

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

**Hilton New Bern Riverfront Hotel
New Bern, NC**

December 8, 2010

SUMMARY MINUTES

SEDAR Committee:

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Mark Robson

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Tom Swatzel

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Dr. Jack McGovern
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Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
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Additional Observers and Participants Attached

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Hilton New Bern/Riverfront Hotel, New Bern, North Carolina, December 8, 2010, and was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m. by Chairman David Cupka.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, I'd like to call the SEDAR Committee meeting to order. The first order of business will be approval of the agenda. Are there any changes to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved. The next order of business is approval of the minutes. Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes? Seeing none, then the minutes are approved. That brings us down to our next agenda item, which an overview of SEDAR activities, and I'm going to turn it over to John and let him bring us up to date on what has been recently.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Quite a lot of activity has been going on with SEDAR during this year. Recently concluded was the SEDAR 24 assessment for South Atlantic Red Snapper. That was wrapped up in October. The SSC met in November and you'll get information on that during the Snapper Grouper Committee.

Just recently, right before Thanksgiving a review workshop was held for SEDAR 23, Goliath grouper. The review panel had quite a few issues with that assessment; and for the most part the assessment was rejected. We're hoping that there is going to be some information that comes out of it. They may have some insight on stock status and try to see what pieces of information that were used might be reliable that then the SSCs can use to try and get some information.

But there were a lot issues with that assessment, as expected, and one of the challenges being that essentially there is no catch for these Goliath grouper due to the moratorium that has been in place, the no-take provisions that have been in place for a long time. We also had a review following that of spiny lobster.

It was a joint review of the South Atlantic and Gulf SSC representatives because it was an update assessment conducted by Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. There were numerous issues with that assessment as well. Most of that was discussed obviously during the spiny lobster assessment, but there is a lot of difficulty in trying to figure out what is going with the South Atlantic spiny lobster stock because of connectivity with the overall Caribbean region and dependence, it seems, and recruits coming through the Caribbean into Florida and not having a strong indication that building spawning stock within Florida necessarily returns you a whole lot of recruits back to that stock in particular.

We don't have the reports from that as we noted from that group either and expect all of this will be coming to both the Gulf and SSCs in their next couple of meetings to try and work that out. That's what is going on with SEDAR and what is recently concluded, and what we're looking forward to is a coming action item where we will talk about participants for the black sea bass and golden tilefish.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, John. Questions or comments for John? Seeing none, then we will move into the report of the steering committee meeting. I think, John, you did want to get feedback on some of the issues we'll be going over in the steering committee report. As we go

over those, you want to bring those to our attention, we can try and get you some input at that time as we go through it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay, sure, David. The steering committee met in October. They had quite a long meeting. They talked a lot about the process and procedures related to SEDAR, which is a lot of their normal business. In particular at this meeting there was a lot of discussion of documentation and communication issues, how the councils work with the SEDAR staff, how the different councils work together and then working with the different federal agencies that are all involved, just trying to keep the process effective, efficient, making sure that the communication lines are open and that we have documentation.

The steering committee provided some guidance back about we were going to try to work more with memos and such and work better with the councils and just really – you know, for the most part it's just the growing pains of a process that went from being me, the sole person involved doing a couple of assessments a year, to having potentially up to three coordinators at this point that we're looking at.

This year I think we had 12 different assessments underway, so normal growing pains and the steering committee worked through it; and as always, the process has remained pretty flexible and adaptable to the situations that we face. A lot of the discussion, of course, was about the process that we rolled out here for 2010, the use of webinars for the assessment, how efficient that proved to be, where we're getting more people involved, are we able to increase our workload doing that, and, of course, the schedule.

So what I'd like to talk some now, first, is about the process changes that the steering committee has discussed. Unlike the last time where the steering committee made some process changes and then we rolled them out and went with them, the steering committee said that they would put these out to get some comment from the councils, from the SSCs, and we've created a task force of SEDAR staffs and council staff, regional office staff, science center staff to refine this, give it some deep thought and make sure we've covered all the bases, there are no surprises expected to pop up as we put this into the process, and then the steering committee will meet over a conference call in February to finalize it.

This would be a great opportunity now to get some comments back from the council level on the process changes that we're considering. To start with, you notice that there has been an addition to the types of assessments that SEDAR is considering. We're considering a benchmark assessment, a standard assessment and then an update assessment.

A benchmark will continue to be very similar to what SEDAR has always done as a benchmark; reconsider all the data; consider multiple models; thorough evaluation of all aspects. The sort of middle tier that is inserted is what we're terming a SEDAR standard assessment, and this would be a followup to a benchmark. You could never do this first; you could only do after you've done the full benchmark. It will be streamlined a bit in that you won't consider any feasible model given the data. You will focus on the model that was put forth from the benchmark assessment.

If the benchmark went forth with a production model and a catch-at-age model, you may look at both of those models just to maintain some linkage if the review panel thought that both of those models were viable. But if there was a model type that they didn't look into – if you had looked at stock synthesis model in the benchmark and they didn't think that model was ready to go forward, when you got to the standard you wouldn't look at that model again.

A lot of times a lot of the extra work that comes into the assessment is doing models that the review panel the last time didn't necessarily think were going anywhere. That's one way of kind of reining in the workload a little bit, and that's really what all this about. If an assessment scientist can do a model of a stock, and I try to do an assessment of a particular stock and I want to do three model classes, that might take three assessment people as opposed to I could have those three people working on three different species, and that's really the logic behind this.

Another way of bringing this in is the idea of limiting some of the new discussions, so address issues that are supported by new data; if there are discard mortality studies, review that; if there is a new index, review that; but if there is not any information on some of these aspects, say stock ID or stock structure, then you wouldn't get into those discussions because you have nothing to add.

The idea is to not go back over the same ground unless there is a different direction you may head in that is going to be supported by data. We would like the SSC to be heavily involved in identifying those issues because we think that's very important. One thing this allows is the ability to bring in some new data.

We've left that open in the standard assessment and the thought being here we have a lot of things we've done through a benchmark assessment recently and we have a lot of new data coming on in the South Atlantic. To avoid trying to have to go through the full benchmark process for every one of those stocks, this would allow us to say bring in that new independent sampling for the things we're already done in a benchmark in a faster and more efficient method and get that data incorporated into more assessments quicker. That's really a key thing behind all of this.

They will also still go through, importantly, the SEDAR peer review, the regular peer review panel we have and just like the benchmarks, and we'll either try to do, say, a peer review panel of a number of these standard assessments; or depending on how the assessment schedule works out, maybe we would do a benchmark and a standard at the same time. We'll work that out with the workload, but it's important to note that it will have the full SEDAR peer review.

And then the final part is the SEDAR Update Assessment. As a lot of you know, the updates have been defined with a pretty substantial gray area about them. It's not real clear what an update is and what can be changed in an update, and that was intentional to allow some flexibility and to allow the SSCs to have a role in saying what can change in an update. What we're proposing here is that an update would come in only after you've done a benchmark and probably the standard a couple of times.

