

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

4
5 Naples Grand Beach Resort Naples, Florida

6
7 June 5, 2017

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
11 Pamela Dana.....Florida
12 John Greene.....Alabama
13 Campo Matens.....Louisiana

14
15 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

16 Kevin Anson.....Alabama
17 Patrick Banks.....Louisiana
18 Doug Boyd.....Texas
19 Glenn Constant.....USFWS
20 Roy Crabtree.....NMFS
21 LCDR Leo Danaher.....USCG
22 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
23 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
24 Tom Frazer.....Florida
25 Martha Guyas (designee for Nick Wiley).....Florida
26 Paul Mickle (designee for Jamie Miller).....Mississippi
27 Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
28 John Sanchez.....Florida
29 Greg Stunz.....Texas
30 Ed Swindell.....Louisiana
31 David Walker.....Alabama

32
33 **STAFF**

34 Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
35 Matt Freeman.....Economist
36 Douglas Gregory.....Executive Director
37 Morgan Kilgour.....Fishery Biologist
38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
39 Jessica Matos.....Administrative Assistant
40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
41 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
43 Carrie Simmons.....Deputy Director

44
45 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

46 Anna Beckwith.....SAFMC
47 Eric Brazer.....Gulf Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance
48 J.P. Brooker.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL

1 Traci Floyd.....MDMR
2 Susan Gerhart.....NMFS
3 Chad Hanson.....Pew Charitable Trusts
4 Scott Hickman.....CFA, Galveston, TX
5 Mark Hubbard.....FL
6 Alison Johnson.....Oceana
7 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA
8 Rich Malinowski.....NMFS
9 Bonnie Ponwith.....SEFSC
10 Jessica Stephen.....NMFS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Contents.....3
4
5 Table of Motions.....4
6
7 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes.....5
8
9 Action Guide and Next Steps.....5
10
11 SEDAR Steering Committee May 2017 Meeting Summary.....5
12
13 SEDAR Schedule Review.....7
14
15 Adjournment.....26
16
17 - - -
18

TABLE OF MOTIONS

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

PAGE 16: Motion to assess gray triggerfish and cobia in 2018 as standard track assessments with a terminal year of 2016. The motion carried on page 18.

PAGE 20: Motion to assess red grouper as the number-one priority in 2019 as a standard track assessment with a terminal year of 2018. The motion carried on page 22.

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1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Naples Grand Beach Resort,
3 Naples, Florida, Monday morning, June 5, 2017, and was called to
4 order by Chairman Leann Bosarge.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN LEANN BOSARGE:** I will be chairing this committee as
11 well. Let's go over our members. Obviously I am the Chair, and
12 Dr. Dana is the Chair of our Mackerel Committee, Mr. Matens is
13 the Chair of the Red Drum Committee, and Mr. Greene is the Chair
14 of the Reef Fish Committee.

15
16 I know that Dr. Dana will have to step out at some point, and so
17 filling in for Dr. Dana at that point would be Mr. Walker, who
18 is the Vice Chair of the Mackerel Committee. We obviously
19 invite comments from anybody else as we go through this, anybody
20 around the table.

21
22 The agenda can be found under Tab I, Number 1. Are there any
23 additions or modification to the agenda? Seeing none, the
24 agenda is approved.

25
26 Your minutes from our last SEDAR meeting can be found under Tab
27 I, Number 2. Are there any revisions or edits to the minutes?
28 Seeing no edits, Dr. Dana moves to approve the minutes as
29 presented. It's seconded by Mr. Greene. Any opposition to that
30 motion to approve the minutes as presented? Seeing none, the
31 motion carries.

32
33 Your Action Guide and Next Steps, which will lead us through our
34 agenda, can be found under Tab I, Number 3, and the first action
35 item on our agenda here, or summary item, will be our SEDAR
36 Steering Committee May 2017 Meeting Summary, which is Tab I,
37 Number 4 in your briefing book, and Mr. Gregory is going to lead
38 us through that.

39
40 **SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE MAY 2017 MEETING SUMMARY**

41
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUGLAS GREGORY:** Okay. The SEDAR Steering
43 Committee met by webinar on May 5, and there are three or four
44 important things here that were decided, and I would ask Dr.
45 Ponwith to add anything that I leave out or she thinks needs
46 more explanation.

47
48 The first thing was that the Florida Commission, or FWRI, the

1 Florida Wildlife Research Institute, reported that they stopped
2 work on the black grouper stock assessment, because they ran
3 into some issues with trying to determine in the catches what
4 was a black grouper and what was a gag grouper and how it's been
5 reported historically.

6
7 We found that curious, because we have done stock assessments on
8 black grouper before, and we thought that we had resolved that
9 issue sufficiently, and so FWRI, or Dr. Barbieri, is going to be
10 providing us a written document summarizing the problems they
11 ran into and why they requested to halt further work on the
12 black grouper assessment, and the SEDAR Steering Committee,
13 during the webinar, agreed that that was a good thing to do at
14 this point in time, and so we're not going to be getting a black
15 grouper assessment this year from the State of Florida.

16
17 The other thing, from an assessment standpoint, that happened is
18 there's been delays in developing the MRIP revisions and
19 calibrating our recreational landings, and so we're not going to
20 get those done until 2018, but, because of that, we're going to
21 be talking about later -- Ryan is going to present doing an
22 extra stock assessment or two in 2017 and 2018, since those MRIP
23 calibrations are not going to be done as quickly. The main
24 thing is they wanted three years of side-by-side comparison
25 data.

26
27 The other major thing that we discussed was the research track,
28 as opposed to a benchmark or standard assessment track, and the
29 complication seems to be within National Marine Fisheries
30 Service and how to go about operationalizing the research track,
31 and so, with that, quote, confusion, that has been delayed as
32 well. The Atlantic cobia, which was scheduled to be a research
33 track, is now going to be a benchmark assessment.

