

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

Webinar

June 10, 2020

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Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Clay Porch
Dr. Genny Nessler
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Other observers and participants attached.

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're going to go into the SEDAR Committee. Let me remind you who the committee members are. It's myself, Mel Bell, Bob Beal, Anna Beckwith, Carolyn Belcher, Kyle Christiansen, Roy Crabtree, Tim Griner, and Steve Poland. Our first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any modifications or additions to the agenda? Is there any objection to approval of this agenda? Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. Then the agenda is approved.

The next order of business is Approval of the December 2019 Committee Minutes. Any modifications or changes to those minutes? Any objection to approval of those minutes? All right. Then the minutes are approved. Now we're going to go into our first order of business, which is the Assessment Activities Update, and I'm going to turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Jessica. Attachment 1 in the SEDAR folder is the assessment activities report, and I just provided activities that are occurring in the South Atlantic, and some of these might be joint activities with the Gulf of Mexico, but I focused it just on South Atlantic activities.

We have two projects that are in progress, and the first one is SEDAR 66, which is South Atlantic tilefish, otherwise known as golden tilefish, and this assessment has a terminal year of 2018, and it was originally postponed due to MRIP numbers, but they are now back on schedule, and, there again, I have an in-person workshop in November of 2020 to talk about this, and the completion date is expected in April of 2021.

The next assessment I was going to go over, and we'll talk a little bit about this a little bit more during the SEDAR Steering Committee, is the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic scamp research track assessment, and this is assessing two different stocks, the Gulf of Mexico stock and South Atlantic stock, separately, but they wanted to do this at a joint meeting, and this is the first research track assessment that was started, and we wanted to see how the process worked out.

It was originally started -- The data workshop was scheduled for March, mid-March, and that was right at the beginning of COVID, and so that meeting was stopped, or at least the in-person meeting was halted, and it switched over to webinar. All staff did a great job switching over to webinar, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and SEDAR staff did a phenomenal job of changing on the fly, in order to have this stock assessment data process to continue.

Unfortunately, COVID has led to a variety of issues, not the least of which is increased demand for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and, therefore, they are going to be focusing their time on stock assessments that are going to be making management decisions, and, if you remember, during this research track and operational track assessment process, the research track kind of builds the tool, and then the operational side kind of implements the tool and provides management advice, and that's what the Science Center is going to be concentrating on in the upcoming months, are stock assessments that are going to be providing management advice, and so scamp, SEDAR 68, is going to be on hold for a few months, as things are worked through the system.

SEDAR 71 is the gag grouper operational assessment, and that is going to get started later this year, and we are hoping to have a completion date of March 2021, and the next one is the snowy grouper 2020 update, and that's, once again, going to be starting late this year, with an expected completion date of September 2020.

There are a few others that are in planning stages, and we'll be talking about these today, and this includes SEDAR 73, which is the red snapper operational assessment, a stock assessment for South Atlantic Spanish mackerel, and then a stock assessment for South Atlantic black sea bass, and those are all the projects that I had for the South Atlantic. If there's any questions, please let me know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike, do we have any raised hands?

DR. ERRIGO: I do not have any raised hands at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Mike. Thank you, Chip. I guess let's go ahead and go into the SEDAR Steering Committee report.

DR. COLLIER: The SEDAR Steering Committee report is Attachment 2. It is going to be in your late materials folder, and this meeting actually occurred after the briefing book deadline, and that's why it's in the late materials folder, and this is just a draft, and it has not been approved by the SEDAR Steering Committee, and so the information in here is likely to change, but we wanted to at least give you some information on what occurred during the meeting.

Probably the big one that occurs during this meeting is they set the schedule. They set the schedule for upcoming stock assessments, and what they're trying to do is look out several years in advance now, and we have it color-coded into scheduled projects, which is in green, pending projects, and this means Southeast Fisheries Science Center scheduling, and that is in the orangish color, and then future requests are in blue, and I talked about all the projects that are in green.

We do have a few orange projects that are going to be coming up soon, and we have an operational assessment for scamp that is going to likely get pushed back, if there's going to be some delays in the research track, and so just keep that in mind, and we also have a red grouper operational assessment as well as vermilion and bluefin tilefish that are being proposed and hopefully can get on the schedule with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

One thing I do want to point out is, if you look in blue, we have a snowy grouper and tilefish -- We have those listed as potential new assessments starting in 2023, and, back when we were creating this operational/research track assessment schedule, the goal was to have some of these assessments be done every four or five years, and so you can see snowy grouper up there in 2020, and then it's going to be coming back around 2024, and so it is getting on that four-year schedule, and it looks like we're going to get those cycles through, and we're going to get these assessments in a timely fashion, which is excellent. It's meeting the goals that they were trying to get to.

They also went through an update on the SEDAR projects, and, with that update, they're going to be covering all the projects that SEDAR does, whether it's HMS, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Caribbean, Gulf Council, or South Atlantic Council, and so that's going to be

completed in all of those, and they did talk about the SEDAR 68, and I'm going to talk about that under the second topic here.

One thing to point out is there was a cancellation of Gulf gray triggerfish, and so, much like on the South Atlantic side, gray triggerfish is a species that has been fairly hard to assess, and we've had two attempts in the South Atlantic, and their most recent one has also had some issues.