So what you have is an assessment framework that has really been reviewed several times, it's quite robust, and you would just be adding new observations to the data series that you have in place; no method changes, no changes in anything, just new observations. The idea is that this would be done rapidly; every year for some stocks, within five years for most stocks, probably one to three years given what we're hearing at the national level for how timely we want our assessments to be.

This could take about a month and working with the science center, and the idea is that the science center and the lead analyst would request the data from the various sources that they then incorporated into the model. They would update the results and it would go to the SSC for review. This is intended to be a very rapid approach.

The process of, say, a given stock that you've never assessed, it would go through a benchmark. If that benchmark went really well, you go through a standard assessment, you may go through a standard assessment a second time, and then you would go into the update. We don't have any stocks at this point in time that we think would fit into this update assessment category as it's currently described.

Everything we've done a benchmark for already would at least go through the standard assessment before we got to the benchmark. Some stocks such as Spanish mackerel, where there are a lot of issues with the benchmark and all the information wasn't fully accepted, we'd like to run another benchmark assessment before we get to the standard assessment, so that we can get these issues worked out.

As I said, the idea is I would get some feedback from you guys here and then we have task force that is working on this, and we want to get it to the steering committee for our approval in February. I'll open it up for some comments and suggestions and feedback.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, John. As John has indicated, SEDAR continues to be an evolving process and the steering committee is always looking for ways to streamline the process because we have a tremendous workload that we're trying to meet. Even though I think Bonnie's group is going to be adding some people, we still have a lot of needs there and so we're constantly looking for ways to improve the process and streamline the process to be more responsive to what we need. Are there comments relative to the proposed new structure on assessments?

MR. GEIGER: John, that was an absolutely great presentation. Taking that and capitalizing on an idea that Ben had – and he spoke about this morning that just absolutely rang a bell in my head – was we need to capture that presentation with an expansion on a video that we can give to the public or have available to the public via the website somehow, maybe both the video, disk and on the website with an expansion of not just this but expanding the SEDAR itself, the body of the SEDAR and the type of data that goes into it with an explanation of the different indices that are considered in the process and have that available as a vehicle to help educate.

As you said, Ben, you had that idea this morning that somehow we've got to educate the public and now you've got interest on the part of fishermen, we need to have some type of a 101 program, and this I think was a wonderful prelude to that; and if you expand it and talk about

what the body of an assessment is and explain the different indices, I think that would go a long way, if you agree.

You know, John, you are so good at explaining this stuff in terms that people can understand and your presentation is so good, you'd be the perfect person to do this as a video, I think. Would you consider that? I don't know if the steering committee has to look at that or not, but I think that Ben's idea of educating the public is something that we really need to do. We've talked about how to do it, and I just think that this being a prelude or a preamble to expanding what an assessment is and using a video and video technology on a disk that costs nothing once you produce it. We have the in-house knowledge; let's just do it.

MR. HARTIG: John, did you guys discuss the peer review process in any depth about possibly changing that? I guess with the update you're going to use the SSC to review that, and so you're changing that part of it. Have you thought about other different changes in the peer review process?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We didn't specifically at that meeting. However, in the rejections of Goliath and the issues with spiny and then I've had some communication with Rick Methot, who has been working on the progress at the national level on stock assessments and the timing issues that they face, and he was pretty concerned with, well, did anything come out of Goliath so we're going to be able to say anything about status or improvement of the stock even qualitatively.

And so we had some conversations about the need to perhaps modify terms of reference and to ensure that we get some information from these people, even if things are getting better, things are getting worse, anything like that so that there isn't this tendency to, well, the terms are kind of geared toward a very technical review of the assessment and if you sort of reject the foundation in the assessment, then all the rest of it just floats out the window.

And the thought that I had this morning – and we were just talking about it some – was that maybe we do need to really look closely at these peer reviews and especially the terms of reference, which are the instructions we give to them. And my thought this morning – and I haven't really fully worked this out – was that perhaps we should focus on what do we really want to get and some general questions that we could ask of them and also have the technical aspects that we have now, but also maybe a segment that is general questions; things like is overfishing occurring, is the stock overfished, do you have a stock-recruitment relationship, can you estimate reference points; the sort of straightforward questions that are inherent in the terms of reference as written, but they're not really stated simply and explicitly.

We ask for stock status and then, well, we reject the assessment so we can't give you stock status. Depending on how the group of people who are reviewers interpret the English language and how they read words – and it's different when you get someone from Norway versus someone from Australia versus someone from the United States; they don't always want to just give those simple questions.

My thought is to work something in here as well that we just put those simple questions out there so that even if you reject the entire assessment model as put forth, well, there may be information

in the trends that allow you say we don't believe overfishing is occurring. I think that would be a big help, for one thing, and then that may help us make sure that we get some information. We are thinking about that, and other aspects of it we haven't really discussed so I'm wondering if there are some parts of it that you were thinking in particular that you might want to bring up.

MR. HARTIG: No, you covered it pretty well, because in the Goliath grouper assessment the CIE reviewers themselves said although we can't give you the benchmarks, we could give you some qualitative information about the stock and how we think the direction is going. That certainly would have been helpful to have that kind of information from them. I'm not sure exactly – I haven't seen the report yet – about what they actually said so we'll see when we get their reports.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm thinking of this as getting back to the basics and making it kind of simple, at least one part of it to answer the kind of questions that Roy asked at the end of the assessment, well, those guys are done, is it overfished or is it overfishing? Sometimes you shouldn't have to dig for that kind of stuff; but if they rejected the assessment, sometimes you do as you noted with Goliath, so maybe this will be a way to get past that.

MR. HARRIS: John, I'm always curious as to whether the CIE reviewers question the type of model that was used for the assessment because that was done I think for either vermilion or Spanish. I get those two mixed up because the review workshop was at the same time. I know that there are some new models out there that have been developed by stock assessment scientists, but the question is have they been through a peer – the model itself been through a peer-review process.

Are we still using models that are not peer reviewed and are we still having problems with CIE reviewers because they're not familiar with models and they think that there might be better models out there?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think that we've having that issue anymore. I think part of it is we've been very consistent in the types of models we've used. It's only within the Beaufort – and we've now gotten to the point where we've been doing it long enough that in most instances of the three CIE reviewers, two of them have been here before and they some familiarity with the model, and I think that's really a huge plus.

Like the one that we did for red snapper, those guys were familiar with our data systems and with our management system and with the models that we used and they didn't have to get into that type of thing, and, yes, I think we've come past that. Our models are peer reviewed and we are not having those issues.

MR. O'SHEA: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the value of using your presentation, John, as a teaching outreach tool to the stakeholders. My question is a little bit different. In terms of the SEDAR meeting, one of the underlying themes when I was there was that we have limited science resources and we're pressing them on the other side with the demand for increased frequency, and it's sort of an economics problem and something is going to have to give.

And in doing that, I think there was this idea that in some cases a leaner, meaner type of science advice is what we're going to have to live with in the future, and I think that's frankly the way we need to go. It occurred to me that may butt up against this other thing in Magnuson that says we have an obligation to use best available science.

