

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Perdido Beach Resort Orange Beach, Alabama

October 25, 2021

VOTING MEMBERS

Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
 Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
 Tom Frazer.....Florida
 Bob Gill.....Florida
 LTJG Adam Peterson.....USCG
 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
 Greg Stunz.....Texas
 Troy Williamson.....Texas

STAFF

Assane Diagne.....Economist
 Matt Freeman.....Economist
 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Tim Griner.....SAFMC
 John Walter.....SEFSC

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

[PAGE 21](#): Motion that, to retain fishery-dependent data, it is the council's desire to avoid a total shutdown of any species, if at all possible. [The motion failed on page 23](#).

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1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened on Monday morning, October 25, 2021,
3 and was called to order by Chairman Dale Diaz.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN DALE DIAZ:** The members on the committee are myself as
10 Chair, Ms. Guyas representing the Reef Fish Committee, Mr.
11 Geeslin representing the Mackerel Committee, and Mr. Schieble
12 representing the Red Drum Committee. The first item on the
13 agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any changes or
14 additions to the agenda? Mr. Gill.

15
16 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not on your
17 committee, and I would like to ask your indulgence to consider
18 adding another item to Other Business, and I would title it
19 fisheries closures, if you would so do. Thank you.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right, Mr. Gill. We'll have a short
22 discussion at the end of the meeting, in Other Business, on
23 fisheries closures. The next item on the -- Any other additions
24 or changes to the agenda? Seeing none, is there any opposition
25 to adopting the agenda? The agenda is adopted as amended.

26
27 Next up is Approval of the October 2020 Minutes. Are there any
28 changes to the minutes? Seeing none, is there any opposition to
29 adopting the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes are adopted.
30 Next up is the Action Guide and Next Steps, and I'm going to ask
31 Mr. Rindone to go over those before each agenda item, and so,
32 Mr. Rindone, can you go over the action guide and next steps for
33 Agenda Item Number IV?

34
35 **SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE SUMMARY OCTOBER 2021 MEETING**
36

37 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Yes, sir. Agenda Item Number IV is a
38 discussion of the SEDAR Steering Committee Report from the
39 October 13 webinar, and Dr. Simmons will talk to you guys about
40 that, and she'll provide an overview of the outcomes from the
41 Steering Committee meeting and the changes that were made to the
42 Gulf's stock assessment schedule, and so you guys should ask
43 questions and provide feedback.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right. Any questions for Mr. Rindone?
46 Seeing none, Dr. Simmons, can you take us through the next
47 agenda item?
48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Yes, and thank you, Mr.
2 Chair. Good morning, everyone. If we pull up Tab I, Number 4,
3 this was a virtual meeting, and I think Dr. John Walter is also
4 on the webinar, on behalf of the Science Center, to help fill in
5 any gaps on this meeting, and it was held on October 13, and
6 this was the summary overview that was given to us during the
7 meeting by the SEDAR staff, in coordination with Dr. Clay Porch,
8 who is the chair, and so the final draft, or the draft report,
9 from this meeting has just come out, and we do not have it
10 posted yet, and so I'm going to use this to go through the
11 meeting materials and items that I want to bring to your
12 attention.

13
14 If we go to page 3, and I'm just going to focus on the Gulf. I
15 am not going to talk about the South Atlantic or the Caribbean
16 or Highly Migratory Species for this.

17
18 We have received the SEDAR 68, the Gulf of Mexico Atlantic scamp
19 report, and we are slated to review that report during our
20 November SSC meeting, and so we'll be working on terms of
21 reference for the operational assessment, and that is the first
22 research track that we have received in the Gulf, and so we're
23 looking forward to taking a look at that, and so that is slated
24 to be reviewed in November.

25
26 We received SEDAR 72, Gulf of Mexico gag grouper, the final
27 report. That report was reviewed during our September SSC
28 meeting, and you will hear tomorrow that the SSC did not get a
29 chance to finish up making their recommendations on gag, and so
30 that is also going to go back to the SSC during their November
31 meeting, and that will come back to the council in January.

32
33 Next was an update on SEDAR 74, the Gulf of Mexico red snapper,
34 and so they held a stock ID process via webinar in November, and
35 we talked about it in 2020 of last year, and they had the stock
36 ID discussion, and then there was a final report, yet there was
37 a supplemental meeting, and I believe that was held on October
38 6, to discuss the catch per unit effort and landings workshop
39 issues in that stock ID report, and that meeting was held, and I
40 think it was successful, and I believe the final report for that
41 stock ID should be coming out soon. I don't know the date of
42 that, but that should be in the works as well.

43
44 I think many folks saw the letter, and we sent a letter
45 regarding the data workshop for red snapper, which is SEDAR 74,
46 and that was originally slated to be held November 1 through 5
47 of this year. Although NMFS staff can still not travel, and the
48 analysts can't travel, and a lot of our other SSC members, and

1 some I think state staff did not want to participate virtually,
2 without having those analysts there, and so we really felt that
3 it was an important enough workshop to try to push it back.

