

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Omni Hotel Corpus Christi, Texas

August 20, 2018

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17  
18

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1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
2 Management Council convened at the Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi,  
3 Texas, Monday afternoon, August 20, 2018, 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:** The members of this committee are  
11 myself, Mr. Dale Diaz, Dr. Tom Frazer, and Ms. Martha Guyas. I  
12 do invite though the other members of the council to please  
13 chime in if you have any feedback. You know, that's a pretty  
14 small committee, and that's the way it's always been run, but  
15 feel free to contribute. We would like as much feedback as we  
16 can get.

17  
18 The agenda can be found under Tab I, Number 1. Were there any  
19 changes or amendments to the agenda as presented? Seeing none,  
20 the agenda is approved as presented. Tab I, Number 2 are our  
21 minutes from our June 2018 meeting. Were there any changes that  
22 needed to be made to those minutes? Seeing none, I will  
23 consider the minutes approved as presented.

24  
25 Next is our Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab I, Number 3. Dr.  
26 Simmons, do you want to take us through that or just dive right  
27 into Item IV?

28  
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** I will give a quick  
30 overview. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Porch is going to  
31 provide a presentation on the new assessment process. We're  
32 going to hear some recommendations and feedback from the SSC,  
33 and the council should ask questions and discuss this, after the  
34 presentation.

35  
36 The next agenda item, regarding this new process, we're going to  
37 try to review and finalize the 2020 schedule, at least, and  
38 start looking at the 2021 schedule, and you also have some SSC  
39 comments to hear on that as well.

40  
41 The Steering Committee meeting for SEDAR is in September, and so  
42 we're trying to get a good idea of what the council wants in  
43 2020, and so thank you.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right, and so that's going to bring us to  
46 Agenda Item Number IV, which is our Overview of the Revised  
47 SEDAR Process, and, Dr. Porch, do you have a little presentation  
48 that you're going to take us through?

1  
2  
3 **OVERVIEW OF REVISED SEDAR PROCESS**  
4 **PRESENTATION ON RESEARCH, OPERATIONAL, AND INTERIM TRACK**  
5 **ASSESSMENT**

6 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Yes, I do. I just need the clicker. All  
7 right. Good afternoon, everyone. As you know, we've been  
8 talking for quite a few years now about various ways that we  
9 could revise the SEDAR process to make it more efficient, and,  
10 with some things, we actually have instituted quite a few things  
11 we've been talking about for, I think, about three years now and  
12 just kind of it stalled, and then it would start up again, but,  
13 at this point, I think we've come to some general agreement  
14 amongst most of the players, and so I'm just going to try and  
15 review those for you and break it down into what fraction we  
16 would expect it to improve throughput or improve timeliness and  
17 all that sort of thing.

18  
19 Those of you who have been here as long as I have remember that,  
20 when we did assessments back before the millennium, mostly it  
21 was done by rather few agency scientists compiling data and  
22 running models, and that was back before I had all the gray, and  
23 I was one of those people sitting in the dark room there, and  
24 the council, for some of the species, appointed assessment  
25 advisory panels that would act somewhat like assessment panels  
26 do today.

27  
28 The models were generally simpler, and the data was simpler, or  
29 at least fewer of it from fewer sources, and the only real  
30 review was the SSC, and so, consequently, the throughput and  
31 timeliness were pretty high. Thoroughness, maybe not quite what  
32 it could have been, but transparency was really low, and we got  
33 criticized for that quite often, and the other things were the  
34 undercurrent that was going on is that individual analysts were  
35 often vilified in one way or another, and the people, at the  
36 time, were wanting to kind of shift that blame from just a  
37 single person that's just running the model to a broader group  
38 who are actually making consensus decisions.

39  
40 What we ended up coming up with was SEDAR, and that really  
41 started around 2001 or 2002, I think, in response to some heavy  
42 criticism from both the red porgy assessment in the South  
43 Atlantic and the red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, surprise,  
44 surprise, and the keystone of the SEDAR process was the so-  
45 called benchmark assessment.

46  
47 That was comprised of three workshops, the same three workshops  
48 that we know of today. There is the data workshop, where, in

1 particular, we would really emphasize bringing fishermen and  
2 other stakeholders into the process to talk through the data  
3 that we have with them, and then an assessment workshop, which  
4 would focus more on the technical aspects of the assessment, and  
5 then, finally, a review workshop, where we would present all the  
6 data and all the technical models and everything to a group of  
7 independent peers, who would review it for scientific merit, and  
8 then there would also be two or three SSC representatives, and  
9 so it got a very thorough review, much more thorough than in the  
10 past.