Maybe a simple way to put this is to say if we could do a benchmark but then decided to do an update instead, would we still be meeting the criteria of best available science? My sense is that best and available are linked together; so at the time you're making your decision if the only thing that you have available is an update, then that's the best available science. Now, I'm not trying to speak for NOAA General Counsel and maybe Monica wants to chime in, but I think it's important that best available science criteria shouldn't tie our hands to having this perfect science when we don't frankly have the resources to generate it on the frequency that we need to make management decisions. Thank you.

MR. CUPKA: Yes, there was another area that we had a lot of discussion on. Of course, the bottom line is to try and get as good assessments as we can and get as many of them done as possible, but another thing that was talked about was I guess what we could call, for lack of a better term, outside assessments that may be done by other groups or supported by other groups and then brought to us. We did have some discussion on that and about getting the SSC to review them at least preliminarily to see if it ought to go through a full review, and I didn't know if you wanted to touch on that now, John, or wait.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, one of the issues that we brought up at the committee under the other business item, because it was something when we were setting up this meeting that was an issue to bring up, it's the idea of assessments to come from sources outside of SEDAR and the associated agency. Originally when SEDAR was developed, it was not intended that it would have to be the only source of stock assessment information because that can be limiting at times.

Now, that was early on. Things are kind different now and standards are a lot higher and things are a bit more complex than they used to be. There is interest now in assessments coming from other sources and the steering committee is aware of that. Of course, one of the concerns is that you can have a lot of resources tied up in trying to validate what was actually done; and most importantly is in trying to evaluate the data.

There are quite a few people around this table that don't have to be reminded that the whole reason we have SEDAR was because of a data issue and a core assessment that was approved and published in a peer-reviewed journal; and so people said, well, if it's in a peer-reviewed journal you ought to be able to use, and we know that the assessment standards are higher than that, and what you go through in a stock assessment review and developing these assessments is way more rigorous than what goes into a peer-review journal.

The peer-review journal generally said that the data are there and they're right; and if they're not right, well, we're really talking about method, anyway. That doesn't cut it here. So reviewing that data is, of course, of paramount importance, so what the steering committee has talked about is initially having the SSCs look at these -- an assessment comes in from an outside source, the SSC look at it, decide if it looks like it's in the ballpark -- you know, the SSCs are ideally people

who know the fisheries within the region fairly well and should know if the data are at least in the ballpark; is landings reported in millions when they think it should be multiple millions or what have you.

If they think then it looks like it has some promise, it could be recommended up to a more rigorous review through the science center. Our long-term plan is develop some explicit guidelines for dealing with this situation, but in the meantime we're putting forth to use the SSC as the first tier of review; and if they think it passes initial muster and it looks like it holds some promise, then it would be forwarded up for more intensive review, which would involve essentially the appropriate agencies going through and initially evaluating all the data, making sure that all the landings that are being added are correct, and then maybe doing some brief work to look into the results and make sure that it seems like it's on the right track.

Obviously, it's a bit of a time-consuming process and we'd much rather have people involved at the initial levels work through our systems to provide the data and provide some support and avoid having just something come up out of nowhere and not know what the sources are; but if that happens we're at least initially prepared to deal with it and we're going to work on it down the road.

DR. PONWITH: To that end, the thing I think would be counterproductive is a scenario where we've got dueling stock assessments; because instead of advancing the through-put of stock assessments, which is something we're all interested in doing, it would actually slow down the process of trying to tease apart two different approaches as opposed to doing comparative analysis within an actual stock assessment. I think the way we proceed on this is going to have to be very smart so that's its something that actually contributes to the through-put rather than erodes our existing capability.

MR. CUPKA: Yes, we were very aware of that and, obviously, that was a point that we made during our discussions, but it is another source. I think it's going to continue to grow. We're going to see perhaps increased pressure to look at – I won't say pressure but these things brought to our attention as we move ahead.

We don't want to bog system down, but we want to make sure that whatever is brought to us is something that deserves further consideration before we get too far into it. Roy, did you have something?

DR. CRABTREE: John, the working group that we're putting together; when is this going to happen?

MR. CARMICHAEL: It's happening now. I've sent the initial framework out to the group.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, when did we even assign people to a group?

MR. CARMICHAEL: At the meeting.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, could you send it around because I haven't seen a list of who is on the group?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, it was Erik Williams and Clay Porch and Jack from your staff and Luiz, SEDAR staff.

DR. CRABTREE: All right, well, send that around because I don't recall when the steering committee approved any of those people, so it seems like that is –

MR. CARMICHAEL: We talked about people in general and we might not have formally approved them.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, and that's a big problem because we need to do that, so I would say that working group is not yet formed until we do that. What is the timeline to complete their work?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, we want to have steering committee call by February; so if we're going here in the middle of December without having an active group, then we're probably not going to meet that, I guess.

DR. CRABTREE: No, because I'm slowly coming to the conclusion that SEDAR just isn't meeting our needs and needs to be really completely redesigned, and to me there are two major problems with it. One, we have to have more assessments, and I think it has got to be more than just streamlining SEDAR.

If we make SEDAR a faster process but we don't get anymore stock assessments, then I don't that really accomplished much, so I think it has got to be streamlining to produce more assessments. I don't see how with annual catch limits we can continue to operate with the number of assessments we have in the past.

And the other thing – and this is a huge concern to me – is the process simply isn't I don't producing robust scientific advice in a lot of respects because there are too many inconsistencies from one SEDAR to the next and too many inconsistencies about how something is done in the South Atlantic versus how something is done in the Gulf.

We've tried workshop and methods' workshops and things on that, but I think the problem is still there. The whole purpose of SEDAR is to produce useful advice for management, and I don't think advice that is not robust to those kinds of things, meaning you get an assessment that is done one way and then you get another assessment and something is done a different way, so the results tend to bounce around because of changes or you can't really explain why one group did it differently than the other.

That's not the kind of scientific advice that to me is useful to management. Management can't handle science that is moving around too much. It just keeps things in turmoil and you're always changing things, and I think it erodes public confidence. We have got to somehow get these to the point where if changes are made from how things are done, there is a very good reason for it

and not just because one set of scientists happens to have a different view than the other one; or particularly sometimes one particular scientist happens to be very aggressive in pushing his person viewpoint and that's how things go.

I think it's critical that when we redesign this process that it really focus and address those two. I suspect that is going to take more time than just February, but I think what you need to do now is send out to the people who are to appoint members of this task force and we need a more formal process of naming who is going to be on it and get that done. I think this is really critical and we really need to think hard about major changes to how we're doing things.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, just a question for John. John, I know the Management and Science Committee at ASMFC is talking about the possibility of embedding one of the peer reviewers in the assessment process as a means of I guess improving communication and possibly helping to facilitate the process.

