

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE The Beaufort Hotel Beaufort, North Carolina

December 9, 2021

TRANSCRIPT

SEDAR Committee

Mel Bell, Chair
Robert Beal
Kerry Marhefka
Trish Murphey

Dr. Carolyn Belcher, Vice Chair
Tim Griner
Jessica McCawley
Andy Strelcheck

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Dr. Judd Curtis
Kathleen Howington
Kim Iverson
Dr. Julie Neer
Cameron Rhodes
Nick Smillie
Christina Wiegand

Invited Attendees and Participants

Rick DeVictor
Shep Grimes
Dr. Genny Nessler
Dr. Clay Porch
Dr. John Walter

Dale Diaz
Dewey Hemilright
LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy
Monica Smit-Brunello

Additional attendees and participants attached.

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Thursday, December 9, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: I will call the SEDAR Committee to order, and the SEDAR Committee consists of myself, Carolyn Belcher, Robert Beal, Tim Griner, Kerry Marhefka, Jessica McCawley, Trish Murphey, and Andy Strelcheck. That's the SEDAR Committee, and so everybody is welcome to participate, but those are the committee members.

The first item on the agenda is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any additions to the agenda that you've seen that we need to make? I don't see any hands, and so no additions to the agenda. The agenda will stand approved as written. The next item would be Approval of the Minutes from the March 2021 Meeting. Any edits or corrections to the minutes from the March 2021 meeting? I don't see any hands, and so the minutes will stand approved then. All right.

That will take us to our first item on the agenda, which would be a SEDAR Steering Committee report, which would be Attachment 1 from your briefing book. Are you going to run through that, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: Sure. I'll run through that, and, if I miss anything, either you or John Carmichael can fill me in, or fill in the spots that I miss, and I think Dale was at that meeting as well, and so he might be able to fill in. The SEDAR Steering Committee met on October 13, 2021, and what the SEDAR Steering Committee is, is it's basically an oversight body for the SEDAR enterprise system, and so they help to provide guidance on the administration as well as the operation of the SEDAR system as well as general timing for assessments.

When I'm talking about general timing, what they're trying to do is fit in all the assessments that are done in the Southeast region into a grid that is manageable for everyone, and, if you look at the SEDAR Steering Committee report, you can see all the different agencies that are involved with it. It's the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and it's the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, HMS, Highly Migratory Species, as well as FWC also provides some assessments, and so it's a huge grid that is put together, and it's quite a task to get all the assessments done in a timely fashion, and so that's what the SEDAR Steering Committee gets together to really look at, are the timing of these assessments as well as making sure that the operation of SEDAR is going smoothly.

The big things that we wanted to highlight at this one was the Spanish mackerel assessment. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center had indicated that there was going to be a delay in the Spanish mackerel assessment. It was originally planned to be delivered for April of 2022, and this would have made it in time for the April South Atlantic SSC meeting. They indicated that it was going to be delayed until May of 2022, and, therefore, it could cause some delays, or it will cause some delays, in the overall system, and you guys had talked about this at the Mackerel Cobia Committee, and so I don't know if you guys want to talk about it more. There are additional members here, and I believe, Bob, you're actually on the SEDAR Steering Committee as well.

MR. BELL: Is there anything further that we want to talk about related to the delay there? Bob.

MR. BEAL: Thanks, and it's disappointing that there's a delay, I guess, but I think, on the surface of it, a one-month delay, from April to May, doesn't sound like a big deal, but I think the difficulty is when it cascades through the council meeting cycle and the SSC and the actual council meetings, and then ASMFC has been -- We cooperatively, or jointly, manage Spanish mackerel with the council, and, you know, the Mid-Atlantic states have been interested in -- Well, let's back up a little bit more.

The Mid-Atlantic states have been harvesting a lot more Spanish mackerel. As the water gets warmer, they're kind of wandering their way up the coast, and the Mid-Atlantic states are -- The interstate plan, right now, doesn't require the states to close or take any action when the federal quota is met, and the Mid-Atlantic states are waiting, for this new stock assessment, to decide what the appropriate action is in state waters, once the federal quota is met, and so these delays -- One month is not a big deal, on the surface, but, really, I think it's going to cascade and really slow down a lot of important management action that needs to take place to prevent overharvesting and those sorts of things in the Mid-Atlantic region as this stock moves forward.

I guess what -- I am on the Steering Committee, but I delegate that to Pat Canfield, and what I heard is that the delay really wasn't known, or talked about much, before that Steering Committee meeting, and so I think, if there's delays in state data compilation, or whatever may be happening, I think if we can -- The ASMFC is willing to reach out to those states and work with them to get the data pulled together, or whatever it is, and, if there's a way that we can help out and sort of prevent future delays, we're more than willing to do it, and, again, a small delay is one month, and it doesn't sound like a big deal, but it does cascade and create some big changes when we've been waiting on an assessment for quite a while in Spanish mackerel.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Bob. Like you said, one month didn't seem like a big deal, but it's really that cascading effect and other things, and I know, the commission perspective, really we're trying to move some things along, and it affects the timing of that as well, and so I think my understanding was it was kind of a bit of a surprise at the meeting, and so it's done, and it's done, and the lessons learned from that is that we can avoid -- If there's any way, in the future, that we can communicate ahead of time, to make sure we can have a shot at dealing with fixing something, that would be much more beneficial, but, at this point, I know we've already talked about it, and John Walter is basically -- I mean, if we could get it to move, we would, but -- John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, and we're sensitive to the needs of all of the stakeholders on this one, and it is an unfortunate that one month has a lot of knock-on effects, given the timing of things, and I think maybe the fact that it was a surprise was because the data wasn't in when we needed it to be in, and we only knew that it wasn't in when it's not in.

I think the solution is, because these assessments have so many moving parts that are provided by different providers, different states, different entities, that we need to make sure that we meet those deadlines, and, if there's any entity that may be late at any given time, or has the inclination or thoughts that they might miss it, and we understand, under these circumstances, doing the ageing, when you might be trying to do the ageing from home and bring the saw home and the microscope home, that we're not always as efficient as we have been.

We need to know that as soon as a data provider might be running late, so that we can try to accommodate it and absorb those kind of things, and sometimes we can absorb late data and not

affect the process. In this case, we just can't absorb a one-month delay and still promise the same delivery date. We're going to try, but we just can't promise that.

MR. BELL: That's understandable, and I know you -- There's a dependence upon external partners to do things and do things on time, and I think, if there's -- If folks realize, and I would say that to everybody. If you realize there's going to be an issue with delivery, say something sooner, and then we can even engage, and there's other ways to kind of go back to the states, through other channels, through commissioners or whatever, and kind of say, hey, what's going on, and can we move this along. Bob.

MR. BEAL: Just sort of an offer to help, but I think maybe Spanish mackerel is a symptom of what's going to be going on. In other words, there's a lot of species that are traditionally assessed in the Southeast region, at the Science Center, that are going to be -- Data is going to be -- States north of sort of the normal turf of the Southeast region are going to have data, and so Maryland and Virginia and up through New Jersey, and they're catching red drum in Cape Cod in the summer now, and there's all sorts of crazy stuff going on.

If there is any value in ASMFC kind of being the conduit to those northern-more states that are kind of outside of the normal communication channels of the Southeast region, we're more than happy to be -- To help out and knock on the door of those states and say, hey, have you got some data for this critter, and we'll feed it into the process for the Science Center, if that's helpful. If there's a better way to do it, that's fine too, but we, obviously, work with all the east coast states, and we're happy to interact any way we can and help out and prevent any delays and that sort of thing.

MR. BELL: All right. Thank you. Anything -- Chip.

DR. COLLIER: When SEDAR reaches out to find interested parties, Bob, is there someone on staff that would be best to reach out to, to make sure we are getting the best data?

MR. BEAL: I think, on our staff, Pat Canfield, our Science Director, would be the best person to talk to, and you can come to me, and I can farm it out within the office, but, if you want to go directly to Pat, that's a good way to do it as well.

MR. BELL: All right. Anything else on that? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: So just a question. Since it's only delayed a month on paper, how hard is it to delay the SSC a month, or does that cascade onto everything else?

