

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SEDAR COMMITTEE**

**Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel  
Key West, Florida**

**June 12, 2011**

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

**SEDAR Committee**

David Cupka, Chair  
Dr. Brian Chevront  
Ben Hartig  
Tom Swatzel

George Geiger, Vice-Chair  
Duane Harris  
Mark Robson

**Council Members:**

Robert Boyles  
Dr. Roy Crabtree  
LTJG Matt Lam  
Charlie Phillips

Tom Burgess  
Mac Currin  
Dr. Wilson Laney

**Council Staff:**

Bob Mahood  
Mike Collins  
Kim Iverson

John Carmichael  
Julie O'Dell  
Andrea Grabman

**Observers/Participants:**

Monica Smit-Brunello  
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith  
Otha Easley  
Phil Steele

Dr. Jack McGovern  
Jessica McCawley  
Bob Gill

Other Participants Attached

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Flagler Ballroom of the Key West Beachside Hotel, Key West, Florida, June 12, 2011, and was called to order at 2:25 o'clock p.m. by Chairman David Cupka.

MR. CUPKA: All right, the SEDAR Committee is George Geiger, Brian Chevront, Duane Harris, Ben Hartig, Vince O'Shea, Mark Robson, Tom Swatzel, and myself. The first order of business will be approval of the agenda. Are there any additions or corrections to the agenda? Seeing none, then the agenda is approved.

Next is approval of minutes from our last committee meeting. Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes? Seeing none, then the minutes are approved. This brings us down to our next agenda item, which is SEDAR activities and John is going to give us an overview on those.

MR. CARMICHAEL: A couple of primary things going on with SEDAR; we had a steering committee meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup> in Charleston; you have got a meeting summary attached for that. We will talk about that in detail when we get to the Steering committee Report, which is Item 5. The other event going on is SEDAR 25, which is doing assessments of South Atlantic black sea bass and golden tilefish. We had a data workshop April 26-28; an assessment workshop will be next week, June 21-23, up in Beaufort.

There are some issues around this assessment, discussions about stock structure, stock ID; raised at the data workshop and unit stocks and then there has also been discussions that have come up recently about the headboat data set and the type of assessments that we are doing. That is what led to creation of Attachment 1A, which is a summary of things that were discussed regarding this assessment and just went through the research recommendations and the process that is being applied to this assessment and tried to compare it and contrast it with what past types of assessments have been.

We have called this assessment a standard in the SEDAR moniker, but what happened in this case is the SEDAR Steering Committee was looking at different types of assessment categories at the same time we were trying to get this assessment off the ground. We really wanted to have this assessment to the council by December, so that led to the council going off with a particular approach for this assessment and calling it a standard before the steering committee had finalized what they would consider a standard in the future.

As a result, what we have is really a hybrid between a standard and a benchmark. That is why I went back and looked at what have we done for this assessment, what types of information is being brought in, what kind of new data is being considered, and how does that compare with like the research recommendations that were put forth in the previous couple of assessments?

Normal standard assessments we wouldn't be bringing in a lot of new data and in this case we are bringing a number of new data series. We are looking at they are going to put forth both the production model and the age-structured model, so they are actually bringing forth two models through this assessment. Now this is for black sea bass, all of this is related to black sea bass.

In the future, in a standard they would just go forward likely with the one model. They are bringing in new data. There is a lot of age data. They looked at all of the indices again in detail and reconsidered all of that, which is something that would not be done in a normal standard. Now this led to one of the issues which was raised by the participants is that they just didn't feel like they had time in the shortened workshop to get through all the issues, but they did.

We are a little behind on getting the data workshop report out but that is just reflecting how much new information they put into it and the effort that went into reconsidering all the different decisions that were made. So in this case it is true, this is kind of a hybrid assessment. It is much more like a benchmark than what you can expect from future standards.

I just want the council to understand that. The other issue is a couple things have come up about this stock that we brought you questions about do we go ahead, do we go ahead? The latest in this is the question about the headboat data and the fishermen coming forward and saying that basically they didn't fill out their records in a timely manner 30 years ago; and as a result there is some questions about the accuracy and the reliability of the information.