11  
12 Now, after that, then there would be still another level of  
13 review, and that was done by the SSC, but each step was open and  
14 transparent, and there was exhaustive documentation, as  
15 illustrated by this photo by Ken Rose, where he laid all the  
16 papers for the -- This was the red snapper assessment in 2004,  
17 and he laid all the papers that he had to read from end-to-end  
18 and stood his daughter at the end of the papers, and I believe  
19 there were about a hundred manuscripts that he had to read, and  
20 those aren't pages. That's the individual papers. It just got  
21 so unwieldy for the reviewers that we got a lot of complaints,  
22 because there is that much material to read.

23  
24 There were also dozens of participants, both engaged in the  
25 decision-making process and in the critiques, and the  
26 consequence of all that was the process became very, very slow.  
27 We went from a case where we had reasonable throughput and  
28 timeliness, but little transparency, to very low throughput and  
29 timeliness and very high transparency.

30  
31 Stepping back a little bit, to try and figure out what went  
32 wrong with that process, we have to first recognize that SEDAR  
33 wasn't originally intended for use on all of the stocks. It was  
34 intended for just some high-profile stocks like red snapper and  
35 red porgy.

36  
37 What ended up happening is, somewhere along the way, both  
38 councils and the Southeast Center somehow agreed that we'll  
39 start using it for everything, and that created a systemic  
40 overload, because we didn't have the infrastructure to support  
41 that many detailed assessments with that level of review, and so  
42 the data providers, in particular, had trouble meeting all the  
43 deadlines, and this is particular exacerbated by the fact that,  
44 during benchmark assessments, we would change the way the data  
45 were presented as different decisions were made in the process,  
46 like which fleets would we model and which would we combine and  
47 which would we model separately, and we might come up with a  
48 different stock structure, and then all the data had to be

1 reconfigured, and it just slowed down the process enormously.

2  
3 The other thing that was happening is we were getting a lot of  
4 changes in the scheduling, and sometimes less than a year out,  
5 and so you have all your staff working for one assessment and,  
6 all of a sudden, we say, whoops, we're not going to do that  
7 assessment anymore and we're going to shift over to this other  
8 one, and it creates inefficiencies in the process.

9  
10 We also noticed that the results were, as thorough as they were,  
11 were still often criticized by reviewers, but, because  
12 management advice was required of the benchmark assessment,  
13 there wasn't any real time to actually address some of those  
14 concerns. We would do the best we could, but, at the end of the  
15 day, we had to produce management advice in a timely fashion.

16  
17 One other thing that we noticed is that both councils tended to  
18 favor benchmark assessments, because there was a view that that  
19 was the best, but those are also the slowest, and then, finally,  
20 I would say that we were kind of a victim of our own success,  
21 because SEDAR was very successful in bringing more people to the  
22 table with more data streams, and we have more partners from  
23 more states and academia, and what ended up happening is the  
24 assessments got evermore complex, and they used more and more  
25 pieces of data, and, the more pieces of data you use, the more  
26 potential failure points you have, because one partner may not  
27 be able to deliver it on time, and that has a cascading effect  
28 that just delays the whole assessment all the way down the line.

29  
30 Those were the sorts of issues that came up, and we thought, for  
31 a while, about how we might revise this process, and, like I  
32 said, a lot of this has been in the works for several years, but  
33 I think the key things that we've come up with is introducing,  
34 one, a sort of research and operational assessment track, and  
35 the research assessment is the assessment that creates the tool,  
36 but, as I will talk about a little bit later, it actually  
37 doesn't produce the management advice. It's focused on  
38 developing the best tool.

39  
40 The operational assessment then is going to apply the tool, and  
41 so we'll have a research assessment and then, presumably,  
42 several operational assessments over the years after that.

43  
44 We also want to emphasize advance scheduling more efficiently  
45 than the way we've been doing it, to help us manage the  
46 workload, and then we're also introducing, as Luiz mentioned,  
47 interim analyses, where we can provide more timely advice with  
48 the latest data, and this would be performed outside of the

1 SEDAR process.

2  
3 For the research assessments, for most intents and purposes,  
4 they're most like the current benchmark approach. It's got the  
5 three workshops, and it will have independent peer review, et  
6 cetera, and it develops the tool that we're going to use down  
7 the road, and so this would be including the data streams that  
8 we'll use in the assessment and all the analytical methods, but  
9 it's not used for providing management advice, and the reason  
10 for that is it helps us to have more flexible deadlines, and so,  
11 if there is some topic that is identified during this whole  
12 research track process, it can actually be followed up, instead  
13 of just curtailed and say, well, next time we'll do it, at the  
14 next benchmark.

