GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort         Clearwater Beach, Florida

       June 20, 2016

VOTING MEMBERS
Kevin Anson (designee for Chris Blankenship).........Alabama
Pamela Dana...............................................Florida
John Greene...............................................Alabama
Campo Matens............................................Louisiana

NON-VOTING MEMBERS
Leann Bosarge.........................................Mississippi
Doug Boyd...................................................Texas
Roy Crabtree..................NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida
Dale Diaz.............................................Mississippi
Dave Donaldson..............................................GSMFC
Myron Fischer (designee for Patrick Banks)..............Louisiana
Martha Guyas (designee for Nick Wiley)....................Florida
Kelly Lucas (designee for Jamie Miller)................Mississippi
Robin Riechers........................................Texas
Greg Stunz..............................................Texas
Ed Swindell.....................................Louisiana
David Walker............................................Florida
Roy Williams..............................................Florida

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Steven Atran.............................Senior Fishery Biologist
John Froeschke...................Fishery Biologist - Statistician
Douglas Gregory............................Executive Director
Morgan Kilgour................................Fishery Biologist
Ava Lasseter....................................Anthropologist
Mara Levy.....................................NOAA General Counsel
Emily Muehlstein....................Fisheries Outreach Specialist
Kathy Pereira..................Meeting Planner/Travel Coordinator
Charlene Ponce.............................Public Information Officer
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Carrie Simmons............................Deputy Director

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 21: Motion to move the gray triggerfish assessment to 2017 and move the gray snapper assessment back to starting in 2018. The motion carried on page 25.

PAGE 26: Motion to draft a letter to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center requesting that the fall plankton larval survey samples from the U.S. Gulf of Mexico for Calendar Year 2008 forward be processed in time for the next gray triggerfish assessment, to be scheduled in 2017. The motion carried on page 26.

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The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort, Clearwater Beach, Florida, Monday morning, June 20, 2016, and was called to order at 10:50 a.m. by Chairman Kevin Anson.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON: Let’s go ahead and we’re going to start the SEDAR Committee. Members on the SEDAR Committee include myself, Dr. Pam Dana, Mr. Camp Matens, and Mr. Johnny Greene. Everyone is present, except for I don’t see Camp.

The first order of business on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda. Before we do that, I just want to point out that Representative Jolly from Florida is expected here before we break, and, when he comes, we’re going to go ahead and allow him to address the council, and so that will occur during the agenda, and so I just wanted to let everyone know that. Besides that though, is there any -- Does anyone want to move to approve the agenda or is there any changes to the agenda?

MR. JOHNNY GREENE: So moved.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Move to approve and it’s been seconded. Any objections to approving the agenda? With no objections, we will go to Approval of the Minutes. Is there a motion to approve the minutes or are there any changes that need to be made to the previous meeting’s minutes? Do you want to make a motion, Mr. Greene?

MR. GREENE: Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a motion to approve and it’s seconded by Dr. Dana. Any objection to approving the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes are approved. Action Guide and Next Steps, it’s Tab Number I-3, and so we have our two agenda items here that are highlighted, and there is a short description of what our goals are here with those agenda items, for your review. Next is Item Number IV, SEDAR Steering Committee Review, and Mr. Gregory.

SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE REVIEW

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just going to give a brief overview of the review and some other
comments of things we learned at our Council Coordination Committee Meeting last month. The full summary report is in the briefing book. This is the conclusions of the May 2016 SEDAR webinar. Item 1 is the SEDAR Committee supported the Best Practices Panel recommendation for a multispecies stock ID workshop in 2017. Stocks to be included or considered to be included are cobia, lane snapper, and scamp. We’re going to do something similar with gray snapper as part of their benchmark assessment. There is evidence that there is multiple stocks of gray snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

The panel also recommended holding a broader procedural workshop on reference points, which would include the topic of reproductive inputs. The panel also recommended two additional procedural workshop topics to be considered in the future, the Gulf of Mexico shrimp bycatch estimation and data-limited method improvements for best practices.

Each council is asked -- This is something that we might need some action on. Each council is asked to report to the Steering Committee in October on its progress in reviewing and applying the prioritization tool. At this point, the Gulf Council’s position has been, and it’s been what I’ve been pushing, is to request that the Southeast Fisheries Center draft the initial factors and weighting factors for consideration by our SSC, rather than having our SSC develop them from scratch. My main concern has been the amount of time that it would take to do that.

The South Atlantic SSC is planning, however, to develop the factors and weightings on their own, and so we can see how well that goes. At the CCC meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council announced that they did their prioritization with the SSC, but it was very time consuming. Therein, it reinforces my concern.

Although the councils have been told -- Now here is another point that is important, and I don’t know how it’s going to operate here in the Southeast. The councils have been told that we are not required to use the prioritization tool exclusively when determining which stocks to assess, but rather it’s one of the tools that we use in setting our recommendations to the SEDAR Committee.

