

**Scientific and Statistical Committee**  
**Scope of Work**  
**May 7 – 8, 2024**  
**Webinar**

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**Agenda Item IV:** Development of Terms of Reference for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Benchmark Assessment

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Katie Siegfried (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]) and Mr. Ryan Rindone (Gulf Council Staff) will discuss the development of the terms of reference for the upcoming benchmark assessment for Gulf red snapper (SEDAR 98). This assessment will be comprised of an in-person Data Workshop, a webinar-based Assessment Process, and an in-person Review Workshop with an independent peer-review to include the Center for Independent Experts. The SSC should consider the CIE review and its own review of the SEDAR 74 research track assessment for red snapper, contemporary science, and data availability when developing the terms of reference for SEDAR 98. The SSC will be asked to specifically address several aspects of the terms of reference and provide recommendations to the Council as appropriate. The SSC is requested to volunteer for the Data Workshop, which will be held the week of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Mobile, Alabama. Data scoping calls are expected to begin in July 2024.

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**Agenda Item V:** SEFSC Progress Report: MRIP-FES Steering Team

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Cassidy Peterson (SEFSC) will present the results of an independent exploration by the SEFSC, which evaluated the utility of managing fish stocks using the percent change in reliable indices as opposed to relying on fishery landings and discards. This “desk management strategy evaluation (MSE)” examined the impact of landings data of unknown magnitude may have on management performance for Gulf fish stocks and sought alternate management approaches that may perform better against uncertain recreational landings. Specifically, herein, the SEFSC tested combining aspects of a model-based management procedure (MP) with an empirical based MP on a hypothetical fish stock to project catch based on a single index and a single fleet. The experiment demonstrated that catch can be scaled based on percent changes in the representative index, given certain assumptions. The SEFSC can now explore increased complexity and realism in the presented framework. The SEFSC expects this work to prove useful for data situations like that presented by the current overestimation issue inherent to the Marine Recreational Information Program’s Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES). The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions, and make any recommendations to the SEFSC as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VI:** RESTORE Project Update: Projections Model Review

**Action:** None

**Committee input and next steps:** This item has been moved to the July 2024 SSC meeting.

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**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.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits: Data and Information Availability

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and feedback

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Steven Scyphers will present the findings from the National Academies of Sciences study on equity in the distribution of fisheries management benefits. This report focuses on identifying the necessary data categories to assess benefit distribution, the existing data within those categories, and potential obstacles in data collection and assessment methodologies. The presentation will highlight key recommendations such as the need for a contextual, place-based, and participatory approach to equity considerations in decision-making processes. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and ask questions.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Equity and Environmental Justice Regional Plan

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Ms. Christina Package-Ward and Ms. Heather Blough from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will present the Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan. This plan integrates the National EEJ Strategy, emphasizing the distribution of benefits equitably, enhancing community engagement, and providing institutional support for underserved communities. The presentation will cover immediate and long-term action items, including research and monitoring priorities, policy adjustments, outreach strategies, and governance involvement aimed at ensuring equitable access to fisheries management benefits. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item X:** Alternative Assessment Methods for Gulf Stocks

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Siegfried and Ms. Vivian Matter will review the SEFSC’s response to the Council’s August 2023 request for an evaluation of alternative assessment methods for Gulf stocks. Depending on the data available and the complication of the requisite analyses, a stock assessment can take anywhere from months to years to complete. This variability in time requirements is an opportunity to improve efficiency in the stock assessment process by first pairing the appropriate modeling approach with each species, rather than defaulting to an age-structured approach and exploring progressively and comparatively simpler approaches. The SEFSC will discuss its review of stocks that are suitable for alternatives to age-structured stock assessment models. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Overview of SSC Reorganization and Application Process for June 2024 – 2027

**Action:** Informational Presentation

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review the Council’s reorganization of the SSC, which will integrate the Special Ecosystem, Reef Fish, and Socioeconomic SSCs into the Standing SSC. Integrating these disciplines into the Standing SSC and increasing the Standing SSC membership number to 21 will provide ample and consistent multi-disciplinary expertise. The recommendation includes maintaining the Coral, Mackerel, Red Drum, Shrimp, and Spiny Lobster Special SSCs, and to continue convening them, when necessary, with the Standing SSC. Staff will outline the roles and engagement responsibilities of SSC members for meetings and attendance during stock assessment meetings. Staff will also outline the application process for the SSC’s June 2024 – June 2027 term and answer any questions from SSC members regarding applications for the upcoming term.

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**Agenda Item XII:** 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.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** 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.