MR. BELL: Like we were talking, and this has come up a couple of times in the meeting so far, and we were talking about, hey, we'll just move the SSC here or there, and it's looking at the overall schedule of things and then realizing some of the challenges we talked about with SSC members, and they're also, perhaps, associated with universities or whatever and have schedules, and so it's not -- It sounds kind of easy, but it's not, necessarily, but certainly we have had special meetings and things, or moved a little bit, but I guess the overall schedule is fairly complex, and, as soon as you kind of push on one thing, it affects others, but, Chip, do you have anything better than that?

DR. COLLIER: Well, in addition to that, and so the SSC meets, and they generally develop a report from that meeting, and, if they were to meet in I guess mid-April, or mid-May, they would not have time to get the report to you guys, and they would basically be bringing it right at the meeting, and so it might not give you sufficient time to review. It also limits their amount of time to really think about what to include in the report. They discuss everything online, but sometimes they add additional details that might be necessary.

MR. BELL: I think the thing here is just communicate, communicate early, and communicate effectively with the right people, and we can try to work around things and avoid problems in the future. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. The other thing that was probably of interest to the South Atlantic Council was the shift of the cobia assessment. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission had asked for a 2024 or 2025 slot for the cobia assessment, and there was an indication that the old location, where it was in in the HMS slot, that it was being removed and the cobia assessment was going to now be placed under the South Atlantic slots.

Given the assessment schedule, and I will pull up Attachment 1, so you guys can see the assessment schedule, these are all the assessments that are going on, and, on the left side is the South Atlantic, and so the first four slots are the South Atlantic, and you can see it's completely booked for 2024 and 2025, and, therefore, it's going to be a bit of a challenge to get the Atlantic migratory cobia assessment in there.

MR. BELL: You will notice what it's booked with, and it's our favorite species, and so I will say, again wearing multiple hats, that, when the council passed management of the Atlantic group of cobia over to the commission, it's a very important species to the states, from the commission standpoint, and we really would like to have that stock assessment no later than 2025, but you can see we've got a problem there right now, but it is -- Cobia is a -- It's a species that's kind of doing some new things, and it's moving north, we've noticed, and, therefore, data from the northern states and all, but it wasn't in the greatest of shape.

I mean, the stock assessment was okay, the last one, but it had some interesting trends to it, and I think the sooner we could evaluate that, the better, and then that allows the commission to act in a manner before things might start happening, and so, Bob, did you want to speak to cobia?

MR. BEAL: I was just going to say everything you just said, really. The commission, and our member states, are worried, or "worried" may be a strong word, but there's some concern that things may not be going real well with cobia, and waiting -- We don't want to wait too long to have the next assessment and find out there is -- We have waited a while, and there is really bad news, and the states really need to clamp down on this fishery, and so, in 2025, if we can find a way to accomplish that and get it into that schedule, it would be great.

The tricky part of this scheduling, and we have the same conversation with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils and the Northeast Science Center and everything else, is it turns into this competitive -- There's a limited number of slots, and so how do we allocate those between ASMFC and the councils, and it almost puts us in an adversarial role. If cobia is being done in 2025, that means something has to come off the South Atlantic Council list, and it's just a difficult dynamic to compete with each other for these limited slots that the Science Center has.

I don't know how you fix that, but it's just an unfortunate outcome of the reality of limited stock assessment capacity at the Science Center, but anyway we can do it, and I guess the reality is that ASMFC sort of has one slot, which is menhaden, and so, you know, we can't -- Menhaden is also a big deal to ASMFC, and we can't delay those assessments, for sure, and now the menhaden assessments feed into our ecosystem management approach and ecological reference points, and they have to be synced up with striped bass and summer flounder and Spanish mackerel and all these other species that eat menhaden, and so there's not a lot of flexibility there with menhaden either.

I don't know how we sort of get out of this conundrum of limited stock assessment capacity up and down the whole east coast, and it's not just the Southeast, but it would be great if we could get away from this sort of competing with each other for these slots, because it just creates kind of a bad dynamic and an awkward situation, but I don't know how to fix it.

MR. BELL: Yes, and that's just a fact, and there are only so many slots, and there are so many needs, and I don't have the magic solution for that, in terms of increasing capacity, but I do know that, when we left off with cobia, it was managed by the council. When the last stock assessment was done, it was all kind of a high priority, but, in that shifting over, it's still a priority for -- I know I will speak for my own state, and it's an important fishery for us, and I know, for the last assessment, it was not overfished, and overfishing was not occurring, but the trends in the lines were a little interesting, and I just think waiting until 2025 would be -- Well, waiting beyond, waiting to 2027 or whatever it was we've got on there, I'm not really comfortable with that, but we're trying to deal with the reality of so much stuff to do and cramming it into so many slots.

As we move forward, if there's any way we find that we can wiggle things around somehow and get cobia in there sooner, I mean, that would be, in my mind, a priority, if we can -- At a future SEDAR Committee meeting or something, but any other comments on cobia? Okay. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So, I mean, I'm just wondering -- At the last SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, they had talked about adding this slot on the Gulf team, and what they did was they took some of the assessments on the CMP slot and had shifted it over into that fifth slot, and so they took the Gulf Spanish mackerel from the CMP, and I'm just wondering -- Could that be -- Could cobia be done in 2024 on that CMP slot?

MR. BELL: Can anybody speak to that as a reasonable accommodation? John.

DR. WALTER: Well, that slot, right there in 2024, is filled with Gulf shrimp, which is multiple stocks, the Gulf shrimp research track, and that's a pretty important one for the Gulf, and so I'm not sure that that could be accommodated there.

DR. COLLIER: I guess I wasn't that clear, and I am not referring to this fifth slot over here for the Gulf team, and I am referring to this slot over here for the CMP team.

DR. WALTER: That one, I will have to engage with staff, and probably ask Clay about what the plan was for that, because it's clearly not booked, but I think we might not even have that person hired, and so let me get back to you on that.

MR. BELL: All right. Again, we're not going to fix anything here today, but if we understand that -- I would at least, for myself again, say that cobia would be a priority that if we can in any way get it done by 2024 or 2025, that would be very helpful. I don't know if anybody feels that as well, but it's a priority species, in my mind, and so, as we kind of move down the line here a little bit, if there's any wiggle room at all in the schedule, the next time we look at the schedule, if we can make it happen, it would be very beneficial. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I am just wondering, based on your discussions, maybe at the table, Bob, has there been any thoughts about any big changes to the assessment, or data streams, or that it would be pretty consistent from the last one?

MR. BEAL: I think it would be fairly consistent. I think the new data streams may just be landings from farther up the coast. There is a lot more landings coming in from New Jersey, and there is commercial landings in Rhode Island of cobia right now, and so there's more data streams, and it's basic rec and commercial landings, and it's not real exotic new data, but I think it's expanding up the coast, and we'll need to get those states involved in the process and make sure we have all their data, but I don't think the basic model and the fundamental underpinnings of the assessment will change a whole lot, and I think just some more catch data.

Mel, just to reiterate what you said, from an ASMFC perspective, if there's any way to wiggle things around and get cobia assessed in 2024 or 2025, that would be important, and it's one of our highest-profile critters that we manage, and there's a lot of public interest, and there's a lot of concern that, by waiting too long, we may miss some bad news and really have a problem on our hands by waiting later into the decade.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Bob. Anything else on cobia? I don't see anything. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. The other thing I want to point out from this grid is, if you look at the 2024 slot for the South Atlantic team, in the first slot, we have the red snapper research track assessment that's being placed there, and that was a request at the last meeting that came from the South Atlantic Council, and one of the reasons for that is trying to get started on a research track for red snapper as early as possible.

We realize that some of the data that's being collected through the count estimate that's going on in the South Atlantic region -- It might not all be completed, but the actual forms of the data, or what information is going to be collected, should be available, and, therefore, in the research track, they should be able to try to accommodate what types of information are coming in, and so that's the idea with trying to get this started as early as possible, and then you would be having a research track following that in 2026, and that would be used to provide management advice for red snapper.

