

Scientific and Statistical Committees
Scope of Work
September 27 - 30, 2021
Hybrid (Webinar & In-Person)

Agenda Item IV: Selection of SSC representative for the October 25-28, 2021, meeting in Orange Beach, Alabama

Action: Select SSC representative

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will select a member to participate in the October 2021 Council meeting, which will be held both in-person and via webinar. The representative will provide a summary to Council Committees, answer questions and provide insight into the SSC deliberations from this SSC webinar meeting. The SSC representative will have the option of attending the meeting in-person in Orange Beach, Alabama, or participating via webinar.

Agenda Item V: Final Draft: SSC's Best Practices and Voting Procedures

Action: Discussions and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will provide an overview of Council-approved modifications to best practices and voting procedures for the SSC, based on the SSC's recommendations from its August meeting. These modifications are being made in keeping with National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which specifically addresses peer-review and the use of the best scientific information available for fisheries management. The SSC should review the draft and provide any final feedback as appropriate.

Agenda Item VI: Decision Tree for Making Informed Decisions on Parameters for Yield Projections

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Katie Siegfried from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) will present a new approach to making decisions about projections parameters, detailing the implications of the types of decisions that can be made on both the stock assessment and the resulting yield projections. Dr. Nathan Vaughan (Vaughan Analytics) will further detail a revision to the SEFSC's previous code for modeling yield projections. The code refines the determination of sector allocation-informed yields. The SSC should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate. This information is key, as the SSC will be reviewing two stock assessments later in its September 2021 meeting (greater

amberjack and gag) and this will propose a process for future SSC reviews and deliberations for yield stream projections.

Agenda Item VII: Review of SEDAR 70: Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack Stock Assessment

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Siegfried will present the revised projections for the SEDAR 70 stock assessment of Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) greater amberjack. The model and results that were presented to the SSC in January will be available to review if needed. These projections of the SEDAR 70 assessment apply the aforementioned novel projection code detailed in Agenda Item VI, which can affect the stock status based on the Council's defined stock status determination criteria and sector allocations. Further, the SEFSC will discuss the impacts of the proxy for maximum sustainable yield, as per the SSC's request at its August 2021 meeting. The SSC will determine whether the revised SEDAR 70 projections represents the best scientific information available, and inform the Council of the stock status of greater amberjack based on its status determination criteria. The SSC will also determine whether the projections of the assessment are suitable for management advice and, if suitable, will recommend values for the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) using the Council's ABC Control Rule or other method. The SSC should consider both annual and constant catch yields. Lastly, the SSC will review the Stock Assessment Executive Summary, and provide any feedback to SEFSC staff.

Agenda Item VIII: Terms of Reference for Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group Spanish Mackerel

Action: Discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Ryan Rindone (Council Staff) will review the SEDAR 81: Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group Spanish Mackerel operational assessment terms of reference with the SSC. SEDAR 81 will be conducted in 2022, using data through 2021. The last stock assessment of Gulf Spanish mackerel was SEDAR 28 (2013), which used data through 2011, and found the stock to be healthy in all respects. The SSC should evaluate the terms of reference and provide recommendations as appropriate. Presently, no topical working groups are recommended for this operational assessment.

Agenda Item IX: Scope of Work for Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group Cobia Operational Assessment

Action: Discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will review the scope of work for the Gulf migratory group cobia operational assessment with the SSC. This operational assessment is tentatively scheduled to occur in 2025, using data through 2023. The last stock assessment of Gulf cobia was SEDAR 28 Update (2020), which used data through 2018, and found the stock to be experiencing overfishing and, though not overfished, spawning stock biomass was depleted compared to historical levels. The SSC should evaluate the proposed scope of work and provide recommendations as appropriate. The SSC should also consider whether the scope of work recommended for this assessment would benefit from topical working groups to address key issues. This scope of work will then be sent to SEDAR for consideration in the development of the terms of reference for the same assessment.

Agenda Item X: Red Tide Ecosystem Modeling

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Dave Chagaris (University of Florida, Standing SSC) will provide a presentation on a NOAA RESTORE project which incorporates episodic mortality from red tide events into analyses of fishery-independent data to determine the effect of red tide events on certain Gulf finfish stocks. The SSC should review the information presented and ask questions and provide feedback as appropriate.

