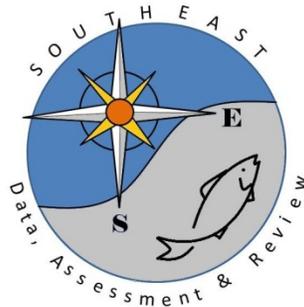


# SEDAR Policies and Procedures



## SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review

*Cooperative Stock Assessment Development and Review Program of:*

**NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center**

**NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office**

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council**

**Caribbean Fishery Management Council**

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

**Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission**

**NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division**

SEDAR

4055 Faber Place #201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

May 2011

## Table of Contents

1. Program Goals.....	1
2. Administration and Oversight .....	1
2.1 SEDAR Cooperators.....	1
2.2 Oversight.....	1
2.3 Administration .....	2
2.4 SEDAR Staff Responsibilities.....	3
2.4.1 SEDAR Program Manager .....	3
2.4.2 SEDAR Coordinator .....	3
2.4.3 SEDAR Administrative Assistant.....	3
2.5 Cooperator Obligations.....	4
3. SEDAR Panel Participant and Appointment Process .....	4
4. Public Participation .....	5
5. SEDAR Approach.....	6
5.1 Workshop Process .....	6
5.2 Workshop Documentation and Dissemination .....	6
5.3 Science Based Decision Making .....	7
6. SEDAR Assessment Classifications .....	8
6.1 Benchmark Assessments .....	8
6.2 Standard Assessments.....	8
6.3 Assessment Updates .....	9
7. SEDAR Workshop Details.....	10
7.1 Benchmark Data Workshop.....	10
7.2 Benchmark Assessment Process.....	11
7.3 Benchmark Review Workshop .....	11
7.4 Standard Data/Assessment Workshop Details.....	12
8. Role of the SSCs .....	13
9. Relation to State Agencies .....	13
10. NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division .....	13

Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) is a cooperative Regional Fishery Management Council process initiated to improve the quality and reliability of assessments of fishery resources in the southeastern United States, including the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and US Caribbean. SEDAR is managed by the three Regional Fishery Management Councils in the Southeast in coordination with NOAA Fisheries and the Interstate Fisheries Commissions (Atlantic States MFC and Gulf States MFC). SEDAR seeks to improve the quality and reliability of stock assessments, improve the quantitative basis of fishery management actions, and increase the relevance of research and monitoring programs in the Southeast Region. This document describes SEDAR Policy and Procedures as determined by the SEDAR Steering Committee. A broader overview of the program and its development over time is provided by the companion document *SEDAR Description and Background*.

## 1. Program Goals

- Provide robust and transparent assessments
- Provide stakeholder involvement in the assessment process
- Provide reliable and scientifically rigorous assessments
- Provide independent peer review of assessment products
- Provide timely assessment products
- Provide thorough documentation of methods and data
- Provide appropriate consistency in documentation, assessment approaches, and treatment of uncertainties

## 2. Administration and Oversight

### 2.1 SEDAR Cooperators

- NOAA Fisheries Southeast Science Center
- NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
- South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
- Caribbean Fishery Management Council
- NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

### 2.2 Oversight

- Oversight of the SEDAR process and operations schedule is provided by the SEDAR Steering Committee.
- The SEDAR Steering Committee shall be included as an official Council Advisory Panel in each Council's SOPPs.
- The SEDAR Steering Committee shall meet at least once annually to review policies and establish the work plan.

- The Steering Committee is composed of representatives of the SEDAR Cooperators, including:
  - NOAA Fisheries Southeast Science Center Director
  - NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Administrator
  - Executive Directors of the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils
  - Chairs of the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils
  - NOAA/NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division Chief
  - Executive Directors of the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions.
- The SEDAR Steering Committee is supported by SEDAR Staff.
- Members may designate alternates.
- The SEFSC Director shall chair the Steering Committee. Officers may serve successive terms without limit.

