

**SEDAR Steering Committee Summary
In-person Meeting May 16-17th, 2019
Charleston, South Carolina**

The SEDAR Steering Committee met in-person on May 16-17th in Charleston, South Carolina.

Gulf Council Steering Committee members present: Mr. Dale Diaz and Dr. Carrie Simmons

Gulf Council staff present: Mr. Ryan Rindone and Dr. John Froeschke

SEDAR Projects Report

SEDAR staff discussed the 2019 partial government shutdown and the impacts to the stock assessment schedule. Science Center staff and SEDAR staff developed a modified work plan. For the Gulf Council, the **SEDAR 61 assessment of red grouper** will be available in July 2019 and go to the SSC in September 2019 and the Council in October 2019. The **SEDAR 62 assessment of gray triggerfish** was pushed back two months from the partial government shutdown. That assessment is scheduled to be completed late October 2019 after the Council meeting. The in-person workshop held May 20-22, 2019, brought some issues to light regarding aging of the spines and the discard mortality rate. However, the goal is to maintain the current schedule with the report going to the SSC in January 2020 and then the Council at the January 2020 meeting. The **SEDAR 67 assessment of vermilion snapper** is scheduled for completion in March 2020. The **SEDAR 28 update of Gulf cobia** is scheduled for completion in April 2020.

The joint **Gulf and South Atlantic SEDAR 68 Research Track assessment for scamp** was delayed by nine months and is scheduled to finish in June 2021. An operational assessment is scheduled to begin in late 2021 and completed in 2022.

The operational assessments for **gag** and **greater amberjack** will be initiated in late 2020 and are scheduled for completion in 2021. The Committee discussed how cooperators can request in-person workshops for operational assessments without a preceding research track assessment. Based on this information, the Gulf Council requested an in-person workshop for **gag** and sent a letter with this request. Although greater amberjack is of high importance to the Gulf Council, staff did not think there was enough new information at this time to request an in-person workshop.

Due to the delays in the scamp research track assessment, the Gulf **red snapper research track assessment** is not scheduled to begin until 2021. The research track will be followed with an operational assessment. A working group will be formed in 2020 to develop terms of reference, discuss stock identification, and develop and review the proposed schedule.

Florida FWC Assessments: Yellowtail Snapper

The **SEDAR 64 assessment of southeastern US yellowtail snapper** was delayed approximately four months and is estimated to be available in March 2020. This assessment is being led by Florida FWC.

Action Items:

The Council should determine what species they would like assessed in 2022 and provide that information to the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting by September 2019. The current schedule shows a scamp operational assessment in 2022 and a research track for red snapper starting in 2021 and continuing to the end of 2022. An operation assessment for red snapper ending in 2023 for red snapper. Staff also recommends a gray snapper operational assessment that would start 2021 and finish in 2022, and a research track for red grouper starting as soon as the scamp operational assessment is completed. A research track for red drum was discussed and acknowledged to only be possible pending completion pending the completion of other studies in federal waters. A benchmark assessment on Gulf hogfish from Florida FWC has also been requested to start in 2021.

Key Stocks and Stock Prioritization Process

The South Atlantic Council has applied the Key Stocks analysis to prioritize stocks for assessment. The Gulf Council initiated the stock prioritization process in April 2017, based on guidance from NMFS headquarters, but would like to explore the Key Stock approach to see if this more simplified approach can achieve the Council's needs in a timely manner. Under the Key Stocks approach, Councils identify a list of stocks from that are eligible for Interim Analysis-style assessments. Council staff will work with the Science Center on this item and bring something to the SSC and Council for review in the fall of 2019.

Research Track Assessment Processes

The Committee discussed having a more technical person chair research track workshops. This need was based on having the necessary technical expertise to lead discussions, and on being able to understand all the materials presented. The chair would not be the lead analyst, but could be a member of the Assessment Development Team or from outside the region.

Progress on Interim Assessments

Dr. Porch asked how the Committee liked the Interim Analyses. The Science Center's goal is to automate the Interim Analyses so that others, including Council staff, could request and complete them on an annual basis. These analyses would allow the SSC to re-specify OFL and ABC, and the Council to re-specify ACL and ACT. Generally, the Interim Analyses would supersede any carryover mechanisms or paybacks currently on the books. The Committee stated

they found them useful, but were concerned about how much time these analyses took based on the Gulf Council's request for the red grouper interim analysis (which took approximately six months). Dr. Porch said that not all stocks will have an index of abundance with data across age classes that could be utilized in an interim analysis. Regarding timing, the red grouper interim analysis was an unusual case because a management strategy evaluation (MSE) was completed, which took more time than an interim analysis would in the future.

BSIA Guidance

During the Council Coordinating Committee meeting, the Final Policy Guidance on Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA) was presented. The Councils commented on the drafts of this policy in the last year. One of the outcomes of the final policy is to create a regional BSIA framework to address region-specific issues, and so this item was added to the SEDAR Steering Committee agenda under other business. Dr. Roy Crabtree stated that his staff would take the lead on initiating the regional BSIA Framework for the southeast region that would include all three Councils and Science Center staff.

508 Compliance

SEDAR staff stated that, like the Councils, the SEDAR documents would need to be made 508-compliant. SEDAR staff will be working towards a process to complete this in the future.

Scope of Work Process

The following scope of work process and deadlines were requested by the Science Center and SEDAR coordinators. The purpose of the scope of work is determine data needs and if in-person workshops are necessary to review and discuss new information being considered in an assessment. Currently, Council staff and the SSC have used a scope of work format that is similar to the terms of reference.

- Scope of work:
 - SEDAR requests scope of work from Council
 - Council creates up scope of work with SSC
 - The scope of work will be used as the basis for the terms of reference and will be approved by the Science Center approximately two years before the beginning of an assessment
- Scope of work submittal deadline requests:
 - 2020 assessments: May 2019
 - 2021 assessments: September 2019
 - 2022 assessments: May 2020
 - 2023 assessments: May 2021

The meeting concluded at 10:15 am on May 17th.