survey as best available science and not a
28 need for calibration, because that is a fast way of doing
29 something.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Barbieri.

32
33 **DR. BARBIERI:** Well, that's a good point. I mean, all these
34 questions are on the table. I mean, you may remember, from what
35 Dr. Sagarese presented yesterday, that it was a fishery-
36 independent survey that integrates the underwater camera survey
37 that FWRI conducts off of parts of Florida with what NMFS
38 conducts off of the Panhandle, the Panama City Lab, and then
39 what the Pascagoula Lab conducts for other parts of the Gulf,
40 and a model has been developed, a statistical model has been
41 developed, to be able to integrate those types of data and
42 generate just one data trend there that is informing the model.

43
44 Again, in this time of limited resources and the need of data, I
45 think that whatever we can put on the table that, having gone
46 through rigorous scientific review, and a process to
47 appropriately integrate this data into the assessment and
48 management, I think it would be a benefit to the process, and so

1 that is on the table.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Roy?

4

5 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think part of the key here though is, for
6 assessment purposes, you have to be able to reconstruct the
7 historical time series of catches, and so, when you change to a
8 new survey method, even if you decide that new survey method is
9 perfect, then you've got to go back in time and calibrate the
10 historical time series to adjust it so that they are in sync
11 with your new survey method.

12

13 That is part of the issue that we have, and I don't know if
14 we'll ever be able to say that this survey is perfect and these
15 are sub-perfect, and I don't know how that will work out, but
16 you do have to reconstruct that historical time series in a way
17 that is consistent, in order to do the assessment. I believe
18 that, and, Dr. Barbieri, would you agree?

19

20 **DR. BARBIERI:** Yes, and that is correct. That's one approach
21 that can be used, and it is used often, but, statistically, when
22 you look into this, there are ways that you don't have to use
23 either or. You can use a combined approach. Now, still, you
24 have to find some calibration factor, to be able to scale your
25 retrospective time series of data into the future, but there are
26 ways to integrate multiple sources of data that takes -- It
27 makes the best of having several sources of data that are pulled
28 together to generate the most information possible.

29

30 That approach, this is like -- For the fishery-independent
31 surveys, an actual statistical model was developed that was able
32 to integrate those things and calibrate both retrospectively and
33 integrate the data, different types of data, going forward.
34 Those discussions need to be had, yes.

35

36 **DR. CRABTREE:** So I think the last word is yes, and that was the
37 answer?

38

39 **DR. BARBIERI:** Yes.

40

41 **DR. CRABTREE:** Thank you.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Luiz, for that very concise yes
44 answer. Did you have another question, Paul?

45

46 **DR. MICKLE:** I guess. It's massively different, like I teed it
47 up, and so the phone survey phased out because of no landlines,
48 and so just an observation of my generation. My generation

1 started to get older, and now we have new millennials, and I
2 don't know the names of the generations coming up, but mail is
3 starting to phase out, and there are signs of it. Even my wife
4 and I, we don't open anything unless it is a handwritten letter
5 that we know is from someone or it says Publisher's
6 Clearinghouse or the IRS. That's it. Everything else goes in
7 the firepit or whatever. I mean, is MRIP taking that into
8 account? I guess this is towards Richard.

9
10 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think, to combat that, they're going to start
11 mailing out cash, periodically, and unannounced.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Cody, do you want to address that, real
14 quick?

15
16 **DR. CODY:** Paul, the survey, as it stands right now, there are
17 cash incentives in the survey currently, but we have just
18 finished a full season of looking at alternative modes for the
19 FES, and so that includes an electronic reporting option online,
20 and so a web-based survey, and so that's something that we are
21 looking at.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. We're going to take two
24 more questions, one from Ms. Guyas.