Is that something that you all talked about at SEDAR and what do you think of that idea? I know that at least the pilot process that we were thinking about using for that is American eel, and there has been some concern expressed by the American Eel Stock Assessment Committee about having a peer reviewer embedded through the whole process. I would just be interested in hearing your thoughts on it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We've talked about that some. We've brought in peer reviewers at other levels. One of the issues you get in is if you bring in the peer reviewers from the CIE, there is an independence aspect and it creates issues if you have someone involved at the data workshop and then the assessment workshop; and then if they were to come in as a reviewer, well, they're not independent.

There are issues with having a person from the CIE involved in the assessment workshop stage as more than a reviewer. A lot of times we'd really like to get some feedback from them and get information and some solutions, and that's not exactly in fitting with the current mission of the CIE. There is a lot of talk now about, well, maybe that could be made part of the mission, but that creates issues with independence.

We sent the red snapper out for a pre-review and got a written desk review from a CIE reviewer who made some suggestions; most of them implemented; some worked out well; some that didn't. If you looked at the review panel report, you noticed those issues were raised. They raised issues about reviewing the reviewer. That caught the attention of the CIE; so the idea of embedding them seems to hold some promise for adding some consistency, but I think it creates a lot of issues with sort of the independence of the reviewer, so it hasn't been that easy to implement.

MR. MAHOOD: Three things to address what Roy said. First, Roy, my recollection of the SEDAR Steering Committee was we told John, when we decided what we wanted to look at relative to changes and recommendations that we brought back to the SEDAR Steering Committee at the next meeting was we just told John to get you a group and do it. I don't think we ever asked him to have that group ratified by the SEDAR Steering Committee.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, if I could, I disagree with that. We were told we were going to put a group together and there would be representatives from the regional office, the councils and the science center, and now no one has come to me and asked me who is the representative do you want from the regional office, so I don't agree with that.

MR. MAHOOD: Well, I think we're talking semantics. I think he did put a group together and I think that's what we –

DR. CRABTREE: We're not talking semantics; we're talking about who is going to be on the group, and I want to be able to name who from the regional office is going to be on the group, and that hasn't happened.

MR. MAHOOD: Are you okay with Jack?

DR. CRABTREE: I want John to contact me and I'll let John know who I want to be on that group.

MR. MAHOOD: Okay, and then the other two points you made about the robustness and using different methodologies and different assessments based on where you are, I agree that's a problem, but it's a hard problem to overcome because I think on the front end of that is the reason we have so many problems is the data, the lack of data that we have in some of these assessments.

I think as that gets better we're going to get more robust stock assessments. As far as getting one group of scientists to do something the way another group of scientists did it, that's a more difficult problem, and I'm not sure how we overcome that. If you try to put too many constraints on the group of scientists, then they feel like you're steering the outcome one way or the other, so we have to find that happy medium between those two, and I'm not sure where that is.

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, it is a tricky thing; and you right, the problem is a huge problem down here because we have so many gaps in the data. What that means is there have to be even more assumptions that are made to put an assessment together and the outcome of the assessment is even driven more by those assumptions.

They might be the case in Alaska or New England where there they have so much more data. That's why it's so important that we focus on this, and I think it's to a large extent why we're having the problem. It is a tricky one, and we don't want to box in scientists to the point where no one can ever make a change even though it's obvious we need to make a change, and no one is arguing for that.

But what has happened in the past is we have one assessment that does something one way, another assessment does something a different way, and no one can explain why that happened. That's part of why we had such a ruckus over SEDAR 15. Decisions were made there that were very different than what was done in the Gulf. Now we've done SEDAR 24 and decisions have shifted back away from some of those.

So I'm not saying that we want to go too far with it, but I think there is a balance between every assessment that is created fresh with no consideration of what has happened to the past two. Every assessment is done the same way and no one can – we've gone too far away from continuity where we're starting every assessment without enough regard to what has happened in the past. We need to pull back and put more emphasis on continuity.

I think some of the changes we're talked about at the steering committee will lead to that because I think more updates and fewer benchmarks will bring in some more continuity. Whether that's going to really work or not, I don't know, but we're open to all kinds of problems when we have things done differently here than they were done there when the facts aren't that much different and we can't explain it, and that has to be addressed and it has to be fixed. But you're absolutely right that we don't want to go too far in the other direction.

MR. ROBSON: I want to speak to the capacity issue for getting stock assessments done and just let everybody know that I think you're going to have to take into account limited capacity particularly in the state of Florida in the years to come in assisting and conducting assessments. Apart from the typical budget and personnel shortfalls that we already have, we've seen a significant drop-off in our ability in the Research Institute to conduct our own state-managed fisheries assessments and getting those done in a timely manner or on schedule.

I think the main reason for that has been that we've put a lot of our agency staff's focus and attention on helping with the federal SEDAR process and even in taking the lead on some assessments. We've volunteered to do that, but I think everybody needs to be aware that capacity has probably reached the breaking point for us.

I think you need to take into account in terms of the state of Florida's support for SEDAR, we're going to continue to do everything we can, but I think we're reaching a limit. We've got several major state fisheries that have had significant delays in getting our own assessments out so that we can look at management alternatives.

DR. PONWITH: It's to the question of consistency. Absolutely, consistency enables you to avoid discontinuities when you're looking at trends, and those trends are where it's at. That's basically telling us are we succeeding or are we not in using science to inform management and management to modify human behavior to increase the status of a stock.

The problem is that we're at a stage where the inputs to those stock assessments are changing dramatically. This is very good news; getting a million and a half dollars to apply to fishery-independent data collections is very good news. That creates an input that is different from what we've had before, which creates an opportunity to do analyses that are either different or modified from before, and those have to be done in a way that modulates the discontinuity so that we can interpret properly the trend line.

My feeling is that I look with envy at some of the other systems that are more mature in their stock assessment programs and data collections that enable them to do annual updates by just simply adding the terminal term's data in and be able to see how are we doing on our trajectory of recovery for this stock.

We're a long way from that and the reason is because every time we put more money into the system we get more data, which enables us to do a better job of that stock assessment, and so I think we're in a season of change. I think we're in a season of under this language of standard and benchmark assessments until we stabilize the system long enough that we can go to those episodic or periodic updates.

In terms of consistency from across the breadth of the range of a species, say red snapper, for example, my feeling is that if you are keenly interested in consistency in approach, then the right way to do that is to have one stock assessment team doing the stock assessments for the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico for red snapper at the same time, so that discussions of when you parameterize a variable, do you do it the same or do you do it differently; and if so, what is the justification for doing it differently can be discussed with both regions in mind.

Otherwise, you end up in a situation where the precedent is set merely by who did it first, and then have to go through and revisit all of those decisions. That can be done as a serial approach as opposed to a parallel approach; but if you do that you need to explicitly include in the terms of reference as a starting point – use all of the approaches that were done in this stock assessment as your starting point and explain any departures from that with the rationale.

It has to be explicitly stated. You can't put in a terms of reference and say please assess this stock and tell me what the status is; and then after the assessment is done say but why did you do this differently than they did it four years ago in a different region. Those considerations can be done. You just have to be explicit about what you want and how you want that done. Honestly, I think we should consider talking about doing for stocks that span the range of both the jurisdictions of the – both of those regions, talk about the relative merits.