### 2.3 Administration

- SEDAR is administered through the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils with funding provided by NOAA Fisheries and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.
- The South Atlantic Council ED, Administrative Officer, and SEDAR Program Manager shall develop an annual (Calendar Year) SEDAR activities schedule and budget for consideration by the Steering Committee.
- The South Atlantic Council provides the primary program staffing and support. This includes the SEDAR Program Manager, SEDAR Coordinators as needed based on workload and funding, and general SEDAR administrative support which may include a dedicated administrative assistant.
- The South Atlantic Council administers travel and meeting arrangements for all Cooperators, except in special circumstances that will be determined by the Cooperators and Steering Committee.
- SEDAR travel orders and travel reimbursement will be provided for workshop panelists, AP representatives appointed to specific workshops by a Cooperator, and SEDAR staff supporting SEDAR workshops.
- Travel orders will be issued, and reimbursements provided, in accordance with applicable Council polices, rules, and regulations.
- The South Atlantic Council maintains the SEDAR Administrative Record.
- The SEDAR program provides travel expenses for workshop panelists and AP observers appointed by the Cooperators, Council members appointed to observe the workshops, and associated support staff.
- SEDAR does not pay travel expenses for federal employees.
- The Gulf Council provides administrative support for SEDAR workshops involving Gulf Council managed species.
- The SEDAR Steering Committee may enter into alternative administrative arrangements, with Cooperators and other organizations, as deemed necessary for the program.

## 2.4 SEDAR Staff Responsibilities

The following is a general description of primary SEDAR Staff responsibilities. The Steering Committee may approve other arrangements and assignments of these responsibilities as necessary to meet program objectives and address funding issues. Such arrangements may be described in grant documents, project plans, steering committee meeting summary, or memoranda as appropriate.

### 2.4.1 SEDAR Program Manager

- Ensure SEDAR Guidelines and Steering Committee policies are followed during assessment projects.
- Supervise SEDAR Coordinators and Administrative Assistant.
- Provide staff support to the Steering Committee.
- Represent the SEDAR program at meetings and conferences as necessary.

### 2.4.2 SEDAR Coordinator

- Coordinate and manage SEDAR assessment projects.
- Serve as liaison between Cooperators, analytical agencies, data providers, and others involved in SEDAR projects to develop project plans and deadlines and manage progress.
- Ensure SEDAR guidelines and Steering Committee policies are followed during assessment projects.
- Represent SEDAR at Cooperator technical (SSC) meetings when benchmark and standard assessments are presented and at other times when SEDAR issues are on the agenda. Attendance at SSC meetings is contingent upon funding, scheduling and availability.
- Ensure technical documentation for the Administrative Record is complete and up-to-date for each project.
- Chair data and assessment workshops.
- Develop project schedules, project Terms of Reference, and suggested participant lists in consultation with Cooperators and lead assessment agencies.
- Notify Cooperators of their responsibilities under the SEDAR guidelines and Steering Committee policies, such as appointments and administrative approvals.

### 2.4.3 SEDAR Administrative Assistant

- Provide administrative support to SEDAR Program Manager and Coordinators.
- Set-up and manage AV and recording equipment during SEDAR workshops.
- Serve as the administrative contact for venue staff during SEDAR workshops
- Provide initial point of contact for travel related issues involving SEDAR appointees.
- Distribute Travel Orders, meeting notices and reminders to workshop participants.
- Manage SEDAR website postings.
- Ensure the administrative documentation for the Administrative Record is complete and up to date.