34
35 Ryan is going to go into detail with the assessment schedule,
36 but we are proposing some revisions to that, and FWC, FWRI, is
37 proposing to do a hogfish stock assessment in 2018, a yellowtail
38 stock assessment in 2019, and a mutton snapper assessment in
39 2020. There was some discussion, and we will have to learn if
40 the hogfish assessment is going to include the Florida Keys or
41 just exclusively be the Gulf of Mexico area.

42
43 The thing that we want to discuss today is our request -- We
44 need guidance from the council if cobia or red grouper is a
45 higher priority, and Ryan will go into more detail with that,
46 and we also agreed to delay the scamp research track project
47 until 2019, and that coincides with the delays with the MRIP
48 work and also trying to decide what a research track really is

1 going to be.

2
3 That's a summary of our meeting. The fuller detail is in that
4 document, Tab I-4, and so, with that, I will turn it back over
5 to you, Madam Chair.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Gregory, and Doug gave us a
8 precursor to a lot of the things that Ryan is going to take up
9 with us next on the agenda, and so I will turn it over to you,
10 sir.

11
12 **SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW**

13
14 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's go to Tab I,
15 Number 5(a), which is the SEDAR Assessment Schedule. This is
16 broken out, of course, by year. We say that 2018 is semi-final,
17 as opposed to final, because we have some questions about the
18 terminal year for gray triggerfish and whether we're going to do
19 cobia or red grouper.

20
21 Let's go ahead and start with gray triggerfish. Originally, you
22 guys had said that you wanted to use as much data as would be
23 available before that assessment was done. Something to
24 consider though is just how long it takes to do an assessment,
25 obviously, and to get that vetted through the SSC, which is the
26 review body for a standard assessment, which is what gray
27 triggerfish will be assessed as, and then get something on the
28 books, if there is a need to change what we're doing.

29
30 Because the recreational season for 2017 is closed, the only
31 recreational landings that will be coming in will just be in the
32 form of discards, and so that would just be a discard fishery
33 for 2017, and so you might consider just being comfortable with
34 the 2016 data, which means that we could start gray triggerfish
35 earlier in 2018. Any input on that?

36
37 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Greene.

38
39 **MR. JOHNNY GREENE:** Well, I think you know where I'm at on the
40 triggerfish thing. I would just as soon start it tomorrow, but,
41 with that being said, I think that the appropriate path forward,
42 given the situation that we're in, would be to keep the gray
43 triggerfish where it is and use a terminal year, I think, of
44 2016 would be the best way to go.

45
46 You make a good point about 2017, and, as much as I want to wait
47 for that 2017 data, I just don't know that it's going to be
48 worth it in the whole scheme of things. However, if we can use

1 the terminal year of 2016 and get it started early in 2018,
2 perhaps we can get it delivered to us earlier and then we can do
3 something with it quicker, to assist within the fishery.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Rindone.

6
7 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, ma'am. Another point to add is that
8 we're going to have some things updated this time around that
9 weren't updated the last time, like the larval indices and also
10 age-specific growth curves, and so those will be new and
11 improved.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Do you remember, off the top of your head,
14 what the terminal year was for the last gray triggerfish
15 assessment?

16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** 2012 or 2013.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** 2012 or 2013? Okay. So we'll get three or
20 four more years of data. That's what I was wondering. Thank
21 you.

22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** I am good on that one? All right. Red grouper or
24 cobia for 2018? Last time we assessed red grouper was SEDAR 42
25 using data through I believe it was 2013, and so it's not super
26 old yet, but it's getting older. Cobia used data through 2011,
27 and we've heard from some fishermen that cobia are going the way
28 of the buffalo, and other fishermen are saying that there's
29 plenty of them out there, and so you guys, I am sure, have
30 received emails and phone calls and whatnot from people about
31 this, and so are there opinions?

32
33 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** We're going to go to Mr. Gregory and then Dr.
34 Crabtree and then Martha.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Two items that kind of make cobia
37 stand out is, one, there is going to be a -- It's a joint plan
38 with the South Atlantic, because it's part of the Coastal
39 Migratory Pelagics, and the Gulf cobia migratory group goes
40 around toward the east coast of Florida and stops at the Georgia
41 border.

42
43 That is one thing in favor of cobia, and the other thing is the
44 South Atlantic Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
45 Commission are considering turning the Atlantic migratory group
46 of cobia over to the commission. The South Atlantic Council is
47 going to discuss this next week at their meeting, and we're
48 going to bring it back to the council in August, to you, because

1 one question we don't know is can you take a migratory group out
2 of an FMP without taking the entire species out.

3
4 That would be a major decision to do. If you have to take the
5 entire species out, that would affect us greatly. Those two
6 things are bringing cobia to highlighting cobia over red grouper
7 in my mind at this point.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Before I go on to the list here, I don't know
10 if you all remember, but we did forward that letter out, because
11 the Gulf actually did receive a letter. Didn't we forward that?

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** No.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Not yet? Okay. Well, we'll be forwarding it
16 shortly. It was from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
17 Commission that asked -- It was informing us that they're going
18 to be looking at this, and, because there is some overlap
19 between the Gulf and the South Atlantic there, they were -- What
20 did they ask us? They didn't ask us to delegate, but they asked
21 the Gulf Council to do something.