25
26 **MS. GUYAS:** My question is about the integration, and so we
27 talked about, okay, states have been certified, and now we've
28 got to go back and calibrate those back in time with MRIP, but
29 now there is this other step that is integration, and so like,
30 for example, Clay just mentioned that the Gulf Reef Fish Survey
31 now will need to be integrated, which I have been unclear about,
32 because our survey, by design, is integrated by MRIP, and so I
33 guess I'm interested in what do we mean by integration, and what
34 is that process going to be like? What's the timeline? What
35 are we talking about here? That may be a Richard question.
36 Sorry.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, I think it is.

39
40 **DR. CODY:** Well, the consultants have already started to look at
41 integration as a way to combine the different estimates, and we
42 were hoping, initially -- When we started looking at it, we
43 looked at one method, which is composite estimation, and it's
44 sort of like what Clay mentioned. It's kind of a weighted
45 averaging approach for the different surveys.

46
47 Unfortunately, it didn't work out very well for our needs, and
48 we were looking for an automated type of way that we could

1 combine the estimates, and so it's not off the table, and, in
2 fact, in 1C, the Option 1C, it's in there, but integration is --
3 The Gulf Reef Fish Survey is integrated, in terms of its sample
4 draw and other aspects, but the way it does its mail survey is
5 very different from the way MRIP does theirs, and so there are
6 things there that we need to look at, to get an idea of the
7 differences, before we can really, truly integrate the two
8 surveys.

9
10 **MS. GUYAS:** So then I guess what's the plan and the timeline for
11 doing that?

12
13 **DR. CODY:** Well, the plan right now is to focus on the
14 calibrations. I mean, that's really our primary focus. The
15 consultants are still interested or still looking at integration
16 approaches. I would say that that will take some time, and I
17 would be hesitant to make any promises on when that could be
18 completed, and certainly not by the end of next year. I think,
19 if the focus is on the calibrations, we can get those done by
20 the middle of the year and reviewed, but I think that it will
21 take more time to look at Option 1C, so to speak.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Clay, and then we'll go to
24 Leann.

25
26 **DR. PORCH:** I mean, the problem is the scale of differences. If
27 we were talking about 10 or 20 percent, it's probably within the
28 range of the sampling variability, and it would be a little more
29 straightforward to come up with just a weighted average or
30 something, but, when you are talking about twofold differences,
31 clearly it's not just the number of samples or -- There is
32 something to do with the sampling frame. Something is
33 fundamentally different, and we need to understand that, and so
34 I think the reason why we don't have a real clear plan for
35 integration is we're still trying to figure those things out.

36
37 **DR. CODY:** I would add one more thing to that. That is that not
38 all the surveys collect exactly the same data components, and
39 so, when you're talking about integration, you're actually
40 talking about integrating components from one survey with
41 another to come up with a combined estimate at the state level,
42 and so it comes with some challenges.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann.

45
46 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, sir. I'm glad to see that we're
47 working on the currencies, the common currencies, because that
48 is important, if you're going to have a stock assessment giving

1 you something in one metric, but yet you're managing and your
2 landings are coming in in a different metric. You have to have
3 a conversion, and I get that, and so that's an important piece.

4
5 To me, there is something that's even more important, and so you
6 have all these different surveys, and the state surveys, by and
7 large, are producing numbers right around here, regardless of
8 the species. The FES survey is producing numbers up here, by
9 orders of magnitude bigger, right, and that, to me -- The bigger
10 implication there is, if we don't drill down and decide which
11 numbers we actually think are more precise, because there is an
12 actual number, right? We are killing -- Dale hates it when I
13 use the word "kill", but we're killing a certain number of fish.
14 There is a number that is right. Okay?

15
16 Will we ever get to that number? I don't know, but we have
17 surveys that are at two different levels. Which one is more
18 accurate? To me, the importance of that is when you plug it
19 into -- It's not our currencies and all this and measuring, but
20 it's when you plug it into the assessment.