However, it was noted at the Council Coordinating Committee Meeting that one of the centers in the country was indicating to the councils that they would only follow the prioritization results in doing assessment scheduling. If that were to occur
here in the Southeast, then the councils and the Steering Committee would have less input into the stock assessment scheduling, and so that’s just a red flag for us to be aware of, that, even though we were told we still have flexibility, in some regions it’s being interpreted otherwise.

The Gulf SSC recently received a presentation on the research track proposal at their June meeting, and Luiz is going to give a brief summary of that. Overall, the process was viewed favorably by the SSC, as long as it did not result in fewer assessments.

The first test application of the research track approach is planned for the Gulf of Mexico/South Atlantic scamp assessment beginning in 2018. The council may wish to request adding yellowmouth grouper to that assessment, due to the problem of species identification between the two species.

Also, the potential priority stocks for MRIP revision assessments in the Gulf of Mexico were identified as gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, gag, red snapper, red grouper, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and vermilion snapper.

The Steering Committee, lastly, discussed having a Gulf and South Atlantic king mackerel assessment in 2018, including data and input from Mexico, as part of, I think, the large ecosystem assessment that was discussed with this council previously by Dr. Ponwith. The assessment will be conducted by the ICCAT Highly Migratory Team at the Southeast Fisheries Center Miami Lab. That concludes my summary of our SEDAR webinar.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Doug. Do any committee members have any questions for Doug? Doug, I have a couple for you. First is this comment in your report regarding adding yellowmouth grouper to the assessment. I know we’ve kind of set the schedule or will be setting the schedule here, and so my sense is that it wouldn’t be difficult to add yellowmouth, because it has relatively low landings throughout the Gulf, and so it could be quite easy to accommodate that. Is that what you get the sense for, and maybe Ryan can answer that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: One question would be for the Center, I guess, and Dr. Ponwith. Given the species ID problem, would it be worthwhile to add those to the stock ID and meristics workshop before trying to do a benchmark or research cycle on them? I do think the landings of yellowmouth are relatively small, and I have heard fishermen talk about species ID being a difficult issue.
DR. BONNIE PONWITH: Certainly if there are any concerns about the quality of the data and that the data evolve over the time series, understanding that evolution is crucial to getting a sound assessment out of that. One approach to doing that is to include it in the stock ID.

I am unsure whether it’s best to treat this as a stock identification, which is typically you have this population and is it one stock or two stocks is the real question, or whether that is a data workshop question, but, regardless of what approach you took, getting clarity on that before you begin an assessment would be pretty crucial.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Do we need to make a formal request that they be added then, if that’s a perceived issue? Do you agree with that, for the stock ID?

DR. PONWITH: I think that that’s smart. The stock ID may not be the best venue. It may be. I think what it’s going to do is take some probing of the data to answer that question, and so, as a placeholder, including it in that discussion I think would be useful.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ryan.

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actual delineation of where certain yellowmouth populations occur isn’t something that has been the primary concern for the SEDAR 49 data-poor effort, which is looking at yellowmouth. It’s been that there’s a lot of -- There are many issues with identification, recreationally and commercially, with properly identifying yellowmouth, and they tend to occur in a lot of the same places that scamp do.

Of course, yellowmouth are a shallow-water grouper, and scamp can be shallow-water or deepwater, but addressing it as more of a complex was one of the things that was discussed during one of the SEDAR 49 webinars, and so it might be worth investigating adding yellowmouth to scamp, because, in a research-track-style approach, everything like that could be looked at, and it would be a good venue for it, and that’s why we brought it up to you guys.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I would concur with that. The next thing I had regarding your report, Doug, was on the request from the Steering Committee to provide some progress in reviewing and applying the prioritization tool that you briefly summarized,
You have kind of given a summary of what other councils are doing, and I kind of would go in with what the general feeling is of the other councils in regards to a strict adherence to this tool or to just kind of use it to help guide our decision making process as one more piece of information.

That’s kind of the way I would look at it, but certainly other committee members, if they have any other discussion -- If you’re looking for we’ve got to get an answer by October, and so we might have one more meeting to discuss it, and so I don’t know if you need more discussion now, as a primer for the next meeting, to make a final decision.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: If I may, I think this might be the first that Dr. Ponwith has heard of this, and so I think it’s something for us to discuss at the Steering Committee meeting. If indeed this is going to become a general NMFS policy and not just the interpretation of somebody at one center, then it is something that we need to discuss in more detail and have a letter of statement or comment, but, right now, I don’t know how prevalent that approach is.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: The tool is really valuable, because what it does is it essentially codifies a lot of the same process this council and your SSC goes through in deliberating on what stocks should bubble up next. Instead of having it be kind of an ad hoc or gestalt approach to what is the suite of stocks we want to put on the schedule, it actually creates a mechanism to document what are the considerations you want to evaluate in making those decisions and how do you weight those considerations against one another, and so it makes that process more transparent.