This was a major point of discussion on the last webinar and it kind of came down to some uncertainty about just when the data become reliable. A number of different years were thrown out from 1980 through, I don't know, maybe 1994 at one point. It was a whole range; it was a good 15-year range of different events that might have affected the data.

The question was raised of bias versus reliability and uncertainty; some saying, well, it could be possible that we are just dealing with the more uncertain situation and we might be able to address this by increasing the CVs around the early years of the data set, which is something we deal with quite often in these assessments.

The other idea is to look at different starting times for the model, perhaps start the model in 1985, 1986, 1980, or 1994. There was a good discussion about that and no clear year emerged when people said, okay, we believe at that point the data were clearly reliable. There were questions about various years put forth.

Where it was left at that webinar involving the data and assessment groups was that the assessment workshop would look into this in more detail at their workshop. The guys at the Science Center were hoping to look at the headboat records and try to see if there was anything in the data themselves that would reveal a point in time when reporting became better.

They also wanted to look at the issue from a geographical standpoint because the issues about the data had been raised from fishermen in Florida, and it was noted that this index has been used in many assessments and these data sets have been talked about quite often and these issues haven't been raised. Fishermen in other areas haven't raised the same claims about filling out their data sheets at the end of the month type of thing.

It wasn't sure if the issue was widespread throughout the whole fishery or whether it was just certain areas. Given all those number of questions, there was no clear answer for the data workshop group and let the assessment workshop to proceed. It was discussed about having the

council be aware of this issue and get some guidance from you in the sense of understanding the issue, making sure you still wanted them to proceed with this assessment and if you are comfortable in the assessment workshop exploring this through sensitivities. I know David and Tom are pretty well versed in that. If there is anything I didn't bring up, go ahead and bring that up now in this issue, but I hope I summarized it pretty well.

MR. CUPKA: Well, you did, John. There was just one other issue I was going to allude to and you had mentioned it, but that was this issue of the number of stocks in the region, whether it was one stock or two stocks. I believe this was something that was looked into at the data workshop and the biological subgroup has issued a report on this or the life history group. Apparently from everything they looked at, there is no scientific evidence that this was anything other than a single stock throughout the range, is that correct?

MR. CARMICHAEL: That is correct. They noticed a difference in growth between northern and southern parts of the range and northern being North Carolina, South Carolina, perhaps; and southern being Florida and obviously existing in a continuum along that area. Because of the difference in growth, they looked at a lot of other things within the data and broke out a lot of the data sets into regional areas.

They calculated indices north and south and tried to compare them. There was a lot of consistency in the indices signals from north and south. There is some thoughts that differences in growth could simply be reflecting habitat, prey availability. They have genetic studies that are available, tagging studies, larval mixing and taking all the information and considering that, the panel didn't think there was justification at this time for separating the stock out.

But we expect there to be some research recommendations coming from them that look at this issue a little more in depth and try to determine if there are separate functioning stocks. The general conclusion of the data workshop report is saying that it seems that there is one functioning stock. Even though there may be groups that are kind of resident in the area they live, it seems that their larval mix and there is a lot of genetic exchange between them.

One thing that has been noted throughout and at the data workshop was that the council may ultimately consider regional management to deal with the stock. The fact that there is a single stock doesn't preclude you from going that route.

MR. CUPKA: Also I believe and I'd ask staff to send out the comments that we got from Mr. Jimmy Hull, who is a fisherman and fish house owner here in Florida, that raised a number of issues. Some of those I think have been alluded to already, the issue about stock or the issue about the headboat data. I think you've addressed that, John, that could be addressed by running the assessments for different year periods to see what impacts that would have. I believe Bonnie has asked her staff to look at some of that data or they are looking at some of that data to address the concerns. Mr. Hull did bring up a number of points in the document that we forwarded to you all.

It seems to me like a lot of those points that were made deal more with the process. As we all know, SEDAR is a council-driven process and it is a multi-organizational process. This council

here certainly doesn't have the final say on what is done during this process because we have the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, as well as ourselves, along with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf States Commission, Highly Migratory Species.

All these organizations or groups have representatives on the steering committee. A lot of these things that need to be changed or that they want addressed it seems to me would have to be deferred to the steering committee. Even if this committee or even this council wanted to make some of these changes, it is something that does have to be approved – and we will get to the guidelines and procedures here in a minute.

