

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2  
3 GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

4  
5  
6 Grand Hotel Marriott Point Clear, Alabama

7  
8 January 28, 2015

9  
10 **VOTING MEMBERS**

11 Kevin Anson.....Alabama  
12 Pamela Dana.....Florida  
13 Harlon Pearce.....Louisiana  
14 Robin Riechers.....Texas

15  
16 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

17 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi  
18 Martha Bademan (designee for Nick Wiley).....Florida  
19 Doug Boyd.....Texas  
20 Jason Brand.....USCG  
21 Glenn Constant.....USFWS  
22 Roy Crabtree.....NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida  
23 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
24 Myron Fischer (designee for Randy Pausina).....Louisiana  
25 John Greene.....Alabama  
26 Kelly Lucas.....Mississippi  
27 Campo Matens.....Louisiana  
28 Corky Perret.....Mississippi  
29 John Sanchez.....Florida  
30 Greg Stunz.....Texas  
31 David Walker.....Alabama  
32 Roy Williams.....Florida

33  
34 **STAFF**

35 Stephen Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist  
36 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
37 John Froeschke.....Fishery Biologist  
38 Doug Gregory.....Executive Director  
39 Karen Hoak.....Administrative and Financial Assistant  
40 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist  
41 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
42 Charlene Ponce.....Public Information Officer  
43 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
44 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
45 Charlotte Schiaffo.....Research & Human Resource Librarian

46  
47 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

48 Pam Anderson.....Panama City, FL

1 Billy Archer.....Seminole Wind, Panama City, FL  
 2 Jeff Barger.....Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX  
 3 Randy Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL  
 4 Zack Bowen.....SAFMC  
 5 Steve Branstetter.....NMFS  
 6 John Braswell.....Daphne, AL  
 7 Jim Clements.....Carrabelle, FL  
 8 Cliff Cox.....Destin, FL  
 9 David Dekle.....Wilmer, AL  
 10 Dewey Destin.....Destin, FL  
 11 Michael Drexler.....St. Petersburg, FL  
 12 Tracy Dunn.....NOAA OLE  
 13 Maurice Fitzsimmons.....Daphne, AL  
 14 Troy Frady.....Orange Beach, AL  
 15 Jack Gaines.....Dauphin Island, AL  
 16 Roger Griffis.....NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
 17 Scott Hickman.....Galveston, TX  
 18 John Hollingshead.....Pensacola, FL  
 19 Peter Hood.....NMFS  
 20 Gary Jarvis.....DCBA, Destin, FL  
 21 Joe Jewell.....MS  
 22 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA, Marathon, FL  
 23 Eric Mahoney.....Clearwater, FL  
 24 Sharon McBreen.....Pew Environmental Group  
 25 Bart Niquet.....Panama City, FL  
 26 Chris Niquet.....Panama City, FL  
 27 Will Patterson.....GMFMC SSC  
 28 Bonnie Ponwith.....SEFSC  
 29 Tracy Redding.....AL  
 30 Lance Robinson.....TX  
 31 Mike Schirripa.....NMFS SEFSC  
 32 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
 33 Steve Tomeny.....Port Fourchon, LA  
 34 Bill Tucker.....Dunedin, FL  
 35 Russell Underwood.....Panama City, FL  
 36 Wayne Werner.....Alachua, FL  
 37 Debra Wilhite.....Orange Beach, AL  
 38 Jack Wilhite.....Orange Beach, AL  
 39 Daniel Willard.....EDF, Austin, TX  
 40 Johnny Williams.....Alvin, TX  
 41 Carolyn Wood.....Dauphin Island, AL  
 42 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL

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44  
 45 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
 46 Management Council convened at the Grand Hotel Marriott, Point  
 47 Clear, Alabama, Wednesday morning, January 28, 2015, and was  
 48 called to order at 11:19 a.m. by Chairman Kevin Anson.

1  
2 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**  
3 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
4

5 **CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON:** We are going to go into the SEDAR  
6 Committee and so that's Tab F, Number 1. The first item is the  
7 Adoption of the Agenda. First off, the committee members are  
8 myself, Dr. Dana, Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Riechers and everyone is  
9 here at the table. Do I have someone that would move to adopt  
10 the agenda?

11  
12 **DR. PAMELA DANA:** Move to approve.

13  
14 **MR. ROBIN RIECHERS:** Second.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any objections with approving the agenda as  
17 written? Seeing none, we will move on to Item Number II,  
18 Approval of Minutes, Tab F, Number 2. Anybody have any edits to  
19 the minutes? Seeing none, can I get a motion to approve the  
20 minutes?

21  
22 **DR. DANA:** Move to approve.

23  
24 **MR. RIECHERS:** Second.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** It's moved and seconded and any objections?  
27 With no objections, Item Number III is Action Guide and Next  
28 Steps. You will see that and that's basically to review the  
29 SEDAR schedule and discuss the arrangement of the assessment  
30 schedule and so that's going to be helpful for our next item,  
31 which is Number IV. Number IV is Tab F, Number 4, Review of the  
32 SEDAR Schedule. Ryan, are you ready to do that?