4
5 I think folks are still working on the data deadlines, and we
6 have some webinars that are still going to be held to prepare
7 for that data workshop, but we are moving it to -- We asked to
8 move it to and it's now scheduled for May 2 through 6, in hopes
9 that we'll be able to hold that meeting in-person with all the
10 relevant players, including the Science Center analysts, in-
11 person, and I think we're trying to hold that meeting in a
12 central location as well, and I believe we're looking at
13 Gulfport or Biloxi, Mississippi, I believe is the location that
14 we're looking into, and we're going to work with the SEDAR staff
15 on that. I think I'll stop there for a minute, and see if
16 there's any questions, and I have just a few other things to go
17 through on the report.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Any questions for Dr. Simmons? I am going to
20 make a comment. This SEDAR 74 data workshop is very important,
21 and, like Dr. Simmons mentioned, several people thought that it
22 was critically important to have it in-person. We did discuss,
23 after the last SEDAR Steering Committee, to try to look at where
24 we're at a few months before May and to see if it looks like
25 this thing is going to be doable in person.

26
27 If it's not, we probably are going to have to evaluate whether
28 we're going to have to push forward with meeting virtually, if
29 there's no other option, and so we do have a plan to evaluate
30 this ahead of time and try to make sure that we can move forward
31 with this process. Any questions for Dr. Simmons? Dr. Simmons,
32 you may proceed.

33
34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair,
35 and so the other thing that I just want to kind of bring to
36 everyone's attention, as we're going through the schedule in
37 more detail on the next agenda item, if we go to page 5, the top
38 of page 5, we spent some time talking about, when a research
39 track is complete, how we're going to fit these operational
40 assessments into the schedule.

41
42 I think everyone was thinking that it would just be automatic,
43 and no one was thinking they would really take up time on the
44 schedule and that we would essentially -- The cooperators, the
45 councils, would be required, in coordination with the SSCs, to
46 develop terms of reference for those operational assessments,
47 and so that was discussed during this most recent meeting, and
48 the fact that most of these they are trying to complete within

1 six months, but some of these could take longer, especially for
2 some of the first-time assessments.

3
4 The Science Center and SEDAR staff did bring that to our
5 attention, and so we're going to work through this process
6 together and try to streamline it as much as possible, but we'll
7 get a feel for that in November, when we get the scamp
8 assessment and we develop those terms of reference on how
9 quickly we can streamline this approach and what we can do
10 better in the future, trying to get ahead of how we want to
11 develop these terms of reference for some of these research
12 track assessments.

13
14 We're going to work on that in November, and see what we can do
15 with the staff to make that go as smoothly as possible, so that
16 we can have management advice after a research track.

17
18 If we go to page 6, originally, in 2024, we were thinking about
19 asking for a tilefish complex kind of triage, to determine if --
20 I think it was in 2012 that we attempted a golden tilefish and a
21 blueline tilefish stock assessment, and neither one of those
22 efforts resulted in management advice, and so we were trying to
23 see if we could do some type of reevaluation of the data and any
24 new research that's available, and there's some new data-poor
25 methodology that's been developed, I believe, by the Science
26 Center, and try to see if we could get a usable stock
27 assessment, either for blueline or the golden, and it's now just
28 called tilefish, as one of the higher-landed species.

29
30 For that data triage, we got a letter back from the Science
31 Center that that wasn't going to be possible without a research
32 track, and so you're going to see, on the schedule, on the next
33 agenda item, what we've requested is to consider moving that to
34 2025, and our staff will work to see what is available and work
35 with the Science Center, because we don't want to take up a
36 research track slot for tilefish, and so we'll work on that, and
37 we'll bring what we can to the SSC, and see where we should go
38 from there regarding the tilefish complex.

39
40 You will also see, on the schedule, there is a Gulf shrimp
41 assessment, and Dr. Porch gave us a brief overview on the shrimp
42 working groups, and I believe there's still quite a bit of work
43 to do on two of the working groups, and I believe one of the
44 working groups is the effort monitoring working group, and maybe
45 the other is life history, and I am going to ask Dr. Walter to
46 fill us in on the shrimp working groups and where we are, but
47 that is actually -- You're going to see it on the SEDAR
48 schedule, and I believe it's going to start in 2023, and there

1 is quite a bit of work to be done on the type of modeling
2 environment, I believe, that the Science Center wants to
3 consider for the three penaeid shrimp species that the council
4 is involved with management on, and so those working groups are
5 still not -- Not all of them are completed yet, and so I will
6 see if maybe Dr. Walter can fill us in a little bit more on
7 those shrimp working groups and that 2023 schedule for penaeid
8 shrimp.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Dr. Walter, are you online?

11
12 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** I am online, and I am getting information on
13 where the shrimp working groups are. If you can stand by, I can
14 give you a real succinct answer, maybe even in writing. Thanks.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Okay. We'll do that, Dr. Walter. Just jump
17 back in whenever you're ready. Thank you.

18
19 **DR. WALTER:** Okay. Thanks.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Okay. The next item, we did
22 talk about, and this wasn't specifically in the report, but we
23 did bring up the NOAA white paper for best practices on
24 integration for the recreational data indices, and we just
25 talked a little bit about perhaps asking the Science Center and
26 the Regional Office to give us an update on where we are in that
27 process for that white paper with Science and Technology and
28 perhaps a better way that we could look at streamlining those
29 recreational indices from the MRIP-FES and then the supplemental
30 surveys, now that the methodology has been approved for
31 calibration and how we're going to work through that in the
32 future.