The steering committee has approved the most recent version of them. A lot of these things, like I say, I believe are a process more than anything else and really need to be addressed at the steering committee level. We also know that the steering committee and staff have spent a lot of time recently trying to improve the SEDAR process, looking at ways we can get more through-put.

We all know we need more assessments done. It just strikes me – and I'll ask John if he wants to comment on it, but it seems to me that some of the issues that Mr. Hull raised if they were implemented would result in increasing the amount of time it takes to get a SEDAR assessment done rather than decreasing it, and it is kind of contrary to the route we have been going.

We certainly want the process to be transparent and we certainly want the fishermen to participate in the process as long as they follow the guidelines and procedures and do so in an appropriate manner. John, do you have any comments you want to make on some of the comments we got from Mr. Hull or anything else about the process?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I want to say the steering committee will meet again in October and then they have their regular meeting in May, so we have opportunities of this committee to talk about the guidance that you give to the representatives about these as you get a chance to read over that and consider them.

But David is right, one of the guiding principles here the last couple of years have been trying to get SEDAR to be more effective and to be more efficient so we can get more assessments through this process. The feedback we are getting from participants at black sea bass was that – you know, we went in trying to do this as something a little less than a benchmark, to try and not have to rehash all the ground from the prior assessment.

That is the idea of a standard is that you don't have to revisit every decision from the benchmark. You discuss those things where you have new information, and what the participants said is we ended up discussing everything, we discussed it all. We didn't have time to discuss it all, but we did. I think David is right, it is a balancing act. We are trying to be transparent and we are trying to be thorough and we are trying to be timely.

You hear the things about cheap, fast and good, or whatever that you can get it. One of the things with assessments is you can be timely, transparent, or thorough. In SEDAR we always

said that initially we were very transparent and very thorough and now we are saying we have to be more timely.

We don't want to give up transparency and thoroughness, but we do have to understand we are going to have to put some limits on what we do. We are going to have to have ways of being more efficient. That may mean that the idea that every assessment deals with every issue is not going to always be carried forth; that at some assessments you are going to deal with the big issues and get the best assessment you can and recognize some things you are simply going to have to deal with next time around. That is the point we are at now in this process.

MR. CUPKA: Ben, before I get to you, I want to ask Bonnie if she has any comments that she wanted to make on this headboat data issue or not.

DR. PONWITH: Well, specific to the headboat data issue, I find it deeply, deeply troubling that in the middle of a stock assessment the industry would come forward and say, "Well, you can't use those data, they are fatally flawed. I know because I lied," and actually submit written affidavits saying, "I lied on my logbook so you can't use my data."

This is troubling to me and it certainly strengthens the requirement for logbook validation, but it also is troubling to me that last year during the red snapper stock assessment we were soundly criticized for not weighting the headboat index more heavily. So last year it was a very good index and this year it is fatally flawed.

I take that as guidance on how this should be responded to. Number 1, a stock assessment is absolutely contingent on high-quality data as an input. I take their comments very, very seriously. What we are doing right now is doing quantitative analyses on the historic data relative to other indices we may have to look for patterns in the contemporary data and whether or not there is a disparity between those patterns in contemporary data versus the historic data.

Second of all, another thing that we can do is run sensitivity analyses to find out what happens in the assessment if we truncate that time series. There are always costs when you run with a shorter time series, but then it becomes a tradeoff question; do you truncate the time series or do you use data in the longer time series that someone has on the record called to question?

We are doing that work right now to make decisions about how to move forward and I don't know where we are. It is ongoing even as we speak. I don't have any final decisions on that and I see some points on that point.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Bonnie, actually the question I have been wanting to ask here for a little while has been sort of related to some of the points that you brought up. One of the things is that John was discussing about potential issues at least that folks had brought up saying with reporting accuracies on there.

I don't know the extent that this has occurred in other states, but I know, for example, the way that the headboat fishery has been prosecuted has changed over the years. For example, in North Carolina we used to actually have commercial fishermen that would go out on a headboat and

would catch fish that they would turn around and sell back in the days when they could use electric gear on the headboats, which they cannot do now. Then we had the Fisheries Reform Act that kind of stopped all that activity.