I know it's a hideous thought because it is already a bit unwieldy to get one group of people together and get a stock assessment done, but be able to have those discussions in a dialogue as opposed to taking kind of a cold, static report from another place and say are we the same as this or are we different from this; and if so, what is the explanation isn't as robust as it would be to have those dialogues live.

MR. CUPKA: I know the terms of reference have grown considerably since the process started. We try to be more and more specific, but it is difficult, even with that, to try and get consistency. I think all these issues are important, but I don't think we're going to solve them here this morning. I think what we need to do is go ahead and get this task force finalized and let them start working on some of these issues unless there is any objection. Okay, seeing none, is there anything else under this particular issue, John?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think so, David. I like what Bonnie is saying and we got groups together when we did gag, and we still didn't consistency completely across the board on all aspects there, so it is quite a challenge to try and do that. The terms of reference are specific and that can help you get more consistency in some things, but then we run into the issues like when an assessment gets rejected sometimes you're left with nothing, so we are trying to balance a lot pulls in various directions to try and work this out.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, John. Let's move ahead into the five-year schedule that the steering committee looked at. There are one or two changes we're probably going to need to consider, and this would probably be the time to have some discussion on spiny lobster and what we're going to do about that. We do have one tentatively scheduled for 2012, but we may want to see if we want to change that. Do you want to lead us through that, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: One of the big things the steering committee does, of course, is talk about the schedule. What we've done here is work out a plan of looking at the different teams, the South Atlantic, the Beaufort Group, the Miami Group with the Gulf and Caribbean assessments; the HMS assessments, sharks primarily done with some analysts at Panama City; then the commissions, which in our case is the Beaufort Team has done most of the work for the commission assessments, and then we have Florida, which Mark mentioned some issues there which we're certainly well aware of here at the SEDAR level of how they are falling behind in some of their state obligations and may not be doing what they have done the last couple of years as we look down the road.

What the steering committee did was essentially pencil in a number of slots based on the resources that the science center has in terms of the number of assessment leads that are available. I guess one thing that should be noted is that within the schedule and within the process, what we're trying to do, also, simultaneously is reduce the time lag between the terminal year data and when an assessment is done. The goal right now is to run all these assessments like we ran South Atlantic red snapper.

The data are done in June, the council gets the assessment in December. In the case of the Gulf you'd be getting it in February. Well, that means that obviously we're not running two cycles, and I'll point to the example in the northeast of the SARC. They run a spring cycle and a fall cycle. That means an assessment lead person can do a spring assessment and a fall assessment and crank out two assessments.

We had a lot of discussions at the steering committee about that type of thing, and there was concern obviously that if you start an assessment, say, in January and it's 2010, you're using data obviously not through 2009 because that's not done until June, using data from 2008. The steering committee's option was that data is going to be old going in so don't pursue it that way.

What we've done is we've pushed our entire assessment production process to the second half of the year to try and get the information to the council quickly. Now that could mean that we could do some updates in that early half of the year, but again you'd be doing the updates with data that aren't the most up to date, so that was kind of rejected.

So as we work into updates as well, we're going to have to recognize the timing aspects which limit our assessment production season essentially. What we have is two leads for Beaufort in 2011 working on black sea bass and tilefish as standard assessments. The science center has been adding new people, but they have been losing people to retirement and transfers and other things within the team, but hopefully by 2012 we may have four leads and maybe a fifth, but we're not exactly sure.

You can see then we hope to be up to five leads steady by 2013 within the Beaufort Team, which means five benchmarks/standard assessments each year. Productivity may not be what we want it to be and it may not be what the agency thinks it should be to keep up with ACLs; but in terms of looking back pre-SEDAR, when we got an assessment about every other year for the South Atlantic to the first couple of years of SEDAR where we got a couple of assessments a year, I think getting up to getting five full benchmark assessments in a couple of years is a pretty big improvement.

And if we throw in some updates, perhaps if we're willing to give up a little bit timeliness on the data and get a couple of updates done maybe in the spring of the year, our productivity could be quite high. This coupled with focusing on the stock status indicator stocks – I've had some conversations with Rick Methot about that – if the council gets some stocks out of the management unit, which are unlikely to ever have the data to be assessed, we're getting a lot closer to being able to keep everything within a five-year time span.

That's sort of the big picture of what the productivity does, and what we really need to look at here is what is penciled in now South Atlantic stocks to see what you guys think about that and to figure out what we do, of course, with spiny lobster. Spiny lobster was penciled in there in 2012. Now I think obviously Mark should be the one to tell us what they can do there with that and what they intend to do maybe with things like mutton and hogfish in some of the out years, and get an idea of what this council thinks are the priorities for that first column there under the South Atlantic heading, especially 2012, 2013 and beyond.

2013 notes that we expect to have several years of that new South Atlantic data available and hopefully at that time enough to do an index for some of the stocks. That plays in obviously to not doing necessarily the same assessments that you've done up to that point. We expect quite a few changes in how we look at some of these assessments. New indices coming in can change the approach quite a bit. So with that, David, I'll open it up for some feedback on the specific stocks.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, I want to ask Mark if he wants to make any comments about spiny before we get into the rest of it.

MR. ROBSON: Well, I don't have any specific comments. I'm checking to see if Luiz and his staff have even considered this. I know this would be a benchmark assessment and hopefully that would allow the use of a more updated or a more appropriate model for the fishery. We clearly ran into problems using the integrated catch-at-age model with the outside recruitment and other issues.

If we're going to have to go back and end up with same result with basically a Florida centric assessment that doesn't give us a satisfactory result, I'm not sure it is going to be worthwhile. I know there was some discussion at some point of trying to figure if there is any way to look at that assessment in a more Caribbean-wide basis, and I don't know that is even possible.

For now I think it's something that we will tentatively try to do. I think in terms of the stock assessment group at the Institute, they've reached staffing capacity; and I think we're going to

need to look at if we're going to continue at this level of service and do our own work, we're going to need to add some folks. I don't know how that's going to be possible given the current situation in Florida with budget and staffing.

MR. CUPKA: So we don't know if we're going to get one or not at this point?

MR. ROBSON: I guess not. I think we want to leave in the schedule because this is a huge fishery in Florida and we need to try to make sure there is a placeholder for it and figure out how to get it done.

MR. CUPKA: Well, are you all right with leaving it in there for 2012? It may take a while to look at some of these issues before you can even move ahead with an assessment, so is that the best place to kind of pencil it in for now?

MR. ROBSON: Yes.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, thank you. Okay, other comments on the South Atlantic Schedule?

MR. HARRIS: Mr. Chairman, this is not specific to the schedule but it's related, and that has to do with the timeliness of data. Bonnie, John referred to not having data until the middle of the year from the past year and yesterday we heard that we didn't have 2009 data – and it's for something; I don't remember what it was – and it's already the end of 2010. What is the status? Are we making any progress on getting the data to the council and to the committees to be used in a more timely fashion than we've done in the past?

