

**Scientific and Statistical Committees**  
**Scope of Work**  
**August 9 – 11, 2021**  
**Webinar**

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**Agenda Item III:** Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

**Action:** Elections

**Committee input and next steps:** The Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) will elect from its membership a Chair and Vice Chair, to serve one-year terms (not to exceed two consecutive one-year terms) through July 2022. Council Staff will assist in conducting the elections. The Chair and Vice Chair will be responsible for leading discussions and representing the SSC as necessary to the Council and other bodies.

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**Agenda Item V:** Selection of SSC representative for the August 23-26, 2021, meeting in San Antonio, Texas

**Action:** Select SSC representative

**Committee input and next steps:** The SSC will select a member to participate in the August 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 San Antonio, Texas, or participating via webinar.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Discussion Document: SSC's Best Practices and Voting Procedures

**Action:** Presentations, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will provide an overview presentation regarding modifications to best practices and voting procedures for the SSC. 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 information presented and provide feedback as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Review and Discussion of Finalized Great Red Snapper Count Project Report

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

**Committee input and next steps:** This item will be unavailable for review at the August 2021 SSC meeting.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Review of Updated Red Grouper Interim Analysis

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

**Committee input and next steps:** The SSC will be presented with an updated red grouper interim Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) analysis (IA), using updated sector allocations and data through 2020 from the NMFS Bottom Longline index. The SSC may consider the data from this IA for modifying catch advice to the Council with respect to red grouper, considerate of the updated sector allocations recently approved by the Council in Amendment 53 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan at the Council’s June 2021 meeting. The SSC should consider the data presented and consider whether to recommend updated catch limits.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Discussion of Research Track and Operational Assessment Process Guidance Document

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

**Committee input and next steps:** The SSC will be presented with a summary of the changes to the SEDAR stock assessment process by Dr. Julie Neer, including specific guidance to the SSCs for the different assessment types now used by SEDAR. The SSC should consider the information presented and ask questions and provide recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item X:** Determination of Topical Working Groups for SEDAR 75: Gulf of Mexico Gray Snapper Operational Assessment

**Action:** Solicitation of volunteers

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will discuss the topical working groups for SEDAR 75: Gulf of Mexico Gray Snapper Operational Assessment. There will be two topical working groups at this time: life history and recreational catch and effort. The SSC should provide feedback to Council Staff and SEDAR as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Scope of Work for Red Grouper Operational Assessment

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review the scope of work for the planned operational assessment of Gulf red grouper, which will take place in 2024 using data through 2022. The SSC should discuss the items proposed for the terms of reference for the assessment, whether topical working groups will be necessary and for which topics, and whether an in-person workshop will be necessary. The SSC's recommendations will then be incorporated into the scope of work and submitted to SEDAR for use in developing the terms of reference for the proposed assessment, which the SSC will review and approve at a later date.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Scope of Work for Vermilion Snapper Operational Assessment

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review the scope of work for the planned operational assessment of Gulf vermilion snapper, which will take place in 2024 using data through 2023. The SSC should discuss the items proposed for the terms of reference for the assessment, whether topical working groups will be necessary and for which topics, and whether an in-person workshop will be necessary. The SSC's recommendations will then be incorporated into the scope of work and submitted to SEDAR for use in developing the terms of reference for the proposed assessment, which the SSC will review and approve at a later date.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Determination of Approach to Assess Gulf of Mexico Tilefish Complex

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will lead a discussion about how to approach future assessments of the species in the Gulf of Mexico tilefish complex, which includes blueline, golden, and goldface tilefishes. The SSC should consider what is presently known about tilefish species in the Gulf of Mexico, including the information gathered in the last stock assessment (SEDAR 22 2011), and provide recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XIV:** Interim Analysis Schedule

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review the updated interim analysis schedule with the SSC. Interim analyses are performed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) for species which have an accepted quantitative stock assessment, and a representative index of relative or absolute abundance. The SSC should review the proposed schedule and recommend modifications as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XV:** 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.

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**Agenda Item XVI:** Review of Draft Southeast Regional Framework for Establishing the Best Scientific Information Available

**Action:** None

**Committee input and next steps:** This item will be unavailable for review at the August 2021 SSC meeting.

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**Agenda Item XVII:** Discussion: NS1 Technical Guidance Subgroup 3 Tech Memo: *Managing with ACLs for data-limited stocks in federal fishery management plans - Review and recommendations for implementing 50 CFR 600.310(h)(2) flexibilities for data limited stocks*

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

**Committee input and next steps:** NMFS staff will review the technical guidance memo on managing with annual catch limits for data-limited species. The purpose of this technical guidance memo is to clarify the flexibility available under National Standard 1 for managing species for which the data may not be sufficient to establish catch limits informed by a traditional quantitative stock assessment. The SSC should review the materials presented and the background materials provided, and make recommendations to the Council with respect to managed data-limited species. The SSC recommendations and responses will be put in a letter for the Council consideration.