22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** No, they were simply informing us
24 that they were working with the South Atlantic Council to try to
25 get the Atlantic migratory group, which is from Georgia to North
26 Carolina, to try to turn that over to have the commission have
27 full jurisdiction over it, because the advantage of the
28 commission having full jurisdiction, rather than co-managing it
29 with the South Atlantic Council, is, if the commission has full
30 jurisdiction, they don't have to abide by the Magnuson Act
31 requirements, and so part of that request was also that Bonnie's
32 shop still do the cobia assessments if it turned over to the
33 Atlantic States Commission.

34
35 It's all preliminary. He was just giving us a heads-up that
36 they were going to have these conversations, and it in no way
37 affected the Gulf migratory group, but I was going to bring that
38 to the council next meeting. The only people that saw it so far
39 has been you and the Vice Chair and Dale, because he is going to
40 the South Atlantic Council meeting next week.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Next, we have Dr. Crabtree.

43
44 **DR. ROY CRABTREE:** Cobia has become a very big deal in the South
45 Atlantic, from Georgia north, and the problem is that we
46 implemented a closure of the EEZ because the ACL was projected
47 to be hit. North Carolina and Virginia allowed very extended
48 seasons, and we went way over the ACL, and so the EEZ was closed

1 all of this year, and we project that the entire ACL for the
2 Atlantic stock will be caught and exceeded by the catches going
3 on in state waters. It's pretty clear that -- It sounds
4 familiar, doesn't it?

5
6 It's pretty clear that federal management of cobia is not going
7 to be effective in the Atlantic stock, because 85 percent of the
8 cobia landings are taking place in state waters, and so we have
9 a couple of options with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
10 Commission.

11
12 One is to co-manage with the council and the commission. There
13 were some on the commission who felt like that was going to be
14 cumbersome and difficult, and so the commission has asked the
15 council to consider just removing cobia from the FMP, but it
16 would only be the Atlantic stock of cobia that would be removed,
17 and you can remove one stock from an FMP and not another,
18 provided you have a rationale.

19
20 In this case, the difference is because the Atlantic States
21 Marine Fisheries Commission has regulatory authority and binding
22 regulatory authority with the states, and we don't have anything
23 comparable to that in the Gulf of Mexico, because the
24 legislation authorizing the two commissions is different. I
25 don't know what the council will decide, whether co-management
26 or remove it from the FMP. We'll talk about that next week, but
27 that's what is going on there with cobia.

28
29 I have had a number of phone calls and conversations with cobia
30 fishermen in the northern Gulf, and some emails, and most of
31 what I am hearing from folks is that the stock is not doing well
32 and they aren't seeing fish, and so I would think a cobia
33 assessment would be something that we ought to put priority on
34 with the assessment schedule.

35
36 We probably need to keep coordination between the Gulf and east
37 coast of Florida cobia assessment and the Atlantic stock cobia
38 assessment, because there is a review that's going to take place
39 looking at the boundary between the two stocks, and, if the
40 boundary was to move, that would affect both of us, and so I
41 think it is something that ought to be a priority, and I would
42 like to see us try to get to a cobia assessment as soon as we
43 could.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Rindone, to that point, and then I will
46 take Martha.

47
48 **MR. RINDONE:** Just a point of clarification for you guys. The

1 Gulf stock that occurs on the east coast of Florida, the Gulf
2 Council apportions to the South Atlantic Council to manage, and
3 so they're still Gulf fish, but the South Atlantic manages those
4 fish up to the Florida/Georgia line, and the reason why you guys
5 would have to review anything the South Atlantic does with the
6 Atlantic cobia stock is because the plan is still a joint FMP.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Martha.

9

10 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** I think my preference would be to put cobia
11 as the priority. Like Roy, we've been hearing a lot of comments
12 and concerns from folks in the northern Gulf, in the Panhandle
13 of Florida.

14

15 This came up at our last commission meeting, and, because of
16 that, we actually held some public workshops the last few
17 months, and we'll be putting together a rule package for our
18 commissioners to look at and consider, to potentially make some
19 management changes for Florida state waters, and so more
20 information would be helpful here, I think.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Emily, did you have your hand up?

23

24 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, ma'am. I just wanted to add, in an
25 effort to sort of add to the fishermen-reported data that we've
26 been hearing, I have heard from fishermen about both cobia and
27 red grouper. I am mostly hearing from charter captains and
28 recreational fishermen regarding the cobia stock, and
29 specifically a group that's in the Florida Panhandle. They are
30 concerned that the fish aren't there, or they're really small.

31

32 Then I'm also hearing from a number of different commercial
33 fishermen about red grouper, and they are saying that they are
34 not present in the numbers that they expect them to be, sort of
35 off of the central Florida coast as well, and so I'm sort of
36 hearing an equal amount of comment about each species, and so I
37 just wanted to make sure that I could add that in.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Thank you. I appreciate that. Dr. Mickle.

40

41 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to weigh in from
42 Mississippi, a lot of my constituents there are worried that the
43 numbers are down. Real quick, on the proposed stock assessments
44 here, Mr. Rindone, the red grouper, it doesn't have a symbol by
45 it of what type of assessment, and I'm assuming a standard. Is
46 that correct?

47

48 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, it would be a standard, because we wouldn't

1 be looking to change the modeling environment or make any
2 fundamental changes to how the species is assessed. This would
3 allow the incorporation of any new data that have been collected
4 since the last stock assessment, as well as updating the indices
5 for new years of data for everything else.

6
7 **DR. MICKLE:** I understand. I was just seeing if red grouper and
8 cobia are set up as standard. We're deciding between two
9 standards, just to clarify for everyone.

10
11 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes.