I hear loud and clear that the goal is to have the Science Center create the first version of the factors and the weightings of those factors for the SSC to respond to, but then, once that tool is parameterized, the expectation is that the output of that tool really does guide the decision making process.

Now, in my mind, it doesn’t handcuff the council. In other words, if the output says you do this, you are obligated by policy to do this, but there would be an expectation that if the council chose to depart from the output of the tool that they
worked on to parameterize that there would be a logic behind it, and so you never want to cede your authority to essentially a machine that you created, but you also want to respect the fact that you created that tool, you created that machine, to help guide your process.

My view on this is that, if you depart from the results that the tool creates, once it’s up and running and running in a way that you’re comfortable with, a rationale for why gives you that continued sense of transparency, documents why you chose to depart from those results, and creates a record for that decision. In my mind, yes, there is going to be an expectation that we abide by it, but we are not dominated by it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I can understand that perspective or thought process regarding that tool, and just I guess my -- Well, you gave us an out, if you will, if we felt like the tool wasn’t providing us the output for the direction of assessments that we would be doing, particularly as it relates to let’s say, for instance, gray triggerfish.

We had this hiccup with gray triggerfish, and, depending upon the weights and everything of the different determining factors that would be in there, you might change a couple or two or three numbers for gray triggerfish, based on its situation that we’re in of the rebuilding time period and we need to act more quickly, in regards to setting up a new rebuilding plan and such, and whether or not just using the tool would bump up that triggerfish up to a level that would basically meet the next assessment schedule is my fear, I guess.

Having the ability then to say, okay, we have triggerfish, and we know all the problems with triggerfish now and we have these timelines and everything, and that would be enough rationale to go ahead and alter the schedule then of the output for the other species is my biggest concern.

As long as we did have that ability to change, with some rationale, some legitimate rationale, that would be just my main concern. Anyone else have any comments or questions regarding that topic or anything else? Anything else on Doug’s report that you had any questions about?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: Luiz will do the SSC.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Next, we have Item Number V, which will be the SSC Review of SEDAR Research Track Assessment Proposal. Dr. Barbieri, you’re up for that?
DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: I sure am, Mr. Chairman. I don’t have an actual formal presentation. This is going to be pretty quick, and Mr. Gregory already went over the main points. The SSC, overall, liked the approach and was supportive of the research versus operational assessment track process for SEDAR, but they had some concerns and made some recommendations that I am going to summarize here.

One was a concern. It was whether a transition to the new process would disrupt the timeliness of current assessments. Dr. Clay Porch, who came to the SSC meeting and gave us a presentation, summary presentation, on this, clarified that, no, because the schedule is going to be set up in a way that those research and operational assessments would be lined up and scheduled in a way that there wouldn’t be any interruption of the current schedule.

Actually, we are going to have an improvement in throughput that should increase the number of assessments that are going to come before the SSC and address council management needs, but the committee still had a bit of a concern about the role, or a lack of clarification at this point about the role, that the SSC is playing in both conducting the assessments and reviewing the assessments.

The presentation that Dr. Porch presented was very thorough, but we felt that not having an actual summary document, a report, a SOPPs, so to speak, that would outline all of those parameters explicitly would be difficult for us to really evaluate properly how SSC participation might be integrated into this new process. The SSC is very interested, continues to be very interested, in participating very closely in the SEDAR process, and we would like to have the opportunity to be more involved in this research track, as currently presented.

Another concern was the stakeholder input or feedback on the process. The committee had questions, and they wanted to make sure that there was clear understanding by industry and other stakeholders, to make sure that they were satisfied with the level of transparency in the actual operational conduct of these assessments.

Finally, the committee suggested, and I don’t know if this is a realistic suggestion or not, but the committee felt that perhaps we could have an implementation, pilot implementation, to test
the next few assessments coming under those two tracks and to see whether there will be adjustments, course corrections, that needed to be made at that point. That way, we could review those and provide some recommendations for improvements.

Overall, the committee was very supportive and saw the advantages of these two tracks, and, actually, we approved, overwhelmingly, a motion in support of the concept of SEDAR stock assessments having this research and the operational components. That completes my report, Mr. Chairman. If there are any questions from the committee, I would be glad to address them.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Does anyone have any questions? Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a follow-on. I appreciate the careful consideration. Any time we make a change to the procedures we use for stock assessments, these are high-stakes decisions, and so I really appreciate the care that’s being taken by the SSC in deliberating on this change.

The reason that the Center didn’t arrive with a set of SOPPs in hand was essentially that it was intended to be presented as a concept to the councils and to the SSCs as a proposed approach that we think is an improvement, and the notion is that, if the councils and the SSCs embrace the concept, we would actually work collectively, via the SEDAR Steering Committee, with heavy input from the SSC, to develop those SOPPs. Essentially, once the concept is embraced, you would be helping to be architects of the SOPPs, to make sure that they address all of your biggest concerns.