Agenda Item XI: Review of SEDAR 72: Gulf of Mexico Gag Stock Assessment Report

Action: Presentations, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Lisa Ailloud (SEFSC) will present the model, results, and initial projections for the SEDAR 72 stock assessment of Gulf gag grouper. This assessment applies the aforementioned novel projection code detailed in Agenda Item VI, which can affect the stock status determination based on the Council's defined stock status determination criteria and sector allocations. The SSC will determine whether the revised SEDAR 72 assessment represents the best scientific information available, and inform the Council of the stock status of gag based on its status determination criteria. The SSC will also determine whether the assessment is suitable for management advice and, if suitable, will recommend values for the OFL and ABC using the decisions from Agenda Item IV and the Council's ABC Control Rule or other method. The SSC should consider both annual and constant catch yields. Lastly, the SSC will review the Stock Assessment Executive Summary, and provide any feedback to SEFSC staff.

Agenda Item XII: Using Field Experiments to Assess Alternative Mechanisms for Distributing Fish to the Recreational Sector

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Alexander Gordan of the SEFSC will present a potential pilot project on the use of field experiments to evaluate alternative methods for distributing fish to the recreational sector. The pilot project is designed to better inform future distributions of fisheries resources allocated to the recreational sector. The SSC is expected to evaluate the information presented, provide feedback on the nature of data to be collected from anglers in the project, and make recommendations on the project.

Agenda Item XIII - XVII: Estimation of Total Red Snapper Abundance in Louisiana and Adjacent Federal Waters – LGL Ecological Associates

Action: Presentations, discussions and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Benny Gallaway (LGL Ecological Associates, Standing SSC) and his project team will review a series of presentations with the SSC on a project to estimate the absolute abundance of red snapper off Louisiana and adjacent federal waters. The purpose of this study is to empirically estimate the absolute abundance of red snapper off Louisiana. Dr. Gallaway's team will: detail the study area and habitat types identified and surveyed therein; describe the hydroacoustic and other survey methods used to sample locations within the study area; detail the modeling and estimation of absolute abundance by habitat type, including descriptions of variance estimation, with additional information about mark/recapture population estimation and growth; describe the results of the study, including mean site abundance estimates by habitat type, age, growth, and condition; and, summarize the results and implications of the work performed, including responses to peer-review comments. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate. This information, along with the finalized *Great Red Snapper Count* report (Agenda Item XVIII), will be integrated into the SEFSC analysis and presented to the SSC during its November 2021 meeting for potential consideration of the Gulf red snapper catch limits.

Agenda Item XVIII: Review of Finalized *Great Red Snapper Count* Report

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Greg Stunz (Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies) and his team will present the finalized results of the *Great Red Snapper Count*, including the team's response to the peer-review comments received during the SSC's March-April 2021 meeting. Dr. Stunz will review the subsequent revised estimates of absolute abundance by state and habitat type, and the estimations of variance about those abundance estimates. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, ask questions, and make any final recommendations as appropriate. This information, along with the Estimation of Total Red Snapper Abundance in Louisiana and Adjacent Federal Waters project by LGL Ecological Associates (Agenda Items XIII – XVII), will be integrated into the SEFSC catch analysis for red snapper. To this end, the SSC should make specific recommendations regarding modifications to the analysis the SEFSC completed for the March/April 2021 SSC meeting, including

specification of the data deemed most appropriate to characterize absolute abundance of red snapper off Louisiana. The final compiled product(s) will be available to integrate into the SEFSC analysis for consideration by the SSC during its November 2021 meeting in consideration of the Gulf red snapper catch limits.

Agenda Item XIX: Presentation on EFH Consultation Process

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: At its August 2021 meeting, the SSC received a presentation discussing the methodologies proposed in the development of an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Generic Amendment. During that discussion, the SSC requested more information on the EFH consultation process completed by the Habitat Division of NFMS. Mr. David Dale from the NMFS Southeast Regional Office will provide insight on how the Gulf Council's identification and descriptions of EFH inform the EFH consultation process. The SSC should ask questions of SERO staff and discuss EFH issues in the Gulf.

Agenda Item XX: Revised SEDAR Stock Assessment Schedule

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will review the updated SEDAR stock assessment schedule with the SSC. This schedule is continually updated to reflect the Council's stock assessment needs, with the intent of ensuring species are intermittently reassessed while also allowing for continued development of the stock assessment process. The SSC should review the proposed schedule and recommend modifications as appropriate.

Agenda Item XXI: Revised Interim Analysis Assessment Schedule

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Council staff will review the Council's updated interim analysis schedule with the SSC. This schedule is continually updated to reflect the Council's interim analysis needs, with the intent of ensuring species are intermittently re-examined to assess stock health and the appropriateness of current catch limits. The SSC should review the proposed schedule and recommend modifications as appropriate.

~~**Agenda Item XXII:** Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology~~

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

~~**Committee input and next steps:** This item will be discussed at a future SSC meeting.~~

Agenda Item XXIII: 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 webinar meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item XXIV: 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, then action can be scheduled at a future SSC meeting.