The SEDAR process review and discussion, once again, this scamp assessment, 68, was the first research track assessment that has been done in the Southeast, and so we wanted to make sure that this pilot process was successful, and we wanted to track it along the way before we thoroughly develop the SOPPs and everything is adopted through the SEDAR Steering Committee. There is a stock ID process that was completed prior to the data workshop, and, as indicated in the report, it was pretty successful.

There is also an assessment development team, which is slightly different than our current assessments. This assessment development team kind of sticks with the assessment throughout the development of the project, and so they are a core group of individuals that will help in the decision-making stage. The goal with this is to have the same group going through and kind of remembering what they did before and not rehashing some of the decisions that were made at a previous stage. They also have a technical chair for this assessment development team, and there was some difficulty in finding this technical chair for SEDAR 68. We did get one to agree, but that was some of the discussion that they had at the SEDAR Steering Committee.

If there's anything else, and Clay was there, and Clay is the Chair of the Steering Committee, and we can talk about different parts of it, as well as John Carmichael and Jessica McCawley were there as well, and so, if I missed any of the key points, please raise your hand, and I will stop and let you guys interject.

One of the big things that is going to be changed in the new operational process that's being proposed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center is looking at project management, the assessment panel, and webinars and meetings, and so the current process we have in this table here, which is the project management is under SEDAR, and the assessment panel is usually there, and then where there are usually webinars, as well as meetings, through the standard or update process.

What's being modified is the Southeast Fisheries Science Center would be the project manager during the new operational assessment proposal, and they would have topical working groups, and you guys have had us -- If you listened to the SSC, we talked about this pretty extensively, about a topical working group for selectivity of the chevron traps, some of the work that FWRI has done. There would be few webinars and only topical meetings, and so if there's any questions on the new potential process with the operational versus the current process through SEDAR or anything I missed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I see that there's a hand up, and so Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: I don't have a question about the process, but, Chip, you mentioned that there have been assessment difficulties with gray triggerfish, and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what those problems are, and I wasn't aware of what they might be.

DR. COLLIER: I think, in the Southeast, it was ageing difficulties, and there was also -- Not the Southeast, but the South Atlantic, but there were ageing difficulties with triggerfish, whether or not to use a spine or an otolith, and there were also some concerns about the initial start year, with I believe MARMAP having a significant drop from year-one to year-two and not knowing whether that was a valid drop in abundance or if it was something else that was occurring, and, Mike, you can probably talk to this more than I can, and I believe you were at the assessment, or the assessment review, where gray triggerfish was halted.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, and there were ageing issues with the spines, and there was a lot of questions about that, and there was also a lot of question about the natural mortality estimates for gray triggerfish, and they didn't fit right with -- The natural mortality estimates didn't fit right, and so there were several issues with gray trigger, and I'm trying to think back.

DR. COLLIER: You made me remember a couple of different things, and, Jack, you know this, but they have a juvenile stage, which is up in the sargassum, and then, when they get to the bottom, they're pretty much mature fish at that point, and that was leading to issues with the assessment model as well.

DR. MCGOVERN: Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: I am not positive on all the reasons for stopping the SEDAR assessment in the Gulf, and we do have Julie online, Julie Neer, who is the program manager for SEDAR, as well as Clay Porch, and he might be able to talk about these issues.

DR. PORCH: In the Gulf of Mexico, there were different issues, and there certainly were some issues with ageing, and that, again, had to do with using spines and finding that how we age fish by spine gave ages that were a year or two different than otoliths, but we also -- When we started really looking at all the data inputs, we found that some of the inputs were wrong, and there was a systemic problem that we have been trying to address recently, and so we just suggested that this needed to go for a full research track assessment, which is actually something we had suggested from the beginning, and we tried to be accommodating by running it as an operational, but, once we really looked at it and some of the issues, we just were not satisfied that we could deliver a defensible product.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for that explanation, Clay. Seeing no other hands, we will go into the next one, which is the assessment schedule review, and so several statements of work were reviewed at the -- I guess they weren't really reviewed, but they were included in the materials, and you can see that there were some modifications, and one of them is having -- At least for the South Atlantic, we were going to have the operational assessment, and that was approved by the - - The schedule was approved by the SEDAR Steering Committee, and that was a shift in the completion date in response to redefining some items. There wasn't really any other actions that were in that one.

The workplan, Clay did indicate that analytical resources were adequate for the projects, but he did note that there were some projects or timing that we may need to modify, given some impacts of COVID, and I think the SEDAR Steering Committee was very understanding that it's hard to assess what's going to be going on with COVID, and people have to recognize that the plan may

change in the future, based on what's going on with COVID and how they're able to meet and develop new workplans.

The 2023 workplan is preliminary, and these will be finalized after the meeting, and so the cooperators were requested to give some 2023 projects, and John had indicated that snowy grouper or tilefish would be two options, and so we need to start working on some of the statement of work for those species, and so we're going to be providing those to the council, the statement of work to the council, in September, and we'll hopefully give those to the Science Center by October 15.

Then it will also be good to start getting some information, and we'll ping you guys, I think in December, in order to get what priorities you guys have for 2024 through 2026, and so SEDAR is really wanting to get out there, as far as timing, get far in advance, and, this way, all the data can be put together, and people aren't caught off-guard about what new species are getting thrown into the assessment schedule, and all the ageing can get done, and the stock ID workshop can be developed, and all these projects take some time, in order to get everything compiled, and so they are wanting these schedules very far in advance, and, that way, the Science Center can put them in the workload, and it's also good to get it developed into the research schedules as well.