33
34 After some discussion on that, and then talking about the
35 schedule, it did spur some changes in the red grouper terms of
36 reference for the operational assessment, and so we're working
37 on those, and we'll have those tied up here soon, I believe, to
38 provide back to SEDAR. We're going to look to work with the
39 agency divisions on where to go with that, I believe in the
40 coming SEDAR meetings. The final items that we discussed -- I'm
41 sorry.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Ms. Guyas.

44
45 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** Thanks. Sorry. It was on that item, and so,
46 if you're done with it, Carrie, then I will -- If you're not
47 done, you can go. Okay. I just wanted to flag this
48 conversation a little bit more that happened at the SEDAR

1 Steering Committee, because I heard some things that were a
2 little bit concerning, one of which was some, I guess -- Well, I
3 guess the statement was that there was concern that the state
4 surveys that are being used for the Gulf may never be able to be
5 used in stock assessments.

6
7 That was pretty disappointing to me, and there was some
8 discussion about having a topical working group, maybe, for each
9 assessment, to try to figure this out, and I would just -- We're
10 going to get into this a lot this week, and this has been an
11 issue with gag, but I would just encourage that the Science
12 Center and others involved in this process think about a
13 different way to streamline this.

14
15 Again, we'll get into this this week, but, at least for Florida,
16 we have our State Reef Fish Survey that provides more precise
17 data for thirteen reef fish species, and a number of those are
18 Florida-centric species, like gag and red grouper, and this has
19 come up at an SSC meeting before also, a discussion about,
20 rather than piecemeal and have a topical working group every
21 time we have a stock assessment for something, figuring out what
22 are the procedures, just in general, for Florida-centric things
23 for using the State Reef Fish Survey in assessments.

24
25 It sounds like the SEDAR process may not be the fastest way to
26 go about doing that, and maybe that happens through the Gulf
27 transition team that I know that Richard Cody has been working
28 on, but we need to figure this out, and we have a dataset that's
29 going to be pretty valuable to us that we need to consider, and
30 then, at the same time, we also need to figure out how we're
31 going to do this when we have multiple state surveys in play for
32 species that span more of the Gulf, and I know the -- We'll be
33 getting into that, I guess, with SEDAR 74, because that's part
34 of, I guess, one of the -- I don't know if it's a workshop ahead
35 of the workshop or if that will be part of the May meeting, the
36 data workshop, but -- Okay. That's for the data workshop, but I
37 just wanted to flag that, because I feel like this is a really
38 important issue that the council needs to be aware of.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Ms. Guyas. I agree. Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I wish Clay was here to speak to this, and
43 so I will try to speak to the issues, and so, one, I agree with
44 Martha that we need to figure this out, right, and I think we
45 all can agree to that, and we do have some work underway with
46 Science and Technology, and Richard Cody and Evan Howell are
47 here this week, and they are working on a planning meeting for
48 November, followed by a state workshop in January.

1
2 I think it would be a great idea to encompass this within the
3 terms of reference, and that, I think, will be a discussion
4 point. I know, when we laid out the path forward for these
5 state surveys, and we talked about certification, which has
6 happened, and we talked about calibration, which has at least
7 happened with red snapper, and we're getting clarity around
8 that, and we also have, as part of the process, the transition
9 plan, but I think the key component, for me, is that this can't
10 just be like a single species, and we can't just be driven by
11 gag.

12
13 Gag is, obviously, kind of the species of the day, but we need
14 an overall, encompassing plan as to how we're going to include
15 these state surveys as part of the stock assessment process, and
16 so I think we're in agreement, in terms of that, but it's just a
17 matter of how do we get there and getting that plan formulated
18 quickly.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Any further discussion? Dr. Simmons.

21
22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Chair, there were two Other
23 Business items that were discussed, and so SEDAR has some
24 remaining travel funds, and you can see that on the top of page
25 7, and so they're just -- Those are going to remain there, I
26 believe, and they're estimating that, in 2022, there also will
27 be some remaining travel funds, depending on, I guess, what
28 occurs in 2022 regarding travel and in-person meetings, but we
29 did receive an update on that during the SEDAR Steering
30 Committee meeting.

31
32 Then the final item that was discussed was the fishery-
33 independent indices procedural workshop, with the in-person
34 workshop options, and that was slated for January of 2022, and,
35 again, because NMFS staff is unable to participate in-person,
36 and many of the state folks really felt the need to have this
37 meeting in-person as well, it was rescheduled to April 19
38 through 21 of 2022. That concludes my report.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Ms. Bosarge.

41
42 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not on your
43 committee, and I appreciate you entertaining my thoughts, and so
44 just a couple of things that kind of jumped out at me. That
45 SEDAR 77 HMS for hammerhead sharks data workshop that's coming
46 up in December, and so I want to say, in the Gulf, we only have
47 like twenty-five or thirty permitted fishermen these days for
48 the shark fishery, and so it's just a handful, and I just wanted

1 to make sure that maybe we could send that notice, that email
2 notice, out to them, in case they want to listen in and maybe
3 have some feedback for us, and I think that's important in those
4 types of fisheries.

