

**Scientific and Statistical Committees**  
**Scope of Work**  
**January 11 – 13, 2021**  
**Hybrid (Webinar & In-Person)**

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**Agenda Item IV:** Selection of SSC Representative for the January 24-27, 2022 Gulf Council meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Action:** Discussion

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Jim Nance (SSC Chair) will solicit a member of the SSC to represent the Committees at the Council's January 24 – 27, 2022, meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It is preferred that the representative attend in person; however, if not feasible, the representative may attend virtually.

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**Agenda Item V:** Review: *Absolute Abundance Estimates for Red Snapper, Greater Amberjack, and Other Federally Managed Fish on Offshore Petroleum Platforms in the Gulf of Mexico*

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

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Benny Gallaway from LGL Ecological Associates will present the findings of the above titled manuscript. Dr. Gallaway's team evaluated offshore petroleum platforms in the Gulf to estimate the effects of platform removal on five federally managed fish stocks. Researchers found that removals are estimated to have a minor effect (1% to 8% of the estimated stock abundance) for four species (red snapper, gray triggerfish, vermilion snapper, and cobia). In contrast, losses for greater amberjack would potentially represent 45% of the known stock. An alternative explanation is that the actual abundance of greater amberjack is much larger than estimated by recent SEDAR assessments. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and make recommendations to the Council about whether and how to consider the data in the future.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Evaluation of APAIS Intercepts for Yellowtail Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico

**Action:** Discussion

**Committee input and next steps:** Mr. Ryan Rindone (Council staff) will briefly summarize the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils' progress on management considerations for southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. Evaluation of Access Point Angler Intercept Survey intercepts for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf will be conducted at a future date. There is no action currently required by the SSC.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Review: National Academies of Science Report on the Impacts of Limited Access Privilege Programs in Mixed-use Fisheries

**Action:** Presentation, discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Lee Anderson (SSC) will review the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) report on the impacts of limited access privilege programs (LAPPs) in mixed-use fisheries. The US Congress lifted the moratorium on, and redefined, individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs as LAPPs in the 2006 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The issue of IFQs in a mixed-use fishery (recreational and commercial) was not addressed until the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 (Modern Fish Act) called for this NAS study of how fishing under a LAPP might interact with all sectors in a mixed-use fishery for the same species: commercial, recreational, and charter (i.e., for hire). Recreational fishing is increasing throughout the Gulf, and its values and incentives often differ from commercial fishing. Regional fishery management councils and NMFS would benefit from cooperation among the sectors in striving to rebuild and sustain healthy fish stocks, while weighing and arbitrating competing claims for allocation. Evaluating the effects of LAPPs in mixed-use fisheries requires multiple disciplines, with equal weight to fisheries ecology and the social sciences. The SSC should evaluate the materials presented and provide recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Review: Spatial Coverage and Severity of the 2020/2021 Red Tide on the West Florida Shelf

**Action:** Presentation, discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Brendan Turley (University of Miami) will review work being conducted between the University of Miami, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), and the NOAA Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory to characterize the spatial coverage and severity of the 2020/2021 red tide harmful algal bloom on the west Florida shelf. The team has worked collaboratively with fishermen and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to collect the data necessary to estimate the extent and effects of this red tide bloom. Dr. Turley will compare the observations and analyses conducted by his team with the estimates from Dr. Dave Chagaris' (University of Florida) Ecospace model, which estimates commensurate metrics of coverage and severity. The SSC should evaluate the materials presented and provide recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Review: Simulation of the Effect of MRIP-FES Data on Catch Advice for a Historical King Mackerel Stock Assessment

**Action:** Information only

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay (SEFSC) will briefly clarify a presentation previously given to the SSC which simulated the effect of using recreational catch and effort data calibrated to the Marine Recreational Information Program’s (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES) in SEDAR 38 (2014) for Gulf Migratory Group king mackerel. There is no action required of the SSC for this agenda item.

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**Agenda Item X:** Discussion of Draft Essential Fish Habitat Amendment and Data

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

**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 (Southeast Regional Office; SERO) will provide insight on how the Gulf Council’s identification and descriptions of EFH inform the EFH consultation process. Dr. Lisa Hollensead (Council staff) will then review a web tool for exploring the metadata for spatial layers used in the Gulf for evaluating EFH. The SSC should ask questions of SERO and Council staff and discuss EFH issues in the Gulf.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Status Update on Red Snapper Management and Outstanding Council Motion

**Action:** Information only

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Carrie Simmons (Council staff) will briefly review the motion by the Council to ask the SSC to reconsider the catch limits for red snapper, in light of the revisions made to the Great Red Snapper Count project report. This is provided for the SSC’s information to help inform successive related agenda items.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Summary of SSC Discussion and Recommendations on GRSC Report from March/April 2020 and September 2020 Meetings