33  
34 **SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW**  
35

36 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Yes, sir, and thank you, Mr. Chair.  
37 Obviously we've gone through 2014, which is at the top of that  
38 schedule, and that's Tab F, Number 4. We are moving on into  
39 2015 and we have the assessment workshop for red grouper, which  
40 is being done through a series of five webinars, and we have the  
41 review workshop, which will be completed July 14 through 16 in  
42 Miami.

43  
44 We have a gray triggerfish standard assessment, which is going  
45 to have its data/assessment workshop meeting also in Miami April  
46 21 through 23, and vermilion snapper will start later in the  
47 year, in November. I think it's November 14 through 16 of this  
48 year and that will be also a standard assessment with a combined

1 data/assessment workshop.

2  
3 We have some FWC assessments that are also going to be coming to  
4 us. The mutton snapper assessment should be coming to the SSC  
5 soon and we will have black grouper and goliath grouper standard  
6 assessments coming to the SSC this fall from FWC.

7  
8 2016 and 2017 are years where we need to nail some things down.  
9 The council had decided to move red drum into a data poor  
10 consideration workshop for 2016 and the council might also  
11 consider some other species, with the help of the Science  
12 Center, for that data-poor effort. Then we also have proposed  
13 updates of gag and amberjack and, again, gag was determined by  
14 the SSC, through the assessment, to no longer be overfished or  
15 experiencing overfishing. Amberjack is quite the opposite.

16  
17 For 2017, we have proposed benchmarks for gray snapper, which  
18 has never been assessed, and scamp, which has never been  
19 assessed in the Gulf, and standard assessments for yellowedge  
20 grouper and red snapper and for these proposed assessments, we  
21 can fiddle a little bit with terminal year, but when the  
22 assessment actually takes place is dictated by the terminal  
23 year.

24  
25 If the assessment is in 2016 and you want to use 2015 data, then  
26 the assessment process itself can't start until late August, at  
27 the extreme earliest, and so that results in the assessment  
28 concluding the following year and so that's just something to  
29 bear in mind when you're considering some of these things.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any comments from members of the  
32 committee?

33  
34 **DR. BONNIE PONWITH:** Best laid plans. These are a -- It's a  
35 good slate of assessments to have on the list and I think the  
36 wrinkle in this plan is a new development that's come up since  
37 the October meeting of the Gulf Council and that was the  
38 discussion of the new methodology that's being initiated in 2015  
39 for the collection of effort data within MRIP.

40  
41 As you all know, the effort data collection is done through the  
42 Coastal Household Telephone Survey and as part of the peer  
43 review that was done in 2006, one of the recommendations was to  
44 revisit that methodology and determine if it was indeed the most  
45 effective way to do that.

46  
47 The results of that evaluation and of some pilot studies that  
48 were done in three different geographic regions showed that of

1 the different methodologies they chose to look at, using a mail  
2 survey represented the strongest methodology for gathering that  
3 effort and just as a refresher, the effort is collected  
4 separately at the end of each of those waves.

5  
6 The question is asked of how many times have you gone saltwater  
7 fishing, how many trips have you made saltwater fishing in the  
8 last two months? Then that represents the effort.

9  
10 The landings information is through dockside intercepts and then  
11 those landings are expanded to the total population that fished  
12 by multiplying that catch per unit effort from the dockside  
13 intercepts by the total effort estimate.

14  
15 The new methodology is being used right now and the use of that  
16 is underway and the notion is to collect those data using the  
17 mail survey at exactly the same time as the MRIP Coastal  
18 Household Telephone Survey continues and, of course, this gets  
19 back to the importance of calibrating them against one another,  
20 so we understand the relationship of the results of one survey  
21 to the other to give it context going forward.

22  
23 The pilot studies have indicated that the numbers that we're  
24 getting from the mail survey are different than what we're  
25 seeing in the method that is currently used, which really puts a  
26 high level of importance on calibration. We can't simply stop  
27 one and then start the other.

28  
29 When we've gathered enough data to study the results of those  
30 side-by-side, the next step is to undergo a calibration study  
31 not dissimilar from the one that we just completed for the new  
32 methodology we put in place for the dockside intercepts and so,  
33 again, the steps are initiate side-by-side surveys, using the  
34 two methodologies. The second step is to calibrate those, so we  
35 understand the relationship of those, and once we're comfortable  
36 with the relationship of those two surveys, ultimately let the  
37 Coastal Household Telephone Survey lapse and then rely, going  
38 forward, on this mail survey.

39  
40 Because that calibration will result in numbers that are in  
41 essentially you could say different units, it's going to be a  
42 different set of numbers and we're going to have to apply those  
43 calibrations going back into the historic record so that, again,  
44 your ACLs map to the same methodology that your data collection  
45 is.