DR. PONWITH: I would say we are making progress, and, of course, the data streams come from multiple sources so we have to break it down into pieces. The issue on the 2009 cobia question that happened is that we have trip ticket data and those data are certainly up to date. The thing that was lagging behind is the logbook data. It always takes longer to get the logbook data. The logbooks always take more time to get into usable form for decisions.

We needed logbook data for the cobia; because when you're doing allocations, that's the level of refined data that you need to be able to look at and make decisions based on allocations. It was a resolution issue on cobia. In terms of the weak link on the data right now, as you know we are working on the electronic monitoring system in very close connection with the states as well as the commissions.

That would give us dealer reports in a very timely basis because it will all be electronic. We're ready to go into the implementation phase of that on January 1. The difference with that will be that the data will be coming straight to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center at the start. We'll debug the system probably by June.

We're targeting having that system running the way it was constructed to, and that would be where the dealer reports go straight to the commissions and then to the science center from the commissions, and by then the debugging will be done and we'll consider that program fully

implemented. That will give us commercial data very, very promptly and enable us to run the QAQC.

So then the weak link in terms of having the data that you need to actually run a stock assessment becomes the MRIP data. That has a long time lag and it's because of the two-month wave. When you have a two-month wave, then you have a recall period where the effort data are collected and then it takes the time to forward-process that, so that right now becomes – I think in terms of having the full suite of data you need to do a stock assessment, it becomes the weak link. It's also the hardest one to make a change to because of the population you're dealing with.

It isn't 140 vessels; it's millions of trips. It has been suggested in the Gulf of Mexico to look at the merits of going to a one-month wave. That would really help a lot. What it requires is to do it in a way that doesn't influence the confidence interval or your estimates, it requires a lot of money because you have to improve your sample size to do that. So cutting to a one-month wave isn't simply a matter of just saying stop at one month and then start calling people and say what was your effort for that time period. You have to increase the amount of samples to maintain your statistical stability.

MR. MAHOOD: Just kind of a followup to what Mark said about Florida's participation, with our technical contracts with the states one of the tasks is their folks working on the SEDAR assessment. I've had two other state directors telling me the same thing that Mark just said, that with the cutbacks and their not being able to hire people, they have to let people go in one case, and they're just not going to be able to participate at the level they have been because they've got to take care of their business at home.

So that's kind of a downside of what we're looking at with our state partners. Of course, in the case of Florida it has always been kind of nice. When it was mainly a Florida issue, we just said, well, let's let Florida do it as part of the process. I think what Mark is telling us is that may not be the case anymore. That side does not look too bright until things turn around at the state level.

MR. CURRIN: John, I like the new process as you outlined it and I think we'll see some benefits from it. Where are gray triggerfish or where is gray triggerfish in the schedule here? I'm a little concerned after the AP meeting and what I hear from folks on the waterfront. There has been a lot of effort on gray triggerfish because of closures of other fisheries and the like. My fear is I guess that if we wait too long on that, we're going to find them in as sad a shape as we found some of our other stocks. It's 2015?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, it's in for 2015. I guess I'll point out here that you'll notice everything that is above it is stocks that we've trying to get on the list for a number of years, so it is quite a lag. Another thing I did there was I wanted to highlight this aspect of it, is the coastal migratory pelagic. There are a lot of things in place here within SEDAR of trying to address this consistency issue.

One of them is that when we do a group of stocks, it would make sense to do a logical grouping where consistency is probably going to be a considerable issue. I think the coastal migratory

pelagics is one of those places where that is obviously a huge issue. The intention here is to be able – has always been to try and do this coastal migratory pelagic complex at one time, do all those stocks together.

It just doesn't make sense to do cobia in the Gulf different from when you do cobia in the Atlantic or to do Spanish in the Atlantic and then turn around and do Spanish in the Gulf a couple of years down the road. We used to do this as a complex and we need to get back to that. Another issue discussed at the steering committee – and I should have brought this up – is the idea of creating some standing committees that deal with these assessments; identical essentially to what we call the Mackerel Stock Assessment Panel, but it was the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Stock Assessment Panel.

And when you assess mackerel, that group of people went, and it was the group of people and they learned from year to year, and you didn't have these consistency concerns. I think it's absolutely critical that each council convene groups like that once again; and so that when we say we're going to do the deepwater snapper grouper complex, you have a group of people that are the deepwater snapper grouper complex assessment and data workshop representatives, and they do it year in and year out – and the same with the mackerels and the same with these other groups of stocks, so that then you do consistency building up in these things over time.

And it also makes it a lot easier to get people to attend the workshop when they've already agreed in the past to be a member of a group. Then they make a point to be there. We're still in this process of each time convening a new group of people based on who is available and not necessarily who is the one that we want doing mackerel versus maybe who is the one that we want doing Warsaw grouper.

I think the council is going to have to take the effort, and that means all the representatives and the people from the states who have the resources of the state people to identify who it is – and we've talked about this here with the technical committees, and it's just been a really difficult thing to try and get off the ground because of the resource squeeze as we've talked about.

But I think that's a big step for getting the consistency and the steering committee supports that. It fits in with this idea of doing complexes and I think we should give it some thought down the road to – and maybe the groupings gets us in that direction, what are the complexes of species that we want to assess at one time so we can have the appropriate consistency? It may not be appropriate to do the same things for vermilion snapper that you do for Warsaw, but it might be more appropriate to do things for Warsaw similar to what you do for speckled hind and snowy grouper.

So we need to give some thought to that and where it's appropriate, and I think it will help our efficiency as well, so that's the coastal migratory pelagic complex. And as you can see, it gets watered down because there are other priorities, and that's really been the biggest impediment to doing this in a complex basis.

You might have a complex where one stock is extremely important but the others aren't considered as important at this time, and so the one gets in there and then three others get added

in because they're considered more important to our short-term priorities. We're going to have to have some discipline if we're going to move into sort of this type of approach, but it will give us the consistency.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Sort of related to Mac's comment that I was thinking; under 2012, that's greater amberjack; is that what that is? We assessed that not too long ago and I don't recall that the council ever did anything as a result of that assessment. It looked like at the time that the assessment was done that perhaps maybe there was a little bit of overfishing going on in the recreational side, if I recall, and the commercial fishing effort seemed to be fine.

I'm wondering why, for example, we're putting greater amberjack in there. Mac mentioned gray triggerfish, and then there is another stock that I think that really needs to be considered and that's blueline tilefish. We have seen some major changes in how that fishery is prosecuted in North Carolina. We could potentially be facing a very low ABC given to the council to deal with on that, and it's because we don't have it as an assessment. I guess I'm questioning the wisdom of having greater amberjack in 2012 and wondering what the logic was behind putting it there.

