

Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel, Ecosystem, and Socioeconomic SSC Webinar Meeting Summary September 14, 2020

The webinar meeting of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel, Ecosystem, and Socioeconomic Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) was convened at 9:00 AM EDT on September 14, 2020. The agenda for this webinar meeting was approved as written, along with the minutes from the Gulf SSC's August 11, 2020, webinar meeting. [Verbatim minutes from past SSC meetings can be reviewed here.](#)

Drs. Joe Powers, Kai Lorenzen, and Luiz Barbieri will work together to develop the materials to present to the Council at its October 26-29, 2020, virtual meeting.

Review of SEDAR 38 Update – Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group King Mackerel

Assessment Presentation and Stock Status Determination

Dr. Michael Schirripa of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) presented the SEDAR 38 Update (SEDAR 38U) stock assessment for Gulf migratory group king mackerel (Gulf king mackerel). The SEDAR 38 base model (2013) was updated with data through the 2017-2018 fishing year, using the same parameterization where possible and appropriate. Key changes include the incorporation of the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES), and the incorporation of updated catch and effort estimation for the shrimp fleet.

The SEDAR 38U stock assessment is considered "data-rich", in that it incorporates age and length composition data, gender-specific growth rates (Von Bertalanffy), and considers effort by individual fleet. The model start year is 1929, and fleets include the commercial handline, commercial gillnet, shrimp bycatch, recreational headboat, and recreational charter for-hire and private vessels. All fishing fleets were modeled with dome-shaped selectivity, meaning that the fleets select against the smallest and largest individuals in the population. Exceptions to this include the commercial handline fleet, which was modeled with asymptotic selectivity (increasing selectivity with length, beginning at the minimum size limit of 24 inches FL), and the shrimp bycatch fleet (age-0 fish only). The fishery-independent survey used was the SEAMAP Fall Plankton Survey, which served as an estimate of spawning stock biomass (SSB) in number of eggs. Steepness was fixed at 0.99, as recruitment was not able to be related to SSB.

Overall, commercial handline landings have increased steadily since the 1990s. Commercial gillnet landings, once much higher, have remained consistent since the 1980s. The migration to the MRIP-FES landings from the MRIP Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS; used originally in SEDAR 38 in 2013) shows a decrease in headboat landings (ultimately a very small fraction of total landings) and a marked increase in the charter and private vessel landings (which lands the majority of Gulf king mackerel annually). Discards are consistent for the commercial fleets. Headboat discards have decreased, while historical estimates for charter and private vessel

discards have increased substantially with the use of MRIP-FES. Dr. Schirripa noted that increased sampling of discard lengths would be an improvement to the SEDAR 38U base model. The SSC asked about the use of MRIP-FES as a metric for determining discards for the headboat fleet. Due to small sample sizes of observed data in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (used to monitor harvest from headboats), NMFS developed a ratio to apply to the headboat fleet, based on discard fractions observed in the charter for-hire vessel fleet by MRIP-FES. Discards are a small fraction of catch for the headboat fleet; therefore, observations of discards are much smaller still. This method of using a proxy from one fleet to inform another is uncommon for most Gulf stock assessments, since most managed species have a larger number of observations of discards.

Shrimp trawl bycatch in SEDAR 38U is estimated to be higher than in SEDAR 38. The shrimp effort trend was essentially the same as that from SEDAR 38; however, the method used to determine the bycatch of king mackerel has changed, and the old method could not be exactly replicated. Dr. Schirripa briefly characterized the new method, which is considered the best practice at present by the SEFSC. This increased the median estimate of shrimp bycatch used by SEDAR 38U. Through the process of developing the model, it was determined that the reduction in estimated SSB, and the ratio of $SSB_{Current}/SSB_0$, is due to the shrimp bycatch data. However, the new MRIP-FES recreational landings calibrated back to 1981 and increased shrimp bycatch are responsible for the increased estimate of virgin SSB. Dr. Schirripa noted discrepancies in the observational data and cautioned that future stock assessments should make sure the data assumptions used in the model align with the data collection program design.