In terms of the notion of conducting a research track as a pilot, to see how it goes, I have no difficulty with that at all, and the sense is those research track assessments or research track evaluations would be highly collaborative. We would still have a terms of reference. We would have a beginning date and an end date, but the beauty of it is it breaks off that end deliverable, unlike a benchmark stock assessment, where the last step in the process is the deliverable. Here is your stock assessment.

It is getting you to the point where the decisions that are required to get a stock assessment done are made, and, at that point, all those decisions are made in an open forum, so the public can watch that happening, and so the SSC panelists who are selected to be participants are fully engaged. All those decisions are made, and then all that’s left is to execute those
decisions, which sounds exactly like an update stock assessment.

Essentially, at that point, by dissociating those two things, get those decisions made and hand that report through a peer review process and make sure the decisions are sound. Then, at that point, it’s just a matter of executing those decisions. Again, I like the concept myself. I am not troubled by moving slowly on this, to make sure that we’re considering this and getting it right, by treating this first one as a pilot.

I believe that the first one we’ve selected is one that’s germane to both the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and so it would be joint. This is very attractive to me, again, because then it tackles some of the challenges we’ve had with why do you do it this way here and that way there, and I think it’s a valuable experiment for us to engage in.

DR. BARBIERI: Yes, and thank you for that, Dr. Ponwith. I mean I think it was very reassuring to hear your points on this, and, of course, during the meeting, the SSC discussed this and tried to get some of these clarifications and got some good information from Dr. Porch. Given your comments, I can say, unequivocally, that the committee is very supportive of this concept and we would be glad to work with the Center in developing those SOPPs and beefing up the structure of this process going forward.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Dr. Barbieri, and thank you, Dr. Ponwith, for kind of clarifying that path forward, if you will, and realizing that there is kind of a growing-up period, I guess, for the first couple, at least, to maybe work out the kinks and come up with a more fine-tuned way or process for subsequent assessments through the research track, and so thank you very much.

I mentioned earlier that we would have Representative Jolly from Florida come and talk to us a little bit, and he is here, and so we’re going ahead and we’re going to postpone or suspend the SEDAR Committee meeting. Representative Jolly, welcome.

COMMENTS BY REPRESENTATIVE JOLLY

REPRESENTATIVE DAVID JOLLY: Thank you very much. First, welcome. Thank you for having me attend the meeting. Thank you for the opportunity to be here, but thank you for having the council meeting in Clearwater Beach. A lot of folks didn’t have to travel as far for this one, and you understand the significance of the industry, both for-hire and commercial and
recreational, to the quality of life and the economy here and
the balance between those two.

I just appreciate the opportunity to be home. Some of you may
have seen that I’m not making friends in D.C. these days, and so
it’s nice to be home this week. My wife and I are here, and she
joined me for today, but, when it comes to counting fish, she
decided she would leave that to you all and a little bit to me.

I always tell the story about Laura. We have only been in
office about two-and-a-half or three years, and I kind of take
the position of members of Congress need to sometimes recognize
that they don’t have all the answers, but, as a community, we
do. Who knows best the impact of regulations and of decision
making of Congress when it comes to Magnuson-Stevens or
regulations or you name it on industry and on quality of life,
on commercial, on recreational, on for-hire? You all do. The
folks throughout this community do.

Obviously you all bring the expertise, the background, the
academic expertise, but then also we see the impact on the
waters, from the folks who go out every day, either making a
living or just enjoying what Florida offers out on the water,
and so I appreciate the opportunity to work with you all. What
I have tried to do, and I want to thank publicly -- Some of you
are well aware of this. You have attended some of the
congressional council meetings we have, different form the
formal council.

When I first got elected, I asked the three different sectors,
if you will, to join me in a congressional council to advise me
on policies that we could build consensus around, and you all
have some hard decisions to make, when it comes to stock
assessment, to management, to species management. Trust me, I
understand the complexity of the decision making you all have to
do, and I appreciate the responsibility that you bring to it,
and I thank you for that.

What I have tried to do with my congressional council is kind
of, first, learn, be made smarter on the issues. As a member of
Congress, it doesn’t come from industry or the academia
background that you do, but also to try to build and coalesce
around a consensus position, which has led us down the road to
additional data collection and resources through the Congress
and working together with the agency, with industry, with
recreational, to figure out how can we continue to evolve and
improve and put additional resources towards new data collection
opportunities.
I realize we are never going to have complete consensus, but, to the extent that we can continue to build consensus around some new data collection, I think we’re making progress among the sectors, and hopefully, at the end of the day, allowing for more days on the recreational and more fish to catch for commercial, in a responsible way that looks towards species and stock management. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today. I thank you for working with me and making me smarter.

If I were to provide any legislative update, very briefly, it would be this. I don’t believe we will see reauthorization of Magnuson by the end of the calendar year. I just think, between the congressional calendar and some of the substantive issues that are still outstanding between the House and the Senate, I don’t see Magnuson being reauthorized this year. Frankly, I will be happy if we can keep the government open this year.