Under Other Business, there were two items that were brought up, and there was a procedural workshop pre-proposal that was provided by FWRI, and this is looking at best practices for combining index of abundance surveys, and what they want to do, primarily, is looking at combining a video survey with a trap survey and looking at the relative index of abundance as well as the size composition. In the original proposal, it was mentioned that it would focus on the Gulf of Mexico, but I believe it's going to be expanded to include some information for the South Atlantic as well, because they are going through the exact same issues.

A second issue that was brought up under Other Business was a SEDAR methods working group workshop for the shrimp assessment process review. In the Gulf of Mexico, they have stock assessments for pink shrimp, white shrimp, and brown shrimp, and they had proposed a process for this, and they would like a CIE desk review for the shrimp stock assessment, and there's a little graphic on what the process would look like.

The first one is to have special working groups, and that will be done in 2021, looking at indices of abundance and trying to estimate effort and look at catch and then going to some of the observers, and, Clay, if you wanted to go through this, because this was your proposal, and I'm probably going to butcher it, but I will do the best I can.

Then, in 2021, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will have an assessment workshop, and this will review the findings from the first year, and so the 2020 year, and it will refine the existing model and then provide future recommendations, and so this is kind of an in-between step. We can continue working on the old model, use the inputs that come out of the 2020 findings, and then, in 2022 and 2023, they would like to do a research track assessment for these species. Is there any questions on either of those that were under Other Business? That was just for the Gulf of Mexico.

MR. BELL: I listened to all of that during the SEDAR meeting and all, and just a question. Related to maybe what the Gulf is doing with the assessment of shrimp, given that they are -- In my understanding, they are an annual crop, and what -- Actually, what do they do with that? I mean,

you mentioned at the end that they're sort of recommendations, but it seems like you would -- I guess you could learn from a series of these over time, or doing them periodically, and kind of what the status of things are, but, in terms of using it in management action, and, again, I kind of go back to the state.

At least here, the states really regulate the shrimp fishery, but, certainly for us, we have a penaeid shrimp plan, but how do the assessments they're doing in the Gulf get turned into actual management action? I am just curious. I mean, I can see where you do these to kind of get an indication of how things might look periodically, but then is there -- What do they actually do with these, is just what I'm curious about. Thanks.

DR. PORCH: Jack may want to weigh-in on this too, but the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council does have an FMP where they specify the MSY and the fishing mortality rate, and so the assessments are used to make sure that there's no overfishing going on and that the stock isn't declining below the biomass that would support the MSY, and so it is -- The assessments are directly used.

Since this is basically an annual crop, you really do need something close to annual assessments to manage it properly, and there's some other things that we track too, like a recruitment index, that is helpful for the fishery, and so the assessments are directly used for the Gulf of Mexico fishery management plan.

MR. BELL: Thanks. I guess then the Gulf is a little more involved, outside of just the states kind of running their fishery from state-to-state then.

DR. PORCH: A lot more involved. I mean, the shrimp fishery is a huge part of the Gulf of Mexico, and, of course, one of the most valuable fisheries in the country.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Clay, and thank you, Mel.

DR. COLLIER: One thing that was brought up at this last meeting was changing the format and the timing of statements of work, and I mentioned it slightly earlier, and so there was a proposed format for the new statement of work, and this was provided by Julie, and I think it was late materials that were provided to the SEDAR Steering Committee.

It starts off with the species that you're going to be assessing, and then it asks for additional models and additional years, and so those are clearly defined, and then there is going to be requested data updates, and they want those as specific as possible, and so you can see some examples of requested updates, and then there was a request for model modifications to the previous assessment, and those should be as specific as possible as well, and then new to this is the need for a topical working group, yes or no, and then what those topical working groups are.

Then, after that, the process for the topical working groups, whether it's a workshop or webinars, and then, underneath this, there was a proposed timing that the SEDAR Steering Committee worked on, basically looking at the assessed species approval in the spring, and then cooperators use the process, their own processes, to develop the statement of work, with those statements of work to be submitted to be submitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center by October 15, and, that way, the Science Center can get back to the cooperators with a memo by February 1 of

whether or not it's possible, and then the review bodies can get feedback and negotiate with the statements of work with the Science Center, and then the final statement of work is provided to the program manager by May 1.

These are a little bit new, and, if there's any questions on it, please let me know, but this is going to be the proposed format that we're going to work into our SEDAR Committee when we come up with our statements of work in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions or comments? These could be questions or comments on the entire document, and it looks like, Chip, you have a little bit more.

DR. COLLIER: The last part was just when the next meeting is going to occur.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments on the document or questions? I agree with Chip that, to me, the most important thing is that color-coded table. That's most helpful when we're having discussions and trying to figure out when is the next stock assessment, and we can see now what's underway, what is pending scheduling, and what the future requests are in each of the different regions.

DR. PORCH: I just wanted to comment in general, and I think the councils and all the representatives on the Steering Committee have been working really well together and trying to figure out how we can streamline the process, but maintain as much transparency as we can, and thoroughness, and one of the ways to streamline things is just do a better job of planning.