21
22 What scares the heck out of me is if we only plug in FES numbers
23 into the assessment -- If they're right, that is great. If they
24 were the more accurate survey, we are spot-on. If they're not,
25 how is the model interpreting that? If you tell the model, in a
26 predominantly recreational fishery, and amberjack is
27 predominantly recreational, it's coming up. If you tell it that
28 we have been killing somewhere between two and six-times more
29 fish for the last twenty or thirty years than we thought, is the
30 model going to say, well, god, we must have had a lot bigger
31 biomass out there than we ever thought, and it was a lot bigger
32 population? If we've been able to repetitively harvest that
33 many fish, year after year, there must be way more amberjack out
34 there than we thought.

35
36 If FES is right, no problem. We have raised quotas, and
37 everything is fine. If that GRFS survey, which shows a lot
38 lower amberjack landings, and that LA Creel, which shows a lot
39 lower amberjack landings, which that's two-thirds of amberjack
40 recreationally in the Gulf of Mexico, is Louisiana and Florida.
41 The other third is pretty much Alabama, which it's on their
42 survey now, I think, as of last year.

43
44 Anyhow, if their numbers were more accurate, and we plugged FES
45 into that stock assessment, regardless of the allocation, we're
46 going to have higher quotas, and too many fish are going to be
47 harvested, and so I am ready for somebody to look at the surveys
48 and say which one is more accurate, and, if you can't make a

1 definitive answer, I hope we do something like we just saw in
2 this interim, where you buffer something, somehow, and it's what
3 you put in the stock assessment, regardless of these common
4 currencies. We have got to get that right. I don't want to
5 tell that stock assessment something that is orders of magnitude
6 off the mark.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Barbieri.

9

10 **DR. BARBIERI:** Just briefly to that point, and this is part,
11 really, of what the SSC is asking, in terms of bringing this
12 workshop together. We have been discussing, with Dr. Cody and
13 other folks in the MRIP office, ways to move these things
14 forward, and we would like to have a better understanding.

15

16 There is the calibration issue, for sure, that needs to be taken
17 care of, but there are other issues that we would like to
18 explore, because of the BSIA factor that weighs into this,
19 right, because our region, as you may remember from two councils
20 ago, our region is on the path now to develop our own plan, our
21 regional plan, for the best scientific information available to
22 be integrated into the national framework.

23

24 All of those things are going to actually become very relevant,
25 and the committee is going to be put in a position that it's
26 going to have to think about all of these issues, and so, six
27 years ago, we got together, as the states and the MRIP program
28 and councils and the Gulf States Commission, under the auspices
29 of the Gulf States Commission, to start this process of
30 developing data collection programs, in that case in support of
31 potential Amendment 50 of state management of red snapper.

32

33 That was accomplished, and we are successfully now implementing
34 Amendment 50, and all of this is good, but, at the same time,
35 during that process, we should have thought about how much we
36 wanted to develop data that can be more comprehensive than just
37 for that purpose and be more inclusive of other species and
38 discards, as well as landings and can actually help better
39 inform our stock assessments and the management.

40

41 At this point, irrelevant of where we are right now, the
42 committee is requesting that meeting, and we see the will,
43 really, from the Office of Science and Technology and the MRIP
44 program to come and work with us, and we would like to start
45 reconvening the meetings that we had as a group, and that's one
46 of the reasons why the Florida meeting was canceled, is that we
47 do not feel that it is in the best interest of getting this
48 issue resolved to have individual meetings with different

1 states.

2
3 This is a regional, Gulf-wide perspective that we want to
4 develop, and we want to all work together at that regional
5 level, as we originally started working six years ago, and so
6 this is, by the way, or at least I can tell you from my
7 perspective, not an either/or. We are not against or
8 disparaging the MRIP program in any way. They have been
9 instrumental in helping us develop the surveys that we have in
10 place right now, and they have provided a lot of assistance to
11 us and worked hand-in-hand with us, and so we appreciate that.

12
13 What we are saying is that we have now invested, and are willing
14 to continue investing, resources in adding on additional data
15 that can provide more precise, and hopefully more accurate,
16 information on fisheries that, at this point, may not be well
17 sampled by a general survey of the nature of MRIP, and so having
18 these supplemental surveys would be greatly beneficial, and this
19 is the process that we would like to get started, and I don't
20 know if you want to add to that.

