

Gulf SEDAR Committee Report
June 17, 2020
Dr. Tom Frazer, Chair
Final Revised

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab I, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab I, No. 2**) of the October 2019 meeting as written.

SEDAR Steering Committee Summary Report (Tab I, No 4b)

Staff provided a summary presentation from the SEDAR Steering Committee webinar held May 20-21 2020 via webinar. The full report is not yet available, but Council staff highlighted the important items related to the Gulf Council. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the joint Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic research track assessment for scamp (SEDAR 68) has been delayed about three months. Several webinars for the data portion of the process have been held. Issues with identifying a Technical Chair were brought up with regard to the reluctance of SSC members and analysts to serve as the Technical Chair. As a solution, the Gulf Council offered to solicit its SSC for a volunteer to serve as the next Technical Chair. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) clarified its position on operational assessments, noting that new data and model changes needed to be approved by the SEFSC prior to the assessment as well as numerous other clarifications. The Gulf SSC will need to be briefed about the SEFSC's intent for the operational assessments.

Dr. Simmons recounted the proposed assessment schedule for 2023 and 2024. Under Other Business, the Steering Committee also discussed a procedural workshop to examine combining separate indices into a single index of abundance; a path forward to reassess penaeid shrimp stocks in the Gulf was proposed; and for the SEFSC to send cooperators a memo after the scope of work for each operational assessment that has been developed to improve communication and close feedback loops. After receiving this memo, cooperators can move forward with terms of reference.

Dr. Mickle asked whether the SSC's recommendations concerning the SEFSC's intent for operational assessments would be presented to the Council, and when that would be possible. Dr. Simmons noted that the SSC could be briefed on the SEFSC's intent as soon as July 21-23, 2020, and an SSC member could summarize any recommendations to the Council at its August 2020 meeting in this committee.

Ms. Guyas asked for clarification regarding the process for proposing new data or model adjustments in operational assessments. Dr. Simmons said that Council staff typically develops the scope of work with the SSC and SEFSC prior to submitting the scope of work to the SEFSC. This scope of work becomes the terms of reference for the assessment, which is ultimately approved by the SSC and the Council.

Ms. Bosarge asked whether there would be an opportunity for SSC members to participate in the Topical Working Groups (TWGs) for shrimp. Dr. Porch replied that there would be four TWGs for the shrimp assessment, which will include SSC, industry, and other participants to assist the

assessment process. Dr. Porch went further to explain some of the areas in the present assessments which are going to be readdressed in the near future, and generally how those problem areas would be reconsidered. Ms. Bosarge said she was open to the idea of a primarily webinar-based process, but expressed concern about excluding the public from more of the assessment process in trying to make the assessments timelier. Dr. Porch said that there would still be public webinars for Operational Assessments when necessary; however, there may be fewer of them.

Review of Gulf of Mexico SEDAR Schedule (Tab I, No. 5)

Council staff reviewed the Gulf of Mexico SEDAR Schedule, noting changes following the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting. The Committee inquired about the availability of the Gulf king mackerel assessment, which staff noted will be reviewed by the SSC in July 2020 and the Council in August 2020. Council and SEFSC staff also reaffirmed that red snapper occupies two assessment slots since it consists of eastern and western Gulf models, which are combined to produce a single, Gulf-wide assessment model.

Mr. Swindell asked when a red drum assessment could be conducted in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Porch described the interconnectivity of red drum in the Gulf, and how most states have state-specific assessments for the species. The ongoing studies and availability of data from various purse seine operators by geographic region were discussed. Ms. Bosarge thought that industry cooperation would be key to executing such a study.

Ms. Guyas asked about the timing of an interim analysis (IA) for red snapper. Dr. Porch said that the SEFSC is planning to conduct IAs for 2021 and 2022 in anticipation of the Council requesting as much. The SEFSC could use an existing index of abundance or, depending on the data presented, the Great Red Snapper Count could be used as an estimate of absolute abundance. Dr. Simmons asked when the red snapper IA could be available for the SSC to review. Dr. Porch replied that it depends on when the data from the Great Red Snapper Count become available; possibly in July 2020. The red snapper IA would be conducted after that, and would be available for SSC review in early 2021.

That concludes my report.