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**Agenda Item XVIII:** Review of King Mackerel Historical Harvest and Catch Limits

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

**Committee input and next steps:** The SEFSC will present a comparison between the Gulf king mackerel SEDAR 38 of 2014 and SEDAR 38 Update of 2020. The changes included in the update assessment incorporate a migration in the recreation data from the Marine Recreational

Information Program (MRIP) Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) to the new mail-based Fishing Effort Survey (FES). This comparison stems from a request from the Council to estimate historical catch limits had SEDAR 38 2014 used MRIP-FES estimates of recreational catch and effort. The SSC should review the background materials and the information presented, and provide recommendations to the Council as needed.

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**Agenda Item XIX:** Review of King Mackerel Historical Commercial Harvest Differences

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

**Committee input and next steps:** At its June 2021 meeting, the Council discussed differences it observed in the commercial landings data published between different amendments to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plans, based on the SEDAR 38 and SEDAR 38 Update stock assessments. The SEFSC was informed of these differences, and will present its findings to the SSC. The SSC should review the materials presented by the SEFSC and the background materials, and make any necessary recommendations to the Council.

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**Agenda Item XX:** Review of Greater Amberjack Historical Harvest and Catch Limits

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

**Committee input and next steps:** During the June 2021 meeting, the Council reviewed a presentation to integrate the results of the SEDAR 70 greater amberjack stock assessment into management advice. To facilitate integration of the most recent catch advice into management, the Council requested an analysis that would re-estimate the overfishing limit (OFL) and ABC for the years from 2016 through 2020 using the SEDAR 33 Update assessment using MRIP-FES recreational data. This analysis provides for a comparison of OFL and ABC estimates produced from the same model in both MRIP-CHTS and MRIP-FES to better understand the changes in OFL and ABC that can be attributed to change in recreational data currency in comparison to changes in stock condition over time. The SSC should review the materials presented by the SEFSC and the background materials, and make any necessary recommendations to the Council. The SSC is not expected to make new OFL or ABC recommendations based on this analysis.

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**Agenda Item XXI:** Review of Updated Greater Amberjack Projections

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

**Committee input and next steps:** The Committee will review a presentation of the allocations and resultant projections for Gulf greater amberjack based on SEDAR 70 using MRIP-FES recreational data. The Committee has previously reviewed SEDAR 70 and provided OFL and ABC recommendations based on the current 73% recreational:27% commercial sector allocation. However, the Council is considering options to modify the sector allocation and the OFL and ABC values are contingent upon the allocation selected by the Council. The Committee should

evaluate the materials and recommend OFL and ABC for each allocation scenario and that would rebuild the stock by 2027 or earlier, and provide recommendations and feedback to the Council.

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**Agenda Item XXII:** Presentation: 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 allocations between the recreational and commercial sectors. 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.

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**Agenda Item XXIII:** Review of Draft Options: Generic Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 5

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

**Committee input and next steps:** During the most recent June Council meeting, staff presented draft options for the developing Generic Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment. The purpose of the generic amendment is to formally update the descriptions of EFH for all fishery management plans which have not been modified since 2004. Currently, EFH definitions are generated by combining maps of known benthic habitat characteristics and fish habitat use informed from published literature by species and life stage. One amendment alternative would maintain the current methodology but update benthic mapping and life stage information using more contemporary sources. Two other proposed alternatives would update EFH definitions for a few species/life stages where presence and associated environmental covariate data are available. Council staff will provide a presentation on the proposed draft options, review the methodologies considered, discuss the pros and cons of the alternatives, and present the document progress timeline. The Committee should ask questions of staff, provide input on potential data sources, and make recommendations on the proposed alternatives for Council consideration.

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**Agenda Item XXIV:** Review of Standardized Bycatch Reduction Methodology

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

**Committee input and next steps:** This item will be unavailable for review at the August 2021 SSC meeting.

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**Agenda Item XXV:** Discussion of Topic Leaders for Agenda Items

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

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review a former practice of the SSC to solicit volunteers from its membership to lead the SSC in the discussion of key agenda items. This practice was found to be beneficial in that it redistributed the sole responsibility for leading discussions from the SSC Chair to other SSC members. The SSC may discuss resuming this practice and determine if it would like to resume having Topic Leaders at future SSC meetings to ensure the Council is receiving the input needed to make informed management decisions.

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**Agenda Item XXVI:** 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.

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**Agenda Item XXVII:** 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.