12
13 **DR. MICKLE:** Okay. As far as the cobia concerns, we just have -
14 - Our numbers are real down. They're running the gauntlet
15 through our waters. Just quick numbers, and I did get the
16 numbers from them, but we do have several cobia tournaments, and
17 the numbers have gone from eighty fish to ninety fish for the
18 tournament size each year down to -- I think there was thirteen
19 landed a couple of weeks ago, and so just huge drops, and it's
20 been steady catches for the last eleven years. The last couple
21 of years, we're seeing our numbers go down. I think there's a
22 timing issue with migration within the central Gulf as well, and
23 so there's a lot of things to look at, and we could approach a
24 lot of those through a standard. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Excellent information. Thank you. Mr.
27 Anson.

28
29 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not on your
30 committee, but I would also support cobia for assessment in
31 2018. Ryan, wasn't there an assessment coming up for cobia on
32 the South Atlantic? Is that what I heard you say?

33
34 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, in 2018.

35
36 **MR. ANSON:** But these would be conducted separate, or would they
37 be conducted jointly, the South Atlantic and the Gulf?

38
39 **MR. RINDONE:** It really depends on the timing. Because of the
40 joint nature of it, it would involve work by both the Miami and
41 the Beaufort Lab, and that would need to overlap quite well to
42 do them at the same time, and what we're looking at right now,
43 for the South Atlantic, is that they would do a full-fledged
44 benchmark assessment for cobia, which is currently -- Which
45 looks like it's currently slated to take about eighteen months
46 between the middle of 2018 through the end of 2019, with a
47 terminal year of 2017.

1 We're looking at cobia, or red grouper, beginning in the late
2 summer of 2018, and probably using data through 2016, and so
3 they would start at roughly the same time, but the body of work
4 that the South Atlantic is trying to have done is going to be a
5 lot greater than what the Gulf has determined that it needs.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** I was just curious if there is the potential for any
8 savings, I guess, of staff time or resources to try to combine
9 them and then we would have some slots available, or a slot
10 available, to do something else.

11
12 **MR. RINDONE:** We don't gain anything by doing that, not for the
13 Gulf anyway. The South Atlantic might gain something by doing a
14 less complex -- Not less complex, but less time-intensive
15 assessment, but that's their prerogative to make that decision.
16 We have a slot available, but it's just up to you guys to fill
17 it with something.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Walker.

20
21 **MR. DAVID WALKER:** I was just going to add that, in the
22 commercial industry, the cobia numbers have been down.
23 Normally, after that make that little run inshore, they move
24 offshore, and you see them on the reefs and the natural bottom
25 and so forth, and, through the years, I have actually caught a
26 lot of cobia with a gaff, just swimming behind the boat and you
27 gaff them and put them in the boat, but we're not seeing the
28 numbers that we used to see.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** By the way, there is a small membership on
31 this committee, but this is going to impact all of our decisions
32 around this table, and so I invite anybody that has a question
33 or a comment to please chime in, whether you're on the committee
34 or not. Dr. Ponwith.

35
36 **DR. BONNIE PONWITH:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is lot of
37 change in what normally should be a very solid, at this point,
38 stock assessment schedule, and it's due to a lot of factors, but
39 we do want to be careful about, once the comparison data become
40 finalized, to be able to do a really good job of taking a look
41 at the implications of that calibration and be able to generate
42 some scientific advice to inform management going forward.

43
44 That was one of the big changes that we were expecting to be
45 able to get a start on that, and, in looking at that, we made
46 decisions that it was probably more prudent to wait until we had
47 those data really solidified in the use of those comparisons.

1 The discussion about gray triggerfish versus red grouper or
2 cobia is an important one. I will want to circle back, once
3 you've had a chance to deliberate, and weigh in on this with the
4 team, because the other thing is there are implications in terms
5 of the preparation of the biological samples, and I want to make
6 sure that we're able to keep pace with whatever those changes
7 are, given that we're kind of right around the corner on the
8 2018 schedule.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Okay. Any further comments from the group as
11 to which species we want to slide in that slot? Most of what I
12 have heard, it sounds like, is cobia. Are we comfortable with
13 that consensus though? Johnny.

14
15 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I am kind of torn between this red grouper
16 and cobia thing, I've got to admit. I do live right in the
17 middle of the whole cobia conversation that's been going on, and
18 I do agree that, in 2010, them animals swam into that oil spill,
19 and there has to be some effects of that, and I think we're just
20 now realizing that.

21
22 With that, I don't have a problem putting cobia in 2018, in that
23 number six slot, but, if we do that, I really want that red
24 grouper to move up to number two in 2019, because, if they're
25 only utilizing 40 percent of their harvest on this fish in any
26 type of commercial fishery -- If the guys who get paid to catch
27 them can't catch them, there's an issue, and I think we need to
28 do that.

29
30 I don't have a problem with, in 2018, leaving gray triggerfish
31 as number four with a terminal year of 2016, and cobia for 2018,
32 in the number six slot, but, in 2019, I really want that red
33 grouper, if it's possible, in any way, shape, fashion, or form,
34 to move up to number two, if not number one, if at all possible.

35
36 I know we're just looking at a year here and just move it up one
37 or down one makes a difference, but it does. It makes a big
38 difference, and so I think that's where I'm at on that, and I
39 will turn to the other committee members or council members for
40 any other thoughts, to see if they agree or disagree. I don't
41 know if you want this in the form of a motion or not. That's up
42 to you, Madam Chair.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** I agree, and I think we hear from our
45 stakeholders and our fishermen that come to these meetings a lot
46 that, you know, look, we come here and we tell you we think
47 there's something wrong with these species, and so I think
48 you're spot-on with making sure that, if we choose to do cobia

1 in 2018, that we make sure that red grouper is a high priority
2 in 2019, if at all possible, given what our fishermen have been
3 telling us.