We have always felt from the North Carolina perspective that probably certain species from the headboat index from maybe the early nineties earlier may have been sort of unrealistic in some of the landings. I'm hoping that your analysis looking at some of the other historical documents could help us to figure out whether there is a bias; how much of that activity was really occurring and did it actually have an impact on the overall landings or did it just have an impact maybe only in North Carolina?

I don't know if that practice was in other states or not, so that just might have been a minor blip caused by North Carolina or it could have been something larger. That has always been an issue that has caused the folks in North Carolina to be concerned about the headboat index.

DR. PONWITH: To that point, it would be useful rather than my running the risk of miscommunicating that to the analysts, if you would be willing to put a description of what was occurring in writing. I could pass that on to them and add that to the list of things that they should be examining those data with respect to.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, to that point, Brian, I know what you are saying but I think we have also got to keep in mind that pre-fisheries reform act or pre-'95 or so, by law anybody in North Carolina could sell up to \$500 worth of fish a year without a license. I am not sure that anybody was keeping track of who was selling how much.

There were a lot of fish off of headboats that were sold. I would have to be careful trying to interpret what proportion of that was actually commercially licensed folks that were going out and who were just anglers trying to pay for their headboat ticket plus put some cash in their pockets for the day back when the fishing was real good. We have to be careful on how we interpret that.

MR. SWATZEL: I just want to speak in defense of the headboat industry in general. I guess the effort with the affidavits is more of a Florida situation. I think that most headboat and charterboat operators, headboat operators in particular in the Carolinas that I'm familiar with make a good faith effort to put down accurate data. and I think they have for years. We participated in that program since the seventies. I just want to make sure we don't paint the entire industry as waffling on the accuracy of that data.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you for those comments, Tom. Duane.

MR. HARRIS: Yes, and I too appreciate those comments by Tom and I think he is absolutely right based on what I have seen over the years. Bonnie, I am really disturbed by what you said about affidavits being signed by headboat captains, crews that they were providing false data and actually admitting to providing false data.

I'm under the impression that providing false data is a felony violation of the law. If that is the case, what is happening to those people? If something is not happening, I am not going to be a happy camper.

DR. PONWITH: I won't speak to the legal aspects of this or the law enforcement aspects of this because that is certainly outside of my reach. I will speak to the science side of this. Every Q&A session we have we bring up the point that it is nearly impossible with the sophisticated models that we are running right now to anticipate how to game your data on self-reported data.

Reporting low may seem intuitively obvious but might come back with some unexpected outcome in terms of how the stock assessment looks and likewise reporting high. Our advice constantly to the self-reporting industry is please be as factual and accurate as you possibly can be in these reports. It is really imperative. When I speak about this, I am speaking from the science standpoint. I would defer to my colleagues to discuss the legal implications.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I'm not certain, I just looked at the regulations and it certainly doesn't say people have to make some sort of statement under penalty of perjury when they submit their logbook information, but that is just the reporting regulations. There are other laws about submitting false information and that sort of thing.

Maybe the better thing would be for us to get together. We could talk with Bonnie, and Otha is here from law enforcement, and chat a little bit about what possibly – I don't think we have an enforcement attorney here, but we could chat about what possibly could be done and looked into for these circumstances; because I agree, it is really troubling from a variety of views.

MR. CUPKA: Maybe you could get together and then at full council we could get some idea what your discussions are. Bob, did you have something?

MR. GILL: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee, but, Bonnie, could you discuss a little bit about how widespread, what you know about now? For example, does it go into the Gulf as well? What is the magnitude of what you know about?

DR. PONWITH: I have no way to quantify that; but that said, I can remember maybe every other council meeting in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico an industry person stands up and says, "You can't regulate me on that assessment, it is based on fatally flawed data, I lied." I have heard this before.

MR. HARTIG: The question before Bonnie, and I appreciate her explanation, and for me to read through those letters, too, it seemed like they were form letters and that is pretty disturbing from my point of view, also. It is like here the facts were given to them, here is how you should write your letter, and many of them seemed very similar in those respects.