MR. CUPKA: Well, to blueline – let me just mention that first – we do have blueline on there. It's not shown on the screen, but it's not until 2015. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The purpose of putting greater amberjack there is because it was last assessed in 2007, and I think that included data through either '06 or '05. Under the standards that we're being given, if an assessment is more than five and some discussion of three years old, the agency no longer considers it adequate.

So if you have a stock, say, that's in the fish stock status indicators' listing and it says it's not overfished and has an adequate assessment, if that assessment is now more than five years old, then it's no longer considered an adequate assessment, so you start losing ground in terms of showing the progress.

The reason for greater amberjack is because of the age of the assessment, so that's the thing that we're severely battling is getting the new things while not backsliding on the stuff that we've already done. If the agency comes down and starts telling us three years on our status indicator stocks, we are really up the creek in that case because it's going to be really hard to try and keep these things up to date at that level.

MR. CUPKA: And, believe me, when the steering committee meets, we go around and around on these things. The bottom line is there is just more need than we're able to meet, so we're trying to balance these things as best we can. Bonnie, and then we're going to have to try and move on because we've still got a lot to do yet and we're behind schedule, but all this is important.

DR. PONWITH: Back to the data question and how that drives the timing, one idea might be to create what is considered a fishing year that departs from a calendar year. If you determine for Species X the fishing year is from June until June, then you could call June the end of the

fishing year, obtain the MRIP data for the wave that ends during that time period, which would take some number of months after that, and it would be the equivalent of our April or our June for a calendar year ending.

By offsetting at that and keeping it offset in that way, you would create sort of kind of a parallel end date and be able to do updates that are offset. That's the good news. The bad news with that approach is then the limiting factor gets back to the number of lead stock assessment scientists we've got, but it is one way to deal with that, and basically it's just a construct. I can't anticipate what kind of problems that might create from a management standpoint, but from a data standpoint it seems like to could be technically feasible.

MR. HARRIS: The only question I would be – I know the steering committee addressed this, but the schedule for white grunt as opposed to triggerfish; in our area I would say triggerfish is a lot more important than white grunt. Mac alluded to triggerfish being an important species and probably of growing importance up here, and that's probably true throughout most of the South Atlantic except perhaps down in Florida. Those were the only ones that I would question and whether we'd want to flip-lop those two or not.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, does anyone object to that? We'll still have to take it back to the steering committee and get their approval to make that switch; but if everyone here is all right, we'll certainly put it on the agenda for the next steering committee meeting. The only other comment I would make regarding these that I didn't realize until John pointed it out, but these things are listed in a priority order.

They're not just numbered for the sake of seeing how many are on there. You'll notice in 2013 red snapper is number five and we might want to consider moving that up on the priority list a little bit in case we don't get everything we anticipate by then, that we can do a red snapper assessment. Again, I don't think we need a motion, but unless anybody objects we'll take that back to the steering committee with the idea of giving it a higher priority.

MR. CARMICHAEL: And to comment on that, they're prioritized because if the science center doesn't have five slots available in 2012, then we won't be able to do all of those stocks, so there is an approximate prioritization in there to be considered.

MR. CUPKA: Is there any objection to that? Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, I object to that. We've got too many stocks that are above it that have never been assessed that are pretty important and that we've done some pretty draconian management measures on like completely shutting down the deepwater fishery, and we have no stock assessments on these stocks. We have had two very recent red snapper stock assessments. It's time to move on and get some of these other things done.

MR. CUPKA: Other comments? Okay, every time there is a steering committee meeting, they revisit this schedule so I'm sure we'll be talking about it some more, but that's duly noted, Brian. Okay, did you want to make that in the form of a motion, Brian?

DR. CHEUVRONT: I'm not sure that we need to make a motion because we've got the order right here right now so why change it?

MR. CUPKA: Well, we've got to take it back to the steering committee, though, so it would lend some weight to it if the steering committee knew that was the desire of the council.

DR. CHEUVRONT: If you need to make a motion, I'll be glad to make a motion.

MR. MAHOOD: Yes, the reason for that is when we go back to the steering committee, I know how Brian feels, I think I know how Duane feels, but I'm not sure about anybody else on the council or the committee relative to what they're looking at in priorities. I'd hate to go back and make a change that the majority of the people don't want us to make.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, I guess what I would like to do is let – Duane, do you want to make a motion regarding the white grunt; and then after you do that, I think it might be more appropriate then to say that we'll support the rest of the priority listing. I'd like to see if perhaps we can – I realize that blueline tilefish is much more of a North Carolina issue than it is in other places, but this is yet again another stock that has a huge regional importance that we are now ignoring or relegating to 2015 before we even start a stock assessment. This is a stock that is probably going to face massive cuts very shortly and we're not even going to look at it for another five years. I find that to be problematic.

MR. CUPKA: Well, we're not ignoring it; we're just facing the reality of how much work we can accomplish.

DR. CHEUVRONT: We have ignored it; we're shutting it down in 17B, and in essence we did that as a very simplistic way of dealing with stocks that we couldn't come up with ABCs, and so the way that we're dealing with it is to shut them down, and I find that to be very draconian.

MR. CUPKA: Well, again, I don't think we're ignoring it, but, Duane, do you want to make a motion?

MR. HARRIS: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would move that we would swap the scheduling of gray triggerfish and white grunt and recommend that to the steering committee.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we have a motion; is there a second? George seconds. We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any objection? Seeing none, then that motion is approved. Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, then I'd like to make the motion that we support the rest of the South Atlantic Proposed SEDAR Assessment Schedule as it is listed, except if it's possible to move blueline tilefish earlier in the assessment schedule, if there is a way to do that.

MR. CUPKA: Did you want it sooner or higher priority or both?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Sooner.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, the motion is to support the rest of the South Atlantic Proposed SEDAR Schedule as revised and to encourage assessing bluefin tilefish sooner. Is there any discussion on the motion? Second by George. Duane.

MR. HARRIS: I agree with what you said about red snapper. I think red snapper is a much more important species throughout the South Atlantic than these other deepwater species. I think given what we've done with red snapper and the fact that it is closed and it's likely to be closed for a good period of time until we do get a new assessment, it seems to me that it's more important to move red snapper up.

I understand what Brian is saying about the deepwater species and what we've done with respect to those, but I think when you look at the entire South Atlantic, red snapper is a much more important species and it's much more important to a lot more people than those deepwater complex species.

DR. PONWITH: Mr. Chairman, two points; it would be very helpful to the SEDAR Steering Committee if instead of just asking to elevate a species in the rotation, that if you could make some suggestions of what you would be willing to switch. That really helps the discussion because this council is the best suited to actually weigh in on that. The people from the Caribbean Council won't be able to make a judgment. That's just one point.

The second point is in terms of red snapper there is a lot riding on the status of red snapper in response to whatever management measures are put in place at this meeting. We have the fishery-independent sampling that we're undergoing right now. We started in 2010. The convention is that for any new data stream – and this is the typical convention – that you would want three years of data representing a time series before you used it as inputs to a new benchmark. That would be three years' worth of data if those data are relatively stable.