4
5 We need to make sure that we're okay there, but I do think we
6 would need it in the form of a motion, if we're going do cobia,
7 slide cobia in that spot for 2018. We probably need to make
8 that clear. That way, Bonnie will have the direction she needs
9 to go back and get the wheels turning and make sure that it can
10 happen. Before Johnny makes a motion, he wants to know if
11 anybody else has any feedback. Dr. Frazer.

12
13 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to
14 understand this a little bit better. In 2018, we have vermilion
15 snapper. Is there a reason that we cannot switch vermilion
16 snapper and move it into 2019 and move red grouper up into that
17 spot?

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** At first blush, I would tell you no. Knowing what
20 it takes to process the samples, it will tell less time to
21 process cobia, because half of those samples aren't processed
22 directly by NMFS. They're done through the University of
23 Southern Mississippi and the Gulf Coast Research Lab.

24
25 Swapping red grouper for vermilion, there are differences in
26 terms of how long it takes to age those fish and collect all
27 those data for analysis, and so it's not necessarily apples-to-
28 apples, but maybe Dr. Ponwith wants to throw her hat in the ring
29 on that.

30
31 From a pure scheduling standpoint, a standard assessment should
32 take the same amount of time whether you're doing vermilion or
33 red grouper, and, if you're going to choose between those two,
34 you just need to have an idea of why. If you're going to kick
35 vermilion out, are you going to add it back on later? We just
36 need that kind of direction.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Walker.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** I have concern about the vermilion since 2010. A
41 lot of the fish have been displaced. I've heard a lot of -- I
42 communicate with a lot of fishermen, and, like off the Panama
43 City area, they've seen huge b-liners, where they haven't seen
44 them in years, and so there's a lot of fish that got displaced
45 in 2010, and they seem to still be displaced.

46
47 I am concerned about the vermilion snapper, and then, Martha, I
48 guess as far as the red grouper, I don't know whether you would

1 like to see that, but I am concerned. I do have concerns about
2 vermilion having been displaced, and maybe Kevin can weigh in
3 too, but it seems like the vermilion is just not as plentiful as
4 they used to be off the Mississippi and Alabama and southeast
5 Louisiana area.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Frazer.

8

9 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you. David, I appreciate that. I guess what
10 I'm trying to do is deal with this idea of how responsive the
11 council is to the people that are actually exploiting the fish,
12 and so we have a really obvious problem with red grouper and
13 kind of a perceived problem, potentially, with the snapper, and
14 so, if you could leave the impression that we're going to try to
15 tackle the red grouper problem as soon as possible, given the
16 resources, I think that might be the more favorable way to go.

17

18 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Let's tackle these maybe one at a time then.
19 If we seem to have consensus on the open slot for 2018, and I am
20 asking here, but, if we have the consensus that that would be
21 cobia, we could tackle that. Then, after that, we can have
22 further discussion on where we want to prioritize red grouper.
23 Do we want to somehow bump it up in the place of vermilion
24 snapper, or do we simply want to bump it up in 2019, to make it
25 a higher priority?

26

27 **MR. GREENE:** I will go ahead and make motion that, in 2018, we
28 include gray triggerfish and cobia. Understanding that gray
29 triggerfish is in there, and the conversation in front of the
30 table here has been about the terminal year, and I am fine with
31 2016. I am not going to include that in this motion, but I am
32 going to let that be as part of the conversation, that that's
33 where we're going with this.

34

35 I think that pretty well covers the intent of what we're doing.
36 We've had a lot of conversation, and so it would be that
37 triggerfish would stay as number four and then cobia would fall
38 in at number six, and so basically just as it's listed on your
39 sheet here, but just striking red grouper out of that, and so
40 that's the intent of motion.

41

42 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. While we're getting that on the
43 board, Mr. Anson has a question for us. Mr. Rindone is going to
44 help out with the motion, so we get our wording just right.

45

46 **MR. GREENE:** Madam Chair, my motion is to assess gray
47 triggerfish and cobia in 2018 as standard track assessments with
48 a terminal year of 2016.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. We now have our motion on the
3 board. Do we have a second to the motion? It's a very small
4 committee, and so the second would have to come from --
5

6 **MR. WALKER:** I will second the motion. I'm sitting in for Pam
7 now.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** That's right. Mr. Walker is going to second
10 as the Vice Chair of the Mackerel Committee. He's filling in
11 for Dr. Dana. Is there discussion on the motion? Mr. Anson,
12 did you have a question?
13

14 **MR. ANSON:** I did, just clarification. On the schedule for the
15 number six slot in 2018 for red grouper or cobia, the terminal
16 year is either 2016 or 2017, and so is 2017 a possibility, Ryan,
17 since we have a fall start for that assessment?
18

19 **MR. RINDONE:** I'm sorry, Kevin, but can you say that again?
20

21 **MR. ANSON:** Just looking at the schedule here for 2018 and that
22 number six slot, you have a terminal year of either 2016 or
23 2017, since we have a fall of 2018 start in the assessment. Is
24 it a possibility to have 2017 as the terminal year for data?
25

26 **MR. RINDONE:** Maybe. It's going to be preliminary at first. If
27 the landings don't come in in time, then they remain preliminary
28 for the projections. Again, for cobia, you're gaining five
29 years of data, because the terminal year last time was 2011. We
30 have been hearing about the drops in harvest for at least a
31 couple of years now, and so that signal should be picked up.
32

33 Gray triggerfish, the last time was 2013 data, the 2013 data
34 were used, and so you're gaining another three years, plus
35 you're getting the updated larval index, which terminated at
36 2008 last time, and so you're getting a ton more data there, and
37 you're getting age-specific growth curves.
38

39 **MR. ANSON:** I seem to recall, and it may be species-specific,
40 but I seem to recall, at the last meeting, that there is a
41 possibility of running preliminary numbers as you go through the
42 assessment process and then, since we're talking about a year-
43 plus, potentially, here, that they come back in with the final
44 numbers, but it's basically just to set up the model and
45 everything. I think, to be efficient, I guess, is to go ahead
46 and state that it's going to be 2017, in order to capture it, I
47 guess is what I'm getting at.
48

1 **MR. RINDONE:** They can lead with preliminary numbers for both of
2 them. With gray triggerfish, the commercial landings are fairly
3 predictable, and so what they might end up doing is using an
4 average of the last couple of years to predict the commercial
5 landings for 2017, until they have those finalized. Then, for
6 the discards for the recreational sector, for 2017, those data
7 can take a little bit longer to come in, and so they might do
8 the exact same thing with that.