MR. BELL: All right. Again, it's an interesting table of just competing priorities, and it's a challenge. Have you got anything else in the report there?

DR. COLLIER: No, and we'll be coming back to these other items on 2025 at the last agenda item in this group, where we're going to be talking about priority species for 2025 and just making sure that you and John have good guidance from the rest of the council on which species are most important.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks. Anything else? I don't see anything, and so we could go ahead and start in, and we've got to talk about five different assessments, and we're going to look at some terms of reference that we'll need to approve, and so that will be action on our part, is approval of the TORs, and we'll just run through those one at a time when you're ready.

DR. COLLIER: We'll start off with modifications to the SEDAR approval process. Changing from the old assessment types, which were updates, standards, and benchmarks, to the new research track and operational assessments has brought a few different items to light, and we just wanted to make sure that the council is okay with some of the approval processes and also some discussion on how you guys want to handle statements of work.

Statements of work are a new item that has been requested from the Science Center in order to be able to basically allocate potential staff time in the future to complete these assessments, and, as you looked at with that planning grid, it's a monumental task to get all the work done, and they're working with three councils, in addition to HMS, and working on other species as well, and so it's a challenge, and we recognize that challenge, and so what we're trying to do is get these statements of work to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center by November of each year.

What that does is it gives them time to really negotiate or think about the timing for their staff, and then we're also able to negotiate exactly what's most important in these assessments, to get everything accomplished, and so I provided you guys a list of options that could be considered for statements of work, and statements of work are really the initial negotiations to figure out exactly what's going to be incorporated in the assessment, and so, to me, it's really important to have these discussions early on, to make sure that all the options are available to you guys, and that everybody is aware of what's going to be incorporated in the assessment.

If you're going towards -- Later on, if you think terms of reference might be the best option to review, if you see something that you want incorporated in the assessment, quite often that might be too late, and, therefore, it could result in a delay for that assessment, and so we're trying to get things frontloaded and make sure that everybody is aware of what's going to be incorporated.

The three different options we have is the council does not review statements of work, and what that would result in is staff would develop the statements of work, and we would provide those to the Southeast Fisheries Science. Then you guys would have an opportunity to review, as well as the SSC, review the terms of reference before an assessment is started, but it would probably pigeonhole you into everything that the staff has started, or identified, for you, and most of the ways that we identify items to include in the statements of work is going back to the last assessments and looking at the research recommendations. Also, listening to the SSC about any concerns that they have, and we'll review those and incorporate those into the statements of work.

The second option is having the council and the SSC review pre-negotiated statements of work, and so this is getting reviews by the SSC as well as the council. However, after the pre-negotiated items, it would just be council staff working with Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff to figure out what's most important and what would be included in the terms of reference. Some of this is it can be difficult, because of the timing for SSC meetings, as well as with council meetings and when the SEDAR Committee is. If we're just trying to have two meetings a year, it can be a bit of a challenge.

Then Option 3 is the most thorough example, and you guys would be reviewing pre-negotiated and post-negotiated statements of work, making sure that all of your concerns are addressed, and we would also be developing a working group with the SSC, to make sure that all of their concerns are being addressed as well. Those are the three options that we came up with, and we do have some pros and cons that we put together, if that helps your deliberation at all, and those were just thoughts that were put together by staff. I am not going to go through those, and they were provided in the report, and so I will leave that to you, Mel.

MR. BELL: So, basically, you would like us to sort of pick -- Discuss options or pick a particular option, and so this is Attachment 2a in the briefing binder, under Issue 1, which is the requirements for statements of work for the operational assessments, and so we've got sort of three options that Chip has outlined, with different levels of involvement for us, which the council doesn't review statements of work, the council and SSC review pre-negotiated, or the council changes the SEDAR Committee to March and September and requests -- Is there a preference there? Has anybody got a leaning in a particular way? Tim.

MR. GRINER: I'm not really about adding a whole lot of work to the council, but, in my opinion, these assessments, the SEDAR assessments, are the backbone of everything that we're going to deal with going forward, and it's so super important, and it's super complicated for a guy like me to even understand it, but, as I've become more involved in these assessments and tried to educate myself and just learning the terminology and being able to follow along with some of the discussions, it became very, very apparent to me that, the earlier that we can expose ourselves, as council members, to these terms of reference and to the early stuff that's going to really drive these assessments, the better chance you have at understanding how the assessment works and how you got there.

In my mind, even if it's just the fact that we're going to sit here and have the opportunity, pre- and post-negotiation, to even sit and listen to it, I would really think that would be very beneficial to have Option 3 as a preferred option. I know it may drag, and it may be a little bit more work, and it may be a little bit cumbersome, but just, if nothing else, just from the education that you will get from listening to these early statements of work and trying to understand what they even mean.

MR. BELL: All right, and so there's an Option 3. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was going to say that I don't really think that Option 1 is a good option at all, not looking at them at all, and I was kind of torn between Option 2 and 3, but, after listening to what Tim said, and looking at the table a little bit more and some of the bullets under Option 3, I think that I could support us doing that, and I know it seems like more work, but I really like that there would be -- I don't want to call it significant, but a review by both the council and the SSC, and it sounds like the pre-negotiated and then kind of the final statement of work would be looked at by both the council and the SSC, and so I know that we've had some issues in the past, and the one that comes to mind is thinking about the red snapper assessment.

We had a lot of discussion around the table about what all is going to be included in there, and, if we went with Option 1, we wouldn't even be having that discussion at all, and so I just think that Option 1 is not even viable, but I think Option 3 would allow the council and the SSC to look at those types of things a couple of times, to make sure that we have all the different data streams. I

think about things like the State Reef Fish Survey and how we can include that, et cetera, and so, yes, I would support Option 3 here.

MR. BELL: All right. There is two in support of Option 3. Any other thoughts from committee members? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I agree with Jessica on that, and it's more so -- If it was more out of the can, and it was the same set of repetitions in the SOWs every single time, I could understand where we might not need to be in there, but, if there's any chance that there are things that need to be tweaked, and something happens, then I think it would be good for us. Then, as far as once or twice, I think that's just a matter of where we think -- If there's a chance that something may have been omitted, at least, coming into it, you've said it, and, if it accidentally gets omitted, you at least have that ability to catch it on the backside of it, and so I think -- Like I said, I could go either way, with 2 or 3.

MR. BELL: Okay, and I am also thinking through the process of just how does this work mechanically, meetings, and I know it mentions the creation of an SSC working group, and I am just trying to -- I guess I'm kind of getting into the weeds of the working parts, but I understand the need and the desire for folks to get in early and get involved and be more hands-on. Any other discussion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: It says that the SEDAR Committee meeting schedule would shift to March and September, which does not follow the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, and I'm kind of confused on that.

MR. BELL: Chip, can you address that?

MS. THOMPSON: What's the difference between the SEDAR -- Is one of them our committee meeting and one of them is the SEDAR itself?

DR. COLLIER: That's correct, and so the SEDAR Steering Committee is not a council committee, and that is the broader committee, and then the SEDAR Committee is you guys, and one thing that we've seen is, in some years, it can be a challenge, or after some meetings it can be a challenge, in order to get the report ready for this meeting. This would give the opportunity, and, although you would not be getting a timely report, because it wouldn't be coming right after the meeting, you would be getting a report right before the next meeting, and potentially giving guidance to both Mel and John, at probably a more opportune time.

MR. BELL: All right. Any other thoughts on the process, which one, which option, and I think we seem to be -- We seem to be in favor of selecting Option 3 there, and do you need guidance from us, in terms of just direction, or we'll kind of head in that direction, and is that all you need, or do you need a motion or something from the committee?

DR. COLLIER: I put together some draft motions this morning, and I knew we were going to have a lot of topics, and so I put together some draft motions, and, based on the different options, and so here is the Option 3 draft motion that I put together.

MR. BELL: All right. Would a committee member like to make that motion? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **I move that the council -- I move that we select Option 3 as our preferred, and that would be the council and the SSC reviewing pre- and post-negotiated statements of work, council changes SEDAR Committee meeting to the March -- The council changes the SEDAR Committee meeting to March and September council meetings and requests the SSC to develop a statement of work working group.**

MR. BELL: All right. There's a motion. Do we have a second? Second by Carolyn. Any discussion of that? It seems like a little bit more work, but necessary. Okay. Any discussion on the motion? **Any objection to the motion? Seeing no objection, then the motion carries.** All right. Chip, next issue.