## 2.5 Cooperator Obligations

- Each Cooperator shall approve the project schedule and terms of reference, and appoint workshop participants. The Cooperator may include review of such documents by their technical and advisory bodies as part of their approval process.
- Each Cooperator may provide notices of workshops and SEDAR activities, through press releases, mailing lists, or newsletter notices, as they deem appropriate.
- Each Cooperator shall designate a staff person to serve as a lead contact and liaison between their organization and SEDAR Staff for SEDAR projects involving their organization. This designee shall be responsible for ensuring appointments to SEDAR panels are made promptly and that their organization's appointees meet deadlines for data and document submissions. This designee is responsible for assisting SEDAR staff in preparing for SEDAR workshops and ensuring designated workshop roles are filled.
- Each SEDAR Cooperator shall establish guidelines and procedures for approving schedules, terms of reference, and panel appointments.
- NOAA General Counsel recommends that Council FMPs and Amendments incorporate the SEDAR process as outlined in these Guidelines as a source of assessment information. (NOTE: The Steering Committee acknowledges that SEDAR is not necessarily the sole source of assessment information available to the Councils and other Cooperators.)
- Invitations to appointed participants shall be issued by the Cooperator making the appointment, to make it clear which organization is responsible for the appointment.
- Cooperators shall provide written notification to the SEDAR Coordinator of schedule and TOR approval, and a list of appointed participants and contact information.
- Each Cooperator may determine how SEDAR assessment products are presented to the Cooperator and its technical and advisory bodies, and the involvement of its representatives to SEDAR panels in such presentations.
- SEDAR expects lead analysts to present assessment findings to the technical body identified by the Cooperator (e.g., SSC); Cooperators should contact these individuals regarding meeting locations and times.
- Cooperators should work with the lead assessment agency for any additional presentations desired. Such requests should be made to the appropriate representative of the lead assessment agency in accordance with normal agency and Cooperator procedures.

## 3. SEDAR Panel Participant and Appointment Process

- Workshop participants and attendees include:
  - Panelists: Individuals appointed by a Cooperator to a workshop panel. Responsible for participating in workshop discussions, deliberations, consensus building, and documentation. May also be responsible for submitting data and analyses in support of the assessment.
  - Appointed Observers: Individuals appointed by a Cooperator to observe a workshop and provide guidance as requested by the workshop panel. This group may include Council members, Cooperator staff, and AP representatives. These individuals do not contribute to consensus building or workshop reports.

- Staff: Individuals providing support to a workshop and SEDAR project.
- Attendees: Any individual who attends a workshop on their own initiative without any Cooperator appointment.
- Each Council and HMS shall establish a SEDAR Advisory Panel (AP; also known as the SEDAR Pool) from which participants (panelists and appointed observers) shall be selected for each workshop. Note: provisions related to the SEDAR AP do not apply to the Interstate Fisheries Commissions.
- All workshop panelists and observers appointed by a Council or HMS must be included in that Council's SEDAR AP.
- The SEDAR AP is governed by the same requirements as other Council APs and should be included in each Council's SOPPs. Each Council and HMS shall establish a process for making SEDAR AP appointments.
- Each Cooperator shall establish a process for making SEDAR workshop appointments.
- The Cooperator requesting the assessment and having jurisdiction over the species assessed is responsible for appointing those panelists and observers it deems necessary to fulfill the Terms of Reference.
- Each Cooperator shall ensure that all panelists and appointed observers are members of the Cooperator's SEDAR AP and therefore eligible to participate in SEDAR.
- The SEFSC Director and SERO Administrator are responsible for designating agency employees to participate on workshop panels to provide expertise, data, and analyses, and represent their offices as appropriate.
- In the event of joint jurisdiction, each Cooperator with an interest makes appointments from within its SEDAR Advisory Panel. Cooperators involved in joint assessments are asked to agree to an equitable division of the available seats when the SEDAR project is approved by the Steering Committee, as part of the annual SEDAR budget and activities review.