So, if our fishery-independent data allows us to create a new index and that index is reasonable stable, that represents very good input for a new benchmark that will be much stronger for having it. If the data are highly variable and very spiky, having a fourth year of data improves the signal that fishery-independent index of abundance is giving you.

So, my point of all this is that the fishery-independent data is going to improve the quality of the stock assessment. The degree to which that is true depends on the length of the time series. From that standpoint, moving red snapper up in the queue may not be as productive as you might wish.

MR. HARRIS: I'm satisfied with where red snapper is in 2013 and it's at the bottom of the list, but I think to the extent that we can we need to be reassessing red snapper. If we don't have the data stream to do appropriately, I accept that. I'm just making a point relative to what Brian suggested. I'm not against the motion, but I think that we just to need to recognize red snapper is an extremely important species here and much more important than some of these other species, in my mind.

MR. CUPKA: Brian, based on Bonnie's comment, who is the chair of the steering committee, did you want to make yours more specific.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, that's kind of what I wanted to address and some of the things that Duane said. Certainly, regionally red snapper is very important. It's not nearly as important to North Carolina as it is to Georgia and North Florida. I see that as much a value judgment as anything else; but also in looking at the schedule Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, we tried to assess those, I believe in SEDAR 4, and it was impossible to do that because the data weren't there to do it.

I don't know what is going to make us think we're going to have now because I don't think anything has improved since then. I have a feeling that assessment will fail in the data workshop because we don't have data. We've not ever made it a priority to collect these data. With the closures that we're going to have, it's going to be even worse.

What I'd really to do is go ahead and add blueline tilefish into Warsaw and speckled hind as the grouping because we probably won't be able to do Warsaw and speckled hind because they don't have any data to do it. **I'd like to go ahead and amend my motion, if that's okay, to include blueline tilefish along with Warsaw and speckled hind.**

MR. CUPKA: Is that all right with the seconder, George? Okay, further discussion on the motion? Okay, the motion is to support the rest of the South Atlantic Proposed SEDAR Schedule as revised and to assess blueline tilefish along with – did you say along with or in place of?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, at the same time as Warsaw grouper and speckled hind in 2013.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, assess blueline tilefish along with Warsaw grouper and speckled hind in 2013. Is there any further comment? Any objection to the motion? Mac.

MR. CURRIN: I'm not objecting to the motion; I assume that passed. I'm not on your committee, but in thinking about this, Brian, brings up I think some good points and I agree with him. In looking at that schedule as well, golden crab popped out at me as did wreckfish. I don't know whether anybody has got any feel for whether those two stocks can be assessed with the data that's available.

I realize the importance to the people that participate, but you're basically talking, what, six or eight people, maybe ten or eleven in the golden crab fishery in its entirety with landings other than basic biological information, I believe that's all we have. I don't know what kind of other data, size, age, is available; I doubt any.

Wreckfish, we've got two or three people fishing in that fishery. I'm not even sure that the data, if they're confidential, can be viewed by the assessment group. I don't know how that all works, but that's two slots there are in the next few years, and I think somebody needs to think long and hard about the feasibility or possibility of actually attempting to assess those stocks. If they can't be done, then let's start looking at some other stocks that need to be done.

MR. CUPKA: John, do you want to comment on that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: To some extent. In a lot cases we don't know if they can't done until we look at it. In some of the cases we know that there is some things entered in these slots here that may not come to fruition and may not get all the way through a review panel. We do have to go through the data evaluation aspects.

I guess wreckfish is obviously an interesting one. There are indications that we only see a portion of the stock and we may end up with a lot of those same issues that you – it's all the things like spiny lobster. That issue has been raised by the science center in trying to look at that stock. There was a suggestion made to try and just do an update of the assessment, which was done back pre-SEDAR, and that issue was raised and said, really, there are complexities here and that it needs to go through the whole process to try and see if we can actually come to something that is informative.

People should be aware of these issues and know that you may do something with wreckfish where you go through the process and you still can't talk about reference points and effective spawning stock biomass and what happens to the recruitment from our area. We may be dependent on other areas. It may be something that needs more of a regional-wide assessment, but we may have to go through this to find that out first. It is a tough balancing game but that's kind of what we know about those two.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we still have a motion on the floor, right? **There wasn't any objection so the motion is approved.** All right, is there anything else on the schedule? We need to try and move ahead. The next thing is SEDAR 25. We need to approve the schedule and terms of reference, and then we're going to have to go into closed session to complete the work of the committee, so do you want to take us through those, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: SEDAR 25 is black sea bass and golden tilefish. Black sea bass started as an update and we requested that it be elevated to a benchmark. The steering committee supported that. We approved the benchmark terms of reference at the December meeting; but given the steering committee discussions and trying to increase the efficiency of bit, there have been some slight changes in the assessment workshop terms of reference.

Really, the only change here is in black sea bass assessment process term of reference two is to look at the catch at age, which is the BAM Model, and the ASPIC Assessment Model, which is the production model. Part of that discussion is to limit the amount of models to those that have shown promise, so this would be limiting it to rather than explore any feasible models, it says to explore these two models. That's the only change in the terms of reference. Obviously, it's a change so we would like to get the terms of reference approved.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, so I would entertain a motion to approve the terms of reference.

MR. HARRIS: So moved.

MR. CUPKA: We have a motion; is there a second? **George Geiger.** Is there any discussion on the motion? Any objection? Seeing none, then that motion is approved. That brings us to the schedule.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The schedule has been worked out based on essentially the update assessment and including an assessment workshop as opposed to just a series of webinars. Though the steering committee has fully approved this process within SEDAR, we're moving ahead with portions of it because everyone agreed that this was an important change.

There was a lot of concern with the ability to work through of these really complex issues of the assessments that lead to getting us the first base run through the webinar process. The timing of this is that the workshop comes first. We work through the core issues and then the webinars do the followup and the polishing essentially. So we've put that in place even though that is not fully approved.

I would like a bit of flexibility, if I could ask it, in terms of the schedule because the assessment and review workshops are scheduled now for weeks immediately South Atlantic Council meetings. We don't want to schedule them on top of council meetings; but in trying to balance all the things that are going on – and as I mentioned before, what has become the assessment season – remember, we have assessments for the Caribbean going on and the Gulf going on as well as the South Atlantic.

To try to schedule all that, there is going to be a lot of consequential subsequent meetings. They're going to be one right another, but we'd like to try and if we could maybe get some separation at least between the assessment workshop and the June council meeting. If you can approve this schedule and give us some allowance for flexibility to maybe shift those workshops a week, if the participants can do that we'd really appreciate it.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, can we have a motion to that effect? Duane.

MR. HARRIS: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CUPKA: We have a motion; is there a second? Second by Mr. Geiger. **The motion is to approve the schedule for SEDAR 25 with flexibility to shift the assessment workshop and review workshop if feasible. Is there any discussion on the motion? Any objection? Seeing none, then that motion is approved.** That brings us down to the closed portion of the meeting.

(Whereupon, the open session was adjourned at 9:37 o'clock a.m. December 8, 2010,)

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