9
10 Then, before the assessment comes to the SSC for review,
11 sometime in the spring of 2019, they could try to get those
12 numbers in, the final numbers, but it would just be contingent
13 on when those data are available, and so basically I'm not
14 saying that it's guaranteed.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Okay. We have got to make a small correction
17 here, just a technical glitch. Dr. Dana is on this committee,
18 the SEDAR Committee, because she is Chair of the Mackerel
19 Committee. She is also Chair of Migratory Species. Vice Chair
20 of Migratory Species is Mr. Walker, who seconded the motion, but
21 Dr. Dana is on here as Chair of the Mackerel, and the Vice Chair
22 of Mackerel is Mr. Banks, and so the seconder to the motion
23 couldn't really second the motion, and so I am going to need Mr.
24 Matens to second the motion if we want to continue down the road
25 of --

26
27 **MR. MATENS:** I was sitting over here trying to be good. If I
28 may, yes, I will second that, and I would welcome some more
29 discussion about Johnny's point about moving red grouper in 2019
30 to the number two place.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. So we have an official second to
33 the motion on the board. The motion on the board is to assess
34 gray triggerfish and cobia in 2018 as standard track assessments
35 with a terminal year of 2016. Is there any further discussion
36 on this motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing**
37 **none, the motion carries.**

38
39 Now we can follow up with our secondary discussion, and I will
40 open the floor. Mr. Matens.

41
42 **MR. MATENS:** Since I started this, I find myself in a tough
43 position. I just don't know that much about tilefish and
44 yellowedge grouper. I don't know how important that is to other
45 people, and I really would like some comments and some
46 discussion here about that.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Greene.

1
2 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I think that we need to leave those where we
3 are. The conversation we had earlier was to just simply try to,
4 in 2019, move red grouper up to the number two priority in that
5 year.

6
7 However, looking at this and reading the terminal year, it shows
8 red grouper as number five, with a terminal year of 2018. Then
9 the fish above it shows 2017 or 2016. I would rather have red
10 grouper moved up to number two, even if it had a terminal year
11 of 2017 as opposed to 2018, but I would like to hear some
12 conversation or thoughts from Mr. Rindone or any of the other
13 council or committee members.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Rindone.

16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. For yellowedge and
18 tilefish, the terminal year for those was 2009, and so they are
19 dusty. It might be about time to take another look at what's
20 going on there.

21
22 Now, yellowedge, we got management advice out of. Tilefish were
23 combined, because they were a pre-data-poor situation, and we
24 did not have a stock assessment for that one that passed peer
25 review, and so that's something else to consider there, is that
26 tilefish may represent a larger body of work than what is
27 represented on the schedule. It's something that would have to
28 be reviewed.

29
30 As far as putting red grouper into the number two spot in 2019,
31 or even the number one spot, if you wanted to move it there, we
32 have those spots available to us to make changes to, and so it's
33 really your pleasure.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Greene.

36
37 **MR. GREENE:** Ryan, when I was sitting here and looking at the
38 proposed schedule for 2019, it shows red grouper standard, if
39 not in 2018, with a terminal year of 2018. Then, when I look at
40 the block of 2018 for red grouper, it shows a terminal year of
41 2016 or 2017. Any thoughts on what terminal year we could use
42 for red grouper when we move it up here to number one in 2019?

43
44 **MR. RINDONE:** It's all about when you start it. Red grouper is
45 managed as an IFQ program, which means commercial landings
46 aren't going to be available until after the end of 2018, and so
47 we can't start red grouper early in 2019, because the data won't
48 have finished being processed yet.

1
2 Now, the commercial landings will have, but we won't know non-
3 IFQ discards, like for people that don't have shares that are
4 discarding grouper. The recreational data will still need to
5 come in, and that usually takes a while to get those final
6 numbers in.

7
8 You would have to start it later in the year, and you may,
9 again, like Mr. Anson was talking about with triggers, you may
10 have to lead with preliminary data and just hold on to that
11 until you get the final data, the final numbers, in that you can
12 fold into the assessment. You may have to use some
13 placeholders. You could do red grouper in 2019 using data
14 through 2017 and still gain four good, hard years.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Is there further discussion? Is anybody
17 willing to make a motion on where to go with that? Mr. Greene.

18
19 **MR. GREENE:** I will make a motion -- That motion right there,
20 you can just go ahead and copy it, because we're just going to
21 change gray triggerfish and cobia to red grouper in 2019 and the
22 terminal year of 2018, after hearing the comments from Mr.
23 Rindone about leading with the assessment, and so, Madam Chair,
24 I think that motion is correct as written. The motion is to
25 assess red grouper in 2019 as a standard track assessment with a
26 terminal year of 2018 and that it be moved to the number-one
27 priority. Just, in the motion, just that it would be the
28 number-one priority of 2019, and you can word it however you see
29 fit.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Okay. Just because I'm anal about my
32 grammar, can we take the "s" off the end of "assessments", so
33 assessment won't be plural. All right. We have a motion on the
34 board. I will read it, and then we'll look for a second. The
35 motion is to assess red grouper as the number-one priority in
36 2019 as a standard track assessment with a terminal year of
37 2018. Is that your motion, Mr. Greene?