DR. COLLIER: Staying in Attachment 2, the next issue is review of assessment project schedules. Typically, in the past, we have brought the project schedules to you guys, and you guys have looked at these detailed schedules, which talks about when data scoping calls are going to occur, when certain meetings are going to occur, different timelines, and so a lot of it is dependent on just a few members within the Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff and their time and availability.

Therefore, it's not really an option to change the schedule, and what we're thinking is we could just provide updates on when these meetings are going to occur. Your opportunity to really address some of the big-ticket schedules, like when an assessment is going to occur, that would occur during the statements of work, and also the terms of reference, and so you're not going to lose that ability, but you would potentially be losing the ability to modify like a week or two here or there for a data scoping webinar or a data meeting, and so just checking to see which option you guys would like to, and, just given the new changes and all the workload that's going on with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as well as SEDAR staff, my thoughts are Option 2 might be a little bit better.

I know it's not giving you guys the ability to change that schedule, but I really think any big changes that you would want for the schedule would likely lead to delays in an assessment, and you would probably have more negative consequences than benefits.

MR. BELL: Okay, and so Option 1 is basically status quo, what we're doing now.

DR. COLLIER: Correct.

MR. BELL: So the question is that Option 2 offers some advantages and perhaps flexibility in dealing with -- It's a complicated world as it is, but so any discussion of a preferred option there? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Does that mean -- I guess maybe a perfect example is the discussion we had earlier about cobia and fitting things in, and would that mean that we would not have the ability to have any of those discussions?

DR. COLLIER: No, and you would still have the ability to have that discussion. What you would not have the ability to do is say, all right, the data scoping is going to be this day, and you guys want it on a different day, and you would not be able to do that. You would be able to set the year when the cobia assessment would be occurring.

MR. BELL: So we've kind of got big picture and then down in the weeds on the details would be different.

MR. GRINER: In that case, I would support Chip's recommendation.

MR. BELL: Okay, and so there's some interest in Option 2. Does that seem beneficial to folks, and is there any other support of Option 2? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of feel like it gets a little bit too much in the minutia if we're -- Like you're saying, if it's really flip-flopping to that level, why not let staff figure out what the best way is for that part, and we just need to make sure that the big, moving pieces are being done in a timely fashion, and how it gets done within that window is really, I think, beyond what we need to be playing with.

MR. BELL: Okay. Any other comments on Option 1 or Option 2? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry, and I guess my brain is functioning a little slowly this morning, and, Chip, can you talk a little bit more about the differences here, in terms of what this would do?

DR. COLLIER: What I will do is I will pull up a schedule. I am going to go into Attachment A3, and, if you scroll down to page 2, and so you can see that there's a detailed schedule here of what is going to occur within the assessment, and what we're saying is we would just like to provide updates to the council on when these individual items would occur, as opposed to the council having -- Right now, in their process, they're supposed to approve this, and we just don't -- To me, there's just not that flexibility for you guys to approve this, and these schedules are negotiated with twenty or thirty people on the phone, and it's really hard to get it all done.

MR. BELL: Okay. Any other discussion? Would anybody like to make a motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to make the motion that we select Option 2 as the preferred option for reviewing SEDAR schedules and that we no longer require approval of the SEDAR schedules.**

MR. BELL: All right. Do we have a second? Second by Trish. Okay. Any other discussion? **Any objection to approving Option 2?** Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Would it be helpful just to clarify with a little bit more -- **Instead of saying "SEDAR schedules", maybe the "within SEDAR scheduling", because, otherwise, it kind of could supersede and say like we're not doing anything for SEDAR scheduling overall.**

MR. BELL: So, with the motioner and the seconder, we can tweak the wording a little there, just for clarity. It's really all about those details that you were showing us and not the big schedule. Okay. **Any objection to that? I don't see any, and then that motion carries.**

DR. COLLIER: All right. We'll go back to Attachment 3, and we're going to shift over to the third agenda item, which is the SEDAR 68 terms of reference. SEDAR 68 is the operational assessment for scamp grouper. You guys had a presentation on the research track assessment for

scamp grouper, and so this is going to be updating that information with additional years, and that assessment ended in 2017, and we're going to add years into this assessment, and it's going to be adding data through 2021, and some of the data we realize is going to be partial, or preliminary, but they wanted to include as much information as possible, given that 2020 was a problematic year.

Provided here are a draft terms of reference, and this has been reviewed by the SSC, and this is also a little bit out of the normal -- Or what we're hoping to be the normal path for the future, and the reason for this is things changed back in May, at the last SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, and where we were not able to get you the terms of reference before they were submitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

These have actually been reviewed by the SSC, as well as they have also been submitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center as the -- I'm sorry. I am thinking of the wrong one, but these are the terms of reference that we're talking about for the operational assessment for scamp, and I will get to what I was talking about earlier in the golden tilefish assessment.

SEDAR 68, once again, these have been reviewed by the SSC, and one of -- The first three terms of reference are typical, or first four terms of reference, are typical terms of reference that are included in operational assessments, and they were also typical for past update assessments as well, and so not much has changed in those.

Where this is deviating from the past is looking at Items 5 through 8, and this is looking at discussions at the review workshop as well as discussions at the SSC meeting, and so they wanted to investigate potential changes in selectivity for the chevron trap, and some of those changes looked at time-varying selectivity for the index, and they also wanted to look at change in time in length and age comps, as well as potential random walk for the selectivity parameter. The other item that was suggested by the SSC to incorporate into this one was investigate the length and age comp data on the influence on the stock assessment model, and so they had a couple of different ways to address this.

Then Number 8 is looking at the stock-recruit curve. At low sizes, it does overestimate the recruitment, or it appeared to overestimate the recruitment, and then, at high sizes, it seemed to underestimate the recruitment, and so they were suggesting to investigate that a little bit more. Then, upon reviewing this this morning, it looks like Item 7 is actually a repeat of what is in 5a, and so I would suggest removing that, and those are the recommended changes, or recommended terms of reference, for this SEDAR assessment, the SEDAR 68 operational assessment, and, if there's any other changes, we can incorporate those.

MR. BELL: I know that's a lot to look at, but, again, it's been reviewed by the SSC, and Chip mentioned one little change there. Are there any other desired changes or issues with the assessment TORs? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Not a change, but just a question, again just to help educate me, and what is a random walk on A50 selectivity parameter?

DR. COLLIER: The A50 is the 50 percent of selectivity, and, John, if you want to field this one, you're more than welcome to, but random walk is just -- It allows the model to deviate randomly

through time series, and, in the review of this assessment, it appeared there was some -- I guess you would say not normal behavior in the selectivity for scamp, and so, as the size limit was put in place, the actual size of the fish went down, and so some of the reviewers were picking up on that and saying that it was looking very weird, and so they wanted that to be investigated a little bit more. These items listed in 5 through 8, they were discussed with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center at the table, and they said that they would be able to address those through an operational assessment.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MR. BELL: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Only because I can't, thinking back through time, ever remember where we've gone with partial year data, and how is that -- With preliminary -- I mean, I think about -- Just depending on where the data stream is, and not recalling, off the top of my head, how strong this is recreational, and so the idea of preliminary data as incomplete data, and how is that being addressed? I mean, I'm more curious, and I'm not -- I am just trying to assimilate how that's going to work, because, in looking through your other TORs, we're looking through the terminal year, and I understand that there is things going on, but how is that working into the assessment when it's not a complete year?

DR. COLLIER: There was a lot of concern with 2020 being the terminal year, and so they wanted as much information as possible, to be able to figure out what -- If 2020, given that there was some lack of data being collected in that year, just seeing if 2021 could provide any information beyond that, if 2020 was the terminal year, and so it would be incorporating, potentially, some of the fishery-independent data, looking at some of the indices of abundance, as well as potentially look at some of the fishery-dependent data. Was 2021 really outside of a normal bound that they would consider for that, and it's just providing additional information to hopefully anchor that last point.