46  
47 Again, that one we, based on the pilot studies, anticipate that  
48 those numbers could be different enough that it will require

1 going back into the stock assessments that we generated using  
2 those effort estimates and then ultimately that influence the  
3 landings estimates, to be able to update those assessments.

4  
5 That's kind of a long explanation for where we stand right now  
6 in the MRIP Program and its potential influence and confluence  
7 with our SEDAR schedule, because right now, with the initiation  
8 of the mail survey, come the end of 2015, we will have a year's  
9 worth of data under our belt.

10  
11 That represents probably the earliest that we could do those  
12 comparisons to be able to build that calibration and make the  
13 update assessments of those stock assessments possible. If the  
14 data are unstable and we need more time to be able to evaluate  
15 the relationship of those two surveys, we would continue and  
16 collect two years' worth of data, running into 2017, or 2015 and  
17 2016, and then do those calibrations and the updates in 2017.

18  
19 At this point, I would just look at Andy Strelcheck and ask him  
20 if he has heard anything that needs to be supplemented or --  
21 That's kind of the overview. That puts us in an odd situation,  
22 where that last assessment that we wanted to do in 2016 was  
23 proposed to focus on red drum and a subset of unassessed stocks,  
24 where we could apply data-poor techniques.

25  
26 The wild-card here is that, I think, remains a very good plan,  
27 but, alternatively, if we do have the data in hand and they are  
28 stable enough to support doing a calibration in 2016, that would  
29 likely trump that and, in fact, that calibration would be -- We  
30 would want to prioritize our stocks based on how influential the  
31 recreational landings are in the total landings for the Gulf and  
32 do those updates in that order.

33  
34 It's even a potential -- There is a potential that that effort  
35 could subsume our ability to do some of those other stock  
36 assessments as well. In other words, it would take potentially  
37 all the hands we have to do those update assessments. I will  
38 stop there and see if there are questions.

39  
40 **MR. RIECHERS:** Bonnie, the bottom line of what you're saying is  
41 you're suggesting, at least based on your last comments, that  
42 the same people that will be doing the assessments are also  
43 going to be doing the calibrations regarding the comparison  
44 between the mail survey and the phone survey and do I understand  
45 that correctly? What I think I heard you say was we may not be  
46 able to do Number 3 or one of the assessments in 2016 because of  
47 the recalibration effort.

48

1 **DR. PONWITH:** The sequence of events are we would have to do a  
2 calibration and the earliest that could happen is 2016. There  
3 would be heavy participation in that calibration from the MRIP  
4 team, but it could not be done without our stock assessment  
5 scientists. Our stock assessment scientists have to be a part  
6 of that, because they understand those data and the relationship  
7 of how those data are used in the stock assessments better than  
8 really anybody and so yes.

9  
10 The answer to your question is yes, they would be involved in  
11 the recalibration and then once the recalibration is done, they  
12 would be heavily involved in leading the charge on those update  
13 stock assessments, to make sure the assessments are in the  
14 correct terms with respect to recreational landings.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thanks for the update, Bonnie. I participate  
17 in the MRIP Transition Team and that's populated primarily by  
18 Science Center staff throughout the country and Regional Office  
19 staff throughout the country and MRIP survey folks and then  
20 state folks are also on there to talk about transition and  
21 transition as we go through different methodologies.

22  
23 The main topic has been the mail survey and the results of the  
24 mail survey and the calibration efforts that would go along with  
25 that in comparison to the prior estimates.

26  
27 One of those topics related to the calibration effort is number  
28 of years to do the side-by-side and then the corresponding  
29 calibration efforts that would be needed, whether you go with a  
30 single year in a calibration or multiple years with either a  
31 follow-up, a final, or a single calibration at the end of the  
32 side-by-side pilot or study period or having multiple  
33 calibration efforts, where you put a lot of resources maybe on  
34 the front end, to get all the process down and the formulae and  
35 everything done with one year's worth of data and then just add  
36 additional data.

37  
38 I am concerned or I expressed concern on these phone calls  
39 relative to a one-year horizon of the side-by-side and I realize  
40 that the agency is forced a little bit by budget and the  
41 constraints that multiple years for this particular methodology  
42 change, because it is quite expensive to maintain the phone call  
43 aspect of data collection on the effort side with running the  
44 mail survey, although the mail survey, as I understand it, is  
45 supposed to be cheaper, but you still have to pay both bills in  
46 the same year.

47  
48 In terms of the risk, I guess, of using one year's worth of

1 data, I am just wondering if you have a sense -- You mentioned  
2 whether or not they seem comparable or can compare with one  
3 another, but we have talked on the phone calls that there is the  
4 chance that your data may be different from year to year and  
5 that if you took just a snapshot of one year's worth of data in  
6 a side-by-side, that may look totally different than maybe a  
7 snapshot of one year's worth of data at some point in the  
8 future.