5
6 Then, also, will we be sending out the Something's Fishy tool to
7 all of our stakeholders in general on that, to see if we can
8 garner some feedback, and not necessarily before that meeting,
9 but before that assessment itself, right, because that's one of
10 the things that we kind of talked to HMS about doing when they
11 have presented to us in the past.

12
13 You know, a lot of their feedback was, again, they were getting
14 these comments from the fishermen about the abundance of sharks
15 and things like that, but that's not all that helpful to them
16 unless we can delineate, really kind of by species, what type of
17 fishermen are seeing them, where in the Gulf they may be seeing
18 that, and give them some more color to those interactions, and
19 so I'm hoping that we'll be able to send out our Something's
20 Fishy tool and get some feedback from our fishermen that would
21 be anecdotal in nature, but possibly helpful for those
22 scientists. Then I had one other thing, but I will wait for a
23 second.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Dr. Simmons.

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we
28 can certainly do the first request, and we'll have to get with
29 you on getting those fishermen's contact information and then
30 sharing that with Dr. Neer to ensure that they are emailed about
31 that workshop, and it's in-person, but I assume they're going to
32 have a virtual option as well, but I don't know all the details
33 of that, and, Ryan, I don't know if you have any more, but we
34 could get some clarification by Full Council on that, and so I
35 think that's easy enough.

36
37 Regarding the item the council had requested us to work with
38 HMS, regarding the Something's Fishy tool, we have been unable,
39 really, to connect with HMS folks to get a clear grasp on how
40 that tool could be used and if they do in fact wish for us to
41 use that, and so, no, we do not currently have plans to send
42 this out prior to the stock assessment, until we get more
43 feedback from HMS staff.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Go ahead, Ms. Bosarge.

46
47 **MS. BOSARGE:** I think they're going to talk to us later today,
48 and so I will definitely ask them about that, because I can't

1 see where they would want to turn down any information that
2 fishermen may have. I mean, that's a vital part of this whole
3 scientific process, is that feedback loop, and so I will get
4 with them on that later today.

5
6 Then the only other comment that I was going to make was on the
7 -- I think Dr. Walter said that he would get back with us on
8 where some of those working groups were for the research track
9 on shrimp, and you mentioned some other models, and I do
10 remember that being a discussion in some of the working groups
11 that I participated in.

12
13 However, I thought I remembered the discussion being more of we
14 think these models that we have are working well, and we would
15 like to explore other models, almost in the sense of, and this
16 might not be the right term for it, but more like a sensitivity
17 run, to see how other models stack up against what we're seeing
18 out of the models that we currently have and not necessarily
19 this idea of the next time that we run the assessment it will be
20 -- It was more it will be in the model it's traditionally been
21 in with some analysis, side-by-side, looking at a different
22 model, to see how that may incorporate different parameters,
23 environmental and such, but we'll get more feedback from Dr.
24 Walter on that. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Okay. That's it for you, right? All right.
27 Dr. Walter, are you ready?

28
29 **DR. WALTER:** I can just go over the status of the four working
30 groups, and we have four shrimp working groups, and the first
31 one is the shrimp fishery effort estimation working group, and
32 this one is on hold. Mainly, it's waiting for how we're going
33 to kind of move forward, which was really the topic of the focus
34 group last week, and I think all the efforts that we're making
35 to move forward with the next process for collecting the data.
36 I am optimistic that we'll find a good solution there.

37
38 Then the indices working group, the report is complete from that
39 one, and so that one is actually completed and ended, and the
40 SEAMAP survey was determined to be a representative index of
41 abundance by the working group participants, for brown and white
42 shrimp in particular, and some best practices were recommended
43 in the final document, and I did send that to staff, and it can
44 be posted.

45
46 We'll be turning that document into a full NOAA technical report
47 very soon, and the group is also exploring some other types of
48 advanced modeling and concluding some spatial and temporal model

1 evaluations and some empirical dynamic modeling that might be
2 able to use these indices in some sort of a management procedure
3 for shrimp, so that we could actually be more responsive, in the
4 shrimp fishery, when we set our ACLs and ABCs, rather than have
5 a full stock assessment and a projection forward. Since the
6 indices are really our primary information for shrimp, that
7 might --

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Is there any questions
10 for Dr. Walter? Dr. Simmons.

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, John, for that update.
13 I think I brought this up during the Steering Committee, but, on
14 the first item, in the first working group, the shrimp fishery
15 effort estimation working group, being on hold, it seems to me
16 that the council document that's being worked on is really --
17 Regardless of whether P-Sea WindPlot or some other cellular
18 format is used, the type of data that would be obtained is going
19 to be the same, the ten-minute pings, and so I'm not sure I
20 quite understand why we would not complete work on that effort
21 and move forward with trying to conduct some type of stock
22 assessment.

23
24 **DR. WALTER:** Okay. Did people -- I think I'm having some audio-
25 visual challenges here. Can people hear me?

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** We can hear you, Dr. Walter.

28
29 **DR. WALTER:** Okay, because I didn't go into the other two
30 groups, and so the question, I think, was whether we would
31 conduct stock assessments, and I'm assuming for shrimp, is the
32 question?