The SSC noted that increases in estimated shrimp bycatch in the earlier part of that time series (pre-2000s) may have had a larger effect on the revised median estimate of shrimp bycatch, which then affected SEDAR 38U. These older estimates may be less certain than more recent estimates. A series of best practices workshops will be hosted by the SEFSC to evaluate and estimate shrimp bycatch for various species, with the goal of improving these estimates in future stock assessments. The SSC then asked about comparisons to the Nichols model, which also recommended dividing the shrimp bycatch time series in two parts: one for the period where better data are available, and another for the earlier period when data uncertainties were higher (prior to 2008). Ultimately, the Nichols model was not used in favor of the preliminary SEFSC best practices approach. The aforementioned best practices workshops will continue exploring and fine-tuning approaches to address shrimp bycatch in the future.

Updates to observational data were reviewed in simulation using a terminal year of 2012, with an increase in virgin biomass shown with the use of MRIP-FES for private vessels. Updated headboat data using MRIP charter vessel discards as a proxy decreased virgin biomass, and shrimp bycatch caused an increase in virgin biomass compared to SEDAR 38. Updating all data through 2017 further increased virgin biomass, with SSB estimated below that from SEDAR 38 in 2012, and remaining below it through 2017. Removing indices one at a time via a jackknife analysis reveals the model is sensitive to the removal of the headboat and shrimp effort indices. Headboat effort has decreased over time, resulting in a decrease in the magnitude of increase in the SSB. Shrimp effort estimates increased between assessments due to the change in estimation procedure, resulting in an increase in the media estimate of shrimp effort used in the super-year approach.

Projections

The recommendations in the SEDAR38U report suggested maintaining catch, as the stock seems to be responding well to current management practices. Projections were made for 2021 – 2030. Exploitation in 2018 – 2020 was assumed equal to that in 2017. Retained catch for 2018 – 2020 was determined by exploiting the estimated stock size in those years at 2017 fishing year levels. The P* used in SEDAR 38 was 0.43, and was also applied for OFL and ABC analyses in SEDAR 38U. The SSC decided to explore a different P* via the ABC Control Rule, which resulted in a recalculation of P* to 0.398 for SEDAR 38U.

Something's Fishy – King Mackerel

Ms. Emily Muehlstein (GMFMC Staff) presented results from the Something's Fishy tool for king mackerel, is designed to gain information on observed trends in fish stocks through solicitation of comments from active fishermen prior to each assessment. The results will be shared with the SSC each time the tool is used prior to the completion of an assessment. A total of 47 responses were gathered from September 6 to October 6 with a majority from private angler respondents. The manual classification of responses indicated a negative trend in stock health or abundance, while the automated sentiment analysis indicated a minor trend towards a positive sentiment of the stock. Responses were also categorized by location; those from the west coast of Florida were much more positive than those collected from Alabama to Louisiana. Overall, the automated analysis also indicated a negative perception of abundance when sorted by location. Many of the negative comments specified that a lack of bait as prey for king mackerel was driving the observed decline in abundance. Positive comments indicated king mackerel were observed to be larger than normal.

Ms. Muehlstein explained that due to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), the tool can only solicit general comments. Hopefully, future efforts can gain clearance through the PRA to expedite the process and solicit specific questions that provide more information requested by stock assessors. SSC members commented on the usefulness of the tool but suggested reports for each species be kept as one document to observe trends over time and effects across years. It was also requested that stock assessors become more engaged in the question formulation process and suggested that changing the title, "Something's Fishy", to another name may steer respondents away from assuming the tool is searching for problems or negative perceptions of the stock. Finally, Ms. Muehlstein explained that the purpose of the tool is to help ground truth stock trends found in the assessment data and provides an opportunity to look at projections based on current stakeholder observations compared to the assessment terminal years which are often a few years in the past.