15  
16 They're not, on the other hand, open-ended research projects.  
17 There is a definitive time limit, and it can be longer than the  
18 current benchmark process, but it's not that we're going to let  
19 it go on for three or four years, and so they're not open-ended  
20 research projects, which was a concern that several members of  
21 the council and SSC had expressed/  
22

23 One thing that's important is that they don't rely on the most  
24 recent data, because we're developing a tool. We don't need  
25 finely-tuned data, and we don't need the last year of data, and  
26 what that does is reduce the load on the data providers, and so  
27 we're focusing on the types of data streams that are going in,  
28 the quality of the data that's going in it, which ones should be  
29 used, and also on the life history characteristics and other  
30 aspects that would dictate what sort of models we should use.  
31 We're not worrying about making sure that we get the data down  
32 correctly to every last pound.

33  
34 The advantage of that is it reduces the load on our data  
35 providers, and it allows the project to have more flexibility to  
36 develop the best model. You will still have the independent  
37 peer review and the SSC review, and, when we looked at this, we  
38 think, when you use it in tandem with a cycle of operational  
39 assessments, it should give us an increase in throughput of  
40 around 10 to 20 percent. That's, again, assuming that we're --  
41 Maybe I will put it this way. If you know you're not getting  
42 management advice, there is a little less incentive to keep  
43 saying let's just do a benchmark, because we think it's better.  
44 The operational assessment will be using a peer-reviewed tool,  
45 and it will be the best available science, but we're not just  
46 constantly invoking a benchmark assessment, and so it should  
47 save us some time just for that.  
48

1 Operational assessments, these are going to be -- This is where  
2 the thorough and timely comes in. They are updating -- We are  
3 updating the peer-reviewed tools that we got from the research  
4 track, but now with the latest data, and so this where we look  
5 at the data very carefully and make sure we do get it down to  
6 the nearest pound, as it were.

7  
8 It will provide the management advice, stock status, OFL, ABC,  
9 et cetera. In principle, it merges the existing update and  
10 standard assessments, and exactly how much you will look at in  
11 an operational assessment would be defined by the terms of  
12 reference, which we'll develop in concert with the SSC and the  
13 Southeast Center and SEDAR, and that will define the scope of  
14 the assessment, and, in principle, we would look at things that  
15 the SSC feels comfortable reviewing, because there is not going  
16 to be an independent peer review now.

17  
18 The operational assessment uses the peer-reviewed model, but  
19 then the last stage of review for each operational assessment  
20 would be the SSC, and so we wouldn't want to do things in the  
21 operational assessment that the SSC would be uncomfortable  
22 reviewing.

23  
24 Then, again, this would be expected to increase throughput by 10  
25 to 20 percent. Now, the matter of scheduling, ideally, the  
26 scheduling process would look something like this. The first  
27 part hasn't really happened yet, but, ideally, the council would  
28 identify priorities five years in advance, based on a  
29 predictable, rigorous prioritization scheme.

30  
31 The South Atlantic Council actually has already adopted a  
32 prioritization scheme, and, the Gulf of Mexico Council, you all  
33 have been looking at it, and, in fact, your staff have been  
34 working with our staff to come up with one, and so I think  
35 you're in the process there. I don't think you have quite  
36 adopted it yet, but, ideally, that's what we would have. We  
37 would start looking at these things further out, and I will show  
38 you why in a little bit.

39  
40 Then the SEDAR Steering Committee develops a draft schedule, at  
41 least two years out, and that would get circulated to us, so we  
42 can make sure that we can actually execute it, and also to the  
43 councils. Then, a few months later, the SEDAR Steering  
44 Committee would meet and finalize that schedule, and, in  
45 principle, we might accommodate some minor changes to that two-  
46 year draft and then no further changes after that.

47  
48 Then the SEDAR and Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff, or

1 whoever the cooperator is, FWC, would hold scheduling calls to  
2 establish the data delivery deadlines and all the other  
3 scheduling milestones, and the SEDAR Coordinators would develop  
4 draft detailed project schedules.

5  
6 It looks similar to what we have done in the recent past, but  
7 it's a little more rigorous in enforcing limitations on changing  
8 the schedule, and this, in itself, should increase throughput by  
9 another 10 to 20 percent, and decrease the time to conduct each  
10 assessment, because you're not forcing the data providers to  
11 keep shifting gears and switching from one species to the next.

12  
13 This is a little tool that we've come up with that we hope will  
14 help the SEDAR Steering Committee try and develop these  
15 schedules, and you may not be able to see it on the screen as  
16 well, but it should show up on the copy that you have on your  
17 computer, but what you can see is we have developed sort of  
18 slots for each of several different assessment teams.

19  
20 The total number of assessments can't exceed what's available  
21 for each of these regions, because they are different assessment  
22 teams that specialize on the species for those councils, and so  
23 we have -- You will see our South Atlantic Team, Gulf and  
24 Caribbean Team, the Shark Team, which does HMS sharks, and then  
25 an HMS Team that deals with the mackerels. Then FWC also does  
26 some assessments, hogfish, black grouper, et cetera.