MR. BELL: All right. Any other questions about the TORs for the scamp assessment? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just to comment, because I was going to mention the same thing, Carolyn, but, looking at the schedule, it looks like they've kind of taken that into account, with regard to landings data and other information, because they won't really be able to get started on the assessment until they have complete information for the prior year, but they are sequencing, it looks like, getting the information in, so they can continue work on it.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Andy. Anything else? John.

DR. WALTER: One thing I will note is these statements of work and the timeline usually go through a pretty tight scrutiny from the data providers and all the participants, as well as the Center. There is, oftentimes, some real specific language, like A50, and there's jargon in there, and so bear with us, and sometimes we put in the words that we understand, so that the analysts know exactly what to deal with, but, when you're looking at and giving these a high-level review, from the council-level, understand that sometimes they're going to have that in it, but also know that we put in a lot of care, in making sure that these are doable within the frame of what all of the data providers and the assessment staff can do, but then, if there's a lot of things that are added, I would caution on doing a lot of changes to it, because it's going to have knock-on effects, at times.

If something gets added, that could result in a delay, and so, if there are, in these high-level reviews, big concerns about something that might be going on there, or if you think it's not addressing the key thing, we need to know about it early, to build it in, because it could have an impact, but thanks.

MR. BELL: Good point. I mean, what goes into the creation of this is a lot of effort from a lot of different people and a lot of moving parts, and that's why I said, and it's rather technical at times, but anything else on this? Then do you need us to make a motion to approve?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and if we can hold off on a motion for right now.

MR. BELL: Just do them all at once or --

DR. COLLIER: Well, we can do that or -- I will leave that up to you, but I also did want to go over the schedule, real quick, and not that you're approving that, but just since the document is pulled up right now.

MR. BELL: Whatever works best, and you just go ahead and kind of drive along here.

DR. COLLIER: One thing that was brought up during the last SEDAR Steering Committee meeting was these operational assessments, after research track assessments, are going to be done pretty quickly. Unfortunately, for scamp, there are several conflicts within schedules, and this assessment is not going to get completed within that six-month time period, and it's going to be delayed until November of 2022, and so there is a bit of time there that it's -- Hopefully that's not going to be occurring in the future, but it is occurring for this assessment, and I just wanted to make sure that you guys were aware of it, that it is going to be outside a little bit outside of that six-month time period that is supposed to be done for these operational assessments following research track assessments.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks for that. We'll just kind of get through these, and then we'll just approve them all at the same time, I guess, at the end.

DR. COLLIER: Sounds good.

MR. BELL: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Not to belabor, and I guess my head is still stuck on the partial thing, and is there some way that can note, moving forward, why that clause is in there? I know, generally TORs, we kind of repopulate the list, and so we start from something that was already there, and the language carries over, but, if there's no context for why we're willing to put partial/preliminary data in there -- My concern is, if it goes through another iteration under a different species, it stays in, and we move forward with that, and it may not be appropriate, and does that make sense?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, it definitely does, and, like I said, this was a -- This is a consequence of COVID and concern with having 2020 as the terminal year.

DR. BELCHER: Right, and so our conversations are catching at, but what I'm getting at is this is just a static document, and, if somebody starts working off of that, as a hand-me-down document, they don't have that context there.

DR. COLLIER: So, Kathleen, are you noting that? Kathleen is online, and she helps work on these, and so I'll make sure that that is incorporated.

MR. BELL: Yes, and you don't want things just carrying forward as boilerplate, and it's not really a boilerplate. Yes, that makes sense, Carolyn. Good catch.

DR. COLLIER: I guess Kathleen has her hand raised.

MR. BELL: Kathleen.

MS. HOWINGTON: I did have my hand raised, but I put it down, but I've already taken that note, and that is not going to be included in the generic TORs that get submitted to the SSC for future assessments that don't have 2020 as a terminal year. I will probably keep it in if the 2020 is a terminal year, just in case, but don't worry. I have it in my head.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Kathleen.

MS. HOWINGTON: Thank you.

MR. BELL: Okay, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The next assessment we're going to be looking at is SEDAR 82, and this is a research track assessment, and so this is going to be including all those different workshops that we have included in the past, and so it's going to have a data workshop, and it's going to have an assessment workshop, as well as a review workshop, and so these terms of reference have actually been reviewed by the SSC, and they provided several edits, as well as they have been developed by a planning team for SEDAR 82, and this was developed over several months, to incorporate everybody's comments on this, and the planning team includes staff from the South Atlantic as well as the assessment scientists associated with this project.

If you look under the data workshop terms of reference, these are standard terms of reference that are used for data workshops, and there is, I guess, six or seven different items in here, and the first one is looking at stock structure, and this is typical for how we do items. The next one is looking at life history information, and that's looking at the age and growth of the animal, the maturity, as well as other pieces of information including in there.

The third item in there is looking at indices of abundance, and I know it's not really titled that way, but that's what the providing measures of population abundance is looking at, and it's looking at an index of abundance.

Following after that is the commercial statistics, and then the recreational statistics. After that information, then we have the discard mortality rates, and one of the other items that has been added into several of these assessments is looking at the ecosystem interactions, potentially climate interactions, as well as habitat and episodic events. We don't have many red tide events, like the

Gulf does, but that could be an example of what could occur. Upwelling events could be another item that are considered for certain species. Those are the terms of reference for the data workshop.

Then, following the data workshop, we have the assessment workshop, and this is standard boilerplate language for the assessment process, and I'm not going to read through all of these, but if there's any questions or concerns, and then our final one is review the terms of reference for the review workshop. The review workshop is where the CIE experts come in and really dig into the model and provide comments on any concerns that they might have, and, once again, these are boilerplate pieces of information.

Just a bit of a background on SEDAR 82 that's being done for gray triggerfish, gray triggerfish has -- There was an attempt to assess gray triggerfish. A couple of years ago, they did it associated with SEDAR 41. Unfortunately, there was some identified issues with that stock assessment, and, therefore, it was not carried forward for management advice, and so they're not starting from ground-zero. They do have quite a bit of information already built up for gray triggerfish, and so they know some of the things to look out for as they are developing the research track assessment for this species.

MR. BELL: All right. As Chip said, this was kind of boilerplate-ish, and does anybody see anything in there that we need to address or ask about or concerns? John.

DR. WALTER: I know Bob stepped out of the room, and so I'm going to call him out and take him up on the offer here to help coordinate, because one of the first terms you see is evaluate the catches in the Mid-Atlantic states, and this seems to be one that certainly is moving outside of the bounds of the South Atlantic, and, to get the stock structure, we're probably going to need some help and coordination there, and so that's, I think, really timely, and Bullet Point Number 1 is changing spatial distribution, including catches in the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. BELL: Good call, and you're right that we're probably going to see more of that with things as we get into the future here, but, as Bob mentioned, kind of coordinate through Pat Canfield, perhaps, if we need some help, and that's a good point. Anything else? Okay. We're good with that one. If there isn't anything else, we can move to the next.

DR. COLLIER: All right. I will move on to the next one, and the next item is Attachment A5, and this is going to be SEDAR 83, the vermilion snapper stock assessment. As you're looking through this, I will just point out that Items 1 through 4 are pretty standard, and then Item 5 is looking at ways to use precision measures of the recreational data to better capture uncertainty, and a different method was used, or, at least in the South Atlantic region, a different method was used to capture some of that uncertainty for scamp, and you saw that in that research track assessment, where they were able to incorporate the PSEs in the final run, and so this is kind of looking at trying to do that exact same thing for vermilion snapper.

The other item that's in there is looking at the results of a selectivity workshop that the South Atlantic helped to put together, and it was mainly focused on red snapper, but it also included some information on vermilion snapper, and it definitely did not have as much information on vermilion snapper, and so they just requested that they review and consider some of those findings, as they did talk about vermilion snapper a little bit. Are there any questions on the terms of reference for this species?