9  
10 From the perspective of having a better understanding using  
11 multiple years of side-by-side and having those two datasets to  
12 do the comparison, it would be wiser -- I would argue that it  
13 would be wiser, albeit in the face of increased budget needs, to  
14 do the multiple years of side-by-side and then the calibration  
15 that's required would just be done one time.

16  
17 I was just wondering if you have a sense as to what your  
18 thoughts are on that and whether or not you've talked to your  
19 staff about that.

20  
21 **DR. PONWITH:** I hate to make a statement in a vacuum on this,  
22 because I know that that Transition Team -- This has been a  
23 very, very important long and carefully deliberated discussion  
24 and so I think you hit the nail on the head, Mr. Chairman, that  
25 there are tradeoffs and having more years of side-by-side  
26 certainly gives you a higher level of confidence in the  
27 stability of those relationships between those two surveys.

28  
29 The cost is that the decision to go to the mail survey was also  
30 a carefully weighed decision and the reason that we've opted to  
31 do that is that the mail survey dramatically outperforms the  
32 Coastal Household Telephone Survey in its ability to estimate  
33 recreational effort around the coast.

34  
35 There is a tradeoff of waiting to see the stability of these two  
36 surveys side-by-side versus making that transition to what has  
37 been shown through the pilot studies and through the simulations  
38 to be the superior methodology and making that transition as  
39 quickly as is technically prudent.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just a follow-up on that. As it relates to  
42 everything that we deal with, at least from our concerns on the  
43 schedule and, again, trying to look at the resources and just  
44 trying to look at the most efficient way that we would have the  
45 best available data.

46  
47 Granted, as a stand-alone, the mail survey, as you pointed out,  
48 through the pilot studies has shown to be the more efficient



1 means of getting at that portion of the survey, but the  
2 calibration component and the impact, as you stated, to  
3 adjusting prior year estimates, based on the new methodology,  
4 concerns me and that, I think, needs to be a focus within the  
5 agency and certainly through the Transition Team we can talk  
6 about that, but it's just something that the council should be  
7 aware of, too.

8  
9 We will be dealing with these things and we could be dealing  
10 with a couple of instances where you have a preliminary  
11 calibration and then you can have a follow-up calibration that  
12 might influence those numbers even more a different way and so  
13 that's all I wanted to do, is just to talk about that. Robin,  
14 do you have a comment?

15  
16 **MR. RIECHERS:** I am just trying to -- I certainly understand the  
17 notion that we're going to have the calibration and it may  
18 change after year one and it may also change if we get into a  
19 second year of side-by-side and a different calibration is made.

20  
21 I guess I'm kind of a bottom-line person and what I think I hear  
22 Bonnie telling me is we don't get one of our stock assessments  
23 and I'm trying to figure out if that's really what we're saying  
24 here or if we need to delay this discussion until we really know  
25 whether we're going to get that or not. I am trying to figure  
26 out what our purpose regarding bringing the MRIP question into  
27 this SEDAR stock assessment schedule is.

28  
29 **DR. PONWITH:** That's a good question and so for clarity's sake,  
30 the issue -- The Transition Team is grappling with the very  
31 issues that I have raised and that our Chairman has raised and  
32 has experience with, being on the Transition Team.

33  
34 Those discussions continue and they are difficult to have in a  
35 vacuum, because there is a difference between running three  
36 pilot studies and getting those results versus running the  
37 survey at an operational level, which is what they're going to  
38 do starting this year.

39  
40 They are trying to make decisions and have contingency plans  
41 based on what they see when those data start coming in. That  
42 puts us in a position of really having to make our discussions  
43 about our SEDAR schedule in a way that's mindful. I don't want  
44 to wait until we have a year's worth of data and then spring  
45 this on the council.

46  
47 I want to raise it to you now so you're aware that this is  
48 happening in the background and understand what its potential

1 implications are to your 2016 stock assessment schedule, which  
2 would then, of course, have an influence on 2017.

3  
4 At this stage, I am not saying that your schedule is going to  
5 change. What I'm saying is there's a potential that if they opt  
6 to calibrate in 2016 that we'll be ready to do those update  
7 assessments in 2016 and that could change, at least from our  
8 perspective, the priority for those stock assessments.

9  
10 It would be a matter of making sure we understand how those  
11 numbers and the changes in those numbers influence the status of  
12 all of our key stocks in that first year and then move going  
13 forward.