That’s not to mean that it’s not being worked on, but you all know kind of some of the finer points of where the differences are. Some folks have made the case not to even reauthorize it or make any changes and just keep it in place exactly as it is. As it has been opened up, on the House side, it has created a few divisions, and I just don’t think we’re going to see much of a movement on that.

The only window where you might see it would be sometime in the fourth quarter of the calendar year. You might see an effort to revive consideration of it, but I just -- I would put it somewhere at 70/30 unlikely that we’re going to see it move. Congress is only in session for about another three or four weeks before we break for July for the national conventions of each party and then the August district work period. We are back in about three weeks in September and then out all of October, leading into the November Election Day, and then you will be in a lame duck session, where very little substantive work is done, other than hopefully a wrap-up of some of the budget.

For those of you affiliated with federal agencies, I do think we will be able to satisfy some of the budget requirements, particularly in the science and oceans areas, NOAA and other agencies, likely before the end of the calendar year. We might even see it a little bit sooner, and so I don’t think we will face a real cliffhanger, and the one question would be following the Presidential election, if things get pushed to January or February. I am of the position, and will continue to advocate, to get a budget done by October 1, so that agencies can
effectively manage their resources.

That is about it, in terms of a legislative update, simply because it's a political election year for a Presidential candidate. Most of the focus will be on there, and you will see Congress just attending to kind of the routine order of business, but, again, on Magnuson, I don't see it moving this year.

With that, if there are any questions of me or if there is any comments, interest, concerns, criticisms, certainly I would be open to any of those today. Thank you for the opportunity for me to be here and any questions or thoughts, I would love to have them.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions for Representative Jolly? There doesn’t appear to be any.

REPRESENTATIVE JOLLY: With that, I apologize that you’re indoors. It’s a beautiful day outside on the beach. In fact, that’s why my wife didn’t make it all the way in here. She stopped out on the sand there.

Thank you, all, and I truly mean it. I understand the headwinds you often face and the politics of stock management, and I know we don’t always agree and sometimes we agree, but I appreciate the collaborative spirit. I know you put your heart, soul, and careers into this, and so thank you for what you’re doing to make sure the economy and quality of life for the entire Gulf region, but particularly right in Florida and Pinellas County, continues to make it one of the greatest places any of us call home. Thank you all very much.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Representative Jolly. We will get back into the SEDAR Committee. That will take us -- We completed Item Number V, and we will go Item Number VI, the SEDAR Schedule Review, and Mr. Rindone.

SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will start at the top and just give you guys an update of where some things stand. The vermilion snapper standard assessment is going to be delivered to the SSC, and they will be reviewing that. The gag and amberjack updates, they are scheduled to be completed by the year’s end, maybe early 2017, and those are both underway.

The data-poor assessment is SEDAR 49. I spoke of it just a
little bit before, and we had the data workshop and the post-data workshop webinar, discussing kind of where things stood, and the panel is optimistic about being able to produce quality assessments that will yield management advice for red drum, lane snapper, speckled hind, and snowy grouper.

Yellowmouth grouper, we discussed that a little bit, that it might be best to roll that into the research track with scamp, to try to address some of the other outstanding issues with actual identification between scamp and yellowmouth and maybe looking at them as a complex.

However, almaco jack, lesser amberjack, and wenchman are truly data poor, and the panel is not optimistic about those particular species, the efforts for those particular species, resulting in assessments that will be able to tell us anything. The landings are low and there is very little life history data, especially for wenchman. There was only one study and only a handful of fish collected. The panel didn’t vote to stop work on those yet, but it is certainly being considered.

The black grouper assessment by the FWC will begin this winter, and the goliath grouper assessment wrapped up with a review workshop in St. Petersburg in May, and that assessment report is actually completed, and it’s available on the SEDAR website. The SSC will receive a review on it, but the short story is that the assessment was not recommended for management. Stop me at any point if you have a question or comment or something to that effect.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We do have a question from Mr. Diaz.

MR. DALE DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not on your committee, but, Ryan, I just heard you say that there’s I think you said about three species that it doesn’t look like there’s going to be enough data to do anything on those data-poor assessments, and I do remember, when we talked about that, we were trying to -- Because data-poor was less labor intensive, we were trying to get enough species in there where we could get some species with stock assessments that we don’t have. Is it too late to replace those with some other species that might have enough data at this point?

MR. RINDONE: I think, for this particular round, yes, but I would encourage you guys to consider perhaps repeating this kind of effort with a new set of species, maybe in a few years. Then, that way, we can try and work through the species that we manage, perhaps, and then make at least an attempt on all of
them to have something on the books, but, for some of them, we just don’t catch that many of them and the independent sampling that we have is extremely sparse, in some cases, and in others it’s completely absent. Some of them just won’t be tenable.