27  
28 The idea is each of those entities has a certain number of  
29 assessment leads that can conduct assessments, and so we  
30 allocate a certain area representing the number of assessment  
31 leads, and the size of those boxes basically would reflect the  
32 availability of assessment leads, and so you can only  
33 accommodate so many boxes in that space.

34  
35 The other thing that we have to do though is acknowledge that  
36 the primary limitation has been data provision. Now, that's one  
37 of the things, as the new Science Director, that I am trying to  
38 increase our capacity, so this won't be such a big bottleneck,  
39 but, right now, it is the primary bottleneck, and so what we've  
40 done is compute the total number of weeks that are required to  
41 process each type of assessment.

42  
43 We did it first when we were using benchmarks, standards, and  
44 updates, and we figured out that standards can be from three to  
45 five weeks, and updates can be a little bit less than that, and  
46 benchmarks can be substantially more than five weeks, and so  
47 what ends up happening is, if we say there is thirty-four weeks  
48 of data provision time available, then you add up the total

1 number of benchmarks, standards, and updates, so that it doesn't  
2 exceed thirty-four weeks.

3  
4 Now, again, my job is to try and give you more than thirty-four  
5 weeks, but, right now, given the capacity we have, that's about  
6 what it is, and so the idea here is you have two constraints,  
7 the total number of assessment people, but also data provision  
8 weeks, and we'll try and increase that, but this sort of  
9 scheduling tool would help us figure out how many assessments of  
10 each type we can do every year.

11  
12 Ideally, we would come up with a schedule that is at least five  
13 or six years long. This is a hypothetical schedule that depends  
14 on a stock prioritization scheme, and, again, don't place any  
15 stock in the actual numbers and entries here. It's more the  
16 concept, and the idea would be, for a high-priority stock like  
17 red snapper, it would get a high score in your prioritization  
18 spreadsheet, and that one probably would need to be assessed  
19 more frequently, and so what you can see here in this particular  
20 example is we started with the research track in year-one.

21  
22 During a time when we have a research track, we could still  
23 provide management advice, but we would use it -- We would do it  
24 by using an interim analysis that hinges off the previous stock  
25 assessment, and so the research track, in that sense, is kind of  
26 happening in the background. Then, after that, in the next  
27 year, you would have your operational assessment alternating  
28 with an interim assessment and then another operational,  
29 interim, et cetera.

30  
31 Then, for something that's maybe not quite as high priority as  
32 red snapper, maybe you would have -- It looks very much like, in  
33 this case, say greater amberjack and gray trigger. It looks a  
34 lot like red snapper, except you see a somewhat longer interval  
35 between the operational assessments. It's two years instead of  
36 one, and we would just have consecutive interim analyses.

37  
38 Then, if you look down the list here, you will see something  
39 that might be lower priority still, like Spanish mackerel, could  
40 have maybe as many as three interim analyses in three  
41 consecutive years between operational assessments, and so you  
42 don't need to conduct the intense operational assessments as  
43 frequently for some species as others.

44  
45 That's the idea, in concept. In practice, it may be a little  
46 challenging to develop a schedule like this, but I think it will  
47 increase the efficiency a great deal, and especially going to  
48 these interim analyses.

1  
2 If you look at -- Well, I think we're going to hear a little bit  
3 from Luiz about what we showed them at the SSC, but the gist of  
4 an interim analysis is that you're updating the ABC advice based  
5 on the most recent trends in surveys and abundance or indices of  
6 mortality, whichever is your most reliable data.

7  
8 If you think of it as a survey of abundance, basically, if the  
9 survey indicates there are more fish out there, then, arguably,  
10 you could take a higher level of catch than was recommended from  
11 the assessment before that. It's basically conducted outside of  
12 the SEDAR process, very fast turnaround, and, depending on how  
13 often we implement the interim analyses, they could as much as  
14 double the total throughput, in terms of the amount of  
15 management advice we're providing.

16  
17 Just to give you kind of conceptually what an interim analysis  
18 might look like, this is the simplest form if we have a reliable  
19 fishery-independent survey. Let's suppose, for the last  
20 assessment, the ABC advice was more or less constant. That  
21 would be this straight line at the top of the interim analysis  
22 graph that you see there, and so that's representing a constant  
23 ABC of five-million pounds for whatever species. This is all  
24 hypothetical.

25  
26 Let's suppose though that we, say as we saw with red grouper, we  
27 start seeing the indices of abundance are going down since the  
28 last assessment that we had. That would argue that the ABC  
29 should also go down in some proportion to that abundance, and,  
30 in this case, it's almost in linear proportion to the abundance,  
31 in this particular example.