21
22 **DR. CODY:** I understand your concerns about the accuracy of the
23 data coming out of different surveys, and the fact of the matter
24 is that we may never know how truly accurate a survey is. We
25 can handle on precision, but accuracy is something that we try
26 to work on to identify sources of bias as best we can.

27
28 I would add though that no surveys have undergone as much
29 scrutiny or as much review as the MRIP surveys, FES and APAIS,
30 in terms of the development of the survey itself. That said, we
31 have certified the state surveys as valid survey designs,
32 basically, and that does give us an opportunity to look at the
33 differences between the two surveys, so we can get a better
34 handle on what's making one higher or one lower than the other,
35 and so I think that there are opportunities in this, even though
36 it seems like it's a difficult process, and it is a complicated
37 process, but I think that we're continuing to work on those
38 things. Once it was certified and reviewed, we didn't just drop
39 the ball and stop looking at MRIP. That's something that we
40 continue to do.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. One more, Clay, and then I'm going
43 to try to rein this one in.

44
45 **DR. PORCH:** All right. Just to this point, just to make it
46 clear, we've actually done some of these analyses, where we
47 plugged in the FES numbers, and, yes, you will get a higher
48 estimate of biomass and a higher ABC, but, if you're also --

1 Let's assume you've got that and it turns out, in fact, those
2 numbers were biased high, and so you're overestimating what the
3 ABC should be, and you're overestimating the overall biomass.

4
5 The key is whether you're getting the trends right, because
6 then, when you're doing management, as long as you're consistent
7 in the same currency, you're also overestimating their current
8 catch, and so it ends up kind of canceling each other out.

9
10 In other words, yes, the ABC would be higher, but, if it was an
11 overestimate, if the FES statistics were overestimating catch,
12 then, yes, the ABC will be too high, by about the same
13 proportion, but, at the same time, when you're managing using
14 FES statistics, then you're overestimating and saying they're
15 catching more than they are, and so it will end up -- Do you get
16 what I mean? It kind of cancels out.

17
18 It doesn't perfectly cancel out, because the FES calibration to
19 MRIP ramps down in time, because, when it started, people were
20 using telephones and all that, but there is -- It's maybe not
21 quite as dire as it seems.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I said no more, but, Susan, you had your hand
24 up, and I didn't see it, and so I apologize. Real quick.

25
26 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you for recognizing me. I'm not on your
27 committee, but I have a comment and then a quick question. You
28 know, it concerns me that we thirty-six years of MRIP APAIS and
29 all these other data collections, and then, all of a sudden, we
30 have two years of FES, and that's the best available science,
31 and it would seem to me like there should be some period in
32 which we kind of look back, to make sure it's tracking, because
33 there is so much discrepancy, in my opinion, on where everything
34 is going.

35
36 It bothers me too that we have a charter/headboat data
37 collection program that we're trying to get on the water, and
38 you're telling the charter fleet that it's five years, at best,
39 before you can get anything validated and useful out of that,
40 and so that's conflicting with me. My question is to Dr. Porch,
41 and that is what do you see using for in-season 2020 red snapper
42 as your dataset?

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think Roy -- Roy, do you want to answer that
45 question, actually?

46
47 **DR. CRABTREE:** Yes, and so, in-season 2020, it depends on who
48 you're talking about. We will continue to use the -- To monitor

1 the catches the same way we have in 2019. The states will use
2 state surveys, and then we'll use the converted back into
3 Coastal Household Telephone Survey units for the charter boats,
4 which is what we did in 2019.

5
6 Hopefully, in 2020, we can begin to address the currency issue,
7 but that really is a private sector issue. We won't start
8 monitoring the for-hire fleet using FES, I don't think, until
9 after we get the new assessment and have the ACL and the for-
10 hire fleet ACL in FES units.