38
39 **MR. GREENE:** That is correct.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Okay. Do we have a second for the motion?
42 Seconded by Mr. Matens. Is there discussion on the motion? Mr.
43 Matens.

44
45 **MR. MATENS:** Where do we put scamp then? Another question I
46 have is, since cobia is not number two, we have freed up a spot.
47 Is that something we need to discuss? I do second this motion.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Rindone.

2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** You can move scamp to number two, using a terminal
4 year of 2017, since it's a research track. We don't know what
5 the scheduling is going to be on that, because we still have to
6 hash out exactly what a research track means. You guys can put
7 as many things on here in a list as you want to.

8
9 If, by some miracle, the budget fairy drops a bunch of money on
10 Bonnie and she can hire a whole ton of people, maybe we can get
11 some more stuff cranked out, but we'll be limited in terms of
12 the number of assessments that we can do in a region in a year,
13 and that's why we have these numbered in terms of priority of
14 what's most important. We have an assessment priorities
15 worksheet that we'll look at once we get through all of this,
16 and that's more of a little bit larger, longer view.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Mickle.

19
20 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to point out
21 that the scamp research track -- That will be the second
22 research track, if I'm not mistaken, or will it be the first?
23 The king mackerel research track assessment the prior year,
24 won't that be the first one?

25
26 **MR. RINDONE:** I don't know that the king mackerel is going to be
27 done as a research track right now, because of how up in the air
28 the whole research track process is. It may end up as a
29 modified benchmark assessment, where it's just we afford more
30 time to deal with things.

31
32 One of the things that we're getting with the king mackerel
33 assessment is incorporation of Mexican data that we've been
34 trying for a long time to get our hands on, and it's been
35 difficult, but we're able to do it now, and so that's why we
36 were wanting to do an overhaul of kingfish, but it may not be a
37 research track.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** So that we're all on the same page, I am
40 going to read what I believe is our new list for 2019, and so it
41 would be: 1)red grouper; 2)scamp; 3)Spanish mackerel;
42 4)yellowedge grouper; 5)tilefish. That would be the new list if
43 this motion carries. That would be our new list for 2019, the
44 order of the new list. All right. Any further discussion on
45 this motion? **We have a motion on the board to assess red**
46 **grouper as the number-one priority in 2019 as a standard track**
47 **assessment with a terminal year of 2018. Is there any**
48 **opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

1
2 Was there a third thing that we were going to discuss? Mr.
3 Greene.

4
5 **MR. GREENE:** Before we leave this, since we're on the stock
6 assessment thing, and we've moved up some stuff, in looking at
7 2019, we've got -- We just amended that list, and, if you look
8 on the current sheet we have right now, on number five, it says
9 red grouper, if not in 2018, and so I guess my question to Mr.
10 Rindone is can we move some of the stuff -- Can we move an item
11 from 2020 up to 2019 at this point or is it full?

12
13 **MR. RINDONE:** We have four, or sometimes five, slots available
14 to us in the Gulf. It depends on whether the Caribbean needs
15 something done or not, because the Miami shop handles both the
16 Gulf and the Caribbean.

17
18 Right now, any more than five things on the list, anything
19 that's beyond that fifth thing, is probably unlikely to get
20 done, unless it's the FWC that is doing it, but, again, you guys
21 can put whatever you want on there, and, if something changes
22 with the circumstances with the analytical capacity at the
23 Center and they can do it, then they can do it, and so, by all
24 means, if you want to move something up, you can. 2019 is still
25 in a proposed and not yet final situation.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Greene.

28
29 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I mean, I know Bonnie wants to weigh in, and
30 I certainly want to hear her comments, and I understand that
31 whole thing, realizing that we're in 2017 and making projections
32 out on when the work is going to be completed in the remainder
33 of 2017, 2018, and 2019, but where I'm going with all of this is
34 I'm looking at 2020, and I am looking at a greater amberjack
35 standard assessment that I would really like to move up to 2019,
36 but, before I make any motion to do that, I would like to hear
37 from Dr. Ponwith or anybody else that would share any comments
38 or concerns.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Ponwith.

41
42 **DR. PONWITH:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is enormously helpful
43 to know what your notion of priority is, whether we're
44 physically able to carry out that number of assessments or not,
45 and the reason is because an assessment scientist can pick up
46 and do any assessment in a year that needs to be done, as long
47 as we have a lead that we can assign to it, but you back from
48 there.

1
2 The people who manage the data for that need quite a bit of lead
3 time to be able to work with the states and to work with the
4 commissions and work with our own people to condition those data
5 as input, and then you back farther from that, and our
6 biological sampler processors need a considerable amount of lead
7 time to be able to get those age structures read.

8
9 If there are states who are also reading them, to do the inter-
10 lab calibrations, and so having an idea of what your notion of
11 priority is, whether it's an executable list or not, helps us to
12 be able to take a look at those in context with one another and
13 say, well, we can do this if you can move that and that.

14
15 It's really helpful, and so I don't discourage you from creating
16 a long list. It's with a caution that only the ones on the top
17 are likely going to be able to -- Where that line is, it's
18 always in flux, depending upon the number of staff we have and
19 the combinations of how sophisticated those assessments are.

20
21 The other thing that we can do too is we just -- We worked on a
22 data-limited suite of stocks and a data-limited approach, and I
23 would encourage you to be thinking, again, about do we want to
24 include a slot in there for another suite of data-limited
25 species? That's another thing to keep in the back of your
26 minds.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Rindone, to that point, and then Mr.
29 Anson.