MR. DIAZ: I understand that, and if we do decide to make a new effort like this, it would probably be good if there was a little bit of work done and let us know what were good candidates to put into it, where we don’t do another round of this where we actually get stuff in the hopper that is not going to produce any results. If we happen to do that, probably ahead of time, we need to get that information, so we don’t lose some opportunities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Ponwith, to that point?

DR. PONWITH: Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. It’s exactly to that point, and I appreciate that point. The whole notion of data poor is almost ironic. This is too data poor to use for data poor, but the notion about data poor is this. Right now, for stocks that are unassessed, to meet the provisions of the Act, of having ACLs in place for all managed stocks, we have used landings history.

The notion of data poor is there may be some cases where we actually have enough data to do better than just some landings history with a buffer for uncertainty, and so that was the criteria for selecting these stocks, and the actual process of scoping the data for these stocks would yield the answer of do we or do we not have enough data to do something that’s better than simply the landings history.

I think you’re really smart, and that is we should be gauging the remaining unassessed stocks for whether there are some additional candidates that are appropriate for the next round of data-limited assessments, and I think that would be a reasonable assignment for the Center to start that work, even as we are working on this round of data-limited assessments, because I think that that certainly brings a lot more scientific weight to the process for those stocks where we have enough data to do something more than landings history. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Lucas.

DR. KELLY LUCAS: This is not exactly to the point, but I did want to -- Before Ryan went down the list a little more, I wanted to I think say this now, before he gets there. I appreciate all the work on the research track. I think it’s
great that we’re working to find a solution that meets the needs of the Southeast Science Center and aims at getting the council more stock assessments.

Earlier today, we talked a lot about intent and showing the council’s intent and talking about intent and getting notice of Congress, and it was great to have Representative Jolly speak, because they are listening to us.

I am wondering, as we look at this list, and we have talked a lot about getting more stock assessments done, if maybe we shouldn’t try to put more stock assessments in the queue, like under these years. You know, we might not be able to achieve it, because of money or because of staff or whatever, but it shows our intent. It shows what we’re trying to achieve, instead of continuously just talking about we know we need more stock assessments.

Let’s show our intent. Let’s show that we want more stock assessments, and when Bonnie and them have to push back and be like, we don’t have the money and we don’t have the staff, we’re showing it to them. We are telling Congress right there what we need. We need more money for these stock assessments, because we need more and better stock assessments.

I appreciate that the research track is going to try to get us there, but I am just wondering, from the council as as whole, if we don’t want to start putting it in there, putting those on the list, just to show our intent.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: That’s a good point, Dr. Lucas, and another way of looking at it and trying to highlight some of the frustrations we have with lack of resources, not necessarily due to the Science Center’s fault, but, as you said, it may be the message would be received a little bit differently if it were put in that context, and so that’s an interesting point. Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: I’m a big fan. Let me say that I always find it more valuable to have a list of assessments ranked one to X from the council than a here are the three assessments we would like this year if we can get three.

The reason is because having that one to X list creates that intent. This is how much work needs to be done, and this is how much we’re able to chip away at this year, but it also has a second value, and that is, if we end up, through some means, acquiring additional help, like a post-doc or contract resources
that are available in one year that would enable us to bring an 
extra set of hands on for one year, we have that one to X list 
and we know what’s next in line. I think that that’s a very 
worthwhile approach, and I would encourage the council to take 
that approach.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Just to be clear, you mentioned having the one 
to X and then a year associated, and so we would have four to 
five species, I think, put on that list for next year, let’s 
say, and there would be additional species beyond that, to X, 
but at least we would have five identified, and you may only 
have staff and resources available and budget available for 
three, but we have five for 2017, let’s say.

DR. PONWITH: Mr. Chairman, that is exactly the notion. The 
challenge that that creates is a requirement for an iterative 
process for scheduling, because if you put in a list of one to X 
candidates and you put in seven species, and it turns out the 
resources are available to be able to do four of those, then you 
also are scheduling the out years, and you need to figure out 
what the repercussions of those three that didn’t make the list 
are in the out years, but we’re smart people. I’m confident we 
can figure out a way that those don’t then fall through the 
cracks, but that is one of the challenges of that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. That might be coming up then in 
some future discussions, but I guess let’s go ahead and continue 
on with -- Mr. Rindone, do you want to continue with your 
summary?

MR. RINDONE: Sure can. For 2017, we have scheduled MRIP 
calibration updates in this order of priority: gray triggerfish, 
gag, amberjack, red snapper, red grouper, kingfish, Spanish, and 
vermilion. These will be updates to the recreational MRIP 
indices for those particular species and that’s it. They’re not 
full-scale updates like we usually talk about.

A note on this is that we don’t have to do all of these species 
if you guys don’t want to. If you wanted to free up some time 
to maybe do another update or standard assessment, instead of 
doing all these calibration updates, that’s an option that’s 
available to you, or, if it’s more important to update the 
recreational effort indices for all these species, then leave it 
as is.