I mean, we are, as a Center, trying to reposition our resources to give more support to the councils in general, including stock assessments, but we only have so many resources, and so we just need to be efficient in the process, and so that means planning farther in advance, not making so many last-minute changes, and making sure that all the partners are fully aware of the upcoming schedule, when the data deadlines are, and just making sure the lines of communication are really open, and that's the only way we can really move forward and get more assessments done in the same amount of time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Clay.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that I listened in to the work done by this group, and I really commend Clay and all of those involved. As you pointed out, the picture here, the snapshot, is important, but it's so -- You don't really see all of the details, the moving parts, that are involved in pulling that off and the coordination that Clay talked about, and it's just phenomenal, and, if you think about it, this is the core of what we sort of -- We sort of live and die by these assessments, and so my hat is off to all of them and the level of work that goes into making this happen, everybody involved in all aspects, and it's just --

It's fascinating, and it's a tremendous amount of work, and it's way underfunded, in my opinion, and we've talked about that ad nauseum, but it's just -- There's a lot into it, and thank you so much, Clay, for your leadership in the meeting the other day, and despite communication problems initially and everything, and so it worked out great, and it's a great product, and let's just hope that nothing else happens and we can keep on schedule here. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel, I echo what you said, that all of the work done by Clay's team really is phenomenal, and I really appreciate the thoughtfulness that goes into -- You're right that it's not just the assessment projects, but it's into all these pieces, and so I really appreciate all the work, and, yes, there were some technical challenges at the beginning of that meeting, but great work, Clay, and thank you so much to your team.

Do we have any other questions or comments on this document? Chip, I don't think we need to take any action here on this Steering Committee report. I think we can go on to the stock assessment terms of reference approval, as long as I haven't missed something, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: No, and I will go into Attachment 3a. Attachment 3a is included in your SEDAR materials, and it's SEDAR 73, South Atlantic red snapper operational assessment terms of reference, and this is going to be an update of SEDAR 41, and what it's going to do is it's going to incorporate data through 2019. If you remember, SEDAR 41 actually had data through 2014, and so it's going to add an additional five years of data.

It's looking at including revised MRIP estimates, and these are primarily going to be incorporated into the discards, because the recreational catch side, at least for Florida, is estimated using a specialized survey during the mini-seasons, as well as there is some considerations for other catch estimates from Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina other than MRIP. There's also a request to update any new information on discard mortality and some F metrics.

If you guys listened to the SSC meeting, there was concerns about selectivity, and so what we're proposing to do is have a topical working group that we're going to hold before, or outside of, the SEDAR process, and what we want to do is look at the selectivity of hook-and-line, traps, and underwater cameras and get some information on that, and we have a proposal, statement of work, and that's going to be Attachment 3b, to discuss this in a little bit more detail and to go forward with it, through funding through the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

This workgroup that we're talking about would provide additional information, or would review the information that FWRI has collected, and hopefully provide information for not only red snapper, but for black sea bass and vermilion. Then the normal information for an update or operational assessment is to document changes, update model parameters, those things under Items 3 and 4, and then, under 5, we have to convene a panel, including the SSC, to meet via webinar and in-person, as needed. There might be some discussion on this, and then the Term of Reference Number 6 is to develop a report, and so if there is any questions or discussion on these terms of reference.

DR. PORCH: I have some concerns about TOR Number 5, and that is that it can be interpreted as having two separate workshops, one that is sort of like an assessment panel workshop that reviews everything about the model and another that focuses on the selectivity, and, when we were talking about this in March, at least my intent was that we would have the single workshop, and the whole idea of standard and operational assessments is that, if there is a review, it is of the new things that you're doing to the assessment, because all the other aspects of the assessment have been previously reviewed.

My concern is, if now we're adding a workshop, and so we'll have two workshops, and potentially trying to review the entire assessment again, it will slow the process down, and then I'm afraid

that we cannot meet, or we might not meet, that early spring deadline, because remember the whole idea was to streamline this assessment so that we could provide management advice in time for the 2021 fishing season, but, if we start encumbering the process with additional meetings, and even open up other aspects of the assessment to further scrutiny, there's a good possibility that the process will be delayed to the point that we won't be able to deliver management advice.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Clay.

DR. CRABTREE: I think I would like to hear what John says and then come back to me, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good. I have some questions, too.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Clay, I agree with you on the scope of what should be done here under Term of Reference 5, and I've always agreed that it's never been the intent of any of these non what was benchmark and what is future research track assessments -- That every aspect of the assessment should be reviewed and gone over again in the detail that it is in those more robust processes with the independent peer review.

What the intent here, my understanding is, is that this group focuses on the issues that are listed here in the terms of reference, and that's kind of their purpose. Those terms of reference are supposed to lay out the topics that they get into. As far as the two workshops, going back to this, as it has progressed from the original request as a research track to what was a standard assessment to what is now an operational assessment, the SSC had really wanted to have a data workshop and an assessment workshop and to make this very rigorous, and we recognize the issues that caused with trying to get this in the schedule and get it done sooner, and so my expectation was the council taking, outside of SEDAR, that SSC issue with selectivity and trying to get that addressed for this assessment, as well as other species addressed in the Florida study, and remove the need for one of the workshops, but then there would still be the SEDAR webinars, and in-person if needed, that would go through some of those other issues that are shown, I think, in like Term of Reference 2.

There would still be a need for panel, and I understand -- At the Steering Committee, we talked about the topical working group idea and more narrowly focusing what the groups get into in their operational, and I totally support that idea, but I feel that, in the case of this one, being red snapper, it's kind of been the -- It's kind of in the gap between where we're going with the new things planned and what's being done with the things that are on the table right now, that are underway, in SEDAR.