#### **4. Public Participation**

- SEDAR is a Council process, with public participation during workshops and other meetings governed by Council policies and practices.
- SEDAR workshops and other meetings are open and accessible to the public, subject to the standards and procedures of the Cooperators and provisions contained this document.
- Public comment and questions shall be taken during SEDAR data and assessment workshops at an appropriate time determined by the workshop Chair.
- Members of the public who attend workshops or meetings are noted in workshop reports as attendees and are expected to sign-in on the roll each day of attendance.
- Written comment should be submitted through Cooperators in accordance with the stated policies of the Cooperators involved with the project. Those interested in submitting written comment are directed to contact the Cooperator involved in an assessment project for policies regarding written comment.
- Public comment is not taken at SEDAR benchmark review workshops.

## 5. SEDAR Approach

### 5.1 Workshop Process

- SEDAR assessments shall be developed and peer reviewed through a series of workshops and webinars. A report documenting findings and recommendations shall be developed at each step. Individual workshop reports shall be compiled to create the overall Stock Assessment Report.
- The charge to each workshop is specified in Terms of Reference (TORs). Framework TORs are approved by the Steering Committee and may be modified for each project. The lead assessment agency shall draft preliminary project TORs based on the framework and submit them to the SEDAR Coordinator for approval by the appropriate Cooperators.
- All SEDAR workshops, webinars, and conference calls will be noticed by SEDAR Coordinators in the Federal Register.
- All SEDAR workshops and webinars, and steering committee meetings will be recorded and recordings retained for the Administrative Record. Written transcripts of workshop proceedings and steering committee meetings may be prepared upon written request by any SEDAR Steering Committee member.
- The names and affiliations of all who attend a workshop, including panelists, observers, general public attendees and staff, will be disclosed in workshop documents.
- All panelists are expected to actively contribute to the workshop process by reviewing all workshop documentation, preparing supporting analyses, contributing documents and datasets, participating in workshop discussion, and producing workshop report text.
- Panelists are expected to provide alternative solutions along with any criticisms and work toward consensus while conducting themselves with respectful and professional behavior. No personal attacks or aggressive behavior will be tolerated from any participants, and those who persist in such actions will be asked to leave.
- SEDAR panels are expected to reach consensus decisions, which may include acknowledging multiple approaches for addressing issues and unknowns. Voting is not conducted.
- Council Members attending as official representatives are considered appointed observers and may not serve as panelists.
- Panelists and appointed observers are expected to sign-in daily during the workshop.
- The SEFSC Director may appoint additional experts (such as university researchers, international experts, and NOAA Fisheries employees from outside the SE Region) for Data and Assessment Workshop panels as necessary to complete assigned Terms of Reference and ensure adequate expertise is available at each workshop.

### 5.2 Workshop Documentation and Dissemination

- All submitted materials are subject to public distribution and internet posting.
- Workshop documentation consists of working papers prepared for each workshop, reference documents selected from published literature, and the reports of each workshop
- Workshop documentation will be distributed electronically.
- Distribution of draft working papers is restricted to workshop panelists, support staff and appointed observers. Final working papers are typically available following conclusion of the

workshop to which they were submitted. Anyone not on a workshop panel desiring access to preliminary draft working papers may contact the Coordinator to request copies.

- Final working papers will be posted to the SEDAR website and a notice of availability will be forwarded to the panel, appointed observers and any interested parties, including those individuals requesting draft copies as specified in the previous bullet.
- Assessment and review workshop presentations prepared in advance of a workshop shall be posted to the SEDAR website after presentation. “Working” presentations developed during the workshop are not posted to the website due to their pre-decisional and informal nature.
- Webinar and meeting recordings may be obtained from the appropriate SEDAR Coordinator. A notice indicating how to obtain recordings will be posted on the SEDAR website.
- Draft workshop reports shall not be distributed outside the workshop panel until finalized by the panel and the chair.
- Each panelist is individually responsible for ensuring that their viewpoints and opinions are reflected in the workshop report.
- Workshop reports should provide clear rationale for panel decisions and recommendations, and note associated uncertainties.
- SEDAR workshop panels are not approved for viewing of confidential information. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with agency and data collector requirements for all submitted datasets, working papers, and workshop reports. Each author or data provider is personally responsible for maintaining confidentiality.
- The final assessment report, including the reports of all SEDAR processes and any necessary addenda, shall be disseminated to the Cooperators involved in the project through memorandum from the SEDAR Coordinator following completion of the review panel report and compilation of the final SEDAR Stock Assessment Report.
- SEDAR involvement is complete once the final Stock Assessment Report is finalized and disseminated to the Cooperator.
- SSC Summary reports regarding a SEDAR assessment should be forwarded to the appropriate SEDAR Coordinator for inclusion on the SEDAR website.
- Each Cooperator is responsible for subsequent distribution of SEDAR documentation to its panels and committees.