We’re also starting a gray snapper benchmark in 2017 and a red 
snapper standard assessment, and the FWC will be looking at 
yellowtail snapper, and that’s going to be a benchmark, because
they’re going to be putting it into Stock Synthesis from ASAP.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a question from Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The MRIP calibration updates, and, again, the notion is this is not a traditional update stock assessment. It is merely taking the last assessment and dropping into it the calibrated recreational data and rerunning the same model exactly the way it was run before, to get the output with those data.

Now, the MRIP calibration team have been meeting to define the methodology that’s going to be used in that process when the data become available. Those deliberations have been ongoing, and they are very close to having a report and some recommendations out. In the process of doing that, they have run some test analyses.

Those analyses are going to be enlightening in terms of how short or long the calibration list is, which is my opportunity to say we want to be resilient to that current level of uncertainty by understanding, if we ended up discovering that there are fewer species on that list that needed the MRIP calibration, where it just isn’t appropriate or not needed, because the delta between the two methodologies is so small, it could create an opportunity to slip another update in there. Having a discussion of what species you would put in there if you could would be valuable, in the event that something like that were to occur.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. We will take that into consideration. Mr. Greene.

MR. GREENE: With that being said and the unique situation we’re in with triggerfish, where we have a ten-year rebuilding goal and we have some situations with it, I guess I will make a motion to move gray triggerfish to 2017.

DR. DANA: Second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a motion to move gray triggerfish from 2019 to 2017. It’s been seconded by Dr. Dana. Is there any discussion on the motion? Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: The question is as a benchmark in 2017? As a benchmark, that may be more than could be absorbed in lieu of one or two of those MRIP calibrations. If it’s posed as an update, and, again, that’s something you would want your SSC to
weigh in. If you change the timing, does it change the level of
the assessment? If it were posed as an update assessment, then
that is something that would be easier to accommodate.

MR. GREENE: While I understand your comment, I would think it
would be for a benchmark, and, if there’s no way it can be done
in 2017, then it would move to 2018 automatically. I mean we
have a very tough situation with triggerfish. I mean, in my
opinion, and I will come back to it later, but I’m going to just
stick to the motion, but it is my intent to do a benchmark for
gray triggerfish in 2017.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion on the motion? Mr.
Swindell.

MR. ED SWINDELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What does this then
do to the vast amount of work that I see starting up or involved
in 2017? How does it fit into the picture?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Greene.

MR. GREENE: Well, the way I would envision it is that you have
the list that has been provided to you for the assessments to be
done in 2017, and I would assume that it would be the last
assessment in the list. If they get the MRIP calibration done
and the gray snapper and red snapper stuff done and there is any
remote possibility they can get started on it at that point,
then at that point they should.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: Thank you. I am not on your committee, but,
Bonnie, the way I understand this new research versus
operational track system, if you couldn’t handle a full
benchmark on gray triggerfish in 2017, would it be possible that
that research track, that it could slip into that, which
essentially my understanding is that what it will do is all the
legwork of a benchmark, going and looking at how you’re going to
configure all your different datasets and what’s going to go
into the model, so that, when it’s time to actually put the data
in, it just falls in and comes out fairly quickly, and is it
possible to put gray triggerfish in that type of slot in 2017,
if you end up with some extra staff time?

DR. PONWITH: In response to that, the notion right now is to,
per your SSC’s advice, is to pilot the research track in using
scamp as sort of the pilot stock, and that would be scamp in
both the Gulf of Mexico and in the South Atlantic. To actually
demonstrate the research track with gray triggerfish in 2017 would be essentially, in my view, as onerous as conducting a benchmark in 2017, because it is doing all that frontend loading, the public meetings, the data scoping, the decisions about how to parameterize the model. All of that work is the equivalent of doing a benchmark, with the exception of the fact that the assessment itself follows as an update later in time and is dissociated from that earlier process.

In my mind, if fewer calibrations had to happen, and it created a small amount of scope for some additional work, that scope may be great enough to be able to accommodate another update. If Mr. Greene is interested in adding a benchmark stock assessment for gray trigger in 2017, it may have to come at the expense of the gray snapper benchmark or of the red snapper standard, to be able to accommodate that.

I can consult with staff, and I would consult with staff to confirm that, but that is the scope of adding a benchmark into the assessment. It’s not just the assessment staff, but it’s the people that do all the data prep as well.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Martha.

MS. MARTHA GUYAS: I am going to support the motion, but also ask that people talk closer to the microphones. I don’t know if it’s the vent over here, but we cannot hear anyone, particularly in this corner of the room, when you talk.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so we have a motion on the board to move the gray triggerfish benchmark assessment to 2017. The question was to you, Mr. Greene, if you want to kind of make a suggestion as to what to do with the other species or how they should be identified for shuffling, relative to future years. Do you have any comments to that?