For that reason, and because this is red snapper, and we know that it's going to be under great scrutiny, I think it will really behoove us to have some panel, technical working group, and we can change the name, and I'm fine with that, that focuses on these issues in Number 2 and make sure we have SSC people involved in this, and I wouldn't want to get into a scenario where the SSC receives this in April and we're counting on this going to the council in June and getting into the fishing year and some issue pops up that an SSC member raises and we start having questions about best scientific information available.

As you said, it is red snapper, and I agree, and it will be a lot of scrutiny, and so I think it would help us to have some type of involvement, similar to what we have in the past, and keep it focused

in on these issues, because you are right that, if it's just an open book, then it could definitely slow down the progress.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. Before we go to Roy, I think my understanding was the same as John's, and that's why, Clay, you were asking if FWC could take the lead on this selectivity workshop, and, actually, the selectivity workshop now is not just red snapper, and it's multiple species, and so I thought there was still going to be an opportunity, through the process, that there could be a more robust discussion or guidance provided by SSC representatives, through some sort of panel, and so I thought that was why FWC was taking the lead on the selectivity, so that that would not take away from other assessment activities. I am going to stop there and pass it over to Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I don't have strong feelings about the details of how you do these workshops and webinars and things, but I think it's important that Clay and the Center be able to commit to getting this done in the spring of next year, and you're going to be up against a pretty tight timeline to get whatever the results are implemented in time for next year's red snapper season anyway, but you're pretty much going to have to have something ready to request an emergency rule, I would think, at your June meeting, or you're going to have to have some kind of special meeting to get that done, and so, to me, the timing issue here is critical.

I just do not see how you are going to be able to deal with the political pressure that's going to come down on you to get this done in time for next year's season, and so, however you resolve that, I think Clay has to be able to assure us that they can deliver this in time for you to take action before next year's season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Roy. I agree, but I just don't want to get to the end of this process and then we hear, well, we couldn't make those type of changes, or we couldn't really look at those things that were needed, because we were more concerned about timing.

DR. CRABTREE: If I could just respond to that point, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

DR. CRABTREE: You're going to get this new assessment next year, and people are going to have all sorts of complaints about it, because, in all likelihood, it's not going to give people the long season that they all seem to think they should have, and I don't care how many workshops you go through, but you're still going to have to deal with those kinds of things, but, if you get into next year, and this is all dragging on into the fall, then I just don't know how you're going to deal with that as a council, but you need to be prepared that it's not likely that this new assessment is going to give people what they want and make them all happy, but my hope is that it will give you something better than four to five days.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Roy.

MR. CONKLIN: I think we owe it to the public, the stakeholders, to try and get Item Number 1, the results of the Florida Fish and Wildlife selectivity study incorporated into -- Figure out how to incorporate it into the assessment model. I think that's the intent of this, and I sat through SEDAR 41 grinding my teeth, and the committee members and the public were putting this information

out to the panel, and it was -- I don't know if it was largely ignored, but it sure wasn't incorporated in, and I've heard a lot of pushback from the public about why that wasn't put in there, and I think this is an initiative to figure out a way forward, and, if we have a new assessment, this data should be incorporated in at any cost, and so, I mean, we saved a lot of money on this meeting, and, if we can fund an extra workshop in there and have another meeting next year to deliver a better product, even though it's probably not going to be -- Like Roy said, but I think it's our due diligence, and so I'll end with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris.

DR. PORCH: Let me be clear. I am agreeing with the first four terms of reference, and so all the things that Chris mentioned, and I'm agreeing that we will address those things, and so that's not the issue. The issue, for me, is the way TOR 5 is written, and it could be interpreted that it's kind of an open-ended review of model development, and, in fact, some things I have heard offline suggest as much, and so what I would like to do is maybe clarify that term of reference along the lines of what John Carmichael suggested. That is that the review of model development is focused on the items specifically mentioned in the previous four terms of reference, and so, if we just add some language there, that would help.

As far as a subsequent in-person workshop, personally, I think we could do that with webinars and that the SSC representatives that would participate in that webinar should also participate in the selectivity workshop that was proposed. I mean, that, to me, is the most efficient way to go forward. You have all the interested parties participate in that external-to-SEDAR workshop discussing selectivity, and, ideally, they would also discuss discard mortality, and then those representatives, along with anybody else that the council sees fit to assign to that sort of topic-oriented panel, could participate in a series of reviews afterwards, just to see how it was actually implemented in the model. What I don't want to see happen is that we just rehash everything about the model, and that will derail the process.

As far as the in-person workshop goes, I mean, that may end up being a moot point anyway, because it's not clear whether we'll get the go-ahead to travel as an agency, and the guidance I'm getting now is it still may be many months before they approve anything but life and property-type travel, but who knows, and that's an evolving situation, but, in any case, I'm not sure that we need an in-person workshop for that. I mean, we can present how everything was implemented in the model and review that on webinars.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Clay. Go ahead, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, and I will reiterate that I agree with Clay as well, and I think his suggestion to modify Term of Reference 5 to make it clear that the purpose of this group is dealing with the issues specified here in these terms of reference, and I think that's critical, and I think, to be consistent with how the Steering Committee is approaching this, rather than a panel, I would call it a working group, because I think that helps distinguish the approach in what we're expecting of these groups is different, going forward, than how they have viewed their role in the past.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Steve, I think I have an idea of how to edit Number 5 to fix things, but let me go to Steve first.