### 5.3 Science Based Decision Making

- SEDAR panel decisions and recommendations shall be achieved through consensus of the entire workshop panel in attendance at the workshop, rather than formal votes. Consensus recommendations shall be structured to ensure that the full range of variability and uncertainty is reflected.
- SEDAR workshop panels shall consider biological and technical aspects of datasets and stock assessments and base recommendations upon the scientific merit of the alternatives proposed.
- SEDAR workshop panel decisions are not to be based on possible management outcomes or regulatory impacts. At no point should a SEDAR workshop panel consider such concerns.

- Participants, whether panelists or observers, who embark upon discussions of management implications or regulatory consequences will be notified by the workshop chair that such deliberations are beyond the scope of SEDAR workshops and explicitly and intentionally prohibited.
- If such issues continue to be raised and notices to the contrary are ignored, the workshop Chair, Council staff, and Council members present are authorized by the Steering Committee to ask the offending individual to leave the workshop.
- If the individual refuses to leave the workshop upon such a request, the Chair shall be under no obligation to recognize them during further workshop panel discussions.

## **6. SEDAR Assessment Classifications**

### 6.1 Benchmark Assessments

- Benchmark SEDAR assessments are required for the first assessment of a species.
- Subsequent benchmarks will be conducted when necessary to consider new information or techniques, or other evaluation of a prior benchmark as determined by the Steering Committee.
- Each managed stock shall be benchmark assessed before standard or update assessments are considered.
- One SEDAR benchmark project (SEDAR XX) may have 2-3 related/similar species assessed concurrently.
- During benchmark assessments all datasets and decisions are evaluated. Multiple models are evaluated, with the goal of working down to one model ‘package’ that will be applied to develop management advice and determine stock status.
- All models initially evaluated need not be carried through to the Review Panel and SSC review (e.g. working papers should suffice to confirm simpler models give similar results to “base” model).
- Benchmark assessments involve a three-part workshop process: data, assessment, and review; each workshop may be up to one week long, allowing for multiple species to be accommodated in one workshop.
- Each workshop panel is responsible for determining if the assessment is ready to move forward to the next step in the process.
- Conference calls and webinars will be utilized as needed in the data and assessment process.
- Workshop tasks and goals are governed by the approved Terms of Reference.
- Benchmark assessments will be reviewed by an independent review panel. The Steering Committee shall determine the make-up of SEDAR review panels.
- Benchmark assessments are anticipated to be 9 month processes.

### 6.2 Standard Assessments

- Standard assessments are intended to update prior assessments with recent information and address issues supported by new data or other advancements as feasible within the approved benchmark model approach. New model classifications may not be developed using the standard assessment procedures.