Assessment Presentation and Stock Status Determination

The SEDAR 38U estimates that the Gulf king mackerel population is not overfished and not undergoing overfishing as of the 2017-2018 fishing year. The SEDAR 38U base model predicts that the current level of landings can be maintained with a low probability of overfishing occurring in the short-term. The status determination criteria were defined as: minimum stock size threshold (MSST) = $(1-M) * SSB_{MSY}$, where M (natural mortality) = 0.174 and the spawning stock biomass at maximum sustainable yield ($SSB_{MSY} = SSB_{SPR30\%}$). In 2017, the stock was being harvested at 84% of the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), and SSB was 112% of MSST.

SSC Discussion and Recommendations

The SSC suggested revising the F/MFMT and SSB/MSST plots to include the MSY targets, and not just the overfished/overfishing limits, to prevent misinterpretations of management objectives.

Motion: The SSC determined that the SEDAR 38 Update assessment of Gulf King Mackerel represents the best scientific information available and, based on assessment results, the stock status is estimated to be not overfished and not undergoing overfishing.

Motion carried with 5 objections.

SSC members discussed discomfort with the narrow buffers produced using the probability density functions (PDFs) in the projections. The SEFSC also noted that the uncertainty in the SEDAR 38U base model is larger than that produced by the PDFs, and that a percentage of the MSY proxy may be more appropriate.

Substitute Motion: The SSC estimates OFL to be 10.89, 11.05, and 11.18 million pounds whole weight for the Gulf King Mackerel stock during fishing years 2021-2023, respectively, based on results of the SEDAR 38 update assessment and assessment projections. The SSC sets ABC for the same years to be 9.37, 9.72, and 9.99 million pounds whole weight, respectively, with annual ABC being the projected yield at F_{OY} ($0.85 * F_{SPR30\%}$).

Substitute Motion carried 19-4 with 4 absent

Stock Assessment Executive Summary

The SEDAR 38U stock assessment executive summary was reviewed by the SSC, with some recommendations offered to clarify information provided within the summary. The stock status depletion figure (Figure 1) should be rescaled to have MSY at 1.0 and include two lines indicating the MSST value and the MSY. Mr. Rindone noted the reference point table should specify that $F_{Current}$ is the geometric mean from 2015 to 2017. Dr. Steven Scyphers requested the incorporation of socioeconomic and ecosystem considerations into assessments as they are not currently incorporated. Mr. Rindone reminded the SSC that this section usually includes the Something's Fishy results which can be added to the summary during revisions. Dr. Cass-Calay stated that it is a strategic objective of SERO and SEFSC to better integrate economic considerations into future stock assessments. Once executive summaries and Something's Fishy reports are complete, they will be placed on a Council webpage that is in development, and on the SEDAR webpage. Dr. Sagarese responded to a comment to not include new content in the executive summaries if it is not present in the assessment documents. She said the goal of the executive summaries is to provide content that is more easily and quickly consumed by the reader than the full assessments which may lead to new figures and tables used that better display information over text.

Review of Gulf Gray Triggerfish Interim Analysis

Assessment Presentation and Stock Status Determination

Dr. Matt Smith (SEFSC) presented the interim analysis (IA) for Gulf gray triggerfish, noting that the management strategy evaluation (MSE) process for IAs is close to completion. IAs are conducted between stock assessments, and use a representative index of abundance (preferably fishery-independent, but can use a CPUE index) against the ABC to estimate stock condition and project future catch advice. The last accepted assessment for gray triggerfish was SEDAR 43 (2015); the stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing, but is in a rebuilding plan which aims to rebuild the stock by 2025. Currently, established catch limits are defined based on results from the SEDAR 9 Update and were implemented in 2012. Gray triggerfish has a sector allocation of 79% recreational and 21% commercial. The Council decided not to implement the rebuilding ABCs from SEDAR 43 (2015) in Reef Fish Amendment 43, which was implemented in January 2018. Instead, the Council selected no action and maintained the ABC at 305,300 lbs ww. The recreational sector's ACL is 241,200 lbs ww, and ACT is 217,100 lbs ww in MRIP-CHTS units, and has not been calibrated to MRIP-FES for quota monitoring purposes.