33
34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Correct. For shrimp.

35
36 **DR. WALTER:** Okay. The reason being that we think a stock
37 assessment is not going to be the solution for shrimp and that
38 we would like to move to something that is more like an interim
39 analysis for management procedure, and we can discuss that more,
40 but just spinning up a full Stock Synthesis model for something
41 that is likely to be very short-lived, and potentially
42 environmentally-driven, is a whole lot of overhead for how we
43 would be giving advice for something that is pretty short-lived,
44 and so we're looking at some other options there.

45
46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, John. I think
47 what we were trying to ask is why couldn't the effort estimation
48 working group complete their efforts, because the document the

1 council is working on is assuming they would collect the same
2 type of information, regardless of the platform that's finally
3 decided on by the agency, and how come they cannot complete
4 their efforts, currently?

5
6 **DR. WALTER:** Presumably it could, but we've kind of only made a
7 little bit of progress on shrimp effort, on the next process,
8 and I think it was only last week that we kind of got to that,
9 and so I think the reason the group was kind of on hold was it
10 wasn't clear what was going to be collected, and I don't think
11 it was that useful for them to meet necessarily knowing.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Ms. Bosarge.

14
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** Maybe, Dr. Simmons, what might be helpful, because
16 it seems like there's a couple of moving parts here for shrimp,
17 is if maybe we could set up a call specific to that upcoming
18 shrimp assessment, the research track, and I'm not sure what
19 it's titled these days, and maybe get a good feel back and forth
20 between staff and the Science Center on where we're at on each
21 one of those and what our game plan is moving forward and what
22 our timeline looks like, and I think that probably would be
23 better, and I don't know if we can rectify it right here right
24 now, but a call would probably be a good path forward.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right. I think we're done with this agenda
27 item. Any further discussion or comments for this agenda item?
28 Seeing none, Mr. Rindone, will you take us through the action
29 guide and next steps for the next item?

30
31 **GULF SEDAR STOCK ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE**

32
33 **MR. RINDONE:** Of course. Item Number V is the SEDAR assessment
34 schedule, and this is specific to the Gulf, and I will walk you
35 guys through this, and we'll look at some of the changes that
36 were made at the Steering Committee and talk about priorities
37 for 2025 and 2026.

38
39 A consideration is that multiple research track assessments
40 should not be done at the same time, and this creates a very
41 taxing environment on the data provision, especially the data
42 provision, folks at the Science Center, and so we need to be
43 tactful in our thinking about the timing of these assessments,
44 even though we have certain things stacking up, and so if we can
45 pull up the schedule.

46
47 For 2021, the SSC, as Dr. Simmons noted, is currently in its
48 review of gag, and they're going to look at projections again at

1 their meeting. The SSC will review the scamp research track
2 assessment also in November, and will drum up those terms of
3 reference for the subsequent operational assessment, which will
4 yield management advice, and that's scheduled to start in
5 January of 2022.

6
7 Then we have the red snapper research track going on through
8 2023, and, at the end of this year, FWC is scheduled to start
9 work on the mutton snapper benchmark assessment.

10
11 In 2022, we also have operational assessments of Spanish
12 mackerel, which we haven't done in a very long time, and gray
13 snapper is scheduled to be completed, and the FWC assessment of
14 mutton snapper is also expected to be completed during that
15 time.

16
17 If we move on down to 2023, the red snapper research track
18 assessment should be completed, and the operational assessment
19 should start up immediately following that, and then we have an
20 operational assessment of yellowedge grouper, which we also
21 haven't done in a very long time, and FWC will begin work on a
22 benchmark assessment of west Florida hogfish.

23
24 Going into 2024, and, again, this is in the accepted stage right
25 now, and this means that we've submitted scopes of work for
26 these species, and so we're just at a point where, once we get
27 the finalized terms of reference, then these things are pretty
28 well locked in at that point, and so 2024 is not a window that
29 the council should be looking at changes, except for in
30 emergencies.

31
32 We have a research track starting for gray triggerfish, which
33 the council specifically requested, and then operational
34 assessments for red grouper and vermilion snapper, and we moved
35 up the cobia operational assessment into a slot previously
36 occupied by tilefish, for the reasons that Dr. Simmons talked
37 about previously, and so trying to take advantage of the spots
38 that we have.

39
40 For 2025 and 2026, we have a continuation of the gray
41 triggerfish research track assessment, but we have a couple of
42 other research tracks that the council needs to provide some
43 feedback about what it wants to prioritize here, and so we have
44 an operational assessment for lane snapper, since we started
45 incorporating lane snapper into the schedule a little bit more
46 regularly, and then we have a research track here listed for
47 gag.

48

1 We also have a research track listed for greater amberjack, and
2 then the operational assessment for king mackerel. King
3 mackerel is usually done by the Highly Migratory Species
4 Division, and so we can kind of put that one off to the side,
5 figuratively, but the decisions that need to be made here mostly
6 have to do with these research track assessments, and we'll have
7 already started the gray triggerfish one, and so the council
8 will need to think about which, between gag and greater
9 amberjack, it would like to prioritize, understanding it's
10 likely that that research track assessment could not begin until
11 the end of 2025, at the earliest, to provide time for the
12 research track for gray triggerfish to wrap up.