- A single model will be developed based on the accepted model from the previous benchmark. Those data streams used in the prior assessment will be included in the standard configuration, unless there is a specific reason to doubt the data and the issue is noted in TORs.
- The SSC or equivalent shall be consulted when considering modifications to the benchmark framework and shall recommend to the Cooperator whether the desired changes may result in the need for a benchmark rather than a standard assessment.
- Limited flexibility is allowed for deviations from the benchmark model. The lead assessment agency and Cooperator technical body shall determine what is appropriate and designate the appropriate additions and modification in the project TORs. The types of changes that may be considered are as follows:
  - May incorporate technical advances approved through other SEDAR benchmark assessments or SEDAR intercessional workshops.
  - New datasets reviewed and developed through a SEDAR intercessional workshop may be included if feasible given the model structure.
  - Data-provider revisions to original datasets may be incorporated (e.g., revised catch estimates provided by an agency.)
  - Errors may be corrected in input datasets or model configuration.
  - Supporting models, such as growth relationships, may be updated based on new age and growth information.
  - Biological parameters and assumptions may be updated if there is new supporting research and the updates are consistent with the model structure.
  - May consider new model configurations if necessary to address new data or output needs.
  - May consider alternative software packages that accommodate the benchmark model type.
- Terms of Reference will specify data and modeling issues that will be considered.
  - The lead assessment agency and the SSC (or Cooperator's equivalent) will identify issues to consider.
  - The lead assessment agency shall draft the preliminary TORs for consideration by the Cooperator.
  - The TORs will specify any modifications or additions considered acceptable by the Cooperator and lead assessment agency.
- Standard assessments will have one workshop combining data and assessment discussions. Workshop length will depend upon the number of species and complexity of issues to be addressed in the TORs.
- Teleconference and webinars will be utilized as needed in the data and assessment process.
- Standard assessments adhere to the same administrative policies, record keeping, and support requirements as benchmark assessments.
- Peer review of the standard assessment is provided by the SSC or Cooperator equivalent. The SSC (or equivalent) shall develop the peer review report and forward it to SEDAR staff for inclusion on the SEDAR website in association with the assessment report.
- Standard assessments are anticipated to be a 4 month process.

### 6.3 Assessment Updates

- The basic benchmark framework is utilized for the update.

- Assessment updates are restricted to incorporation of additional years of observations to those datasets incorporated in the prior benchmark or standard assessment, with limited exceptions:
  - New datasets reviewed and developed through a SEDAR intercessional workshop may be included if feasible given the model structure. (For example, CPUE from a new independent survey may be added if the model accommodates such measures and the index was evaluated for the stock in another SEDAR workshop.)
  - Data-provider revisions to original datasets may be incorporated (e.g., revised catch estimates provided by an agency.)
  - Errors may be corrected in input datasets or model configuration.
  - Supporting models, such as growth relationships, may be updated based on new age and growth information.
  - Biological parameters and assumptions may be updated if there is new supporting research and the updates are consistent with the model structure.
- The lead assessment agency and SSC (or equivalent) will be involved in evaluating if an update is feasible, or if the stock needs to be assessed via a SEDAR standard or benchmark assessment. Recommendations on assessment type will be provided to the SEDAR Steering Committee for consideration.
- The update process is managed through the lead assessment agency and Cooperator directly.
- The SEDAR Steering Committee will schedule update assessments as part of the overall regional workload management. Specific timing of deliverables will be addressed by the assessment agency and Cooperator.
- Update assessments are conducted directly by the lead assessment agency. No data or assessment panels are convened and no SEDAR workshops are held.
- Data are solicited by the analyst and submitted directly to the analyst for use in the update.
- Upon completion of the update assessment, the lead assessment agency shall provide SEDAR a copy of the final assessment report for inclusion in the administrative record and posting on the SEDAR website.
- Peer review of the update assessment is provided by the SSC or Cooperator equivalent. The peer review body shall develop the peer review report and forward it to SEDAR staff for inclusion on the SEDAR website in association with the update assessment report.
- Updates are anticipated to be a 2 month process, depending on season and staff work load.

## **7. SEDAR Workshop Details**

### **7.1 Benchmark Data Workshop**

- Data workshop panelists shall assemble and critique all available fishery data, monitoring programs, and life history information.
- Data workshop panelists should compile their data and working papers in advance of the workshop so that time can be spent reviewing and revising datasets during the workshop. Papers and initial data summaries should be available at least 2 weeks prior to the workshop.
- Data workshops shall be chaired by the SEDAR Coordinator.