I had some problems with that. I appreciate Bonnie's explanation on how she looked at it. That made sense to me. We have to look at the SEDAR process as an evolution. I've been involved since the beginning. I was one of the few fishermen who attended these SEDAR assessments



early on; many times just the only fisherman there, hoping and praying that we could get some more fishermen involved in this process.

Now that we've got them, it has only been since SFA has changed and since we are – now the only place fishermen can have a change, can affect their catch levels is in the assessment. That is the only place they can be changed. In my view of the process, in talking to fishermen, just get the best assessment you can get, and we are.

We are getting better assessments; we are getting more fishermen involved. We have industry scientists involved, which is a good thing, and I see this council starting to pull back from that, and I think that is wrong. Industry scientists can add another valuable part of this process to enable them to participate in the process.

The other thing is how do we deal with these recommendations? I know David said through the steering committee but do you need a motion to take these from the council to the steering committee? How will they be done, because I just don't want to see those glossed over? I would like to see every one addressed by the steering committee and how we can or can't deal with them in the timely fashion that we are trying to do assessments now.

Basically we need some way to air these questions because in this evolutionary process – and I think it is a good evolution – we are going to come up with these different things to come before the steering committee and we need to have them addressed.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think like Ben said, dealing with these, you have two important pieces of information. You have the comments and you also have the guidelines from the steering committee. The SEDAR guidelines that you were provided were just approved by the steering committee.

I think what everyone needs to do is just sit down with some time and read those guidelines and think about what it means to the assessments and consider what you need to get in terms of assessment information in the future under ABCs and AMs and the need for information and consider the comments .

Ben's comments about having the industry involved in that is important and what does the council want to do in the future? Where are you going to draw that line between a process that gives due voice to every issue that you know is going to be slow – we've seen that, it is proven – versus something are you going to reduce some of the discussion and make something that is going to get you some more information?

The goal of the steering committee in coming up with the three assessment categories was to trying a compromise on that; a benchmark, which we know is going to be slow and burdensome and time consuming as we've always done; an update where we have dealt with the issues and we can bring in new data, where we can bring the councils timely information, but we are not intending on an update to talk about new stuff.

They are going to put the new data in and they are going to give it to you. Then a standard where there is a little bit in between there, where you know if you have – the best example for the standards is our new independent indices; the idea being that if we can get those worked out in one workshop and feed them into our assessments efficiently, that will be a lot better than a benchmark.

Maybe we could get new indices for six or eight or ten species and be able to bring them in through standards. Now I think you guys really need to carefully look at those guidelines and think about those comments and come to the September meeting with some really good ideas and opinions from yourselves about what you think changes might need to be done at the next stage of SEDAR. Ben is right about it being an evolution; this thing is always in change and that is what we expect.

MR. CUPKA: Thanks for those comments, John. As I've said before, we certainly want to encourage the fishermen's involvement in this. One thing about these reports that go through the different stages – and all of that are put together by panelists – is that those reports should include minority views as well as my understanding.

They are not just supposed to be one-sided. They are supposed to give the next group the full range of issues that were discussed. There shouldn't be a need, for example, for an industry scientist to make a minority report separately to a review panel. That minority information should already be included in the report that is given to the review panel. In order to do that, we need to make sure that those people are involved in the process.

If you look at the three types of participants we have, there are panelists, there are appointed observers and then there are just attendees. In the guidelines it points out the role of each of those three groups, and it is important to get the fishermen involved in such a way that they can have that input; there is no doubt about it. We are not trying to cut anybody out of the process but we are trying to make the process more affective so that we can get more assessments done.

DR. PONWITH: Mr. Chairman, I think the way forward to Ben's question is to be extremely parsimonious going through those comments and split them into two bins. One bin is comments that deal with the science versus comments that deal with the process. The comments that deal with the process should be handled by the SEDAR Steering Committee.

I think that is highly appropriate. The fact that this thing is in flux and has been in flux for so long; I think rather than being detracting from our credibility – and I know Ben agrees – is it is to our credit. We are trying to fine tune a process because we care about the quality of these stock assessments and we care about people buying into the product of those stock assessments.