32  
33 Now, if you found that the index of abundance was going up  
34 faster than you anticipated, you could also use the same method  
35 to increase the ABC, and so it's a very conceptually simple way  
36 to adjust the ABC. If the index goes up, you increase the ABC.  
37 If the index goes down, you decrease it.

38  
39 Then we talked about a few other improvements to the SEDAR  
40 process. One of them is that we probably need to think a little  
41 bit more about right-sizing the assessments. They really should  
42 be -- The complexity of the assessments should really be  
43 commensurate with the quality of the data and the value of the  
44 fishery.

45  
46 We don't always need complex models, especially if the data  
47 don't warrant it, and so I think we need to think, both as an  
48 agency and as a council, how vested we are in things like multi-

1 fleet Stock Synthesis models.

2  
3 Second, I think we need to consider a different way of doing  
4 some of our data-limited analyses. We have kind of started  
5 along that road with the last data-limited assessment that we  
6 did for the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, but the idea is  
7 those are relatively simple techniques. What we really need to  
8 do is kind of vet the methodology first, and then, once you have  
9 vetted the methodology, you can apply it to fifteen species at  
10 once or something, just to make the whole process more  
11 efficient.

12  
13 We started along those lines in the Caribbean and the Gulf, and  
14 we haven't done it for the South Atlantic yet, but I think we  
15 need to think a little bit more about how we can, maybe using  
16 the SEDAR methods working group, to actually focus more on the  
17 methodology and vet it and then get those peer reviewed and then  
18 just apply it to a lot of stocks, and so sort of like what our  
19 research track operational assessments do, but looking at more  
20 species at once, because they are simpler methods.

21  
22 We also think that the reports, and I think everybody thinks  
23 this, that the reports of the operational assessments should be  
24 streamlined, mostly citing research track documentation, but  
25 they also need to have a more effective executive summary.

26  
27 I got a call from a fisherman just a couple of months ago asking  
28 about the gray snapper assessment and trying to figure out where  
29 the ABC and OFL advice was in that, and it took me five or ten  
30 minutes to find it, and so I can't imagine how difficult it is  
31 for somebody else, who is not familiar with these reports, to  
32 try and dig this information out.

33  
34 I think we really need to come up with some effective executive  
35 summaries, and that's something we need to work with the  
36 councils on, what is the best format and what pieces of  
37 information you want to see in there.

38  
39 Then, finally, something that is near and dear to my heart is  
40 being more proactive in our communications with stakeholders.  
41 There is obviously a lot of misunderstandings out there, and so  
42 that would involve things like the Marine Resource Education  
43 Program and investing in things like that more, where you're  
44 educating stakeholders.

45  
46 Also, on our part, regularly updating these key indices that  
47 I've been talking about, so that people can go to a website and  
48 see, in close to real time, the trends in stocks, because it is

1 true that assessments tend to be behind what the fishermen are  
2 seeing. By the time we implement the regulations, it might be  
3 three years behind what the fishermen are seeing on the water,  
4 and so it would be helpful if we, whether it's the FWC or the  
5 Southeast Center or whoever the cooperator is, update those key  
6 indices and surveys of abundance regularly.

7  
8 Then, of course, taking advantage of citizen science initiatives  
9 in a more effective way. Obviously, just having a bunch of  
10 people telling us conflicting stories doesn't help so much with  
11 the assessment, but, if we can find a way to manage that  
12 information flow and glean the nuggets that are in it and then  
13 figure out how to use an assessment, that would be a very  
14 positive thing that I think would not only improve the quality  
15 of the assessment, but also lead to a more efficient process.

16  
17 That's all I had for you today. That's the gist of what we're  
18 planning to do to try and revitalize SEDAR, and our ultimate  
19 goal, going from that sort of pre-millennial era, one person,  
20 one computer, one dark office, and, moving from that, we went  
21 through the SEDAR process, where we are so transparent and tried  
22 to uncover every stone that it became painstakingly slow, and  
23 we're trying now to kind of achieve the right balance between  
24 those things and have a more efficient process. With that, I am  
25 happy to take any questions.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Are there questions for Dr.  
28 Porch? Mr. Anson.

29  
30 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** I'm not on your committee, and thank you. Dr.  
31 Porch, if we were doing an assessment under the current SEDAR  
32 process, how quickly would 2018's biological data, age data, be  
33 available? When would that be available, typically?

34  
35 **DR. PORCH:** Again, it would depend on how many assessments we  
36 tried to schedule, but usually we can have most of the  
37 biological data for 2018 by -- In most cases, by August or so of  
38 the following year.