11
12 Bear in mind that, in the timing of the charter boat reporting,
13 FES -- We did run the surveys concurrently for three years, but
14 the development of the FES survey took much more than three
15 years, and they started doing pilot studies and things years
16 ago, and so I am guessing at least a decade went into developing
17 the new survey, and probably more than that.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Again, I'm just going to kind of recap
20 here. I think what's important here is we have a plan moving
21 forward, at least for red snapper in 2020, and I think we will
22 go ahead and request, on behalf of this SSC, this workshop that
23 Luiz alluded to, but, importantly, I think that these are big
24 problems, and we recognize that there are challenges here, and
25 everybody understands that.

26
27 Moving forward, we have issues, and how do we scale these
28 estimates, and there are issues regarding accuracy and precision
29 that influence what numbers that we ultimately use, but our
30 intent is to -- There is a plan moving forward, and it's going
31 to take longer to get to the full endpoint, I guess, but I think
32 that we'll get there, and so, in the short term, I think we know
33 where we're going, and this topic is not going to go away, and
34 we will continue to talk about it at council meetings in the
35 future.

36
37 We are going to now move forward to our next speaker. Dr. Cody
38 is going to give us a review of the report to Congress regarding
39 the Section 201 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries
40 Management Act of 2018. Before he gets started, Dr. Simmons.

41
42 **REVIEW: REPORT TO CONGRESS REGARDING SECTION 201 OF THE**
43 **MODERNIZING RECREATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2018**

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to give
46 a little background for the committee and council, we have been
47 asked by Headquarters to review this report and provide
48 comments, and the deadline is by the end of this year, and so

1 this is the one-time opportunity for the council to provide
2 comments.

3
4 We are going to have a special webinar for the SSC next week, on
5 Tuesday, and they're going to review it as well, and so, if we
6 can get some recommendations from the committee and council, at
7 least by Thursday, to put in that letter, that would be very
8 helpful. Thank you.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. We'll get that presentation up on
11 the board, Dr. Cody.

12
13 **DR. CODY:** I would like to thank Dr. Simmons for giving me the
14 opportunity to follow-up on the request that we made to the
15 councils and the SSCs and the commissions for input on a report
16 on Section 201, which is on cooperative data collection, from
17 the Modern Fish Act, and, as you know, there are lots of
18 reporting requirements associated with the Modern Fish Act, and
19 this is just one that deals with Section 201, Cooperative Data
20 Collection.

21
22 Basically, the report is to facilitate greater incorporation of
23 data and analysis from state and non-governmental sources into
24 fishery management decisions, and so that's the focus of the
25 report, and the requirement was that we do this report, which is
26 for Congress, and there are two congressional committees, the
27 Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and
28 then the House Committee on Natural Resources.

29
30 The due date is December 31, 2019, and, as Dr. Simmons
31 referenced, we asked for comments to be provided by the end of
32 this year, which is the actual due date, and the focus of this
33 is to be done in consultation, as I said, with the councils and
34 SSCs and the commissions, and so the draft report that we
35 provided was at a fairly high level, because it's national in
36 scope, and so we didn't want to get into the weeds of describing
37 each of the different programs that we have in place in
38 different regions.

39
40 The focus was to just provide a broad overview of data
41 collection efforts in place and cooperative data collection
42 programs that we have ongoing and then to provide some guidance
43 there, and so the draft report, as I said, primarily is at a
44 high level, but it primarily references documents, other
45 documents, such as ones that contain information on National
46 Standard 2, the stock assessment improvement plans, and various
47 MRIP procedures and policy directives.

48

1 Then, also, responses that MRIP has made to National Academy
2 reviews, and so that's basically what the report is about, and
3 then there are some brief recommendations for improvements that
4 are provided in the draft report.

5
6 Just to give you an idea of what's in there, the report
7 contents, as I said, it's at a fairly high level, and it
8 includes a brief description of the current practice and
9 guidance for incorporation of different data sources.

10
11 The report is structured by a number of different sections, and
12 I have listed those under those bullets. The first one is the
13 types of data and analysis, and that basically just does a
14 summary of fishery-independent and fishery-dependent data
15 collection efforts in place, and the inclusion of state and non-
16 government sources is covered in the second section, and that
17 really references the FIN, the fisheries information networks,
18 that are set up for cooperative data collection.