It is imperative that people buy into those stock assessment products because then they will believe in the management that they are based on. Now that takes us back to the other bin, the science bin. For all cases where they have raised questions about the science, that is best handled by the stock assessment panel because, again, a SEDAR process is a science process.

What we want to do is make sure that it is being carried out by scientists. The input of the fishing industry is imperative for the success of that scientific process because we have models, we have data, but there is no one on earth that understands how those fisheries are prosecuted better than the people that are active in them.

There will be times when the scientists have to go to the industry and say, “How are you doing this, do you fish this way or that way?”; or, “We are seeing a weird pattern in the data, can you explain a change in the way you did your business?”

Those are highly appropriate and necessary inputs from the fishing industry. From that standpoint this is a partnership. It is very important but the bottom line is a stock assessment is a science process, and we need to be really, really diligent about protecting the integrity of that science process.

MR. CURRIN: I am not on your committee. Clearly, the participation from the user groups is important and we need to strive to make sure that we get the best input from the user groups that we can. I think we also have to be resolute in our procedure. I think we also have to expect the kind of pressure from folks on important stock assessments like black sea bass.

If it is a designated standard assessment, then we are going to be pushed at every turn to do a little bit more. Why don't we do this? I don't think we need to fall on our sword during that process. We need to stick to our guns, we need to be resolute. If it is a designated standard assessments, then by God let's stay with the criteria associated with that in the handbook or in the guidelines.

A benchmark we know is going to be different, but if we start trying to kowtow to every little pressure on an update – well, can't we do just a little bit here – we are going to end up spinning our wheels and spending a lot of extra time and we are going to get behind the eight ball on another assessment down the road. I am very pleased with the designations that we have. I think it is appropriate, and I think we need to be resolute about sticking to the designations that we assign to the various stocks for the assessments when they come up.

MR. BURGESS: Mr. Chairman, I am not a member of your committee, but I was at the data workshop and did take part in the two webinars, one before and one after. I received a call from Jimmy Hull a couple of days before coming to this meeting and he did bring up concerns that you are all aware of, the headboat index and information.

I think John described it well and explained how they were addressed in the data – no, excuse me, the last webinar after the data workshop. Also he was concerned about not doing a benchmark because the concern he brought up to me at the time was that only one model could be used.

But as you described in your black sea bass description, Tab 1A I guess it was that you are referring to now, more than one model will be considered at the assessment workshop, so I think his concerns are addressed there. I am not sure how Ben feels about the way his concerns were being addressed.

There was a lot of discussion at the webinar about Jimmy's concerns, and I think everybody listened to him and he wasn't pushed to the side. I don't think. Just as an observation, I think everybody was concerned about it but, again, I think John described the results and how it turned out.

MR. HARTIG: Mac, I agree with everything you said. The only problem with this assessment is it's a hybrid and that increases some problems in this assessment. We are going to have to work through those in this assessment but from now on we won't have anymore hybrids. It should be different from this assessment on.

MR. CUPKA: Maybe one of the things we could do is ask John and Bonnie to kind of put their heads together on that list that we got from Mr. Hull and kind of petition it out which is a science issue and which is a process issue and then get John maybe to bring those up before the steering committee, and also this council would have an opportunity to provide some input at our September meeting prior to the steering committee, because I definitely want to respond to Mr. Hull's concerns but I think they need to be treated in the right way. Bonnie.

DR. PONWITH: I appreciate the comments about our three categories because, again, the whole purpose of this was to increase the through-put and I appreciate the support in maintaining our courage in terms of seeing those three categories withstand the first trials. I think one of the things that would be advantageous is we are familiar with the three categories.

When we have put the final touches to the revised SEDAR guidelines, I think it would be beneficial to do at full council at the next council meeting a very short overview of those new procedures at a time most likely to be witnessed by people from the industry; in other words, maybe perhaps right prior to public testimony. I think one of the things we are suffering from is a lag in understanding of these revisions to the SEDAR process. Doing that might help advance our communications with our industry on how we are conducting that business.

MR. CUPKA: Well, those guidelines were approved at our last committee meeting, but we did make some editorial changes and that is one reason why they haven't been finalized or distributed, I guess, because we wanted to incorporate those editorial changes. That is not to say that they couldn't be further amended at the next steering committee meeting if we felt like there was a need to.

