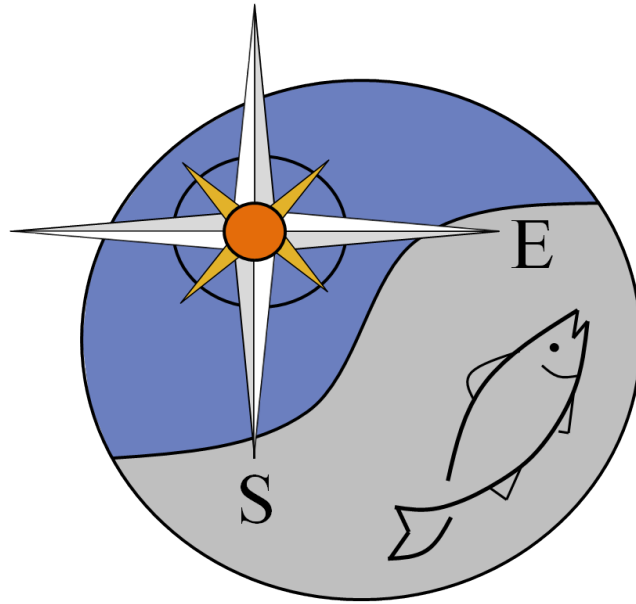


# SEDAR



**SEDAR Steering Committee**

**Meeting Follow-up**

**October 23, 2020**

## **Background:**

During the October 16<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting, Chair Porch informed the Committee that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Center's ability to process data, particularly age data, for use in assessments. Dr. Porch indicated that his staff was operating at ~70% efficiency.

Given the impact of the ongoing pandemic, the SEFSC proposed several changes to the assessment schedule, including postponing start of South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel assessment to 2022.

There was much discussion regarding the SEFSC's recommendation to postpone the 2021 OA of Spanish Mackerel. The South Atlantic Council Cooperator disagreed with the SEFSC's recommendation to delay Spanish Mackerel for several reasons, as outlined in the October 2020 Steering Committee Meeting Summary Report.

The ASMFC Cooperator noted that they were waiting on an updated Spanish Mackerel assessment as well, stating that this species is a top priority for them.

Chair Porch indicated that the major issue for Spanish Mackerel is the backlog of age samples than need to be processed and aged. He noted that access to the building has been restricted and his staff has not been able to get in since March 2020. The Committee then discussed possible ways to keep Spanish Mackerel on the schedule for 2021.

The Center agreed to begin discussions with the States to determine if they could help with the process of ageing samples. The Center will also provide the SAFMC with a report of the status of the Spanish Mackerel ageing work within a month. This feedback will be needed to determine if the Spanish Mackerel OA could remain on the 2021 assessment schedule.

## **Update:**

*On 23 October 2020, the SEFSC provided a memo to the SEDAR Steering Committee documenting their discussions and plans for moving forward with the SEDAR 78 South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Operational Assessment as scheduled in 2021.*

*The SEFSC memo also recommended that the assessment for South Atlantic Black Sea Bass will need to be postponed until 2022, to allow for Spanish Mackerel to remain in 2021.*

*A copy of the SEFSC memo, and an updated SEDAR Project Planning Grid reflecting these recommendations, are included below.*



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
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October 23, 2020

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** SEDAR Steering Committee

**FROM:** John F. Walter, III, Deputy Director for Science and Council Services  
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center

**SUBJECT:** Outstanding questions from October Steering Committee meeting

Dear Members of the SEDAR Steering Committee,

On behalf of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, I want to thank the SEDAR Steering Committee members for their careful consideration of our proposal for navigating workload during these trying times. I also want to our state partners willingness to explore a Plan B for getting the Spanish mackerel ages completed.

After further consultation with our staff in Panama City, it appears that further steps would be needed to develop and distribute a reference collection to ensure the agreed protocols are applied consistently across the various aging labs. Over the next few months, we will begin working in this direction, but we do not expect it can be done in time to provide much relief for the current backlog. However, we are happy to report that we have gotten permission to begin opening up our facilities on a limited basis and have made other changes that, barring future setbacks, will enable us to complete the aging of Spanish mackerel in time to complete the South Atlantic SEDAR 78 as scheduled.

However, after further consultation, we realized that delaying the red grouper assessment would do little to relieve the COVID19-related challenges for data provision and processing in 2021 (as it was not scheduled to begin until 2022 anyway). Therefore, we would like the Steering Committee to consider a 1 year delay for SEDAR 76 (Black seabass) to begin in mid-2022. This delay would also result in a more meaningful assessment, as it would allow us to incorporate information from the 2021 trap/video survey (the survey was not conducted in 2020). SEFSC considers that we can continue with the original schedule for Red grouper to begin in 2022, but it may also benefit from a later start to be able to incorporate 2021 trap/video data.

Sincerely,

John F. Walter, III  
Deputy Director for Science and Council Services  
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Miami  
NOAA Fisheries - Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
Miami, FL 33149

Cc:

Table 1: SEDAR Project Planning Grid – Meeting Outcome: October 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee. UPDATED (based on SEFSC memo): 23 October 2020

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects					Future Requests									
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING					2023 Proposed Projects									
YEAR	<u>SA Team</u>				<u>Gulf/Caribbean Team</u>					<u>HMS Team</u>		<u>FL FWCC</u>	ASMFC GSMFC	CMP Shrimp
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2			
2020	Scamp RT	Snowy Grouper U	Gag Grouper OA	Tilefish OA	Scamp RT	GAJ OA	Vermilion OA	Cobia U		Atlantic Blacktip Benchmark				King U
2021		Red Snapper OA						Gag Grouper OA	Red Snapper RT		Red Snapper RT	Queen Trigger PR-STX-STT OA		
2022	Scamp OA			Spanish Mackerel OA	Scamp OA	Gray Snapper OA				Hammerheads RT			Mutton Bench	
2023	Gray Triggerfish RT	Vermilion OA	Black Sea Bass OA	Red Grouper OA	Yellowedge OA		Red Snapper OA	Red Snapper OA	Queen snap@PR, redtail parrot@STX			Hogfish Bench		
2024		White Grunt RT		Blueline Tilefish OA	Lane Snapper OA?	Gray Triggerfish RT	Tilefish Complex OA?	Vermilion OA	Lane@PR,, YTS		Black Grouper Bench?	ASFMC Red Drum (RW)/ Gulf Menhaden OA		
2025				Snowy Grouper/ Tilefish					Caribbean Hogfish					
2026														

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.