MR. GREENE: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. I was going to, after this motion passes, I was going to move gray snapper back to 2018 and let it start at that particular point and fill the hole in accordingly, if that makes sense.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: It makes sense. You know, as we wrap our minds around what Dr. Lucas was talking about earlier, I don’t know when we want to jump in and kind of make that prioritized list of ten to twelve species and then putting years associated with them, but that might be something as well that we might want to do kind of at the same time. Mr. Rindone.
MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to contribute a little bit to your timeline discussion here. If it did end up getting pushed to 2018, I would say there is -- Based on what I know about the schedule, I would say there is a better chance of it happening in 2018 as a full-on benchmark or research track, if the research track method is adopted.

Then, in 2017, because you will have gray snapper concluding in the 2018, very early spring, and then the MRIP calibrations -- You know if you cut some of those off the backend, like let’s say if you were to drop -- I am arbitrarily picking the last two, Spanish mackerel and vermilion, but that might free up some time on the backend of that MRIP calibration effort.

You have scamp as the big project, perhaps also with yellowmouth grouper, and then king mackerel is done by the Highly Migratory Species Group, and so, from an analytical standpoint, it’s a different set of folks that are tasked with that. A lot of the same data folks are still involved, but it’s a different set of staff that work on some of the pelagics. Your odds are better in 2018, I would say, than 2017, speaking frankly.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Greene.

MR. GREENE: Mr. Rindone, even with pushing gray snapper back to starting in 2018?

MR. RINDONE: If you swap them, then that changes everything. If you leave it as it is, then I still think it could happen in 2018. It’s dealer’s choice.

MR. GREENE: Mr. Chairman, I would like to modify my motion to add the assessment in 2017 and move gray snapper back to starting in 2018.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Is that your motion as it reads on the board?

MR. GREENE: Yes, sir. That is correct.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Dana, do you second still? Okay. Any further discussion or any discussion on this motion? We have had some discussion already, pretty much. All those committee members who are in support of the motion, please raise your hand. There is no opposition, and so the motion passes.

Mr. Rindone, is there anything else? Do you want to finish up the remainder of the schedule? I don’t think you went through 2019.
MR. RINDONE: Sure. I can finish it up. I talked briefly about what’s going on in 2018. Are there any questions on that? All right. For 2019, you guys had made a prioritized list for gray trigger, which I will send you guys an amended schedule to review for full council that reflects this motion, but then you also requested updates for cobia, Spanish mackerel, yellowedge, and tilefish.

Cobia and Spanish mackerel were last done in 2013, with I think a terminal year of data that was 2011. Then yellowedge grouper were done quite some time ago, and the terminal year for that assessment I think was either 2009 or 2010, and so it’s good to see that those are going to get updated. Then FWC has verbally committed to a spiny lobster assessment in 2019. Any other schedule questions?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Are there any other questions for Mr. Rindone? I guess we’re out of time, or out of the scheduled time that we had for this committee, and this is the last item, and so we can wrap it up fairly quickly, but I was wondering maybe, Ryan, if you and staff could put a list together relative to what Dr. Lucas was talking about and kind of putting all the species that we’ve got for the foreseeable future, the ten or twelve species. If you can bring that list with you to full council and then we can talk about the years to associate with them, as far as the intent that Dr. Lucas brought up. Could you do that, please?

MR. RINDONE: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Mr. Greene.

MR. GREENE: Mr. Chairman, I’ve got one more thing I would like to tackle under this, if we can, in about two minutes, if you will bear with me.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Go ahead.

MR. GREENE: Okay. I had forwarded a motion over to staff earlier. While they’re putting that up on the board, I’m just going to read to you what I’ve got here. In the most recent Gulf of Mexico gray triggerfish assessment, SEDAR 43, recruitment was estimated to be low, with the only uptick in recruitment evident in the terminal year of 2013 of the assessment. However, the larval index was incomplete, as it stopped in 2007. It is anticipated that this index will help to inform recruitment indices as well as tuning the indices of
spawning stock biomass estimates in the next assessment.

With that, with a lot of help, I have crafted a motion here to bring before you to draft a letter to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center requesting that the fall plankton larval survey samples from the U.S. Gulf of Mexico for Calendar Year 2008 forward be processed in time for the next gray triggerfish assessment, to be scheduled in 2017, if you can make that change, please.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: You have to leave it, I think, there, because it hasn’t gone through full council yet, your motion, and so I think if you leave it here that we’ll be good, and we can clean it up as it goes through full council, your other motion.

There is a motion on the board. Is there a second to the motion? It’s seconded by Dr. Dana. Any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion? Dr. Simmons.

DR. SIMMONS: Just real quick. I just wanted to tell the committee that we did bring this up at the SSC meeting, very briefly, and they thought this was a good idea. I did spend some time talking to Dr. Jeff Isley, who did the last standard assessment, and he did think this would help inform those indices and help them move forward with trying to get some better ideas about recruitment, because the species is data poor, essentially, and has an unusual life history compared to other species that we manage in the Gulf, and so he did think this would be helpful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. I think that will conclude -- Is there any other business? Seeing none, the SEDAR Committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m., June 20, 2016.)