MR. POLAND: I was going to offer my idea for modified language.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You go ahead.

MR. POLAND: **Hearing everyone’s input, especially Clay and John, I see at least two potential changes to this language to help clarify it, and so the very first line is to convene a panel, and maybe, instead of “panel”, refer to it as a “workgroup”, and then, later on, in that same sentence, where it says, “as needed to review model development”, add in “relative to TORs 1 through 4”. That just clarifies that the scope of this workgroup is to review and provide input on TORS 1 through 4 and not the whole model development process.**

DR. COLLIER: Can you repeat that, Steve?

MR. POLAND: Which part? The whole thing? **You’ve got to convene a working group, including SSC representatives, to meet via webinar and in-person, as needed, in model development relative to TORs 1 through 4.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I like that, and I’m wondering if, Steve, the part where it says, “meet via webinar and in-person”, can we change the “and” to an “or”?**

MR. POLAND: **Yes, and I’m not optimistic at all.** I’m sure we’ll be meeting via webinar in September as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just want to be clear that this would be in addition to the selectivity workshop that the FWC is going to hold, and it’s not suggesting that the selectivity workshop won’t occur.

MR. POLAND: Yes, that’s my intent, because, in the draft TORs, right after that, it’s got the italicized language referencing that workshop.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so this looks like a motion, Steve.

MR. POLAND: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second?

MR. BELL: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I believe that was Mel, and so it’s under discussion. Either John or Clay, do you think that this captures what we were talking about, John, and then, Clay, will this work for you?

DR. PORCH: The first part of the motion works fine for me. I would like to preserve somewhere the sentiment that the SSC representatives that participate in that webinar should also participate in the selectivity workshop.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. John, I was frantically trying to review the selectivity statement of work, to see if what you're suggesting would work, Clay, because I wasn't sure that we had enough SSC representation on the statement of work for selectivity, but I am going to glance at that. John, do you want to add something here?

DR. ERRIGO: It looks like we lost him.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm in and out. I'm good with that. I think that's good, and I do like Clay's point about the SSC folks covering both of those workshops. That's important for consistency.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to throw that out there, I think that, on the selectivity item, I think that we need to add Dustin to this, but I think that we can probably work out those points on the selectivity workgroup. Is there more discussion on this? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I was just getting ready to say that the way it was worded before, which has now been corrected, the thought was that you would have the same SSC person, representatives, so that you would have the carryover of the information, and so you've corrected it now, and thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Just to be clear, we've had some modifications here, and the part about the selectivity workshop would be held outside, and then the notes to staff below, and so we took the selectivity part out of the motion, and I think folks are okay with that, but let me go back to Steve.

MR. POLAND: I am just re-reading the motion, and I don't have any problems with the intent there, and just probably some minor wording modifications. **It says, "as needed in model development", and maybe take "in" out and insert back the original language of "to review model development relative to terms of reference".** I think that reads a little cleaner.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It sure does, and so, Mel, I think you're the seconder, are you okay with this?

MR. BELL: Yes, I think that's clear, and that makes sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on this? **Is there any objection to this motion? That motion carries.** Then, Chip, do we need to go back to this now modified terms of reference and approve the entire terms of reference as modified?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that would be good to do that, to make it clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Can I get a motion to do that? **What we're needing here is a motion to approve the South Atlantic red snapper operational assessment terms of reference, as modified.**

MR. POLAND: **So moved, Madam Chair.**

MS. BECKWITH: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. It's moved by Steve and seconded by Anna. All right. Any more discussion? I don't know, Chip, if you want to -- Do you have the motion there, before we -- I'm going to go back to Clay.

DR. PORCH: I'm sorry. I thought we were done with this, and I was just going to ask for an update on the status of that selectivity workshop, because the sooner the better for us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just hang on, and it looks like Chip is getting the motion up there, and so just stand by, Clay.

DR. PORCH: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. There is the motion, and the motion was seconded. **Any more discussion on the motion to approve Red Snapper SEDAR 73 terms of reference, as modified?** Any more discussion on that? **Any objection to that motion? That motion carries.** Now back to Clay on your question on the selectivity.

DR. PORCH: Again, I just wanted to get an update on the status of when that would be held, because the sooner the better for us, so we can make sure that we deliver the product on time.

DR. COLLIER: I've been in communications with Ted Switzer, and we have a plan forward, and we don't have timing on it yet, and we would like to get it to the Science Center by late fall, and, just given the difficulties in setting up meetings, and we are starting to recognize the fact that, in all likelihood, this is going to not be an in-person meeting, and it's likely to be through webinar, and so that might delay things a bit, but we're trying to set it up, and I didn't want to go too far in establishing this without getting approval by the council first. Madam Chair, do you want me to go through this Attachment 3b, which is the proposal, or the statement of work, for that selectivity workgroup?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, please.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so this workgroup is one of those topical working groups that was mentioned previously through the SEDAR Steering Committee, and, also, Clay had mentioned it as well, and it was requested by the SSC, as well as the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. If you remember, it was presented to the SSC back in October, and the information from this selectivity stuff that we're talking about was presented to the SSC in October of 2018, and they also indicated that there was additional information on selectivity of vermilion snapper and black sea bass.

