



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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August 4, 2023

Dr. Larry Massey
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
75 Virginia Beach Dr.
Miami, Florida 33149

Dear Dr. Massey:

During its June 2023 meeting, the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council (Council) received a presentation from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) regarding management strategy evaluations (MSE). During discussion of this presentation, the types of stock assessment models available, and their data requirements, was discussed between the Council and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The Council was informed that using different stock assessment models (e.g., age-based, length-based, data-limited) was an appropriate practice, based on the data available for a species. The Council discussed the differences in the types of data available for some species it manages, like the Gulf migratory group of cobia (i.e., fishery-dependent indices only) and red snapper (i.e., multiple fishery-independent and -dependent indices and other data streams). 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. Considering this, the Council requests that the SEFSC conduct a review of stocks that are suitable for alternatives to age-structured stock assessment models, and present its findings at a future meeting of the Council's SSC.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. Please contact Mr. Ryan Rindone on Council staff to coordinate an appropriate time to present the SEFSC's findings in this matter to the Council's SSC. Please contact Mr. Rindone or me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Stunz, Ph.D.
Council Chair

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cc: Council Members / Council Staff / Clay Porch, Ph.D. / John Walter, Ph.D. / Shannon Cass-Calay, Ph.D. / Katie Siegfried, Ph.D. / Jack McGovern, Ph.D. / Peter Hood / Jim Nance, Ph.D. / Luiz Barbieri, Ph.D.