

**Scientific and Statistical Committees
Action Guide
July 30-31, 2019
Tampa, FL – Council Office**

Agenda Item III: Approval of SSC Minutes

Action: Review, modify (if necessary), and approve minutes

Committee input and next steps: The Committee will review, modify if necessary, and approve the minutes from the May 9, 2019 Standing, Socioeconomic, Mackerel, and Reef Fish SSC webinar.

Agenda Item IV: Selection of SSC representative for the August 12-15, 2019 Council meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana

Action: Select SSC representative

Committee input and next steps: The Committees will select a member to attend the August 2019 Council meeting. The representative will attend the meeting, provide a summary presentation, answer questions and provide insight into the SSC deliberations.

Agenda Item V: Presentations

Action: Background and Discussion

Committee input and next steps: The Committees will review presentations on:

- Best Scientific Information Available – NOAA Policy Directive for Stock Status Determinations and Catch Specifications

Dr. Rick Methot will review the Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA) procedural directive that complements the National Standard 2 guidelines. The goal of this directive is to increase clarity and transparency regarding BSIA and stock status determinations. The SSC and Council reviewed and commented on a previous draft of the BSIA directive. NOAA Fisheries approves and makes a determination of BSIA in a decision memo. The agency recognizes that this general framework may not reflect regional Council differences and suggests that each region should develop a BSIA Framework tailored to its specific needs. This action was discussed at the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting in May 2019 as an Action Item to develop a regional BSIA Framework in the next 3 years in coordination with regional office(s), science center(s), and Council(s). Council leadership is identifying with who and when the Regional Framework will be developed.

Presentations for Status Determination Criteria Discussions

- National Standard 1 Guidance on Estimation of Fishing Mortality and Biomass Proxies
- *Coping with Information Gaps in Stock Productivity for Rebuilding and Achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield for Grouper–Snapper Fisheries*
- *Establishing Stock Status Determination Criteria for Fisheries with High Discards and Uncertain Recruitment*
- *A Perspective on Steepness, Reference Points, and Stock Assessment*

These presentations will serve as background and guidance material for discussions about establishing status determination criteria for Gulf stocks (Agenda item VI).

Agenda item VI: Review of Status Determination Criteria Amendment: Revised Actions

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Staff will review revised actions and alternatives to establish or modify status determination criteria for several reef fish stocks and red drum for which these criteria have not previously been established. Since the SSC last reviewed the status determination criteria document, Council staff have identified established criteria by the SA Council for jointly managed stocks. Additionally, Council staff have attempted to simplify the document as requested by the Council. The SSC will review the range of alternatives and provide recommendations for the following actions:

- MSY Proxies for Assessed Stocks
- MSY Proxies for un-assessed reef fish stocks and complexes
- MSY Proxies for red drum
- Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold for reef fish stocks and red drum
- Minimum Stock Size Threshold for reef fish stocks and red drum
- Optimum Yield for reef fish stocks and red drum

The Committees should provide guidance or recommendations about the proposed management actions and the range of alternatives for Council consideration.

Agenda item VII: Discussion of Alternative ABC Control Rule

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Joe Powers will lead a discussion on modifying the current ABC Control Rule, and ways in which the Rule could be modified for improvement. The SEFSC will provide a framework for a modified ABC Control Rule, and will detail the changes proposed therein. The Committees should discuss the proposed changes and a path forward for developing a revised ABC Control Rule.

Agenda item VIII: Review MRIP and State Survey Data Collection and Calibration Efforts

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Richard Cody (NOAA Fisheries) will provide a presentation about the latest developments and progress from MRIP to improve recreational data collection. This presentation will describe several MRIP related workshops, an FES pilot study, MRIP-specific components of the Modern Fish Act, and a summary of the rare event species working group. No action is required by the SSC at this time.

Agenda Item IX: Discussion of SEDAR 62: Gray Triggerfish Progress

Action: Education and information

Committee Input and Next Steps: SEFSC staff will briefly review the progress of the SEDAR 62 stock assessment for Gray Triggerfish, specifically the issues surrounding aging accuracy for otoliths and spines. The SSC will serve as the formal review body for the SEDAR 62 stock assessment. No action is required by the SSC at this time.

Agenda Item X: Discussion of Council Research and Monitoring Priorities for 2020 – 2024

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The Committees will review the proposed Council Research and Monitoring Priorities for 2020 – 2024, and recommend changes as appropriate. These priorities are updated every five years, approved by the Council, and help to inform funding priorities for continuing and proposed research and monitoring efforts as they relate to managed species in the Gulf. The Council will review and finalize these priorities at its October meeting in Galveston, Texas.

Agenda Item XI: Scope of Work: Gray Snapper Operational Assessment

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Committee Input and Next Steps: The Committees will review the scope of work for the proposed Gray Snapper operational assessment, currently scheduled to begin in 2021. The last stock assessment on Gray Snapper was SEDAR 51, which found that the stock was experiencing overfishing as of 2015 based on $MFMT = F_{30\%SPR}$, and that the overfished status of the stock was dependent on the status determination criteria used as a proxy for MSY . The Scope of Work is structured similar to assessment terms of reference for ease of inputting desired assessment tasks; however, the SSC will still need to review formalized terms of reference at a later date before they are approved. The SSC will serve as the formal review body for this assessment.

Agenda Item XII: Scope of Work: West Florida Shelf Hogfish Benchmark Assessment (FWC)**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

Committee Input and Next Steps: The Committees will review the scope of work for the proposed West Florida Shelf Hogfish Benchmark Assessment, which will be conducted by Florida FWC, and is currently scheduled to begin in 2022. The last stock assessment on West Florida Shelf Hogfish was an update assessment to SEDAR 37, which found that the stock was not overfished and was not experiencing overfishing. However, the yield projections were substantially reduced from those in the SEDAR 37 benchmark assessment to account for additional uncertainty in the indices. The Scope of Work is structured similar to assessment terms of reference for ease of inputting desired assessment tasks; however, the SSC will still need to review formalized terms of reference at a later date before they are approved.

Agenda Item XIII: Discussion of the Gulf SEDAR Assessment Schedule**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

Committee Input and Next Steps: The Committees will review the proposed SEDAR stock assessment schedule for 2021 and subsequent years, and provide recommendations to the Council about any changes to the proposed schedule. The next meeting of the SEDAR Steering Committee will be in the fall of 2019.

Agenda Item XIV: Explosive Removal of Structures: Fisheries Impact Assessment**Action:** Education and Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: The Committees will review a presentation by Dr. Benny Gallaway on the potential impacts to several Gulf stocks from the explosive removal of artificial structures, such as oil and gas platforms. This presentation and the data therein are part of a larger study funded by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the published results are anticipated to be released later in 2019.

Agenda Item XV: Discussion of Almaco Jack Life History and Landings**Action:** Education and information

Committee Input and Next Steps: The Committees will review life history data and recent landings for Almaco Jack in the Gulf of Mexico. The South Atlantic Council approved the establishment of a 20-inch fork length commercial minimum size limit for Almaco Jack, and the State of Florida implemented commensurate measures in state waters on July 1, 2019. The purpose of these regulations is largely socioeconomic, and sets the commercial minimum size

limit for Almaco Jack at a preferentially marketable size. The Committees will review the provided information on Almaco Jack, and provide the Council with any appropriate feedback.

Agenda Item XVI: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by Committee members, time permitting. If the committee wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future SSC meeting.