MR. BELL: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't know, with the kind of 2018 assessments, when the MRIP changes are happening with FES and incorporating the updated recreational landings, and if this is one that included FES or not previously. Do you know, Chip? The reason I say that is that, to me, seems to be a pretty substantial change, or something that would need to be also added to this or clearly laid out, in terms of the assessment, to consider.

DR. COLLIER: I am trying to remember back, and we had a couple of stocks that were actually reassessed to incorporate some of the FES numbers, but there was a lot of uncertainty going forward with those, and a lot of apprehension going forward, with some of those numbers, and so I think the management had kept with the previous CHTS values that were done in a previous SEDAR, and then these were just used as -- They were looked at for reference, and the SSC had reviewed them previously, but they had not made recommendations to put that forward for management. Does that make sense? It's been incorporated in an assessment, I believe, but it has not been used for management at this point.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, it makes sense, and I guess the -- You know, we've been dealing with this issue for a number of years now, where the methodology for calculating landings, or at least tracking the landings, no longer exists, right, and so we're constantly calibrating, or back-calculating, into the units in which the quotas are set. I don't know, with an update assessment, if it's appropriate to change that time series and update the time series using FES, since that's essentially how we're now tracking landings going forward, but I would recommend that it at least be explored.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and so we can -- Let's see. Would you like to have basically a sensitivity run looking at the impact of changing from CHTS to FES?

MR. STRELCHECK: I am not sure if it's a -- I mean, certainly a sensitivity run could be done. From a management standpoint, we're starting to move, obviously, into using FES, and so, really, I think my desire would be to manage in FES units, to convert the assessment into FES.

DR. WALTER: That would be our standard practice, is just to convert it and convert it back in time and then use the new units that we would be managing in. There are times when we have to do some sensitivity analyses, as to whether that change had an impact, and, quite often, we get asked to look at that at different times. Particularly, in the Gulf, we've been asked a number of those things, but just the standard practice would be we use the best units now, and we just convert it.

MR. BELL: So go to the current currency, I guess. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Is that not what we're doing currently right now with like the scamp that we just finished up? Isn't that what we just did?

DR. WALTER: Yes.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and all of these assessments are under the assumption that the recreational numbers are coming in in FES units, and I see Julie Neer has her hand up, if you want to recognize her.

MR. BELL: Okay. Julie.

DR. NEER: I was going to say what John Walter just said, and, yes, the standard practice, across-the-board, has been that, when a new assessment is done, the numbers are -- The recreational numbers for the current ongoing assessment are FES units, and, as you noted, sometimes there are sensitivity runs or other things to look at how that new set of data has made a change, but, moving forward, we no longer put the old numbers in, and we put the new numbers in. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, Julie. Do you have enough guidance on what we need to -- If we need to tweak something, and I hope that people are listening and taking notes.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, I think we have enough guidance. The one question I have is for Andy, if he wants to have a sensitivity looking at the impact, and so I feel like we could put it under 3, where it says to examine and describe impacts on model performance of estimates in 2020 and beyond, but I feel like we could also put the change from CHTS to FES in there as well.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I agree with that approach.

MR. BELL: Okay. Carolyn, did you have something? Okay. Anything else on this assessment TOR? I don't see anything. We'll let Chip finish typing here, and then we'll move along.

DR. COLLIER: I might wordsmith this a bit, but it's going to basically capture this.

MR. BELL: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: Then just a quick update on the schedule for this assessment, and, basically, it's going to be starting late in 2022 and get a completed report to you guys in September of 2023. I just wanted to give you an update on that.

MR. BELL: All right.

DR. COLLIER: Moving on to Attachment 6, and this is going to be the terms of reference for red grouper. It's very similar to the previous one, and, basically, Items 1 through 3 are the exact same, or, actually, Items 1 through 4 are the exact same, and Item Number 5 is looking at incorporating CVs, appropriate CVs, for landings data, and this is very similar to the one looking at the previous assessment, where they were talking about using appropriate estimates for the recreational landings, appropriate estimates of error associated with the recreational landings, and this is looking at the exact same thing.

The item for the selectivity workshop, that's not included in this assessment, and the reason for that is there were not enough red grouper in that selectivity workshop, or in the study, to really address the selectivity of red grouper. However, there is a slightly different one here, where it's looking at calculating the different F metrics, and so that's the fishing mortality metrics for the species. Typically, it's presented as just apical F, but there is different ways to present it, and we

want to make sure that some of the conclusions that are coming out of the assessment aren't just based on the metric associated with the F metric.

MR. BELL: All right. Any -- It's not a long list there, and is there anything on red grouper that you see there? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Do you need to add the same language to Number 4 that you did in the previous one?

DR. COLLIER: I think that would be good.

MR. BELL: Cool. Thank you. While he adds that, is there anything else that anybody noticed? I am not seeing any hands. We'll make that change and then look at the schedule, I guess.

DR. COLLIER: All right. The schedule for this one, basically, scoping for this assessment starts in late November, with the final report delivered to the council, or the final report being available, in December. That's likely going to be potentially an assessment review by the SSC in April of 2024. However, if it is going to be available in December, we might have an earlier SSC meeting, depending on the number of assessments that might be coming to the council at that time.

One thing I do want to point out for these last two assessments is, because we are changing to those operational assessments, and we really only need -- There is really only involvement of either SEDAR staff and council staff, and also the public, if there's a topical working group, and neither of these last two assessments had a topical working group, and, therefore, it's going to be completely driven by the Science Center, and there's not going to be any public meetings looking at this stock assessment.

MR. BELL: All right. Anything else on this one? Okay. Let's move along to golden tile.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so, for golden tile, you'll notice a slightly different format for this. The previous documents you were looking at, those were terms of reference, and so those are kind of finalized along the process, and what we're looking at here is a statement of work, and so this is that early-on process that John was talking about, and let's get whatever concerns you have in here, and we'll discuss it with the Science Center and see if they can address it in an operational assessment.

What we're looking at for tilefish is it's looking at it updating SEDAR 66. The previous terminal year was 2018, and the next terminal year for this operational assessment will be 2022, adding four years of new data. Some of this new data that has been talked about is updating information on life history and discard mortality as well as steepness. In addition to that, there is some fishery-independent surveys that are going on out there, and a couple of them are listed here. It was requested that the South Carolina DNR vertical longline, and they call it the short bottom longline survey, incorporate some of that life history information, because it appears that they're sampling in additional areas, and so they might be getting a different age structure from those areas.

There is also a discussion about using life history from the SADLS program, the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, and potentially incorporate some of that information, and then review the methods to generate a commercial longline CPUE index, if it's going to be done for the update.

One thing that the SSC had suggested was to explore changing the alternate age group delineations in the assessment model, and this is a suggestion to match what's being done for the northern stock of golden tilefish. Just for a little bit of information on golden tilefish, we do manage them as two separate stocks along the Atlantic coast. The border for the two separate stocks is the North Carolina/Virginia border, and what we're talking about here is the southern stock.

You will notice here that we have a request for a topical working group. This is a request that comes in as we're developing the statements of work, and we would incorporate that into the terms of reference as well, and so this one is requesting a typical working group, which means that there would be public involvement in this assessment, and mainly what we're looking at, or a public meeting as the assessment is being developed, and mainly what we're looking at for this species is reviewing and exploring some of the life history information that's available.

It is a fairly data-limited species, although we do have a lot of age data that's being collected from fishery-independent sources, and there is potentially other sources that could be available to maybe better inform some of the age and growth models, as well as the size-at-age, and also spawning frequency, and so you can look at the list of information that's being requested of this life history topical working group, and, if there is anything else that you guys would like to explore for this model, please let us know.

MR. BELL: Okay, and remember what you're looking at here is a statement of work, and so we're a little earlier in the process. This is the point where, if there's anything that we would want to add or consider in this assessment, this would be the time to bring it up, I guess. Anything? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I just want to make sure that some of the longline sampling is done on the southern end, which is where we're seeing on the small fish, so that they can confirm that they're there.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks.

DR. COLLIER: When you're talking about the sampling, are you talking about the sampling of the commercial fishermen or the sampling with that SADLS project, which is the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey?

MS. THOMPSON: Both.