13
14 We also have an assessment for black grouper that we're going to
15 try again, and you may remember that, the last time we tried to
16 assess black grouper, one of the big issues with the data was
17 the misidentification of black and gag grouper, which is
18 prevalent in the gag assessment as well, but, due to the scale
19 of the landings and the amount of misidentification, it's a much
20 bigger problem for black grouper than it is for gag, and there's
21 a correction factor that is applied to the gag assessment that
22 pretty much takes care of that, but we have been still trying to
23 work this out for black grouper, and so the idea is that, by
24 2025, significant progress should have been made. I will stop
25 there, Mr. Chair, and talk about 2025 before we go further.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Do we have questions or comments for Ryan at
28 this point?

29
30 **MR. RINDONE:** We definitely cannot have three research tracks
31 listed for one year, and so that needs some --

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right. Any feedback that the council has at
34 this point would be appreciated, and the really tough thing
35 that's boxed us in right now is, as we sit here in 2021, I think
36 I could make a pretty good case that both gag and greater
37 amberjack are very important species that we know are having
38 some issues right now and definitely need a lot of attention.

39
40 It's just the way the planning process works out that you have
41 to get lined up so far in advance to make these decisions, and
42 it's just one of the things that you have to do. Any questions
43 or comments? Ms. Bosarge.

44
45 **MS. BOSARGE:** I am just wondering, and, tomorrow, I believe it
46 is, and we have Reef Fish tomorrow, right? Take things one day
47 at a time, and, all right, and so we're going to talk about gag
48 and greater amberjack tomorrow, the current assessments, right,

1 that we're just getting back.

2
3 It really does make it hard for me to give any feedback on that
4 2025 until I really hear those in-depth presentations, and will
5 we be able to revisit this a little bit and give Ryan and staff
6 some feedback tomorrow, because those are both, it seems like,
7 maybe problem areas for us.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** I actually think that's a really good
10 suggestion, and it would probably be good, when we go through
11 the report at Full Council, and we'll have had the benefit of
12 discussing both of those in Reef Fish, and it will probably be a
13 lot better time to do that. Why don't we hold the discussion on
14 the 2025 proposed until then? Ms. Guyas.

15
16 **MS. GUYAS:** I am fine with that, and just some things to think
17 about when we go into that discussion, and so I remember, from
18 gag, that I think there was a recommendation to do a research
19 track next, specifically, and I can't remember with amberjack,
20 and there were some data pieces that they weren't able to
21 incorporate, I think, and just wanted to take a fresh look at
22 some things, and so it might be good to just review the
23 recommendations coming out of both assessments.

24
25 Then, for the amberjack count project that's going on, the
26 timeline for that and just making sure that that's going to be
27 signed, sealed, delivered, and ready for consideration for this,
28 whenever it comes back, and so we don't have to answer those
29 things now, but just think about it, and I'm planting some
30 seeds.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Ms. Guyas. Any further discussion?
33 All right. Then we're going to have a little bit more
34 discussion at Full Council at this item. Seeing no more on this
35 item, Mr. Rindone, do you have anything else on this agenda
36 item?

37
38 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, sir. Just looking at 2026 also, just so that
39 you guys are kind of mulling this around in your minds, whatever
40 research track starts in 2025 is expected to carry through 2026,
41 and we also have the operational assessment for gray triggerfish
42 that will follow that research track and then conclude in 2025,
43 and we also have the data-poor assessment for tilefish
44 tentatively listed there, and we will be looking at the data
45 that are available for the three tilefish species, and that will
46 allow the council to try to figure out what's available, and has
47 anything changed since SEDAR 22, and how best to work with the
48 Science Center to move forward on that.

1
2 Then, lastly, FWC -- We went ahead and put down a regular
3 standard assessment for yellowtail snapper, to be done by FWC,
4 and it's so far out at this point that we don't have start dates
5 scheduled for that, and so the actual start date and the
6 terminal year -- Those things might change as we get closer to,
7 but, at that point, the yellowtail snapper assessment will be
8 almost eight years old.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Any questions for Mr. Rindone? Ms. Bosarge.

11
12 **MS. BOSARGE:** Last comment, I promise. I remember getting an
13 email, and I don't know if it was from staff or from NMFS, about
14 a closure that we had on some species that we very rarely talk
15 about, some snapper species, and it was maybe queen, and this is
16 how rarely we talk about them, and I'm having trouble
17 remembering what the species were, but queen maybe, and
18 something else, Florida-centric species, I believe.

19
20 I was just wondering, and not to say that those -- You know, I
21 am not going to propose that those need to be put on this
22 schedule, per se, but are we going to look into that a little
23 bit? I know there was some conversation during the SSC meeting
24 about it, and let's maybe look first at, you know, it's a small
25 fishery, and was there maybe very few intercepts that we had
26 that we were dealing with that got extrapolated and caused a
27 spike, and let's look that first, before we jump into putting it
28 on the schedule, but will we be getting an update on that at a
29 future meeting?

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Mr. Strelcheck.