39  
40 **MR. ANSON:** You mentioned front-loading and sticking to a hard  
41 schedule, and the 10 to 20 percent you talk about the savings, I  
42 guess, would that then be realized in that you would have that  
43 data available a month or two earlier, at the least, under a  
44 best-case scenario, if you implemented this fully?

45  
46 **DR. PORCH:** That wouldn't -- Changing the SEDAR process itself  
47 probably wouldn't help that so much, and so there is two issues  
48 there. One, we could have all the data for all the stock

1 assessments prepared by that date. You have to stagger them a  
2 little bit, because you have limited personnel, and so they  
3 can't all work at the same thing at once, and so there would be  
4 some staggering.

5  
6 The data can be available, for many stocks, close to August of  
7 the following year. Some pieces of data can be processed much  
8 quicker, and that's the advantage of interim analyses. For  
9 instance, if we were using fishery-independent surveys, we can  
10 usually process those much faster, and a lot of things depend on  
11 the states' ability to produce the data, depending on what the  
12 data stream is, and so it's not as simple as that.

13  
14 The other thing that -- I guess the main point is the data  
15 provision deadlines aren't really the things that are slowed by  
16 SEDAR. What is slowed by the current way the SEDAR process  
17 operates is that you shift -- You are forcing the data providers  
18 to shift gears when you change the schedule or, in the case of a  
19 benchmark, you change -- You make different decisions on how to  
20 process the data mid-stream. Those are the things that slow the  
21 data provision process down. Do you follow what I mean?

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Any other questions? All right. If there  
24 are no other questions, that is going to lead us to Dr. Barbieri  
25 and the SSC discussion on the staff-proposed modifications to  
26 the SEDAR process.

27  
28 **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS ON AND STAFF-PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE**  
29 **SEDAR PROCESS**

30  
31 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members. I  
32 did not actually put together a presentation or any slides with  
33 summaries for this one. I thought this one would be more  
34 conversational in nature, and I don't know, Ryan, if you  
35 actually have already presented to the council what those  
36 summary recommendations or suggestions --

37  
38 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** No, we haven't. Staff received direction to  
39 do this, to run it through you guys, before bringing it to the  
40 council, and that's essentially what is happening here. The  
41 presentation that we gave you guys is in the background  
42 information, and it's Tab I, Number 4(b). The first couple of  
43 pages there, you can see the discussion that the SSC had about  
44 the schedule, and then the subsequent slides are what we showed  
45 the SSC.

46  
47 **DR. BARBIERI:** Madam Chair, I don't know if you want to go over  
48 that presentation that Ryan gave at the SSC meeting, to kind of

1 give the committee an overview, but, in general, I would say the  
2 bottom line is that council staff put together, I thought, and  
3 the committee agreed, a good number of good suggestions or  
4 recommendations for improvement of the SEDAR process.

5  
6 I think that this has been a process that has been going on  
7 within the council staff for a while, for maybe a year now, give  
8 or take, and it looks like several of those recommendations are  
9 already being implemented through some of these revisions of the  
10 SEDAR process, as presented by Dr. Porch and summarized before.

11  
12 In that case, the committee felt like, well, there are some good  
13 recommendations here that could achieve good ends, but most of  
14 them, if not all of them, are already being incorporated in the  
15 revised SEDAR process through those tiers of assessments that  
16 Dr. Porch just went through.

17  
18 Now, there are a few things that the committee discussed, in  
19 terms of sort of like operational improvements for the process,  
20 that would be development of the ability for, in the data  
21 workshop or throughout the SEDAR assessment process, that you  
22 could have like an IPT-like interagency kind of group that would  
23 be working on resolving issues and summarizing data and  
24 addressing problems throughout the process without having to  
25 have the formally-noticed meetings that really take a lot of  
26 time and slow down the process quite a bit.

27  
28 If there was a way for things to be done, with the tradeoff that  
29 Dr. Porch talked about, perhaps not as transparent as the  
30 current SEDAR process, but more efficient, and then those  
31 recommendations and suggestions and analysis would be brought to  
32 the formal, open, publicly-noticed workshops to be vetted, but  
33 not have to wait for those meetings for those changes to be  
34 known and then discussed further, and so that's just a way to  
35 kind of add a little more speed and efficiency to the process,  
36 but, overall, we like the recommendations.

37  
38 I think, in terms of the research and operational assessments  
39 and the interim analysis, the committee responded well. There  
40 was a lot of interest, actually so much interest, so many  
41 questions and discussion points, during the SSC meeting that we  
42 had to basically ask for them to hold back, and, in the interest  
43 of time, perhaps come back some other time, perhaps when you can  
44 come over, and have, again, this overview for them to be able to  
45 provide the input that they have in mind.