However, the SSC, at that point, did not have time to review all the material, and they were mainly focused just on red snapper, and so council staff thought it was a good idea to work on all three of these species at one time and really do a thorough review of the selectivity study and make it so that it's available in future SEDARs for a variety of species.

When the information was originally presented, I think in 2018, it had not been completely finalized, and they were trying to get as much information to the SSC as possible, but they hadn't completely aged all of their information, and so now they have some better-informed age-based

selectivity that wasn't originally presented to the SSC, as well as, I have mentioned before, vermilion snapper and black sea bass.

Getting into the statement of work, what this working group would do is review the selectivity study, review and discuss the pros and cons, and to describe selectivity among the different gears that they used. In this study, they used hook-and-line gear, trap gear, videos, and, within the hook-and-line, they also had different types of trips that they would do, whether it was a random selection or a captain's choice. Then the other one, another term of reference, is discuss which species have sufficient data to inform selectivity and then provide recommendations on appropriate methods to incorporate the data into SEDAR 73 and other potential assessments, and then the final one is to develop a report.

This is just a proposed participants list, in order to give you guys an estimate of how much involvement there would be, and we were thinking three members from FWC, two members from South Carolina DNR, since they work with the chevron traps, some members from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and what I was thinking was definitely include the stock assessment scientist for red snapper in the South Atlantic, as well as a potential stock assessment scientist from the Gulf of Mexico that might work on red snapper as well.

It would be good to have a scientist from the Gulf of Mexico, and they do have some studies that have looked at selectivity for red snapper, and maybe try to get one of them involved, and then have three members of the SSC included, and then we would have staff members attended, and not necessarily be part of the working group, and so that would give the total number of attendees up to fifteen, with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center members -- The council doesn't necessarily have to pay for those. That is the proposal. If there's any questions, please let me know, or if you guys would like to see it modified in any way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are there questions or concerns here? I think we also have Dustin on the webinar, if there are some questions that I can't answer. Clay, do you have more questions, now that we've gone over this?

DR. PORCH: I don't really have questions, but I just want to support having a diverse group with expertise in this area participate, and I like the idea of having people outside the immediate region who could be viewed as kind of independent participating in the workshop and even in the subsequent webinars.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Based on that, do you think we need to up the number of attendees here?

DR. PORCH: Are you asking me or generally?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Both. I am asking you if you think, for example, one Gulf scientist is enough, or do we need to have more outside independent folks, but I'm also asking the committee.

DR. PORCH: Well, my two-cents is I think it would be useful to have at least one person that is kind of completely independent and has expertise in estimating selectivity, and so it could be an academic from somewhere, and we could float a few names out there, if you were interested, but having someone that is fairly independent of the process would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I really like that idea. I see Genny has her hand up.

DR. NESSLAGE: Thank you. I just wanted to echo that sentiment. The SSC, when we first discussed the possibility of incorporating this new information into the red snapper assessment, recommended that an outside expert on selectivity be brought in, at least one, and so that would be great. I think that would be something that the SSC would support.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I like adding that here to the table. To me, what we're doing here is we're having one Gulf scientist plus an additional person with expertise in this, and so Chip looks like he's working on that. While Chip is adding this in, any more comments or discussion or concerns on this? If we don't have any more comments or concerns, then I would be looking for a motion to approve this statement of work, as modified. Before we do that, Julie.

MS. NEER: I just wanted to make note that the selectivity workshop was, at least in my understanding, was going to talk about more than red snapper. If that is no longer the case, that's fine, but you do reference SEDAR 73 several times and talk about red snapper, and I just want to make sure that is not getting lost in the discussions. If it is only red snapper and that's the will of the council, that's fine, but I just want to make sure that it's clear. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That's great. Thank you for bringing that up. I am looking back to the top of the statement of work, and it looks like it's just called South Atlantic Selectivity Workgroup statement of work, and it does look like we have references to SEDAR 73, but I also see that it looks like we're going to cover other things, and it looks like vermilion and black sea bass. Then, Chip, can you go back to the draft motion? They call it a workgroup, and do we need to call it workgroup? All right. Thank you, Julie. All right. Are there more comments or concerns here or discussion? Would someone like to make that motion that's on the committee?

MS. BECKWITH: **I am happy to make that motion, Madam Chair.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's moved by Anna and seconded by Steve. I assume you have your hand up for seconding?

MR. POLAND: Yes, and I was going to make it too, but I also do have a question, for clarification, and I do second the motion Anna made, but, as far as I guess timing and process of appointing these individuals, would that be up to us? How do we foresee that taking place?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had that exact same question, since we don't have a list of names here for the committee to discuss, and how are we thinking about doing that, or is that something that we're leaving up to the SSC? Chip, do you have any answers to these questions?

DR. COLLIER: Maybe not an answer, but maybe some guidance. There is a process that you guys can take to do an interim approval of participants for such things, and that could be an opportunity for it. I don't think having the SSC approve it, because they don't meet until September, or they don't meet until October, and you guys won't meet again until September, and so developing the list of participants and getting approval through that process is going to be very delayed, and doing it through the interim approach could save some time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. I agree that the waiting until the council meeting, or waiting until the SSC meeting, especially if we wait until the SSC meeting and then the council takes action after that, and then we're talking about council action in December, and so, yes, I think some type of interim process is what we would need to approve the folks for this workgroup. Does that work?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We do have that process that was developed for SEDAR, and it allows the council chair and the committee chair and the ED to approve appointments when they are necessary outside of the regular cycle of meetings, and I think that would work just fine in this case.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John.