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Leann, and so I think you're referring
34 to midwater snapper, and you might also be referring to lane
35 snapper, and so, tomorrow, during the Reef Fish Committee, we
36 will be giving our normal landings update for reef fish, and
37 we're prepared to talk about a number of the recent closures,
38 including the midwater snapper closure.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Thank you, Ms.
41 Bosarge. Mr. Anson.

42
43 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you. I was just wondering if there was
44 any discussion about the timing of the red snapper assessments
45 in relationship to the change in the data workshop schedule, and
46 the data workshop has now been pushed back six months, but there
47 was no change in the timeline from the 2020 update that was
48 provided to this one, and so I'm just wondering if that is

1 evaluated fully and the dates are still on track, as they are
2 listed here?

3
4 **MR. RINDONE:** These dates get modified frequently,
5 unfortunately, and so this document very much has a pulse, and
6 it changes probably seven or eight times a year, as we figure
7 out how certain things are having to be moved, especially during
8 COVID and certain delays in trying to accommodate in-person
9 attendance, like we are for the data workshop for red snapper.

10
11 The current due dates for all of the data deadlines and
12 everything haven't changed, just because a lot of people were
13 already working on those, and they were already aiming for those
14 deadlines, and it never hurts to get the data in ahead of time,
15 and so it's often, by the time we get to the data workshop, as
16 Matt Smith is putting together the presentation for the
17 graveyard of missed deadlines, that it can often delay getting
18 progress made in the data workshop, and so it's definitely an
19 advantage to the process to have that stuff done as far in
20 advance as possible.

21
22 This document does change frequently, and I wouldn't be too
23 married to the actual start and end dates in the right-most
24 column, and I would be paying more attention, were I you guys,
25 to the terminal year and the endpoint of the state of nature for
26 that assessment and what we're actually assessing when, so that
27 the council can better prioritize knowing that it has the right
28 information it needs to proceed with any anticipated needs.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right. I am not seeing any more hands.
31 Ryan, does that conclude your presentation? Okay. I am not
32 seeing any more discussion. We have one item under Other
33 Business. Mr. Gill.

34
35 **OTHER BUSINESS**
36

37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not on your committee,
38 and I appreciate this opportunity to inject something that is of
39 common interest, and your discussion relative to gag and the
40 closures is a wonderful segue into what I wanted to discuss,
41 because it's gag that gave rise to my thinking on this subject.

42
43 When I was the liaison to the last South Atlantic Council
44 meeting, they have got a gag problem, and, based on the recent
45 discussions at the SSC and the SEDAR Steering Committee, our gag
46 is coming up with a similar problem, and I think one of the
47 difficulties that I see is we're facing fisheries closures, and
48 I would submit that that's absolutely the last thing that should

1 be done, if it's at possible to avoid.

2
3 Part of the problem is, in my mind anyway, is the mindset with
4 which we approach it, and I think what is needed, to start to
5 change that mindset, and I am suggesting changing the mindset
6 from the agency, the Center, SERO, the SEDAR Steering Committee,
7 the SSC, APs, and this council on how we view potential closures
8 of a fishery.

9
10 Any fishery closure has major consequences, and the loss of the
11 fishery-dependent data makes subsequent consideration of
12 reopening much more difficult, and much more problematic, not to
13 mention the socioeconomic costs that are huge, and so I'm of the
14 mode that says we ought to bend over backwards to avoid such a
15 situation, but what we tend to is we take the input and data and
16 say we don't like this, but this is what we've got to do, but we
17 don't go the last mile to try and figure out a way around it or
18 how we can minimize it.

19
20 I would think that the best step for this council is to take
21 that first step and go on record and say that we believe that a
22 fishery closure is the last thing that ought to be done and
23 avoided at all possible costs, if possible, and I would hope
24 that someone on this committee would make such a motion to start
25 that discussion and carry that forth, so that we can start to
26 change the mindset on avoiding what I view as a disaster. Thank
27 you, Mr. Chairman.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Gill. Ms. Guyas.

30
31 **MS. GUYAS:** I will bite on that, and so, once again, we'll get
32 into this tomorrow, specifically with gag, but so the SSC, as
33 they were looking at projections with gag, and cut to, I guess,
34 the preview for tomorrow, and, I mean, we're potentially looking
35 at -- At least I think it's going to be an option that we have
36 to completely shut down that fishery, because it looks like
37 we're in the ten-year rebuilding timeframe under Magnuson, in
38 which case one of the options we'll probably have to look at is
39 F equals zero, and I completely agree with Bob.

40
41 I think the SSC had this discussion as well, how can we avoid
42 this, and I feel like it is a very bad situation, where we would
43 have to shut something down and lose that data stream, or data
44 streams, really, because the fishery-dependent data are so
45 important for these assessments.

46
47 I mean, this council is less familiar with it, but, on the
48 Atlantic side, this is the problem that they've had with

1 Atlantic red snapper, and they're kind of stuck in this rut,
2 where they can have these mini-seasons, but it's very, very
3 challenging, and so I will try to tee-up a motion here for
4 staff, and it will be short, and so I'm going to read it out
5 loud.

6
7 **My motion would be, to retain fishery-dependent data, it is the**
8 **council's desire to avoid a total shutdown of any species, if at**
9 **all possible.** You're welcome to massage it there, but I think
10 this kind of gets to the sentiment of what Mr. Gill was talking
11 about, and I certainly agree with him.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** All right. We have a committee motion. Does
14 that read the way that you would like it to read, Ms. Guyas?

