

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**



**SSC Meeting Report**

**August 19, 2020**

**Meeting via Webinar**

**VERSION  
FINAL  
August 24, 2020**

**Documents**

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**SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT**

Written comment:

For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment was 12:00 pm Wednesday, August 12, 2020. All written comment received by this date was included in the SSC briefing book.

Verbal comment:

Two general opportunities for comment were provided: at the beginning of the meeting and near the conclusion. An opportunity for comment on specific agenda items was also provided. All comments are part of the record of the meeting. See meeting minutes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introductions

Marcel Reichert has resigned as a long-standing member of the SSC. The SSC expressed gratitude for his service and dedication to SSC leadership and business. Two new members, Drs. Jie Cao (NC State University) and Walter Bublely (SCDNR), were introduced and welcomed to the SSC.

### 1.2. Approval of Agenda

- *Approved by Committee with one modification (other business item regarding Snowy Grouper update assessment was moved up in the agenda to follow item #3).*

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

See meeting minutes.

## 3. UPDATE ON OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1. Documents

Attachment 1. Update to SEDAR OA Process Presentation

Attachment 2. May 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting Report

### 3.2. Presentation

OA Development Update: Julie Neer, SEDAR Staff

### 3.3. Overview

The Committee was briefed on modifications to the way in which SEDAR operational assessments will be conducted, based on the information provided to the SEDAR Steering Committee by the SEFSC during the Steering Committee's May 2020 webinar.

### 3.4. Public Comment

See meeting minutes

### 3.5. Action: Provide any feedback on the updated method in which an operational assessment (OA) will be conducted.

- *The SSC expressed concern with the proposed timing of review and delivery of the 2023 Statements of Work (SOWs) for Snowy Grouper and Tilefish given the SSC has been asked to provide recommendations before ongoing assessments for these species have been completed. The SSC recognizes this is a unique situation and that timing should not be an issue for future SOWs.*
  - ***Recommend the SSC be given the opportunity to finalize recommendations for 2023 SOWs for Tilefish and Snowy Grouper at their Spring 2021 meeting (or before if review is scheduled as a webinar).***

- *The SSC raised concern with the number of assessments coming up for review at a single SSC meeting, particularly the April 2021 meeting.*
  - ***Recommend the SSC not be overloaded with the too many assessments at any given meeting to ensure each assessment receives proper attention and that adequate time is provided for discussion. The type (RT vs OA vs update) and complexity of assessments up for review should be considered when setting the meeting agenda.***
  - ***Recommend establishing a process for using an SSC workgroup to review whether the Terms of Reference for an assessment have been met and to draft a P\* recommendation before it comes to the full SSC for final review and determination of fishing level recommendations. This would allow analysts time to prepare the projections most likely to be used by the SSC in advance of the meeting.***
- *The SSC noted that recommendation of Topical Working Groups (TWG) may require a working knowledge of the Operational Assessment itself. The SSC discussed who should be involved in drafting of SOWs (currently Council and SEDAR staff with initial review from Science Center).*
  - ***Recommend including SSC members in the initial drafting of SOWs and the identification of TWGs.***
- *The SSC discussed how new information may become available after the SOW has been approved and that more specificity is needed on how that information will be considered in the process.*
  - ***Recommend clarification on how this type of new information would be incorporated into the SOW.***
- *The SSC discussed the need for more guidance on what would trigger a TWG and what modifications to an existing assessment would constitute an OA vs Research Track assessment.*
  - ***Recommend generating a list of examples or “rules of thumb” to determine what new information would trigger formation of a TWG.***
  - ***Recommend generating a list of examples or “rules of thumb” for what should be considered an Operational Assessment vs what should be a Research Track (e.g., assessment requiring 1-2 vs 3+ TWGs).***
- *The SSC discussed the importance of identifying new literature and other research reports as they become available for species managed by the SAFMC.*
  - ***Recommend identifying a point person or persons to identify and distribute new information as it becomes available for species of concern.***

#### 4. CHANGE IN MAXIMUM AGE AND NATURAL MORTALITY ESTIMATES OF SNOWY GROUPEL

##### 4.1. Documents

Attachment 3. Snowy Max Age presentation

##### 4.2. Presentation

Rob Cheshire, SEFSC Beaufort Laboratory

##### 4.3. Public Comment

See meeting minutes

##### 4.4. Overview

New data made available for this assessment suggests the maximum age of Snowy Grouper is closer to 80 than 35 as had been previously assumed. This has implications for the estimation of natural mortality and the assessment.