19
20 Then there is a section on improving accuracy and precision of
21 data, and this references the stock assessment improvement
22 plans, and, as I said, the MRIP NAS reviews, and then this is
23 followed by best scientific information available for fisheries
24 management, and that's a separate section, and, again, that
25 references a number of different items, National Standard 2,
26 again, the stock assessment improvement plan recommendations,
27 and there's some guidance in there for citizen science data
28 incorporation and then MRIP as well that focuses on the
29 certification and those kinds of efforts to improve data
30 quality.

31
32 Then the recommendations are focused really on facilitating
33 incorporation of these data sources, and there are some
34 recommendations focused at the state and non-governmental
35 partners, and then there are others that are focused at the NMFS
36 level and the fisheries management councils.

37
38 As I said, it's at a very high level, and what we're looking
39 for, really, is your input, if we have missed anything in
40 particular that concerns you, and, also, Dr. Simmons pointed out
41 to me earlier that she had some recommendations on the
42 connections between certification and the use of state
43 supplemental surveys that we can address, but that's basically
44 what we're looking for, input that really gives us an idea -- If
45 you have any recommendations, first of all, that you can add to
46 what we have already in place, or if there are some omissions
47 that you think we should address.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. The report to Congress
2 is actually -- The draft report is in your briefing materials,
3 and I'm going to go ahead and -- I know that Dr. Simmons and the
4 staff have had an opportunity to go through the report, and I
5 will give them a first crack at looking at some of the potential
6 revisions or concerns.

7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we pull
9 up Tab I, Number 6, I will just point out in the report what Dr.
10 Cody was referring to and make sure the council is comfortable
11 with us putting that in the letter and that we weren't
12 misinterpreting the way it was written. It's the section for
13 inclusion of state and non-governmental sources, and it's the
14 third and fourth page.

15
16 I think what we're suggesting, and I think it's the second
17 sentence, and I think this is really -- The incorporation of
18 this information and data into stock assessments -- Although the
19 second sentence doesn't say that explicitly, the part with the
20 MRIP state supplemental surveys, it says frequently
21 incorporated, and I think, right now, based on the white paper,
22 there is some inconsistencies there.

23
24 I think we would suggest some changes in text, if the council is
25 comfortable with that, and then I just had some general
26 suggestions of page numbers and then maybe linking those
27 policies and policy directives that you guys have cited in here,
28 just so everyone knows which drafts you're referring to, et
29 cetera. Thank you.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I am wondering if there might be any
32 more immediate thoughts. Ms. Guyas.

33
34 **MS. GUYAS:** I have a number of comments on this, and I can
35 provide those to Carrie, but, just in general, the purpose of
36 this report, of course, is to address facilitating greater
37 incorporation of the state data information, and I kind of feel
38 like it falls a little bit short there.

39
40 Mostly it's a rundown of what is happening now, and there are a
41 few recommendations at the end, but they're not really a path
42 forward for making this better. Largely, these are things that
43 are already happening, at least in the Gulf of Mexico, and
44 perhaps not other places, and so that's just an overall comment.

45
46 There were a couple of specific things that we also picked up
47 on, and one of the recommendations for state and non-
48 governmental partners was to make sure that the sampling design

1 covers like the entire stock's range, and it's a long time
2 series, and it's peer reviewed, and I just wanted to point out
3 that, at least in the Southeast, usually that's not the case,
4 but the SSC or the SEDAR team that's working on an assessment
5 will recognize that those pieces of data are valid and should be
6 used for assessment, because that's basically the best we have,
7 the best scientific information available. That particularly is
8 true in the South Atlantic, and maybe not the Gulf always.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think, again, one of the things we might do
11 is, if you have any particular comments, provide them to Carrie,
12 and what we could do in Full Council is simply try to summarize
13 those comments in a more concise way, so that we can make some
14 efficient use of our time right now, because we're a little
15 behind schedule. Go ahead, Dr. Cody.