15
16 **MS. GUYAS:** Yes.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Is there a second for the motion?

19
20 **MR. ANSON:** I will second it for discussion.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** The committee is only four people. It's Mr.
23 Schieble, Mr. Geeslin, myself, and Martha. I will second the
24 motion, for discussion. Ms. Guyas, discussion? Mr. Dyskow.

25
26 **MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bob, I think you've
27 done a great job of articulating the issue that we want to
28 address, and I think the motion that Martha has communicated
29 looks like it could address that, but I would like to ask a few
30 questions, and, specifically, how would you do that? What are
31 some of the steps that we would take, or envision, that could be
32 moved forward, based on this motion? Thank you.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Ms. Guyas.

35
36 **MS. GUYAS:** Well, I think, in the case of gag, the SSC seems to
37 be doing this, but I think, really, the intent here is to just
38 send a message to SEDAR, the SSC, and others involved in the
39 assessment process and projections that we need to find a way to
40 keep things open, where we can.

41
42 I mean, we have restrictions, based on Magnuson, but we need to
43 exhaust all options, and we need to make sure we keep things
44 open, if we can, and that's basically it, and so maybe this
45 gives them a little bit of cover, and it helps them maybe
46 understand where the council is on this, and that's really just
47 the intent here.

48

1 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, and I had one other comment, and I'm not
2 on this committee, but I am a representative for the State of
3 Florida, and I know that Florida has a significant dataset on
4 this species, and are we looking at that information to
5 supplement the information that exists within NMFS, or is that
6 not a good question to ask? I see you kind of smirking at me
7 like I'm bringing up something maybe that's not relevant.
8

9 **MS. GUYAS:** I think that's a fine question to ask, but it's
10 probably a separate conversation to this. I would like them to
11 include that information, but we are only halfway there at this
12 point, I would say.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** I would note that this motion here is generic,
15 and it's for any species. Mr. Gill, and then we're going to try
16 to move on, because we're behind, and we've got another
17 committee that has got a lot of stuff. Mr. Gill.
18

19 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I'm not on your
20 committee, and, to add to what Martha mentioned, in relation to
21 Mr. Dyskow's question, it seems to me that there is a fair
22 amount, and, while this doesn't direct any action, in my mind,
23 things like when the Science Center does an assessment on a
24 species and comes up with dire results, then they can start
25 thinking in terms of information they can bring to the SSC that
26 would help the SSC address that question, because, ultimately,
27 at the end of the day, the SSC is going to give us an ABC, and,
28 if it's zero, there is no movement.
29

30 One of the questions that comes to my mind, and I am certainly
31 not the smartest guy in the room, is what's the minimum data
32 that is required for that fishery, in order to avoid it, and is
33 there a way to devise a plan, from a scientific basis, that the
34 SSC could recommend, and, at the end of the day, the council has
35 to deal with whatever the SSC gives us, but we've got to start
36 the process early, to have that discussion and bring as much
37 information to the table, so you can get to an answer, the best
38 answer we can get, all along the line. Thank you.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Go ahead, Dr. Frazer.
41

42 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To that point, and the
43 one that Martha made earlier, that the SSC needs to provide a
44 suite of alternatives, and, oftentimes, we do just get one piece
45 of information, and this is your catch advice, and so I would
46 really like to see the SSC explore alternatives and provide some
47 background and rationale to the council for what might happen if
48 we pursue one of those different alternatives, and that may

1 require a little more direction on our part to the SSC moving
2 forward, but I'm happy to make that change as well.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. All right. We've had a
5 fair amount of discussion on this, and so I'm going to bring
6 this up for a vote. **All in favor of the motion on the board,**
7 **raise your hands. The motion fails by a tie vote.**

8
9 All right. Any other business to come before this committee? I
10 am not seeing any, and thank you for bringing that up, Mr. Gill.
11 It was a good discussion to have. That is going to conclude our
12 SEDAR Committee for today. Did you have anything else, Mr.
13 Rindone or Dr. Simmons?

14
15 Well, let me double-check that. Did everybody understand who
16 was voting on that last vote? It's Mr. Schieble, Mr. Geeslin,
17 Ms. Guyas, and myself were the four people on the committee.
18 Everybody understands? Okay. That is going to conclude the
19 committee. We're going to move right into the Sustainable
20 Fisheries Committee, and Dr. Stunz is the new chair of that
21 committee. Dr. Stunz, if you would. Wait. Hold on one second.
22 Mr. Dyskow.

23
24 **MR. DYSKOW:** To that last point, before we leave it, as a point
25 of order, could this motion be reintroduced before the Full
26 Council, simply because you have such a small population on this
27 committee, and you're not getting a true representation of the
28 council's potential, you know, wishes, and so can a failed
29 motion be reintroduced before Full Council? I am getting a yes.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Yes.

32
33 **MR. DYSKOW:** Okay. Thank you. Sorry to be so disruptive.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** It could be brought up and discussed at Full
36 Council. Thank you, Mr. Dyskow.

37
38 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 25, 2021.)

39
40

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