14  
15 There is still the possibility that the team will opt to wait  
16 and get more data. I think what I'm hearing is that that  
17 decision has not been absolutely finalized at this point and so  
18 what seems smart to me right now is to talk about 2016 and talk  
19 about 2017, bearing that potential in mind, so that we  
20 understand what our priorities are in the absence of this  
21 development and what our priorities would be in the event that  
22 we were positioned to do some of these update assessments with  
23 the calibrated MRIP numbers in 2016.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Bonnie, assuming there is no potential for an  
26 MRIP calibration in 2016, would the list that's currently up  
27 there of the three species, would that be what the Science  
28 Center capabilities would be or would we be able to add one? I  
29 know there's an issue with new Science Center staff, stock  
30 assessment staff. They've been hired and so they have this OJT  
31 period that they're going through, a journeyman type of thing.  
32 Is that also imputed? I mean if the MRIP calibration went away,  
33 could we look at four, maybe, species?

34  
35 **DR. PONWITH:** If calibration were not an issue in 2016, this  
36 slate would be what the Center could handle, because we would be  
37 doing updates on gag and updates on greater amberjack and then  
38 doing a data-poor approach on red drum, including some  
39 additional species.

40  
41 I will tell you right now that we had talked about what those  
42 other species would potentially be and my plan was to come to  
43 you with a list of those.

44  
45 The people who run that analysis are also the people who are  
46 doing the red snapper stock assessment and getting those  
47 projections ready for this meeting and so we are behind on that  
48 analysis and for that, I apologize to the council, but what we

1 would like to do is add a cluster of stocks that have not been  
2 assessed that we believe have inadequate data to really lend  
3 themselves to a traditional stock assessment approach, but have  
4 adequate data to lend themselves to this data-poor approach and  
5 group them in with red drum and run a collection. It could be  
6 one or it could be two more or more stocks that we include with  
7 red drum in that data-poor category.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So I understand about the data-poor stocks and  
10 trying to develop the list and that would certainly inform us in  
11 our approval and deliberations for the future, but I am just  
12 wondering if it's decided and I don't know -- Andy, you might --  
13 You're with the agency and as a team member, I am just kind of  
14 supposed to be on the sidelines, I guess. Do you happen to have  
15 an idea as to when the team is going to submit their  
16 recommendations and it goes up the chain and it gets accepted,  
17 if you will, as the best policy going forward to addressing the  
18 calibration within the recreational landings methodologies?

19  
20 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I don't have the sense of timing. You've  
21 been involved in the process like I have and we've been meeting  
22 on a weekly basis now for well over a month. It seems to me,  
23 and correct me if I'm wrong, but we're wrapping up our work at  
24 this point and I would expect our recommendation will be  
25 forthcoming very shortly. Now, how long it takes at that point  
26 for our recommendation to be considered and finalized, I don't  
27 know.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you and I was just trying to get a sense  
30 of that timeline and see if a decision were to be made and it  
31 were to be accepted as the policy relative to the calibration,  
32 it would help us inform when the calibration schedule would be  
33 in relationship to the SEDAR Steering Committee that we have  
34 twice a year as to whether or not, again, the timing of those  
35 two things, whether or not that would be able to inform us of  
36 the direction of 2016 and seeing that you need to get a six-  
37 month to a year out window to inform folks to start looking at  
38 gathering up and processing otoliths and all that stuff and  
39 gathering data and do you have any ideas on that, Bonnie?

40  
41 **DR. PONWITH:** Correct and ideally, under normal circumstances,  
42 this would be the meeting where we would have a definitive idea,  
43 a definitive answer, as to what our final word is for 2016 and  
44 that 2017 would have gelled enough that we could give the  
45 biological sample process folks the heads-up that these are the  
46 stocks that are next in the queue, so we can get those otoliths  
47 cut and those data ready and also so that the SEDAR staff are  
48 equipped to be able to work on the schedule, because that does

1 take a great deal of lead time.  
2  
3 The implications of this uncertainty in the decision making here  
4 in the Gulf Council is that we would, under the best of  
5 circumstances, if we finalized this as the final plan or we were  
6 capable of doing that, the SEDAR Steering Committee could meet  
7 in May and pretty much look at the proposed from each of the  
8 councils and then land on a final decision and get that schedule  
9 put out, so everybody knew what the dates were and knew when the  
10 data due dates were.

11  
12 By not having a definitive answer, it creates the potential for  
13 having to have an interim call and the reason for that is the  
14 SEDAR Steering Committee has a protocol that they've written  
15 into their terms of reference and that is that if a council is  
16 going to make a change in their schedule, but that change has no  
17 influence over any of the other councils' schedule, and that  
18 would include influencing SEDAR staff and those commitments,  
19 that could be done via a meeting that's not face-to-face and via  
20 a telephone call or to get confirmation via email, because that  
21 decision doesn't have an influence over the other councils.

22  
23 My sense is as long as the decisions that we're making are  
24 contained within the scope of our work, the decisions that are  
25 made here are going to be informative in helping the SEDAR  
26 Steering Committee line out what the schedule is going to be for  
27 the next two years. The uncertainty really makes that  
28 challenging.

29  
30 **MR. RIECHERS:** When is you all's SEDAR Steering Committee  
31 meeting coming up?

