

Scientific and Statistical Committee
Scope of Work
February 27 – 28, 2024
Webinar

Agenda Item IV: Review of SEDAR 85: Gulf of Mexico Yellowedge Grouper

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Skyler Sagarese with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) will review the SEDAR 85 stock assessment and projections for Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) yellowedge grouper. SEDAR 85 resolves some data and parameterization issues from the last stock assessment on yellowedge grouper (SEDAR 22), and incorporates updated recreational landings in the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) data units. The terminal year of data in the assessment is 2021. Council staff will also present the Council's Fishermen Feedback tool, which characterized stakeholder sentiment about the stock. Dr. Sagarese will discuss some outstanding decisions to be considered by the SSC, such as how to consider recruitment and the proxy for fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY} ; currently set at $F_{30\%SPR}$). Once these decisions are settled, the SSC can later evaluate the projections based on those changes. The SSC should determine whether the assessment meets the terms of reference, and whether it is consistent with the best scientific information available.

Agenda Item V: Comparison of the Reef Fish and Snapper Grouper Fisheries of the Southeastern US

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Christopher Liese (SEFSC) will present the economics of the Gulf reef fish fishery, followed by a comparison of the economics of the Gulf reef fish and South Atlantic snapper grouper fisheries of the Southeastern US. This recently published work, with Dr. Scott Crosson (SEFSC), looks at divergent economic and fishery outcomes (in 2014-2016) resulting from very different approaches to fishery management. We find that the choice of individual fishing quota (IFQ) program management shows up as a regime shift in the productivity and profitability of the fishery. The Gulf reef fish fishery generates substantially more resource rent than the traditionally managed fishery. The difference is a large fraction of revenue (~30%). Conceptually, this additional value creation 'potential' (as prices are always forward looking) is the basis for the market value of IFQ allocation and share prices. The SSC should ask questions about the economics of the fishery and make recommendations, possibly for future research, as appropriate.

Agenda Item VI: Review of Other Deepwater Grouper Landings Data and Catch Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will present the landings for warsaw grouper, snowy grouper, and speckled hind which, together with yellowedge grouper, comprise the deep-water grouper complex. These landings will be presented to allow the SSC to consider revising the catch limits for these other deep-water grouper species such that they are in a similar data currency to that used for yellowedge grouper. The SSC may consider using the Council's Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule in determining how to establish the overfishing limit (OFL) and ABC for warsaw grouper, snowy grouper, and speckled hind. The SSC should also evaluate whether it is appropriate to continue combining these four deep-water grouper species for management in a single complex, or whether yellowedge grouper should be managed separately from the other three species. The SSC should make any other recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: Public Comment, End of Day 1

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item VIII: Review of SEDAR 74: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Research Track

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Katie Siegfried (SEFSC) will review the proceedings of the SEDAR 74 Review Workshop for the research track assessment of Gulf red snapper. The Review Workshop ultimately determined that the proposed assessment model was not suitable as presented and made recommendations for modifying the model. Dr. Siegfried will review the model's setup, the recommendations of the peer-review, and where appropriate, recommend a path forward. The SSC should consider the information presented and make recommendations to the SEFSC and Council as appropriate. Council staff will then review the draft terms of reference (TORs) for the Council's proposed follow-on benchmark assessment of Gulf red snapper, which the Council intends for SEDAR to begin in late 2024. These draft TORs consider the SEDAR 74 peer-review and the previously accepted base model from the last red snapper stock assessment (SEDAR 52). The SSC should make any modifications to the draft TORs as appropriate.

Agenda Item IX: Review of SEDAR Process Recommendations from SEDAR 74

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Siegfried will review the recommendations regarding the SEDAR assessment process from the SEDAR 74 Review Workshop. The peer-review team made a number of recommendations specifically about the manner in which the research track assessment was conducted. The SSC should review these and make any additional recommendations. The SEFSC and Council are currently in discussions about how to modify the current SEDAR process to better serve the SEDAR cooperators and analytical partners.

Agenda Item X: Review of SEDAR 96: Southeastern US Yellowtail Snapper Operational Assessment Terms of Reference and Participants for Recreational Data Topical Working Group

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will review the TORs for the SEDAR 96 assessment of southeastern US yellowtail snapper. This operational assessment was requested by the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils in response to the availability of new survey data for the recreational private vessel fleet. The State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) has collected landings data for this fleet since July 2020, and with now three full fishing years of data available, can be considered for use in place of the MRIP-FES data used for the same purpose in the last yellowtail snapper assessment (SEDAR 64 Update 2020). SEDAR 96 will also consider the sensitivity of the model and the projections to the inclusion of the recreational shore mode (also in MRIP-FES data units), and whether to continue to include those data. The Councils requested that the SRFS landings data for private vessels be considered in place of MRIP-FES due to the propensity for the latter to result in sometimes substantial and unpredictable landings estimates, and the improved precision of the SRFS data by comparison. The SSC should review the proposed TORs and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Council staff will also solicit the SSC for participants in a topical working group to discuss the recreational landings. This TWG will meet virtually via webinar in the beginning of the SEDAR 96 assessment. SSC members should volunteer at their pleasure to contribute to these discussions and decisions. The Council will then finalize its recommendations for TWG participants to SEDAR.

Agenda Item XI: Review of SEDAR 85: Gulf of Mexico Yellowedge Grouper Projections

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Sagarese will present projections for Gulf yellowedge grouper, based on the SSC's recommendations for the stock with regard to the treatment of recruitment and the F_{MSY} proxy. If the SSC has determined the SEDAR 85 base model to be consistent with BSIA, the SSC should then consider OFL and ABC recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XII: Discussion: Revised Black Grouper and Yellowfin Grouper Landings and Catch Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will present revised catch data for Gulf black grouper and yellowfin grouper. At its May 2023 SSC meeting, the SSC made revised OFL and ABC recommendations for these species inclusive of MRIP-FES data units. However, the data which were provided to the Council for this purpose included landings from the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction, contrary to the Gulf Council's data request. The revised data are specific to the Gulf. The SSC should evaluate these landings data consistent with the Council's ABC Control Rule and make revised OFL and ABC recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item XIII: Review: 2024 Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper Interim Analysis (no catch advice)

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Sagarese will present the annual Gulf red grouper interim analysis using data from the NMFS Bottom Longline survey through 2023. At its January 2023 SSC meeting, the SSC decided not to make further catch limit recommendations for red grouper based on the interim analysis process due to the amount of time that had elapsed since the last stock assessment (SEDAR 61, with data through 2017). As such, this interim analysis is presented for the SSC's information only, and does not include catch advice. The SSC should review the information presented and make recommendations as appropriate. The SSC should note that the SEDAR 88 stock assessment for red grouper is currently underway, and is expected to be reviewed by the SSC in October 2024.

Agenda Item XIV: Public Comment, End of Day 2

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item XV: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by SSC members, time permitting. If the SSC wishes to pursue action on those additional items, it can be scheduled for a future SSC meeting.