

Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report
June 24, 2024
Dr. CJ Sweetman, Chair

The Committee added an item under Other Business to discuss the Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Roadmap, adopted the agenda (**Tab E, No. 1**) as modified, and approved the minutes (**Tab E, No. 2**) of the January 2024 meeting.

SSC Recommendations from May 2024 Meeting (Tab E, No. 4)

Dr. Jim Nance (Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC] Chair) reviewed the proceedings of the SSC's May 2024 webinar meeting. The SSC reviewed and approved terms of reference for the upcoming SEDAR 98 assessment of red snapper; an independent management strategy evaluation (MSE) exercise by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC); evaluated a study by the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) on equity in fisheries management benefits; evaluated the NMFS southeastern U.S. region equity and environmental justice plan; discussed modifications to the SEDAR process and alternative assessment methods for Gulf stocks; reviewed the Council's planned restructuring for the SSC; and, heard public comment on both days.

Dr. Nance clarified for the Committee that the purpose of the independent MSE exercise by the SEFSC was to establish a base for future work, and to engage the SSC in further work on this MSE exercise. Regarding the NAS study on equity in fisheries management benefits, Dr. Nance added that the SSC's motion on the subject was meant to help ensure that the recommendation in the study, stated in the SSC's motion, is acted upon and the continued research occurs. The Committee concurred with the SSC. The Committee also questioned if the mechanism and applicability of the Southeast equity and environmental justice plans, being implemented by NOAA Fisheries, would include the recommendations of the NAS study.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move, to recommend that the Council request that NOAA Fisheries recommend that the National Academies of Sciences follow up on "Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a second Consensus Study Report that, as noted in the current report, "would build on this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative fisheries using the information available.**

Motion carried without opposition.

May 2024 SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting Report (Tab E, No. 5)

Council staff briefly reviewed the SEDAR Steering Committee's May 2024 webinar regarding changes to the SEDAR process and assessment of key stocks. These changes are being discussed by Council staff and the SEFSC, and will be reviewed further by the Steering Committee and the Council's SSC in July. A Committee member asked whether these changes could affect throughput. The SEFSC replied that the main idea was to provide focus on the most

important stocks to a region within a predictable timetable, while providing for bandwidth to consider other species assessments and analyses to inform fisheries management decisions. Another Committee member asked about analyzing the five key stocks every three years, and whether interim analyses would be used for providing catch advice or only as “health checks”. The SEFSC replied that interim analyses could and have been used to revise catch advice, so long as they can use a reliable index of relative abundance that is representative of the fishery for that species.

Other Business

A Committee member brought up the NOAA Fisheries request for comments on the modified ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) roadmap. It was noted that the comment deadline is July 31, 2024. The Committee member recommended convening the Council’s Ecosystem Technical Committee (ETC) to provide comments on the roadmap, noting a request for an extension on the comment period was likely necessary. Council staff noted that other Councils have also asked for an extension for providing comment.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, to direct staff to write a letter to ask for **an extension to the EBFM Roadmap request comment deadline of July 31, 2024, to allow the ETC to meet and provide their input prior to submission.**

Motion carried without opposition.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.