For this interim analysis, the combined video survey (which includes the NMFS Pascagoula Lab, NMFS Panama City Lab, and the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute video surveys) was used as the representative index. This fishery-independent index covers the area and sizes of gray triggerfish selected by the fisheries. There is general agreement that the stock hit its low point in terms of SSB during the late 2000s, and that SSB has been increasing since, especially in the eastern Gulf. As such, removals can likely be increased without jeopardizing the rebuilding plan for the stock.

The harvest control rule used for interim analyses creates a buffer on uncertainty either by using an average of the uncertainty in the reference period, or by using a smoothing parameter ("beta scalar") to more closely reflect either the ABC or the representative index of abundance. These decisions will one day be made by the MSE through an automated process; at present, the analyst makes these decisions. This is how the combined video survey was selected as the representative index, and three-year averaging was selected for handling variance in the standardized index. A comparison of 2011-2013 (years following the SEDAR 9 Update assessment, on which the current ABC is based) and 2017-2019 (the most recent years of finalized data) generated a ratio of 1.496 for characterizing the variance between the standardized values for the index. This results in an adjusted ABC of 456,900 lbs ww. Under this analysis, the OFL remains unchanged (1.22 mp ww); however, the OFL can be examined in future analyses using the same method.

SSC Discussion and Recommendations

The SSC thought that gray triggerfish was being modeled in such a way as to suggest that it is a "data-poor" species. The process is somewhat disconnected from the population dynamics of the species, and the SSC thought that a more robust approach was possible. Further, the IA assumes strong proportionality between the index chosen and the ABC. The index chosen (the combined video survey) covers from eastern Louisiana east and south through the west coast of Florida. Further, the SSC was reminded that the IA process is not designed to replace operational

assessments; however, it can be a useful tool for providing interim catch advice. Mr. Smith added that procedures were being developed to methodologies in the MSE that would allow for more comparisons of indices. Dr. David Chagaris recommended looking at work being conducted on the Gulf menhaden MSE to help with MSE development of gray triggerfish. Dr. Sean Powers asked if the video surveys had been considered individually to obtain a range of estimates for analysis. Mr. Smith indicated that had not been done and acknowledged that the Panama City video survey contains the majority of positive observations. He stated that the modeling methods used to combine the video surveys does account for differences between the survey when generating the combined index.

The SSC discussed the benefits and future directions for the IA process. The SSC appreciated the ability to review catch advice annually or biannually since several years often pass between stock assessments. The SEFSC is interested in automating the IA process in the future; however, recent IAs do require manual index selection, which can take some time to conduct. Staff notified the SSC that gray triggerfish was not on the SEDAR schedule until 2023 as a research track assessment, and management results were not expected to be available until 2025. Council staff reviewed the landings history by sector, which show that the commercial sector is usually under its annual catch limit (ACL), while the recreational sector has exceeded its ACL every year since 2015.

Motion: The SSC finds the gray triggerfish interim analysis is suitable for management, and recommends an ABC of 456,900 lbs ww (MRIP-CHTS) for 2021-2023 and an interim analysis for 2024 forward be conducted at that time.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Something's Fishy for Gray Triggerfish

Mr. Ryan Rindone (GMFMC Staff) presented results from the Something's Fishy tool that was deployed from April 16 to May 10, 2019 asking stakeholders to provide insight on gray triggerfish. This Something's Fishy was completed prior to SEDAR 62 but was never presented. There were 132 comments received, a majority of them from private anglers. Manual classification indicated a largely positive trend in stock health or abundance; automated analysis also indicated a trend towards a positive sentiment. The majority of responses originated from the Florida Panhandle and Alabama. Automated analysis indicated respondents saw a greater abundance of larger fish, while the manual analysis indicated respondents believed there to be an over-abundance of gray triggerfish, with the most fish found off the coast of Florida and the fewest off the Texas coast.