DR. COLLIER: Okay. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: That was going to be another question, because I think Laurilee had said that they're more than welcome to collect all the data that you want, and is data collected from the commercial longline sector in the south for this assessment? Is any of that data used?

DR. WALTER: I can answer that. We have port sampling, and so the port samplers in all the major ports would be collecting that data. I don't have the numbers on what is collected in the

south area, and I can get that, to make sure that we've got coverage, and, if one wanted to add something to ensure that there is consistent sampling from throughout the region, I think usually that's what we intend to do. COVID has thrown a few monkey-wrenches in, and some places couldn't get out, but the intention is that we have that sampling, and, if there is a request to ensure that, that's perfectly within the bounds.

To get to the SADLS, to Laurilee's point, there was a presentation to the council in the June meeting on the 2020 SADLS project, and we're going to update that with 2021 and the expanded sampling and then, as part of this process, evaluate how much of that information can be used in the assessment, and, ideally, it's going to play a big role, particularly because it's designed for golden tile.

MR. BELL: Thanks, John. Tim.

MR. GRINER: So would this be an opportunity for some cooperative effort with those guys, or does it just have to be just random port thing, or can it be actually some sampling that's actually worked together cooperatively and scheduled and done?

DR. WALTER: Let me get -- Sometimes like a little bit of cooperative help can go a long way, and so let me get back to our lead analyst about like are there holes that some small fish could be filled in for like the growth curve.

MR. BELL: The terminal year on this is going to be 2022, I think, in terms of data. Okay. Anything else? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Thanks for that, John. I appreciate it, and we'll do anything we can to help you out, and I have heard that the person that comes in and samples at the dock, in the Canaveral area, works a lot harder than the one that's down to the south.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks for the observation. All right. Anything else? Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so I think what we'll do is we'll go through -- Let me take a second to put all these motions together, and then, after that, we can go into the stock prioritization, because that's just more or less guidance for you and John at the upcoming SEDAR Steering Committee.

MR. BELL: All right.

DR. COLLIER: Give me just a second on this.

MR. BELL: As Chip finishes editing this one large motion, somebody think about who would like to make it. Carolyn says she'll make it. Go ahead.

DR. BELCHER: I would like to make the motion that we approve the terms of reference for SEDAR 68 scamp operational assessment, terms of reference for SEDAR 82 gray triggerfish research track assessment, terms of reference for SEDAR 83 vermilion snapper operational assessment, and the terms of reference for SEDAR 86 red grouper operational assessment. as modified, and the statement of work for the 2026 golden tilefish operational assessment.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Can I get a second? Second by Tim. All right. Any discussion of the motion? It's basically just approving everything we just went through. Okay. **Any objection to the motion? I don't see any, and so that motion carries.**

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for that. All right. Now we have Attachment 8 that's looking at stock prioritization. In March of 2017, the SEDAR Committee reviewed a document that talked about the long-term assessment plan and developed a list of priority species, and there were some that they listed as what was recommended for age-based assessment, and that's what I have included in Table 1, so you guys can focus some of your discussion, potentially, on these. If you look at Table 1, the items that are bolded are species with current assessments going, and this also provides me an opportunity to talk about some of the ongoing assessments.

We have already talked about Spanish mackerel quite a bit, and we also have a mutton snapper assessment that's going on right now, and it's a benchmark assessment that's being conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute, and the terminal year for that one I think is 2020 for that data.

There is also an indication -- We also bolded our assessments that have been approved through the SEDAR Steering Committee, and so you will see -- Right below mutton snapper, you will see hogfish, and that's going to be updated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife, and we also have blueline tilefish, which is going to be an operational assessment in 2024, red grouper, which is going to be an operational assessment in 2023, and we just talked about that. Black sea bass, we didn't talk about this, but you guys did approve participants earlier on, during the closed session, and that's going to be an operational assessment starting in 2022. Then we just talked about vermilion snapper.

Highlighted in yellow are the species that are currently on the list for 2025, and, when we're talking about the changes to the process for SEDAR, what we need to do is really give guidance to Mel and John about what species they would like to be suggested for the 2025 slots, because they would make the recommendation at the May meeting, and that would basically start the ball rolling for developing statements of work.

Right now, on the list, we have red porgy for 2025, and king mackerel is also on the list, and that's not actually in the list for the South Atlantic slots, and that's actually over there on the far-right side of that planning grid that we had talked about earlier, but that's still included, and we also have snowy grouper, and that is potentially starting in 2025, and we also have gag grouper that you guys had a lot of conversation about at this meeting, and that's also going to be starting in 2025.

Those are the current recommendations, and you guys are welcome to change those, and you're also welcome to provide recommendations going forward for 2026 and 2027 to Mel and John, and, if you guys have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

MR. BELL: All right, and so any guidance for John and I as we move forward, in terms of prioritization suggestions? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, at some point, we've got to do a wreckfish assessment. Those guys paid for the last one, and that's a burden that I don't think we can put on them again, and so that would be a high priority for 2026 forward, is the earliest.

MR. BELL: Okay, and so wreckfish. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with that, and I guess I would -- I don't know that we need white grunt, and, I mean, I will just throw that out there. I can't even fully remember why we put it on the list in the first place, and it seemed like it came from another type of prioritization process, and I know that we have limited space, but I agree with Kerry that I think that there are things like wreckfish that should supersede something like white grunt.

Then I guess I also had a question, and maybe this is a question for John Walter, but I am understanding the whole like interim analysis and how that would factor in here, and I do understand that you're limited by the number of people, and I don't know if you have certain folks that are focusing on conducting the assessments and then a different set of folks that are working on the interim analysis.

You mentioned, earlier in the week, there was also something maybe called a management procedure, and can you explain the difference between the interim analysis, the management procedure, and maybe a SAFE report, and then it sounded like what you were saying, earlier in the week, was that we just need a little bit more information from those long-term datasets before any of the interim analyses can be conducted in the South Atlantic, and so I just was trying to understand a little bit more about when you thought the first interim analysis would come out on the Atlantic side, and one has already been out on the Gulf, but I just wanted to understand a little bit more about that.

DR. WALTER: Thanks for the question, and so the interim analysis -- We think we're about a year out from being able to develop a methodology and test which indices are most informative, and so then the process for requesting them would be the same process as going through the SEDAR Steering Committee and getting it on the docket.

It's much less time intensive, but it is the same analyst conducting it, usually, as doing the assessment, and we don't have a pool of interim analytical staff, but, because it's quite easy to do, it takes a lot less time, and we can fit a whole lot more in a whole lot more rapidly, and so we want to, once we develop it, utilize that tool more often.

A management procedure is something that is a good bit different, in the sense that it's not using the stock assessment or modifying the stock assessment, and it's an entire procedure, or recipe, for managing the stock. We haven't fleshed out that process yet, and that would be something that might, and could, apply to something like dolphinfish, that doesn't have an assessment, where we might use an index to adjust the current ACL based on that index just being a good indicator of when it's a good year or a bad year.

That approach is something we need to develop through a management strategy evaluation process, where there is some simulation testing to determine that it works relative to the uncertainties, and so that's kind of a separate parallel process, and I wouldn't say that that's ready

for primetime yet. The interim approach, in one year, we think we should be about ready for primetime on that, and then I think those would answer the questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to follow-up on that, if I can, Mr. Chairman, and so the SAFE report is a totally different part of this process, but the SAFE reports don't actually give you anything that you can utilize for management, and, I mean, like it has the biology, and it has the most up-to-date information, but it's not exactly like the interim analysis, where you're looking back on these long-term datasets, so that, ultimately, the council could make some decision, with the SSC, on like a new ABC or something like that, and a SAFE report couldn't get us there, right?

DR. WALTER: No, and the SAFE report doesn't have in it a formula for calculating a new ABC, and it gives you an overview of the status and a picture of what's going on. What we would do in the interim is take one of the indices that are in there, and we've identified that that index works well, and, ideally, we simulation test it, to show that it does actually predict the stock well, and then we use that index to adjust the ABC or the ACL up or down in between stock assessments, and so it allows us to be more responsive to whatever that index is saying about the stock.