46  
47 Some committee members, and I think this is to be expected, are  
48 still feeling a little I would say cautious or not as

1 comfortable with the proposed structure, and they have questions  
2 too about the ability of the research assessment to really  
3 increase productivity and help resolve some of the problems, but  
4 other committee members are fully onboard with the research  
5 assessment process and the operational, together with the  
6 interim, and so I think it's a matter of waiting a little bit,  
7 and the committee appreciates these interim presentations, but  
8 it's just a matter of waiting for the Steering Committee meeting  
9 to get to the point where it has a better-defined framework and  
10 can present it to us. This is like my short version, Madam  
11 Chair.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** I'm glad you didn't have any slides, Luiz.  
14 No, in all seriousness, anything else, Luiz, from the SSC on  
15 this one?

16  
17 **DR. BARBIERI:** No, Madam Chair. We're going to talk a little  
18 bit later about the schedule, right, and I can talk about it now  
19 if you want, or you can go through the schedule first.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** How about can we get into it and then we'll  
22 call you back up? Let's take a look. All right. So Luiz  
23 brought us right into the last agenda item, which is our SEDAR  
24 schedule, and I think staff is going to get that on the board  
25 for us. Ryan, do you want to give us, generally, the quick  
26 version of what has changed?

27  
28 **REVIEW AND FINALIZE 2020 AND 2021 GULF OF MEXICO SEDAR SCHEDULE**

29  
30 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure, Madam Chair. The MRIP calibrations have  
31 seen delays on deliveries since 2015, and that hasn't changed  
32 much. We now have those updated data that are starting to come  
33 in, and they will start to be able to be used in assessments  
34 now, but, with trying to get everything plugged in, we saw some  
35 additional delays that have resulted from that, and, notably,  
36 scamp is going to start now, and this is just projected to  
37 start, at the end of 2019 as a research track, instead of the  
38 beginning.

39  
40 You guys likely won't get the results of that effort from the  
41 scamp research track and subsequent operational assessment,  
42 which is where you will get your management advice, until the  
43 end of 2021.

44  
45 We have requested a red snapper research track and subsequent  
46 operational assessment to start in 2020. The SSC discussed the  
47 appropriateness of doing a research track assessment, which Dr.  
48 Barbieri can expand upon, but, ultimately, with the input from

1 the Science Center and what we know from past assessments, there  
2 are plenty of things that could be worked on to try to make that  
3 assessment better, and so a research track assessment is  
4 certainly appropriate, and it may just be more a matter of  
5 timing and, like Dr. Porch referred to, the available data weeks  
6 to be able to actually put everything together. That is our  
7 current bottleneck.

8  
9 Then we talked some about the gag and greater amberjack  
10 operational assessments, but the SSC is going to revisit the  
11 potential terms of reference for that in October, I believe, and  
12 so that's what you have.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Thank you, sir. Our red grouper,  
15 with the MRIP recalibrations, our results from that are going to  
16 be delayed a little bit, to try and incorporate those into the  
17 assessment, and gray triggerfish, and so we'll be a little later  
18 getting those assessments, but I think we updated you all on  
19 that last time.

20  
21 Red grouper, we hope to see the final report on that in the  
22 second quarter of next year, and so maybe we'll see it -- I  
23 don't think we would see it in June. Maybe we would see it in  
24 our August meeting, and so about a year from now. Mr. Rindone.

25  
26 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am, and that's the important thing to  
27 remember. When you guys are looking at this and you see the end  
28 date is Q-whatever for a certain year, that is when the stock  
29 assessment process is over, but there still has to be an SSC  
30 review, and then it comes to you guys, and so there is still  
31 time on the backend before management.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Ms. Guyas.

34  
35 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** If red grouper is going to be a little bit  
36 late, does that mean we have the possibility of grabbing another  
37 year's worth of landings data for that assessment?

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** We have red grouper listed as starting Q4 of this  
40 year, and we're still trying to get 2017 data, and so that's  
41 about as current as we're going to be able to be, and so, like  
42 Dr. Porch mentioned, most of the ageing data are available  
43 roughly by August. Usually by August, we have the finalized  
44 MRIP numbers, and we have all the state data, and so that is --  
45 Anything that happens beyond August of Year X can usually  
46 include the previous year's data, usually.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** For red grouper, I think the Science Center

1 is trying their best to have some sort of management strategy  
2 evaluation, AKA an interim assessment, for the SSC to evaluate  
3 at their next meeting, which would be late September or early  
4 October. It's the first week in October.

5  
6 That way, hopefully we could get some advice from them and maybe  
7 take some action, instead of having to wait until, essentially,  
8 a year from now to see the results of the assessment and begin a  
9 document to take some action, because we've heard enough  
10 feedback on that particular species that we know we have an  
11 issue, and so hopefully the Science Center is going to be able  
12 to do that for the next SSC meeting.