Review of SEDAR 75: Gulf of Mexico Gray Snapper Terms of Reference, Schedule, and Participant Solicitation

Mr. Rindone (GMFMC Staff) reviewed the terms of reference (TORs) for the SEDAR 75 operational assessment for Gulf gray snapper. Mr. Gregory noted that the scope of work approved by the SSC requested consideration of recommendations from SEDAR 51, and any new information, on reproduction, and that such be added back to the TORs.

The SSC requested that staff clarify the assessment type in the TORs. Further, it was noted that SEDAR 75 is intended to be the last assessment which will use workshops instead of topical working groups. Dr. Scyphers proposed adding a TOR from SEDAR 64 (southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper) that encourages the incorporation of social and economic information, as practicable.

Motion: The SSC recommends including in the SEDAR 75 Gray Snapper Assessment Terms of Reference the following item, as submitted by the Gulf Council in their letter to the SEFSC on September 30, 2019:

“Consider SEDAR 51 recommendations, and any new information, for reproduction.”

Motion carried with no opposition.

Motion: "Incorporate social and economic information into the stock assessment considerations as practicable."

Motion carried with no opposition.

Motion: to approve the Terms of Reference for SEDAR 75 Gulf gray snapper as amended.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Motion: to approve the project schedule for SEDAR 75 Gulf gray snapper.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Drs. Jim Nance, Kai Lorenzen, Jim Tolan, Steven Scyphers, and Mr. Doug Gregory, volunteered to participate in SEDAR 75.

Discussion of Carryover in the Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota Program

Dr. Jessica Stephen of the NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) gave a presentation on the impacts of the pandemic on IFQ fisheries and reviewed carryover considerations. Dr. Stephen compared the landings, ex-vessel values, and allocation trading activities for the major IFQ species, i.e., red snapper, red grouper, and gag. For red snapper and gag, pounds landed in 2020 were below landings during the corresponding time interval in 2019. For red grouper, 2020 landings to date were approximately equivalent to 2019 landings. For all three species, 2020 cumulative weekly allocation transaction trends in 2019 and 2020 were similar. Landings comparisons through July between 2019 and 2020 indicated that landings expressed as a percentage of the corresponding quota were lower in 2020 for red snapper, gag, shallow water grouper, deep water grouper and tilefish, but were greater for red grouper. SSC members noted

that a further investigation of the potential impacts of the pandemic on allocation trading activities could yield valuable insights.

Dr. Stephen indicated that the IFQ online system is migrating to a new system and that the migration may limit changes to the catch shares system during the transition. Dr. Stephen noted that amounts to be carried over would be calculated on December 31, 2020, and that the SSC would need to approve a new ABC accounting for the carryover. She presented the gaps between the OFL and ABC for red snapper, red grouper, and gag, and the carryover questions that will be considered by the Council. These questions deal with the modalities of the carryover including the share categories to be considered, the potential recipients, and the distribution methods. The SSC Chair noted that the SSC would need to think about adjustments to the ABCs to accommodate carryovers. SSC members suggested carryover recipients should be the allocation holders, i.e., whoever holds the allocation at the end of the year. Dr. Stephen noted that this issue will be discussed by the Council. Ms. Bosarge requested that SSC members briefly discuss whether carryovers should be based on a pound for pound distribution or on discounted portions of the unused quotas. SSC members recalled that during previous discussions, the SSC indicated that pound for pound distributions of unused quotas would be adequate.