16
17 **DR. CODY:** We will be providing the same presentation by webinar
18 to the SSC on Monday, I think, or Tuesday.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you for doing that, and so we'll get
21 some additional feedback there as well. Okay. We're going to
22 move on. Thank you, Dr. Cody. The next agenda item is the
23 Summary of the September 2019 SEDAR Steering Committee Webinar.
24 Dr. Simmons.

25
26 **SUMMARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 2019 SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE WEBINAR**

27
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Bernie. This is Tab I,
29 Number 7. The Steering Committee met again via webinar in
30 September, and we had a couple of items, action items. If you
31 go to page 4, we were asked to approve the project priorities
32 for 2022, as shown in Table 1, and they also requested the
33 cooperators provide scopes of work for 2022 assessments by March
34 of 2020, which we have done that now, and then they asked for
35 projects to be considered for approval for 2022 and beyond, and
36 some of this gets into the stock assessment schedule.

37
38 In the Gulf, we requested yellowedge grouper, Spanish mackerel,
39 and that's the Atlantic hogfish. If we go down to the table,
40 during the discussion, the red snapper research track had
41 previously only had one slot, only one analyst, but, because of
42 the large assessment and complexity of it, it was split into two
43 slots, and so that was discussed in the Gulf. The gray snapper
44 operational assessment, we have completed that request and
45 submitted our terms of reference. I will stop there for a
46 second.

47
48 There was two other agenda items. We kept the red drum research

1 track, and we requested that in 2022 into 2023 now, it looks
2 like, and that's based on some ongoing research that's being
3 completed and whether that can be completed in time to make a
4 useful assessment for red drum.

5
6 If we go down to Other Business Topics, there are two Other
7 Business topics that came up. One was a request for future
8 SEDAR committee meetings, Steering Committee meetings, that
9 staff try to develop a way to summarize the modifications to the
10 tables and make those available for the committee prior to
11 discussion and deliberations, and that's just to better
12 understand what's driving those changes and what has occurred
13 from meeting to meeting, because we're not looking at this
14 except every five to six months, and get a better understanding
15 of what's occurring there.

16
17 Then there was also a request to improve communications with
18 data providers, and this was brought up by Dr. Porch, and I
19 don't know if he wants to discuss this any further, but we are
20 planning to delve into this more in May, at the May in-person
21 Steering Committee meeting. I will stop there and see if he
22 wants to add to any of that.

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

25
26 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. I couldn't help myself. I think, as many of
27 you have probably figured out, the assessments in the Southeast
28 are some of the most complicated in the country, partly because
29 we get so many little pieces of data that we have to stitch
30 together, and pieces of data from each of the states.

31
32 The processing of that data is all interdependent, and, if one
33 link doesn't get provided, it kind of cascades down the chain
34 and delays everything, and I think our SEDAR staff, and some of
35 you on the council, are familiar with how frequently we have
36 delays. A lot of times, it's because big chunks of data aren't
37 provided, and so we need to find a way where we can coordinate a
38 little bit better.

39
40 It's hard for me to have my staff go to all the states and say,
41 are you going to provide data, and when are you going to provide
42 the data, and they, obviously, can't go ride roughshod over the
43 states. The states have their own priorities, and so, somehow,
44 we need to coordinate a little bit better and make sure that all
45 the data are provided on schedule, if you want them included in
46 the assessment, and sometimes it's -- I mean, it's not even a
47 matter of wanting to include. They might be critical data that
48 have to be included in the assessment.

1
2 We can talk about it more at the upcoming Steering Committee,
3 but I do think it's useful, for especially those of you who are
4 representing states, to kind of think about how we might get a
5 little bit better at collaborating in that way and making sure
6 that data is provided in a timely way, because assessments are
7 hard enough and complicated enough. If you're always waiting
8 for pieces of data, it's really hard to get them done in a
9 timely way. Thanks.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any other questions? Kevin Anson.