32  
33 **DR. PONWITH:** We will make a decision on -- We will certainly  
34 meet in May and depending upon how this discussion goes, we may  
35 have to have an interim meeting, which would be scheduled for  
36 probably early March.

37  
38 **MR. RIECHERS:** I guess if you were meeting in May, I am not  
39 certain your interim would be then. I would have thought your  
40 interim would have to have been after your May meeting, before  
41 your next fall meeting. At least that's as I was thinking about  
42 it.

43  
44 I was thinking about, given what Kevin has said and you have  
45 said about the information coming out of MRIP and Andy has  
46 suggested, it seems like we may need to defer this discussion or  
47 -- I mean it's a good discussion and it informs us all of what  
48 may be coming, but to make the decisions, we may not have the

1 information we need to make those decisions today, because if  
2 we're being told we have to cut one off of our list, we may  
3 choose the way the priority ranking is now or we may want to  
4 change that, which is what I think you're asking us to at least  
5 think about.

6  
7 If we don't really know the information about what the MRIP  
8 timetable is going to be and so forth, I am not certain we're in  
9 a place to do that.

10  
11 I would suggest that the terms of reference for SEDAR, since it  
12 was made up by the councils and the people that that process is  
13 serving -- If we need to somehow have a different way to do that  
14 via a phone call or a special meeting or some sort of other  
15 exception, we need to find a way to do that, because that body  
16 is supposed to be serving these councils and not dictating a  
17 procedure that we're wedded to about meeting twice a year and so  
18 forth. That's just my two-cents worth. I am kind of at a loss  
19 to see where we go, other than maybe defer until March and get a  
20 little more info.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes and so I have the same feeling, Robin, and  
23 I thought an interim call or meeting would be held after the May  
24 meeting and certainly by the May meeting we will have a little  
25 bit better direction of the other things that are going to be  
26 impacting the schedule as it is right now and what you've  
27 proposed.

28  
29 That reminds me that you mentioned about the resources when  
30 you're talking about particularly in your Science Center staff  
31 that have to deal with several councils and demands for  
32 assessments, but at one time, and I think it was at the last  
33 SEDAR Steering Committee or SEDAR meeting, you were going to  
34 kind of develop a resource kind of -- How many assessment  
35 scientists you have and what their output is by year and kind of  
36 overlay that with the benchmark, standard, and update  
37 assessment, as far as needs, and that would kind of produce an  
38 output of X number of assessments per year and how that's dolled  
39 and such, but was that going to be included in your June -- I  
40 might be jumping ahead, Bonnie, and is that part of a future  
41 discussion that you're going to be bringing?

42  
43 **DR. PONWITH:** We can talk about that. The SEDAR process is  
44 something that we're going to talk about in full council after  
45 and it is going -- A proposal that we have for when the councils  
46 are together for their joint meeting in June, to have kind of a  
47 SEDAR 101 to refresh everybody's memory on what those terms of  
48 reference look like.

1  
2 They are designed to serve the councils and give the councils  
3 the maximum flexibility to make decisions without encroaching in  
4 another council's share of the pie, but yes, what it takes to  
5 get a stock assessment done is certainly something that can be  
6 brought into that discussion.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just to follow up on one of Robin's points he  
9 made this last time he spoke was he mentioned dropping an  
10 assessment from the schedule and I look at it from the other  
11 point of view, is adding. Again, depending upon the calibration  
12 and timeline.

13  
14 We don't know when that's going to occur as to the policy as to  
15 how they're going to go, but that could occur after our May  
16 meeting and it sounds like, since May is kind of scheduled and  
17 that's typically when the assignments are given and the word  
18 would go out to the various parts of the machine here as to,  
19 hey, you need to be looking out for this species at this  
20 timeline, we could even talk about it again in April and there  
21 might even be some updated information maybe that comes out of  
22 MRIP at that time and we could still probably address this issue  
23 and provide final guidance or direction.

24  
25 **DR. PONWITH:** One thing that I think would be helpful and really  
26 give us a leg up on this discussion and frame this discussion a  
27 little bit better is if this MRIP issue didn't exist or if it  
28 did, but it was scheduled to bubble up later in the process,  
29 looking at the 2016 schedule, is that still your priority  
30 ranking for 2016? Knowing that much is extremely helpful in  
31 building those contingencies.

32  
33 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to give a bit of a recap as to the priority  
34 and why it is where it is, gag was left as the number one  
35 priority for 2016 because of the red tide event that had  
36 happened in 2014 and so it would give the council the ability to  
37 see what impacts had resulted or not resulted from that  
38 environmental event.

39  
40 Greater amberjack, of course, is still in a rebuilding plan and  
41 so keeping a good eye on how that stock is recovering or what  
42 further action needs to be taken to aid its recovery, that made  
43 it the second priority. Then the data-poor assessments fell  
44 into that third slot and that was, of course, under the  
45 presumption of being able to do three assessments.