SSC Discussion and Recommendations

Following the presentation on the 2020 IFQ Fishery Pandemic Impacts, the SSC inquired about upcoming seasonal trends that could affect the year-to-date percentages of quota landed for the presented species. Dr. Stephen responded that some of the share categories are variable over time, in terms of landings within a year. She referred to the slide showing landings comparison through July for each share category. Excluding red grouper due to the quota change, the other share categories this year are close to the percentage of quota landed by July in the previous three years. The SSC asked if there was information available on the percentage of red snapper shareholders who are participating in allocation transfers this year compared to previous years. Dr. Stephen stated that analysis of that information had not been conducted but could be done. The SSC also inquired about the distinction of transfers from people who don't fish at all. Dr. Stephen replied that it would be difficult to analyze because of related accounts in the IFQ system.

The SSC asked if Dr. Stephen could provide comments, even if anecdotal, on the impacts of the pandemic on the industry. Dr. Stephen stated that, early in the pandemic, when restaurants were closed, they were hearing that this was one of the largest impacts on the industry, as there is generally a lot of fresh products being sold to restaurants. The impacts differ by state as a result of what each state is doing in terms of social distancing requirements. Dr. Stephen stated that they had also heard that a lot of dealers weren't accepting fish at certain times and that those dealers that were accepting fish were being careful about how much they accepted, so that they would not have to freeze and store the product. Some dealers began selling directly to the public. Mr. Rindone commented that he had heard that some fishermen, all of whom were selling to the same fish house, were taking turns going out to fish, if the fish house was limiting the quantity of fish it was accepting. One SSC member stated that he had been involved in COVID-19 survey work and had commercial fishermen convey with regard to grouper and snapper that fish houses were asking them to bring in smaller fish, i.e., retail fish, as opposed to restaurant-size fish. He had also heard that those dealers and fish houses that had their own affiliated retail market to sell seafood to the public had done well during the pandemic.

Following the presentation on potential carryovers, the SSC noted that several of these items had been explored recently in the context of the recreational fisheries. However, the items were discussed in the context of rebuilding timelines and not in the context of IFQ programs. Still, these analyses answer some of the questions related to ABCs and other issues. Dr. Stephen stated that the IFQ-managed stocks have added dimensions that will need to be examined. The SSC commented that the recipient of a carryover should be the allocation holder at the end of the year in order to ensure the benefits of a carryover go to those who purchased unused allocation, rather than the original shareholder who already sold their allocation. The SSC also commented that the distribution calculations should be based on the remaining allocation associated with each account.

Review of SEDAR 74: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Research Track Terms of Reference

Mr. Rindone reviewed the TORs for SEDAR 74: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper and asked the SSC to provide recommendations. Mr. Gregory inquired about the Scopes of Work for SEDAR 74, to which Mr. Rindone indicated that Scopes of Work are usually used for developing research track TORs; instead, a planning team creates the first draft of the TORs for the SSC's consideration. Mr. Rindone also clarified that in TOR #3, for developing fishery CPUE indices, that the goal is to look at the post-IFQ years (2007+) also. Staff were directed to spell out "Connectivity Modeling Simulation in TOR #9, to add a bullet to address density-dependent mortality on juvenile red snapper, and to consider social and economic indicators as practicable.

Motion: To approve the Terms of Reference for SEDAR 74 Red Snapper Research Track as amended.

Motion carried without opposition.

Allocation Review Procedures

Dr. Assane Diagne (GMFMC Staff) discussed the status of the Council's allocation review procedures, and clarified that the allocation review procedures will entail a review of an existing allocation as a precursor to a determination of whether or not the Council will initiate an action to enact a reallocation. Thus, an allocation review may or may not result in the Council pursuing reallocation of the stock through a plan amendment. The Council has established its allocation review triggers and expected start dates for initial allocation reviews, and has formed an allocation review working group to assist with designing the allocation review process, including the administrative steps of an allocation review and the criteria and analyses that would be included. Dr. Diagne noted that the allocation working group has outlined some broad questions for the procedures and contents of the review, and the SSC will have the opportunity to provide additional comment at a later meeting.