##### 4.5. Action:

- Provide a recommendation on how to proceed with the estimation of natural mortality for this assessment.
  - *The SSC discussed the importance of incorporating this new information on maximum age of Snowy Grouper despite this being an update assessment.*
  - *The SSC raised concerns over low sample sizes available for the oldest fish (>60; n = 2) as well as the apparent age difference between the 80-year-old and the next oldest fish.*
  - *Recommend using the Hewitt and Hoenig-based point estimate using a max age of 56-years for generating a scaled M-at-age vector for the base run.*
  - *Recommend incorporating a range of uncertainty in M that spans the 2 different max ages explored (56 and 80) and the different methods of calculating M (Hewitt & Hoenig and Then et al.), namely a range of 0.05-0.12.*

#### 5. REVIEW OF 2023 STATEMENTS OF WORK

##### 5.1. Documents

Attachment 4. 2023 SOWs for Tilefish and Snowy Grouper

### 5.2. Overview

SEDAR is providing the opportunity for the SSC to review the statements of work for the 2023 SOWs for Tilefish and Snowy Grouper under the new topical working group template.

### 5.3. Action

- In the interest of time, the SSC will conduct a preliminary review of these via email. In discussion of agenda item #3, the SSC recommended delaying finalization of these SOWs until the SSC has had a chance to review the most recent assessments for these species (either via webinar this fall/winter or at the April 2021 SSC meeting). The recommended edits to these SOWS should serve as placeholders until ongoing assessments and their associated research recommendations are reviewed by the SSC.
  - ***Recommend subgroup of species experts SSC members review previous research recommendation and recent literature and provide preliminary recommendations on the proposed SOWs for review by the entire SSC via email.***
    - ***Tilefish subgroup: Genny Nesslage, George Sedberry, Church Grimes, Wally Bubley***
    - ***Snowy Grouper subgroup: George Sedberry, Jeff Buckel, Wally Bubley***

## 6. CITIZEN SCIENCE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER REPLACEMENT

### 6.1. Documents

None

### 6.2. Presentation

Overview of duties: Julia Byrd, SAFMC Staff

### 6.3. Overview

The Council's Citizen Science Program was developed over the course of three years with the guidance of a wide array of stakeholders and partners. The aim was to build a program that engages fishermen, scientists, and managers in co-creating citizen science projects that align with the Council's research needs. The projects would collect new data to supplement existing data collection programs and be used to help inform science and management decision making.

The Citizen Science Operations Committee is a small group of advisors that provides guidance and support for the SAFMC's Citizen Science Program. They are responsible for developing program recommendations for the Council's consideration. Specific tasks include reviewing policies, providing program direction/multi-partner support, and providing general advice. The Committee coordinates and works with the other administrative groups of the Citizen Science Program and is responsible for modifying the SOPPS and program components, as necessary. Membership includes Citizen Science Advisory Panel Pool members (5), a SERO representative

(1), a SEFSC representative (1), and a SSC representative (1). Members are appointed by the Council's Citizen Science Committee and terms last between 3-5 years, dependent on the growth of the program. The Operations Committee typically meets in person once a year and holds additional webinar meetings, as needed. Additional details on the Citizen Science Program, including its administration and organizational structure are available in the [SOPPS](#) and on the [program webpage](#).

Marcel Reichert has been serving as the SSC representative on the Citizen Science Operations Committee. Since he has resigned from the SAFMC SSC, a new representative needs to be identified to take his place.

#### 6.4. Action

- Identify an SSC member to serve on the Citizen Science Operations Committee.
  - *Wally Bublely has volunteered to be the representative on the Citizen Science Operations Committee.*
  - *Recommend consideration of an additional SSC member to serve on the Citizen Science Operations Committee, particularly someone with socioeconomics expertise.*

#### 7. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

#### 8. OTHER BUSINESS

None

**Meeting Adjourned at 1:00PM**