

Scientific and Statistical Committees
Scope of Work
September 27-28, 2023
Tampa, Florida

Agenda Item IV: Selection of SSC representative for the October 23 – 26, 2023 Gulf Council Meeting, to be held in Panama City, Florida

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Luiz Barbieri will provide summaries to Council Committees, answer questions, and provide insight into the SSC deliberations from this SSC meeting.

Agenda Item V: Review of Gag Grouper Abundance, Movement, Spawning Behavior, Discard Mortality, and Environmental Influences

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will receive presentations from several researchers on Gulf gag grouper. Dr. Sue Lowerre-Barbieri will present *Reproductive resilience in the protogynous gag grouper*; Dr. Angela Collins will present *Effects of Recreational Catch and Release Angling on the Survival of Gag, and Gear and Strategies Designed to Reduce Barotrauma*; Dr. Dave Chagaris will present *Age-specific Mortality of Gag from Red Tide on the West Florida Shelf*; and, Ms. Beverly Sauls will present *Discard Mortality of Gag on the West Florida Shelf*. These presentations are intended to inform the SSC and assist it in providing recommendations to the Council in keeping with the Council’s goals for the Gulf gag stock: to reduce fishing mortality on male gag; to constrain future harvests to the ACL; to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock; to avoid increasing discards; and, to reduce vulnerability of gag during spawning to increase spawning success. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and consider how it may be used to inform the Council with regard to its goals for gag.

Agenda Item VI: Review: Possible Management Modifications for Gag and Black Grouper

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will review possible management alternatives for a framework action for gag and black grouper. The Council is still considering which actions and alternatives to include, and has requested SSC input on the evaluation of the data included in the document to support these decisions. The SSC should consider the information presented, and the aforementioned research presentations on gag, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: Discussion: SEDAR 94 Florida Hogfish Scope of Work

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will review the terms of reference, and solicit volunteers, for the SEDAR 94 benchmark stock assessment of Florida hogfish. This assessment will evaluate all hogfish off Florida, and will consider data updates such as consideration of the State of Florida’s State Reef Fish Survey for recreational private vessel catch and effort. The SSC should evaluate the terms of reference for the assessment and propose modifications as appropriate. The SSC should also solicit from its membership volunteers for the Data, Assessment, and Review Workshop portions of the assessment. The Council will then finalize the terms of reference and appointments in keeping with the Council’s internal SEDAR approval process.

Agenda Item VIII: Public Comment

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 IX: Review: Gulf of Mexico Gag Health Check

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will review a presentation by Drs. Katie Siegfried and Lisa Ailloud (SEFSC) on the 2023 Gulf gag grouper interim analysis (IA), using data through 2022. These data have been prepared to help inform the SSC about the condition of the Gulf gag grouper stock, for which the catch limits were greatly reduced following the 2022 SEDAR 72 stock assessment. SEDAR 72 estimated the stock to be overfished and undergoing overfishing as of 2019. This IA for Gulf gag grouper is provided as a “health check” of the stock, since the catch limits for gag grouper were modified via Reef Fish Amendment 56 in June of 2023, but have not yet been implemented. The SSC should consider the information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item X: Review: Vermilion Snapper Interim Analysis

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will review a presentation by Dr. Francesca Forrestal (SEFSC) on the 2023 Gulf vermilion snapper (IA), using data through 2022. These data have been prepared to help inform the SSC about the general condition of the Gulf vermilion snapper stock, which was estimated to be healthy as of 2017 by the SEDAR 67 stock assessment. This IA is intended to be suitable for modifying catch advice. The SSC should consider the information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XI: Review: Southeast Region Best Scientific Information Available Framework

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Jack McGovern (Southeast Regional Office [SERO]) will detail the development and features of the proposed framework for evaluating the best scientific information available in the southeastern US. This framework has been under development by the SERO, SEFSC, and Gulf and South Atlantic Council staff as a more refined best practices document suited for the Southeast that was required after the National BSIA Document¹ was released. The SSC should consider and provide feedback on the draft framework for the Southeast Regional Councils based on data and analyses available for stock assessments and projections completed in the Southeast and make recommendations to Dr. McGovern and the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XII: Incorporating Social Science Theory and Methods in to Ecosystem Assessments

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. David Griffiths (East Carolina University; Standing SSC) will present how to incorporate social science theory and methods into ecosystem assessments. Based on the notion that human activity can have direct impacts on fish stocks, Dr. Griffith will discuss some of the ways that social scientists have contributed to fisheries management, including stock assessments, focusing in particular on the growing trend of considering fish and shellfish resources in terms of ecosystem-based management. The presentation will discuss methods of incorporating social science methods into impact assessments, stock assessments and other management initiatives. The examples given include more traditional methods of data collection and analysis such as surveys but also introduce a variety of less conventional methods that social scientists use to assess human behavior, cognition, and activity. The SSC should consider the information presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

¹ <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/01-101-10.pdf>

Agenda Item XIII: Review: Lane Snapper Updated Catch Analysis

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will review a presentation by Dr. Francesca Forrestal (SEFSC) on the 2023 Gulf lane snapper catch analysis, using data through 2022. These data have been prepared to help inform the SSC about the general condition of the Gulf lane snapper stock, which is currently evaluated periodically using an index-based method from the NOAA Data Limited Toolkit (iTarget). This analysis is intended to be suitable for modifying catch advice. The SSC should consider the information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XIV: Public Comment

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.