- Data workshop panelists may include database managers, data specialists, and data collectors; life history researchers and biologists; and stock assessment scientists from States, NOAA Fisheries, Interstate Commissions, universities, independent laboratories and institutions; and Council advisory panel (commercial, recreational, and/or NGO) representatives.
- Data workshops may be structured around working groups devoted to primary data areas. Working groups shall review data, working papers, reference documents, and other information to develop recommendations, for consideration by the workshop panel, on analyses, assumptions, and data for inclusion in the assessment.
- Each group shall select a rapporteur from among its members to take notes during workgroup and plenary sessions.
- All decisions of the data workshop are made during the plenary sessions by consensus of the entire membership.

## 7.2 Benchmark Assessment Process

- The assessment process is conducted through both a workshop and webinars or teleconference.
- Assessment process panelists shall develop assessment models to estimate population parameters and management benchmarks, and evaluate uncertainties.
- Assessment process panelists are expected to compile their data and working papers in advance of the workshop so that time can be spent discussing model parameterization and preliminary model runs during the workshop. Papers and initial model summaries are desired for distribution at least 2 weeks prior to the workshop.
- The assessment process panel is a technical body, consisting of an analytical team provided by the lead assessment agency and other scientists appointed by the Cooperator. Panelists may include NOAA Fisheries stock assessment scientists, Commission/State/university/independent assessment scientists, Scientific & Statistical Committee members, or other appointed technical experts.
- The Cooperator may appoint observers, drawn from its SEDAR AP, to provide guidance on industry practices. Appointed observers are not members of the workshop panel and are not involved in the consensus decisions of the panel.
- Assessment workshops and webinars shall be chaired by the SEDAR Coordinator.

## 7.3 Benchmark Review Workshop

- The review workshop shall provide an independent peer review of SEDAR stock assessments. The intent of the review is to ensure that the assessment and results presented are scientifically sound and that decision makers are provided adequate advice that reflects uncertainties in the data and methods.
- Review workshop panels shall be composed of:
  - 3 reviewers appointed by the CIE (Center for Independent Experts),
  - 2 reviewers from the Science and Statistical Committee (or its analog) of the Cooperator having jurisdiction over the stocks under review
  - Optionally, 1 reviewer appointed by each Cooperator having jurisdiction over the stocks under review.

- Review workshops are typically chaired by a member of the Cooperator's SSC or other scientific body. Chairs are facilitators, not reviewers. Chairs are responsible for compiling the review panel report, providing an executive summary of review activities, and submitting the final review panel report to the SEDAR Coordinator once it is approved by the review panel.
- The lead analytical agency for each stock is expected to provide a rapporteur to support the review panel during their deliberations.
- All reviewers shall be independent from the assessments under review.
- Each Cooperator may appoint observers to a review workshop. These may include representatives of the Council, additional scientists, or constituent representatives. All appointed observers must be members of the Council's SEDAR AP.
- Public comment is not taken during SEDAR review workshops. The Chair may call on appointed observers or other attendees to answer specific questions. Written comment is not accepted by the review panel. Written comment is accepted by SEDAR and SEDAR Cooperators in accordance with SEDAR and Cooperator policies.
- Review panels may not conduct alternative assessments. Panels may request additional sensitivity runs and minor corrections. Results of such runs should be documented in addenda to the assessment report.
- Assessment findings will be presented to the review panel by the lead analysts with support of other assessment panel members as appropriate and necessary.
- The review panel shall not provide specific management advice. Review panel recommendations are advisory in nature.
- If a review panel finds an assessment deficient to the extent that technical staff present cannot correct the deficiencies during the course of the workshop, or the panel deems that desired modifications would result in an alternative assessment, then the review panel shall provide in writing the required remedial measures and suggest an appropriate approach for correcting the assessment and subsequently reviewing the corrected assessment.