MR. POLAND: That sounds good to me. It sounds like a good way forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so it sounds like direction to staff that we would approve the participants via the interim process. All right. Any more discussion on Motion Number 3 there? **Any objections to Motion Number 3, which is approve the South Atlantic selectivity workgroup statement of work? I don't hear any objections or see any hands, and that motion carries.** Chip, I'm going to turn it back to you for the next item that we need to approve here.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Thank you. The next item is the black sea bass terms of reference. Black sea bass doesn't have a SEDAR number yet, and this is going to have -- It's going to update the SEDAR 56 model with data from 2015 to 2019, and it's going to follow the BAM configuration, as most of our models in the South Atlantic do.

Here are the specific items that were considered for changes or deviations from the benchmark model, and it is to include new information on steepness, update and include new information on discard mortality or life history, calculate different F metrics, and then consider a selectivity analyses to address the SSC concerns with chevron traps and cameras, and that is likely to be covered in that selectivity working group that you guys just approved. This language down here is the same as it was for red snapper, and so you guys might consider changing the language here, as similar to what it was before, and, with that, I will turn it back to the committee for their discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip.

DR. BELCHER: I would kind of like to suggest, under Number 2, where it says to calculate different F metrics. In addition to apical F, I think it would be good to at least see, again, what the differences are, the sensitivity to it. Just throwing in new F metrics without looking at the impact I think is kind of going away from what we did with other things.

DR. COLLIER: Can you say that again, so I can get it in there?

DR. BELCHER: Just the idea of, where it says calculate different F metrics, probably changing it to say, "in addition to apical F", and then leave the parentheses with "to address shifts in the age of apical F towards the end of the assessment time series". I just think it would be good to see, at least for the sensitivity, what that shift actually does if you look at a different metric.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn, do you think that how Chip modified it addresses what you are suggesting here?

DR. BELCHER: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good comment. Any more comments or questions? If there aren't any more comments or questions, then what we would need here is a motion to approve the black sea bass operational assessment terms of reference, as modified, but, before we do that, I see that Chip has highlighted there, and did you have something else that you wanted to discuss?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so this was -- I mean, it's similar to what was included in red snapper, and it doesn't have the in-person part, but it does have the via webinar, and I was just wondering if you want to take the "convene a workgroup", similar to what was discussed for red snapper, as well as the ending for that one, in order to make it match a little bit more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay, do you have some thoughts on this?

DR. PORCH: Well, in general, I think the whole spirit of operational and standard assessments is to focus on the changes that are being made to the model, and so, yes, I think it would be useful to make sure that's clear, just so the participants don't get the idea that they are re-reviewing every aspect of the model.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It looks like Chip is working on that. Okay. Any more discussions on this? Chip, do you have anything else that we should talk about?

DR. COLLIER: No, and that's all I saw.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **Once again, I would be looking for a motion from the committee to approve the black sea bass operational assessment terms of reference, as modified.**

MR. POLAND: **So moved, Madam Chair.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Steve, and do I have a second?

MR. BELL: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's seconded by Mel, and so I'm going to let Chip get the motion there on the board. **The motion is approve the black sea bass stock assessment terms of reference, as modified.** Any more discussion of this motion? **Any objection to this motion? I don't see any hands raised, and the motion carries.** Back to you, Chip, for Spanish mackerel.

DR. COLLIER: All right. We're getting close to the end. Spanish mackerel, this is going to be an operational assessment, and we're going to incorporate data through 2020 and apply it to the current BAM configuration. The specific changes in this one are update growth and reproductive models if additional samples are available for fish below 275 millimeters, and that's primarily

there to help with reproductive model, to develop length at maturity ogives, and I think there were very few in past assessments.

If available, improve information on steepness for similar pelagic species, evaluate uncertainty with respect to the recreational landings, and here is calculate the other F metrics, and so you guys might want to consider making the change, similar to what you did in the previous one. Then the other terms of reference are the exact same as what you saw for black sea bass, and so there might be some consideration for modification of Terms of Reference Number 5. With that, I will give it back to the Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chip.

DR. BELCHER: I just want to say that I support the change in language in Item 2, the bullet relative to the apical F again, and also the change in the language to Item Number 5, similar to what we did for red snapper and black sea bass.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Chip, I assume you're going to type those in there.

DR. COLLIER: I am .

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. POLAND: I was going to make the same suggestion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion here or comments or questions? We're going to basically modify these terms of reference with the same two changes that we just made to the black sea bass terms of reference, and one of them is in Number 2, and then the other one is in Number 5. Steve, are you also -- I see your hand is still raised. Are you also going to make a motion to approve the Spanish mackerel assessment terms of reference, as modified?

MR. POLAND: **So moved, Madam Chair.**

MR. BELL: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Steve, and thank you, Mel, the seconder. All right. **We now have the motion typed up on the board, and this is Motion Number 5, to approve the South Atlantic Spanish mackerel terms of reference, as modified.** Any more discussion of this motion? **Is there any objection to this motion? Seeing no hands, the motion carries.** With that, I think we're down to Other Business, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? I don't see any hands, and so the SEDAR Committee stands adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 10, 2020.)

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SAFMC June Council Meeting

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