**Action:** Information only

**Committee input and next steps:** Mr. Rindone will briefly summarize the decisions and recommendations by the SSC during its March/April and September 2021 meetings, with respect to the motion by the Council to ask the SSC to reconsider the catch limits for red snapper. This is provided for the SSC’s information to help inform successive related agenda items.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Great Red Snapper Count Report: Re-analysis of the Florida natural/unconsolidated bottom-type data to include the random forest design stratification

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Greg Stunz and Dr. Will Patterson will present the re-analysis of the natural and unconsolidated bottom (UCB) types off Florida surveyed by the GRSC, which were included in the random forest survey design stratification. This addendum to the original GRSC report submitted to NOAA Sea Grant in June 2021 results in a decrease in the estimate of absolute abundance of age-2+ red snapper in the Gulf from 118 million fish to 92 million fish. Drs. Stunz and Patterson will review the analyses conducted and the effects of those modifications on the estimate of absolute abundance, and on the variance estimates. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and ask questions, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XIV:** Great Red Snapper Count Report: Re-analysis of the Florida natural/unconsolidated bottom-type data to include the random forest design stratification

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Katie Siegfried (SEFSC) will present efforts by the SEFSC, the FWC, and the GRSC teams to conduct a post-stratification analysis of the estimates of absolute abundance for areas of the west Florida shelf. The spatial distribution of fish in the GRSC presently conflicts with data from both the SEAMAP and FWC surveys, specifically in the 10-40 depth stratum in the Big Bend region. Other concerns were raised and are discussed relative to the differing survey expectations between the GRSC (a snapshot in time) and the SEAMAP and FWC surveys (conducted annually). The SSC should evaluate the information presented and ask questions, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XV:** Fishery-Independent Indices Updates for Red Snapper

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Ted Switzer (FWC) will review the regional catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) indices for the SEAMAP video surveys, which are comprised of the Pascagoula and Panama City Laboratory surveys. The Pascagoula Laboratory survey targets deeper water habitats than the Panama City Laboratory survey; together, they are intended to survey reef fish in nearshore and offshore habitats. Mr. Adam Pollack (SEFSC contractor) will then update the SSC on the NMFS Bottom Longline survey data through 2021. The trends present in these surveys may be considered by the SSC in its evaluation of its recommended catch limits for red snapper using the GRSC data. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and ask questions, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XVI/XVII:** Review of Estimated Commercial and Recreational Effort over Uncharacterized Bottom in the Gulf of Mexico

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. John Walter (SEFSC) will review the SEFSC's estimates of commercial fishing effort in the Gulf over the areas classified as UCB by the GRSC. Commercial vessel monitoring system and trip ticket data were used to inform the proportion of the Gulf UCB utilized by the commercial fleets. Dr. Walter will also review estimates of the recreational utilization of the UCB using data provided by FWC. These analyses are combined to demonstrate the total proportion of the UCB that is accessed for fishing by the directed fleets in the Gulf. This proportion can then be applied against the GRSC's estimate of absolute abundance by region to determine the proportion of the stock in numbers of fish that may be vulnerable to fishing pressure, based on past fisher behavior. These analyses may be considered by the SSC in its evaluation of its recommended catch limits for red snapper using the GRSC data. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and ask questions, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XVIII:** Summary Discussion and Potential Requests for Updated SEFSC Red Snapper Interim Analysis for Catch Advice for the March 2022 SSC Meeting

**Action:** Discussions and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Mr. Rindone will lead the SSC into discussion about the information presented with respect to the reconsideration of catch limits for red snapper using the GRSC data. The SSC should consider which estimate of absolute abundance from the GRSC is most appropriate for management advice (110, 118, or 92 million fish), with consideration given to the proportion of the UCB thought to be vulnerable to fishing pressure, post-stratification of Florida absolute abundance data by depth strata, and trends observed in other fishery-independent surveys. The SSC's recommendations here will inform the SEFSC of how to parameterize the interim catch advice it will present at the SSC's March 2022 meeting.

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**Agenda Item XIX:** Review: NMFS Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Mr. Dan Luers (SERO) will review the Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) white paper, which has been in development jointly between the SERO, SEFSC, and Council staffs. All fishery management plans (FMPs) must establish a SBRM to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery, the purpose of which is to collect, record, and report bycatch data. The Council has specified SBRM for all of its sole

and joint FMPs with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The regional Councils must explain, in an FMP or a fishery research plan, how the current SBRMs meet the statutory purpose of an SBRM based on an analysis of four required considerations. The Councils, in consultation with NMFS, must review the current SBRMs within five years of the final rule effective date (March 21, 2017), and must conduct follow up reviews at least once every five years. This white paper uses data from the 2015-2019 fishing years where available; in cases where 2015-2019 data are not available or complete, a summary of the most recent years' data available (where applicable) is used. The information included in this document constitutes the review required by the SBRM final rule. The SSC should consider the information presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XX:** 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 XXI:** 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.