#### 7.4 Standard Data/Assessment Workshop Details

- One combined data/assessment workshop will be held for Standard assessments. Webinars prior to and following the workshop may be held as needed to discuss outstanding issues.
- Standard assessment panels should include a reduced number of participants, in comparison to benchmark assessment panels. Key data providers and analysts with assessment skills are primary parties involved.
- Standard assessment workshop panelists may include NOAA Fisheries stock assessment scientists, Commission/State/university/independent assessment scientists, Scientific & Statistical Committee members.
- The Cooperator may appoint observers to provide guidance on industry practices. Appointed observers are not members of the assessment panel and do not contribute to consensus decision making.
- Standard workshops and webinars shall be chaired by the SEDAR Coordinator.
- Workshop discussion topics will be governed by the approved Terms of Reference.

## 8. Role of the SSCs

- SSC members participate in all phases of the SEDAR process.
- The SSC is not expected to provide additional peer review of SEDAR benchmark assessments.
- SSCs provide peer review of SEDAR standard assessments and update assessments.
- SSCs are expected to recommend whether the assessment constitutes Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA) and determine whether assessment findings and outputs are adequate for supporting fishing level recommendations to the Council. (NOTE: Final determination of BSIA for Council actions and information is provided by NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center, with consideration given to recommendations of SEDAR panels and SSCs)
- SSCs may request additional sensitivity analyses if deemed necessary to adequately characterize uncertainty, and additional projection analyses if necessary to adequately evaluate management alternatives.
- If the SSC determines that an error or omission has been made in the assessment model or in any input datasets, and further determines that such issues significantly impact the assessment results, and in particular the magnitude and direction of required management actions, the SSC shall prepare a written report for submission to the Council and SEDAR Steering Committee which details (1) the nature of the concerns, including appropriate documentation of the correct information; (2) possible impacts; (3) specific concerns related to the issues raised, including the estimated parameters that are affected; and (4) the recommended process and timeline for correction or revision, review, and reconsideration by the SSC.
- The SSC is responsible for presenting to their Council their evaluation of the adequacy of the assessment, their interpretation and summary of the assessment methods and findings, and their recommendations regarding appropriate actions.

## 9. Relation to State Agencies

- State agencies may request SEDAR peer review of assessments conducted by their staff or through contract.
- SEDAR Staff may support the state agency during data and assessment phases of the process if feasible; SEDAR projects will take precedence, however.
- SEDAR Staff will serve as a liaison between the state agency and the other Cooperators for purposes of reviewing schedules, terms of reference, and accommodating Cooperator appointees.
- The Steering Committee may also request that state agencies provide analytical lead in developing assessments through SEDAR, especially with regard to species found primarily within one state's boundaries.

## 10. NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division

- For the HMS Management Division, NMFS staff shall review the report and process and determine whether the assessment findings are adequate for management.
- Staff may request further evaluation of assessment uncertainties and alternative projection scenarios if deemed necessary for management.
- Standard and Update assessments conducted on behalf of HMS will be reviewed by through a CIE desk review, as HMS does not have an SSC to provide a review.

- If designated HMS staff determine that an error or omission has been made in the assessment model or in any input datasets, determine that such issues significantly impact the assessment results, and upon consideration of the magnitude and direction of required management actions that may be impacted by the error or omission, said staff shall prepare a written report for submission to the SEDAR Steering Committee that details (1) the nature of the concerns, including appropriate documentation of the correct information; (2) possible impacts; (3) specific concerns related to the issues raised, including the estimated parameters that are affected; and (4) the recommended process and timeline for correction or revision, review, and reconsideration by NMFS.
- Upon completion of its review, NMFS shall consider the SEDAR assessment findings and the results of any additional supplementary analyses requested in developing specific management recommendations as the best scientific information available.
- Representatives of the analytic team that participated in one or more workshop or the SEDAR staff will assist the HMS Management Division in making a presentation of the assessment to the HMS Advisory Panel either during or after the NMFS review and recommendations phase.