46  
47 **DR. PONWITH:** What would be helpful is just discussion on that  
48 as the priority and that was what was lined out in the last time

1 around and understanding whether this remains as your priority  
2 of those three would certainly be helpful in a situation where  
3 the MRIP calibration needs were postponed to a later year.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I guess, Bonnie, looking at 2016 and 2017, and  
6 I am just throwing out a hypothetical here, but let's say that  
7 the calibration workshops and all of that discussion won't be  
8 made in 2016, based on the 2015 side-by-side.

9  
10 Is there an opportunity to move up let's say gray snapper, so  
11 that we can at least get that done? Is that a possibility? I  
12 know it might have a play as to what group or groups of data-  
13 poor stocks that you do, but your analysis might show that  
14 there's lots of stocks that could be done or there may only be a  
15 handful and that might allow some room in 2016 and is that a  
16 possibility, to move up gray snapper into 2016?

17  
18 **DR. PONWITH:** I would say at this point moving a benchmark stock  
19 assessment in 2016 would be very, very difficult. I don't think  
20 that would be feasible in addition to the data-poor. One thing  
21 that I can say is that our analysis of those data-poor -- The  
22 laundry list of candidates for a data-poor assessment, it's  
23 conceivable that we would have that analysis done and ready to  
24 share with the council at the same time as your interim meeting  
25 is being scheduled.

26  
27 My sense is that something that could probably be dispatched  
28 fairly quickly if the council is amendable to that. We could  
29 have that list ready and include that as a second small agenda  
30 item on that call. This is just a possibility and then you  
31 would have an opportunity to take a look at those stocks and  
32 know what was coming in for those.

33  
34 Then in terms of the interim SEDAR Steering Committee meeting,  
35 of course the SEDAR Steering Committee exists to manage the fact  
36 that there are multiple councils using that same process. It's  
37 designed to serve the councils and if a decision comes up that  
38 requires the Steering Committee to meet, an interim call can be  
39 scheduled.

40  
41 Our expectation is that once we have absolute clarity on the  
42 timing of this calibration, that would probably trigger a need  
43 for a SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, because it's not just  
44 going to be this council that's impacted by that timing. It  
45 will be the South Atlantic as well.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I don't know and I would like to hear from  
48 other committee members. I am just trying to look at if the

1 chips fall that the calibration is not -- If staff time is not  
2 required for doing a calibration in the 2016 time slot and that  
3 would free up staff time to do an assessment and it would help  
4 us in trying to provide some recommendations or guidance as to  
5 what species we would like, that's what I was kind of looking at  
6 and just seeing if that were a potential.

7  
8 **MR. HARLON PEARCE:** Kevin, I know where you're coming from, but  
9 I also know where Robin is coming from. I don't think we've got  
10 that ability to make that decision today and I think that Bonnie  
11 has heard you very clearly that what you want to do is moving  
12 something up and so we've got to wait for the answers from her  
13 to allow us to do that and so I don't think there's much that we  
14 can do in this committee today, but I think that we've put  
15 Bonnie on notice that we really want to know, for the next  
16 council meeting, that, hey, we want to move something up and  
17 we're not looking to take something off, but we're hoping that  
18 the calibration or whatever she's doing is going to help us do  
19 that.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** That's the comment I was looking for, Harlon,  
22 and I appreciate it. I wanted to get some further comments and  
23 direction to make sure I wasn't going off the deep end. I just  
24 want to ask Doug if that would be something we could include on  
25 the webinar and if, Bonnie, you're saying you can get some  
26 information available and together that we could include and is  
27 that the meeting you were talking about or you were wanting to  
28 wait until the March/April regular meeting?

29  
30 **DR. PONWITH:** Let me just ask for clarification. What you are  
31 asking is can you move something from 2017 into 2016?

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, that's what I was looking at, if there was  
34 the potential. Again, with the information that you would be  
35 able to provide on the analysis of the data and such of these  
36 data-poor stocks and giving some idea as to whether or not --  
37 Again, there may not be data applicable to do data-poor methods  
38 for, but just one or two species and that would require less  
39 staff time, but there may be indications that you can do them on  
40 twelve species and that might fill up that time and that's all  
41 I'm trying to do.

42  
43 **DR. PONWITH:** I hear what you're saying now and what I would say  
44 is that my prognosis for coming up with additional data-poor  
45 stocks that are good candidates for that is good. I think we  
46 are going to be able to do that.

47  
48 I think there are going to be some stocks that will lend



1 themselves to that assessment and even if we weren't swapping a  
2 data-poor assessment, an assessment on a data-poor species or  
3 stock, for a benchmark, it's just not a fair trade. It's not an  
4 equivalent trade.

5  
6 A benchmark stock assessment, which I see two of the top two  
7 candidates in 2017 are benchmark stock assessments, and that is  
8 a very laborious process, because it's a stock that hasn't been  
9 assessed before and would have to go through the full data  
10 workshop to be able to determine what data are available. I  
11 would say at this point, with reasonable assuredness, it would  
12 not be possible to move one of those benchmarks into 2016.