Based on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) recommendations, the Council should document its processes for conducting its allocation reviews and specify how it will document

these processes, including the basis for allocation decisions, relation to achieving FMP objectives, and identifying factors considered in the review. Some additional issues for which the SSC could provide recommendations include identifying the participants for an allocation review panel and the details to include in public notices for allocation reviews. Dr. Diagne described the allocation working group's suggestion to use tiers based on stock characteristics as a way to categorize allocation reviews to indicate a more or less complex review is warranted. He also explained the working group's suggestion that the allocation review process be organized similar to the SEDAR process, to include stages for data gathering, interpretation and analyses, preliminary reporting, and review and recommendations. He also provided a list of essential sections that would be included in the allocation review report. Finally, he provided a table with the time intervals and expected start dates of the initial allocation reviews, as approved by the Council.

SSC Discussion and Recommendations

Following the presentation on allocation review procedures, the SSC commented that there would be value in including SSC members and, potentially, independent experts on an allocation review panel, in addition to members of the interdisciplinary planning team. One SSC member commented that the Mid-Atlantic Council's process of reviewing allocations was enhanced when it included external members, such as SSC members and expert review panels. Several SSC members expressed interest in working on allocation review panels. The SSC noted that the allocation review process would require Councils to examine allocations on a regular basis and also provide written documentation of the allocation review. The SSC inquired if this process applied to new allocations as well as any redistribution of existing allocations. Dr. Diagne responded this process only applies to existing allocations. He also commented that the allocation review working group has begun work on the list of general criteria, analyses, trends, and data for inclusion in allocation reviews. Next time the allocation review procedures are presented to the SSC, he will discuss that list and request feedback and input.

Dr. Travis (SERO) emphasized that allocation reviews should be considered a stepping stone and do not necessarily mean that the Council will act to change an allocation. He also stated that the entire point of an allocation review is to provide information to the Council and for the Council to then decide if the information warrants starting an amendment to examine an existing allocation.

Noting that allocation decisions are one of the most contentious things that the Council deals with and therefore involve a lot of time, the SSC inquired if Council staff had considered the impact that the allocation review schedule would have on the Council's schedule for performing its normal and anticipated responsibilities. Dr. Diagne replied that the impact had been contemplated and that the workload impact on Council staff as well as SERO and SEFSC staff was discussed with GAO representatives. He also noted that the extent of the reviews would determine how taxing it would be on resources. Dr. Diagne stated that next time this information is presented to the SSC, it would be both with the Council's recommendations to the current presentation and as well as with the working group's initial attempt at the criteria for inclusion in allocation reviews. He commented that it would be helpful if the SSC would assist at that time to supplement the list for a manageable and meaningful review. On the list of dates proposed for allocation reviews, the SSC asked why the first review would begin in four years. Dr. Diagne stated that the timeframe

provides a maximum period of time for the Council to review current allocations, but that the Council could initiate an allocation review prior to any of those time cycles.

The meeting ended at 5:30 PM eastern time, and the following day's agenda items were postponed to a later date due to the impending landfall by Hurricane Sally in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

SSC Participants

Standing SSC

Joe Powers, *Chair*

Kai Lorenzen, *Vice Chair*

Lee Anderson

Luiz Barbieri

Harry Blanchet

Dave Chagaris

Benny Gallaway

Bob Gill

Doug Gregory

Walter Keithly

Jim Nance

Will Patterson

Sean Powers

Ken Roberts

Steven Scyphers

Jim Tolan

Special Reef Fish SSC

Jason Adriance

Judd Curtis

John Mareska

Special Socioeconomic SSC

Kari Buck

Jack Isaacs

Andrew Ropicki

Special Ecosystem SSC

Paul Sammarco

[A list of all meeting participants can be viewed here.](#)