13  
14 Were there any other questions or comments about the SEDAR  
15 schedule? As you heard the Science Center say, we are going to  
16 try and set it and forget it, if we can, which that's always  
17 been tough for us. That's been a challenge.

18  
19 I did have one question. We originally had red snapper in 2019,  
20 and, at the SEDAR Committee meeting, we pushed that to 2020, and  
21 there are several reasons for that. We want it to be a research  
22 track, and we have the big project, and I don't know the  
23 official name of it, but the ten-million-dollar project, and we  
24 want to make sure that we can set the model up in a way that it  
25 can handle that, and, with a research track, if you start that  
26 in 2020, you're not actually going to have to have the results  
27 from any of that research until almost two years later, right,  
28 because the research track goes on for a year-and-a-half to two  
29 years before you actually plug the data in, but we want to be  
30 set up to handle that kind of stuff.

31  
32 In 2020, with red snapper on there and scamp on there, that's  
33 two research tracks in the same year, and they're starting one  
34 quarter apart, essentially. Is that doable, or is that going to  
35 cause an issue on your end, Dr. Porch?

36  
37 **DR. PORCH:** No, Chair, that won't be a problem. We already  
38 anticipated that, and we've been talking with the SEDAR folks  
39 about it, about the scheduling.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. Any other questions? Yes, Mr.  
42 Diaz.

43  
44 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** I am not sure who to direct this to, Mr. Rindone  
45 or Dr. Porch or Mr. Strelcheck, but red snapper is way down  
46 there in 2021, as a data-poor, and it's proposed -- I'm talking  
47 about red drum. I'm sorry.

1 We've talked about red drum, and we tried to do them in a data-  
2 poor stock assessment a couple of years ago, and there wasn't  
3 even enough data to do them under data-poor, and is anybody  
4 trying to get funds right now to collect the data that we need  
5 to do an assessment on red drum in the future, because my fear  
6 is we're going to get to 2021 and we're going to be in the same  
7 situation we are right now, where there is not enough data to do  
8 anything with, and it's a pretty important fishery, and, anyway,  
9 does anybody know anything about what's being done to pursue  
10 that data?

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Dr. Stunz.

13  
14 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Well, I can comment a little, and maybe follow-  
15 up at Full Council, Dale, but I do know there is some groups out  
16 of Dauphin Island that were doing some work, as well as I think  
17 FWC, in fact, and trying to get some data based upon some work  
18 that they've been doing, but I don't know the details or the  
19 latest, but I can find out, hopefully between now and Full  
20 Council.

21  
22 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to corroborate that, both of those groups do  
23 have active, funded projects that are underway.

24  
25 **MR. DIAZ:** As a follow-up, the last time we talked about this,  
26 there was concerns about maybe just data coming from one portion  
27 of the Gulf, and that might not be applicable across the whole  
28 Gulf. Is the work that's being done going to be substantial  
29 enough and cover a wide enough area of the Gulf where it's  
30 actually going to be something that's usable for a stock  
31 assessment?

32  
33 **MR. RINDONE:** That is yet to be determined. We'll have to see  
34 what kind of data they're able to collect and the space and time  
35 that it covers, but that's not to say that it can't be looked at  
36 in 2021 or at some appropriate time, and so they're trying to  
37 get at least a few years, I think, under the belt of each of  
38 those projects.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Mr. Anson, did you have any details?

41  
42 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I believe the geographic scope includes  
43 western Louisiana through Alabama as their primary sampling  
44 points, and then what Florida is doing, I'm assuming, might be  
45 to supplement the western shelf of Florida for some of those  
46 populations that are not within that core area of the northern  
47 Gulf, which was identified as having the largest concentration  
48 of brood stock.

1  
2 Now, as Ryan pointed out, whether they can get enough samples  
3 over that geographic area, that remains to be seen, and I don't  
4 have an update on that information, but their intent was to try  
5 to cover the core area of red drum brook stock.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** Are the samples hook-and-line samples?  
8

9 **MR. ANSON:** Primarily purse seine, as I recall.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN BOSARGE:** All right. I think that's pretty much --  
12 That was one of the weak points before, is what does that age  
13 composition look like offshore and being able to compare that to  
14 the prior age composition that you had when there was a fishery  
15 there. In order to compare the two, if you use the same method  
16 of capture, then it helps a lot. Okay. Well, that sounds  
17 great, and so then maybe there is traction moving in that  
18 direction, Dale. Maybe we'll get a better result next time.

19  
20 All right. Any other questions or comments on the SEDAR  
21 schedule? All right, and so we're not too far behind schedule.  
22 Let's go ahead and take our fifteen-minute break, guys, and so  
23 at 3:40 we'll pick back up.

24  
25 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 20, 2018.)

26  
27 - - -