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to that point, to give you guys an idea of
32 how far out work starts, they are reading otoliths and working
33 on gray triggerfish now for it to be done next year, and so that
34 work is gearing up now.

35
36 We do have a data-limited assessment proposed for 2020, and we
37 just went ahead and threw everything in there that we haven't
38 looked at yet, and we asked the Center to help us with triage on
39 that, to figure out what we should reasonably move forward with
40 for 2020, but, again, that is still just proposed.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Anson.

43
44 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know you're bumping up to
45 the end of your scheduled end time for this committee, but I
46 want to go back to a comment that Ryan had made relative to
47 tilefish. Ryan, you had said that the last assessment was
48 rejected, and so I'm wondering what has changed that would allow

1 us to do this as a stand-alone assessment relative to the
2 assessment model and/or data?

3
4 **MR. RINDONE:** There was an ageing workshop that determined that,
5 for the South Atlantic, that determined that we don't age
6 tilefish very well, and so there's some lessons learned from
7 that that might be able to be incorporated. There is more
8 landings history, and the more time in the IFQ program. It may
9 be worth not necessarily looking at it under the umbrella of
10 Stock Synthesis, but perhaps in a more data-limited approach.
11 There are just things that we should get some input from the
12 Center on, I would recommend.

13
14 I know that tilefish has been proposed in the past, mostly by
15 the Southeast Regional Office, to be added back on the schedule,
16 again, because of the terminal year the last time around was
17 2009, and so it's quite dusky.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. We are bumping up against our
20 time here, but what we're talking about, or what Johnny had
21 hinted at, was possibly moving a 2020 stock up to a 2019, or a
22 2020 assessment up to a 2019 assessment slot.

23
24 It sounds like there are a few questions about some of these
25 things that we have slated in 2019 and 2020, and I would suggest
26 that we get a little more information on some of those and we
27 will revisit the 2020 move to 2019 at our next meeting, because
28 we will still be in 2017 then, in August, and so I think we have
29 a little bit of time, if we're talking about bumping those up.
30 That way, we can have a good, robust discussion on this, because
31 we do have one more agenda item. Mr. Gregory.

32
33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** To that point, I would suggest not
34 addressing this until October. We will have another Steering
35 Committee meeting in September, and we'll have more information
36 about the MRIP work and the research track, and 2020 is a couple
37 of years away, and so it's not going to make a difference if we
38 do it now or do it in October, and we would have more
39 information in October.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Ponwith, did you have a comment?

42
43 **DR. PONWITH:** Right, and I apologize. I know this is late, but
44 this is when we're moving multiple pieces here, and so the
45 proposal from the motion was to put gray snapper and cobia and
46 gray trigger. We will be finishing up the gray snapper and then
47 putting cobia and gray trigger into the same year, and one of
48 the challenges that we have with that is that the analyst that

1 does cobia and gray triggerfish is the same analyst.

2
3 Having those done in the same year creates a logistics challenge
4 for us, and I just wanted to make sure that I got that on the
5 microphone, to help us think about the implications of that
6 relative to the red grouper decision.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Greene and then Mr. Matens.

9
10 **MR. GREENE:** Dr. Ponwith, I am kind of looking at you. This is
11 your area of expertise, and your advice here is kind of
12 paramount on this. Would it be your recommendation to not do
13 triggerfish and cobia in the same year, just to make sure that I
14 absolutely understand what you are saying?

15
16 **DR. PONWITH:** At this point, because the analyst is the same
17 person who is the lead on both of those, and it makes it almost
18 logistically impossible to do those two in the same year. I can
19 make some calls during the break and get some clarifications,
20 but that is my understanding at this point, based on feedback
21 that I just got from them.

22
23 **MR. GREENE:** Thank you. Madam Chair, I am probably going to do
24 some of the motions that I made earlier in this committee -- I
25 can do it at Full Council or we can do it now, based on the
26 information that she just brought to light.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** We may not get to our last agenda item,
29 because we've got to hammer this out. Mr. Rindone, I have a
30 question. Gray triggerfish, and this may just be my general
31 lack of knowledge about the lead personnel on these assessments,
32 but gray triggerfish, over here on the start and end dates, says
33 spring of 2018 and summer of 2019. Never mind. I thought that
34 was not an overlap between the two, but there is, because the
35 cobia would be fall of 2018 to winter of -- I answered my own
36 question.

37
38 **MR. RINDONE:** Those dates aren't set in stone. They will be
39 adjusted. It should be spring of 2018 to summer of 2018 and not
40 2019. That is on me. Then cobia would start later in the fall,
41 after the end of gray triggerfish.

42
43 Just because the assessment has ended, it doesn't mean the
44 analyst's work is done. They still have to present a review to
45 the SSC that then has to make a decision. If there's any
46 adjustments that need to be made, that all takes time, and the
47 analyst that did cobia the last time around no longer works at
48 the Center, and so somebody else has to do that now, and it

1 happens to be the same person.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. We are over time. We have passed
4 some motions. Bonnie, can you get us some clarification between
5 now and Full Council that we definitely cannot do those at the
6 same time and that we're going to have to make another decision,
7 that we have another decision point to address? We will take
8 that up during our committee report, and so it sounds like we're
9 going to have a busy day Thursday so far.

10
11 That means we're also going to have to take up our agenda item
12 for NOAA's Stock Assessment Improvement Plan and our draft
13 letter. We'll take that up at Full Council as well, which means
14 that we're ready for lunch. We will recess for lunch, and I
15 will see you back here at 1:30 to pick up with the Spiny Lobster
16 Committee. Thank you.

17
18 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 5, 2017.)

19
20

- - -