13  
14 **MR. PEARCE:** Bonnie, I kind of understand where you're coming  
15 from, but I think it would be prudent on the Science Center's  
16 part to listen to all the cries we're getting out of Congress  
17 that we need better stock assessments and I think the harder you  
18 can push and get some things done, the better it's going to be  
19 for all of us and so I think that whatever you can allow  
20 yourself to do, I think you do more and I think you need to push  
21 harder and I think we're coming under constant attack by our  
22 congressional delegation that we aren't doing our stock  
23 assessments timely enough and so the more you can do, the more  
24 heat you're taking off of yourself and us as well.

25  
26 **DR. DANA:** I have to agree with Harlon that it's frustrating to  
27 always hear that no, we can't do some of these stock assessments  
28 or get them done and I appreciate that it's probably a staffing  
29 issue and money issue, but we do hear the cries from the  
30 community or the industry and then congressional leadership to  
31 have them done and it's just frustrating.

32  
33 **DR. PONWITH:** To that end, Mr. Pearce said two words that are  
34 operative in the math here and one is "better" and "better" is  
35 really important. We had a couple of presentations today of  
36 really exceptional stock assessments that were laborious and  
37 yielded some results that the SSC endorsed as being best  
38 available science for you to make management decisions on.

39  
40 We certainly agree that we want better and the other thing that  
41 Mr. Pearce said was "more" and more and better are hard to do at  
42 the same time and so what we're doing is constantly trying to do  
43 this balancing act of giving more stock assessments, because we  
44 certainly recognize you can't manage in a black box and you need  
45 to know the status of those stocks and I agree with you.

46  
47 The notion of putting those data-poor stocks in there is grab  
48 some stocks for which we do have a lower understanding of the

1 status of those stocks, because they haven't bubbled up into the  
2 top seven list over the last several years, and get some  
3 awareness of them by going in and looking for the data and  
4 applying some of these new techniques that we worked very, very  
5 hard to develop and I think that in that scenario you've been  
6 asking for a very long time for an assessment on red drum and  
7 we're over that hump and we're ready to say yes. We are saying  
8 yes.

9  
10 We want to add some additional stocks to that list and get a  
11 collection of assessments done in that third slot. I am viewing  
12 this as a good move in answering the mail to more and then  
13 continue to be attentive to the better as well.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Unless there is any specific motion or  
16 direction from the other committee members, I guess we'll just  
17 leave it at that. You have said that you've heard us loud and  
18 clear and certainly if there's an opportunity, Bonnie, to look  
19 at reevaluating that schedule and, again, the resources that you  
20 have available to do more, we would certainly appreciate it and  
21 look for every opportunity that you might -- If you're looking  
22 for guidance, to come to council and ask our opinions on  
23 directions as to where we might want to put those available  
24 resources when they come available, but unless anyone else has  
25 any other comments on that issue and if there isn't, we will go  
26 ahead and move on to Other Business.

27  
28 **DR. PONWITH:** Just to reiterate the question. If we were able  
29 to complete an analysis and give you that short list of stocks  
30 we think would lend themselves to that data poor collection, in  
31 addition to red drum, is that something you would be willing to  
32 hear in your interim meeting or is that something you would  
33 prefer to defer to the April meeting?

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I think if it doesn't affect your timeline for  
36 getting notice out to the various bodies that are involved in  
37 the assessments, then I would just as soon wait until the April  
38 meeting and then you will have your May meeting and you will  
39 have direction at that time from the April meeting, but, again,  
40 any other -- If anyone thinks different --

41  
42 **MR. RIECHERS:** No, I would concur with that, at least from my  
43 perspective. If it can wait, it should wait, because we've  
44 taken thirty-something minutes here and on a call, that's going  
45 to be, given a call that we already have pretty full, I don't  
46 know that we want to devote the kind of time to that discussion  
47 if it can wait.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you.  
2  
3 **DR. DANA:** I have something under Other Business and so is it  
4 appropriate? Okay. On the agenda, I am just looking at the  
5 members of this committee and who is on this committee, because  
6 I am looking at the committee assignments versus this committee  
7 agenda and --  
8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** At the bottom of my agenda, Tab F, Number 1, I  
10 have myself, you, Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Riechers that are on the  
11 Gulf SEDAR Committee.  
12  
13 **DR. DANA:** So Johnny wouldn't be on it?  
14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** According to this list, he is not and we will  
16 have staff check into that to see if it might be a typo, but --  
17  
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Yes, that's an old list.  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I am sorry.  
21  
22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** My apologies. We will update it.  
23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other business? With that, the SEDAR  
25 Committee is adjourned. Thank you.  
26  
27 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m., January 28,  
28 2015.)  
29  
30 - - -