

Sustainable Fisheries Committee: Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab E

Agenda Item IV: Overview Presentation on Rice’s Whale Status and Recent Speed Limit Petition in the Gulf of Mexico

Timeline Status: Presentation and Feedback

Council input and next steps: Mr. Grant Baysinger will give a presentation on the status of Rice’s whale and the recent publication of a speed limit petition in the Gulf of Mexico. Petitioners are asking NOAA Fisheries to utilize its authorities under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act to establish a year-round 10-knot vessel speed limit and other vessel-related mitigation measures in an area they referred to as Rice’s whale “core” habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions as needed, and determine if they want to provide a letter with comments on the speed limit petition.

Agenda Item V: Review of Multi-year Annual Catch Limits

Timeline Status: Presentation and Feedback

Council input and next steps: The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) will present the merits and drawbacks of using multi-year averages for setting and monitoring ACLs, to incorporate interannual variability in fishing effort, recruitment, and other forces which may influence the ratio of annual landings to that year’s ACL. The SEFSC will use examples of Gulf federally managed species (e.g., red grouper [a species with a sector allocation that is managed under an individual fishing quota program, or IFQ], greater amberjack [a stock that is overfished and undergoing overfishing and has strict payback provisions, and with sector allocation that is not managed under an IFQ], and vermilion snapper [a species managed without a sector allocation or under an IFQ]).

At its January 2023 meeting, the Council discussed the problematic nature of monitoring small catch levels for a short fishing season duration, especially when the stock has sector-specific payback provisions in the following seasons. Using a multi-year averaging approach for the ACL is permissible under National Standard 1 Guidelines and is of interest to the Council. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VI: SSC Recommendations on Report from the MRIP Transition Team on Red Snapper and Other Species in Gulf State Supplemental Surveys

Timeline Status: Presentation

Tab E, No. 3

Council input and next steps: Mr. John Mareska (Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC]) will present the SSC's discussion of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Transition Team's work with the Gulf states and federal data managers to identify and assess sources of non-sampling errors across the various recreational data collection programs. This work was presented by Dr. Richard Cody with the NOAA Office of Science and Technology, has been ongoing in various capacities since 2020, and has recently expanded to include additional species managed by the Council. Dr. Cody focused on the Team's efforts with red snapper, briefly review work on other species, and reviewed MRIP's new presentation of cumulative landings data. The Committee should consider the information presented and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: SSC Recommendations on the Evaluation of Interim Analysis Process

Timeline Status: Presentation

Council input and next steps: Mr. Mareska will briefly review the SSC's discussions of the interim analysis (IA) process, which is conducted in between stock assessments to either update catch advice or to serve as a health check on the condition of the stock. The SSC discussed how the IA process functions, timing of indices processing, catch advice changes with respect to the overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch, time limits on using IAs for catch advice after the terminal year of the stock assessment, conducting a health check versus updating catch advice, and resources needed to conduct health checks using an IA. The SSC requested additional information be brought at a subsequent meeting, currently planned for September 2023. The Committee should consider the information presented and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: SSC Recommendations on Management Strategy Evaluation Workshop

Timeline Status: Presentation

Council input and next steps: Dr. Steve Saul (SSC) will review SSC discussions of a series of talks presented to the SSC about management strategy evaluation (MSE). These talks are intended to serve as a primer to MSE, including techniques and guiding principles, along with real-world examples of MSE that are either in development or in use, to provide context for the SSC with respect to its place in evaluating MSE on behalf of the Council. The SSC discussed MSE at length and postulated how it might be operationalized in the Gulf in the future. The Committee should evaluate the materials presented and provided, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VI: Other Business

Timeline Status: Potential Additional items

Tab E, No. 3

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