12
13 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your committee,
14 but, Dave, isn't there already a process set up within the
15 commission that the states provide a lot of the data that's used
16 and requested of the assessments?

17
18 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Yes, that's true, Kevin. I mean, we
19 provide a clearinghouse of some of the data, but it's not all
20 the state data, but I would suggest that we look towards the
21 commission, since it is an organization of all the states, to
22 see if we can't work through us to help make sure that all that
23 data is provided.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Are there any other questions? Dr.
26 Porch.

27
28 **DR. PORCH:** I should have mentioned -- All the challenges we've
29 had are only going to be magnified if we go to a point where the
30 states are all collecting their own recreational data, and so
31 it's going to be even more important to have some sort of
32 central clearinghouse, like Gulf States, managing that data.
33 Otherwise, we will never finish assessments.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a good point. Again, I'm going to try
36 to keep us as close to schedule as possible, and so I'm going to
37 move forward now with the Review of the Gulf of Mexico SEDAR
38 Schedule, if you're ready, Ryan.

39
40 **REVIEW GULF OF MEXICO SEDAR SCHEDULE**

41
42 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, sir. As you guys are aware, we're
43 well through 2019. At this point, we have begun the research
44 track process for scamp, and we have completed the stock ID
45 portion, and I guess, just for the group's edification, scamp
46 and yellowedge grouper have -- Not yellowedge, but yellowmouth
47 grouper have been recommended to be assessed together as a sort
48 of complex, due to the difficulty in being able to distinguish

1 the species apart.

2
3 Dr. Jim Tolan, who is on the Gulf SSC, did a great job trying to
4 characterize the differences between the species, and they are
5 minimal, and they are hard to spot, and so the stock ID group
6 thought that this approach would be best. We have updates of
7 cobia and king mackerel that are either beginning or underway,
8 and the yellowtail snapper benchmark assessment being conducted
9 by FWC is also well underway.

10
11 Moving into 2020, vermilion snapper, which is getting off the
12 ground now, will be finished about midway through there, and
13 we'll also get our assessments of king mackerel and cobia, and
14 we'll start our operational assessments for greater amberjack
15 and gag, and we'll continue our research track assessment for
16 scamp, and we'll also receive our assessment of yellowtail
17 snapper, and we're looking at doing a joint review for
18 yellowtail, cobia, and, I guess, depending on the timing of
19 everything -- Well, it will probably be just those two,
20 yellowtail and cobia, between our SSC and the South Atlantic's
21 SSC.

22
23 In 2021, which now should be listed as final, we will receive
24 our greater amberjack assessment, if we haven't already received
25 it in 2020, and we'll receive the gag operational assessment,
26 and the scamp research track should wrap up, and we'll begin a
27 research track for red snapper, and the operational assessment
28 of scamp, which will give us the management advice for scamp and
29 yellowmouth grouper. Then we have requested an operational
30 assessment for gray snapper, and then FWC will begin and
31 complete a mutton snapper benchmark assessment.

32
33 Dr. Simmons went through some of the things that we requested
34 for 2022 and 2023 with you guys already, and so are there any
35 questions at this point? Just as a reminder, 2021 is considered
36 final at this point, and it's been the council's goal to try to
37 lock the schedule two years out, to try and ensure that we get
38 the things that we're asking for, because, any time we make
39 changes, especially within two years, it costs something, and so
40 we end up getting less.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any questions on the schedule? Seeing none,
43 Dr. Simmons.

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want
46 to steal Dr. Barbieri's thunder, but the SSC did briefly look at
47 this, and they did just suggest that the Spanish mackerel
48 assessment and yellowedge grouper assessment were pretty old,

1 ten years old, and so that's why you see them on the schedule.
2 That was the recommendation from the Science Center, and the SSC
3 agreed.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, Luiz, I think we're going to
6 keep you from coming up. You're good, right? All right. Is
7 there any other business to come before this committee? Seeing
8 none, we will conclude the SEDAR Committee.

9
10 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 23, 2019.)

11
12

- - -