MR. BELL: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, just thinking about how we look at this schedule and how this operates, and so, going forward, is the intent, say at the end of next year, that we would be adding, to this list of assessments, also the list of interim analyses that we're requesting, so that we don't just have this blanket like, hey, we would like an interim analysis on everything and that it's part of the list, so that we know here are the species that we're asking for, here's the full assessment, here's what is going to get an interim analysis, et cetera, and would that be part of what the SEDAR Committee discusses and then what you guys discuss as the Steering Committee? I am just trying to understand how the interim analyses would fit in as part of all this.

MR. BELL: So how you incorporate that as another tool in here and when it's ready for use, and does that factor into the schedule.

DR. COLLIER: Interim analyses aren't going to be part of the SEDAR process, and they would go directly from the council to the Science Center.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I actually wanted to follow-up, and we heard about white grunt and thinking about that, and it's not management strategy evaluation, but what's the other approach that John has mentioned a couple of times regarding dolphin management or something?

DR. WALTER: Management procedures.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Management procedures, yes, and so, thinking about that for dolphin, and even that seems like it's tied back to an index, the challenge with dolphin is do we have an index, and I'm just wondering though, since this has come up, and it came up in the seminar, and the council seems really interested as a dolphin as a priority, if perhaps we should get some information on that routed to the SSC as a first step, and certainly not in April, but maybe October, or next April, so that we are making some headway in this big challenge of assessing dolphin.

Then I wonder, with white grunt, and Julie Neer I'm sure is chuckling, because white grunt was added to the SEDAR schedule at the second SEDAR Steering Committee, the first one that I ever did, and it was to be assessed in 2005, and it's had itself kicked down the path forever, and so clearly the priority may not necessarily be there relative to your other stocks, and I'm just wondering if perhaps the -- Why can't I remember that name, but the management --

DR. COLLIER: Procedure.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Procedure. If the management procedure process might not be something else that maybe we could look at for white grunt as well, just to make some progress, and, at the very least, maybe get the SSC thinking about how do we assess white grunt and some of these other stocks, and I think we're maxed out in terms of complex, age-based assessments, and the schedule seems to show that we can keep this universe of assessments fairly well up-to-date, on like a five-year cycle, which is really what is desired, and so, as we consider bringing in new things, we should really evaluate this list of the important stocks to have the most robust assessments and look at some of these more creative ways for some of these others.

MR. BELL: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I really like that idea of using that management procedure for white grunt, and that was -- That had me looking at this whole schedule, to try to figure out -- You know, we would be asking analysts to spend a certain amount of time on white grunt, and I just don't know if we want to put all of our eggs in that basket if there are these other tools, such as management procedure, that we could use for dolphin, white grunt, and others, and then, also, trying to understand, and think about the Snapper Grouper Committee and how many times we're like, okay, well, the next assessment for Species X isn't until this many years, but, if, within a year from now, we can start factoring in that, okay, let's assess our progress on the rebuilding plan for whatever species with an interim analysis, and it just seems like it would help this whole process.

MR. BELL: Yes, and kind of the SEDAR factory that brings us information that allows us to move on some of these things is kind of maxed, and so, if you've got other ways of bringing information to us that we can take management action on, if there's more tools in the toolbox, great, and so I would definitely -- That's a great idea. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The other thing that you guys had talked about were the SAFE reports, and so the SAFE reports aren't necessarily going to be providing catch-level recommendations, but what they could be providing are maybe trends in the fishery, and so, if you're seeing concerning trends, like you're only getting to 50 percent of your ACL, you could potentially look at number of trips going on in that fishery, are those changing, what's going on, and try to figure out, without an assessment, do you need to change management measures or be more liberal or be more conservative, and you're not going to have that ABC change, but you could still change management based on some of that information.

MR. BELL: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, from a sort of commercial fishing perspective, I love the idea of -- Even if we don't have sort of all the information, but it gives you business planning tools, right, and so, if the council is getting some kind of trend update, and having some sort of conversation,

even if it's we're not taking management action on it, there's this ability for all of us to sit here and go, you know, if we had known between the gag assessment previous and this one now, that things aren't looking so hot, we could have started thinking about, you know, sort of what we were going to do, and so I like the idea of something in the middle, to help us be flexible.

MR. BELL: Right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know how many people have had a chance or have ever looked at the SAFE report that's put out by the HMS fisheries, and I would not go and use their template, because you have to go through a convoluted process of figuring out -- They put a lot of hurdles and caveats in there, and so, whatever you do, I would make it very transparent and crystal clear, so that you don't have to have fifty follow-up emails or calls to figure out what the graph is, because it's very misleading. I have researched their stuff and looked at it, but something like what you're talking about would be very good and helpful, I think, to the public, also.

MR. BELL: Good observation, Dewey.

DR. COLLIER: Rick is going to be talking about this later on in the meeting, and so I think we can definitely address it at that point as well.

MR. BELL: All right. In the interest of moving along here, we're talking about prioritization, and is there anything else that we need to kind of advise John and I before we -- Bob.

MR. BEAL: Not to beat a dead horse, and I know we're talking about council priorities in the out years, but I think just to reiterate the importance of cobia. If there's any creative way to slip that on the out-year schedule, from the ASMFC perspective, it would be great to have it there, and I know it's not easy, and I know there is limited capacity, but it's a high-profile, important fish for us.

MR. BELL: Right, and I would second that, wearing either hat, either spinning my council and commission hat around or my state hat, and it's an important species, and it was very important to us when it was still ours and we passed it off. Thanks for pointing that out. John.

DR. WALTER: I think I owe the council a get-back on cobia, and I said I would look to staff and ask them about it, and we always need a two-year -- We set the schedule in stone for two years for these in the planning horizon, and cobia in 2024 would still be within that two-year window, in the spring of 2022 meeting, and so it's something to bring, certainly, to the May SEDAR Steering Committee to get in the mix with all the other requests, but I think it's something that -- That would be the place to bring it forward, to get it in the potential queue, possibly for that CMP slot there.

I note that there's a lot of white space, and I wanted to also say that that's actually the branch I used to work in, which also does all the assessments for ICCAT, and so it's not white space, necessarily, and it's not idle space, but it's rather busy on a number of other priority species, but it's within the window, and I think we can get it in the queue, or get it at least in the consideration. Thanks.

MR. BELL: Thank you, John. Anything else on prioritization? I don't see any hands. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I think that brings us to Other Business.

MR. BELL: All right. Do we have any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee?
Seeing none -- Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: No, and I was waving at Laurilee. She was taking a picture.

MR. BELL: Okay. Daggone tourists.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm a tourist.

MR. BELL: Okay. Then the SEDAR Committee is adjourned then.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 9, 2021.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thompson
January 28, 2022

SAFMC December Council

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Attendee Details

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Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bachelor	Nate
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brennan	Ken
Yes	Brown	Julie
Yes	Burgess	Aurora
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Cheshire	Rob
Yes	Christmas	Merry
Yes	Clarke	Lora
Yes	Conklin	The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Robert
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Diaz	Dale
Yes	FRANCO	DAWN
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Fitzpatrick	Eric
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Friedman	Leah
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Glazier	Edward
Yes	Godwin	Joelle
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Hoke	David

Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Ingram	Jamal
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Johnston	Lane
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Kelly	Aaron
Yes	Kerns	Toni
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	Krikstan	Catherine
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Locker	Stephen
Yes	M TARVER	TIM
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Martin	Drew
Yes	Masi	Michelle
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	Meehan	Sean
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Merrifield	Jeanna
Yes	Muehlstein	Emily
Yes	Muffley	Brandon
Yes	Muñoz	Roldan
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Nesslage	Genny
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Donnell	Kelli
Yes	OShaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	O'Brien	Lauren
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Porch	Clay
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Runde	Brendan
Yes	Sagarese	Skyler
Yes	Schobernd	Christina
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Simpson	Julie

Yes	Smillie	01Nicholas
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Vincent	Matthew
Yes	Walia	Matt
Yes	Waters	Jim
Yes	White	Geoff
Yes	Whitten	Meredith
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	Wiseman	adam
Yes	Wyanski	David
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	colby	barrett
Yes	emery	jeff
Yes	gloeckner	david
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Yes	moss	david
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