Even though they are finalized, this really is an evolutionary process and there may be other ways or better ways of doing some of that. That is one of the things we need to get to on our agenda today is a report on the steering committee meeting and the guidelines. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you for bringing up Jimmy Hull's comments and I wanted to thank the science side. He had good comments; the science had additional questions to what Jimmy was asking. It went back to Jimmy and the back and forth and interplay I think is very helpful. I know it takes time, Bonnie. I know it takes time from some of your assessment group, but I thought that was a very productive interchange between you guys and industry and I appreciate that.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, let's move ahead on our agenda. The next thing is the Southeast Fisheries Science Center Report on interjurisdictional stocks. As we know there were some problems with the spiny lobster assessment because you have recruitment outside the area of jurisdiction. We certainly have some stocks in our area – wreckfish certainly comes to mind – and so the Center was going to look at this and give us some thoughts on maybe how to approach these things.

DR. PONWITH: I don't have conclusive findings but I do have a progress report on this. As you know, we have a couple of stocks coming up in 2013 on a list that is a proposed stock assessment that frankly is way too robust to be executable. This information I think is going to be helpful in terms of helping the council formulate its advice to the steering committee on what makes the short list.

Two of the stocks that in light of the outcome of the spiny lobster stock assessment that raised some concern on my staff were golden crab and wreckfish. The reason is say, for example, for the wreckfish is that we own only a small fraction of the real estate that is inhabited by this stock and we represent only a small portion of the fishing pressure on wreckfish in total, which is Pan-Atlantic. It raises the question of how do you deal with recruitment for this species. Certainly our objective as a council is to avoid local depletion; in other words, to maintain our fishing mortality rates on the habitat that falls within the jurisdiction of the council such that we do not fish at a level that influences that local component of the broader population.

The real mystery is recruitment and the probabilities of that habitat being exclusively self-seeding are just about zero. We know that there is recruitment coming in from outside. That recruitment would presumably be influenced by fishing patterns downstream of where the progeny are coming in from.

So the real question is how do you deal with that uncertainty in a stock assessment? We could certainly do a full-blown benchmark in the traditional sense of that stock but there is a risk of that. The risk is that we would go through a full-blown benchmark stock assessment, and after doing that find out that there is enough uncertainty that we end up deferring back to the generic ACL approach to this.

Now that is an important finding, but what it does is cost us a slot on the stock assessment slate. One of the things that I did was investigated the probabilities of being able to propose this for an Atlantic-wide stock assessment under ICES. In having this discussion with colleagues involved in ICES, the one downside to that approach is that our component of the total fishery is small enough that it may be difficult convincing the rest of the scientific community to take this species on.

In fact from the United States perspective there may be other stocks that if the United States were going to propose this in an international forum, that the United States would be better off selecting something where we had a larger fishery or a larger stake just because conducting these stock assessments in ICES tend to be rare because it is a large officious slow-moving vehicle.

Another approach is that on the Pacific – in the California Current one of their senior scientists has developed methodology used for data-poor species. Now one thing about our wreckfish

fishery is we have a pretty good handle on landings for that. I think the thing that is really data poor is life history and the recruitment into that area.

What we have agreed to do is to take the wreckfish data and apply it to this stock assessment methodology on a trial basis with just in-house to see how the species, how the data, how the model behave, because at this point the methodology has been used exclusively for west coast stocks.

That work has been agreed to by the Southwest Fisheries Science Center. Our folks are going to be collaborating with them to run this analysis. The outcome of this analysis would be really informative in terms of what might be an acceptable modeling approach that allows us to put in broad ranges of recruitment scenarios to see what the response field to those changes would be.

For golden crab I have had discussions with people in the Alaska Fisheries Science Center about how they conduct their crab assessments and have yet to but will be having that same discussion with the people in the Northeast Fisheries Science Center regarding their crab fishery to do some compare and contrasts on what type of data they have versus what we have, which will position us to be a little more clear on putting a probability of a successful stock assessment on that, given what we know about those stocks.

For lobster, what I proposed to the Gulf council is this. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center is engaged in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Program and I am the country focal point for that program. One of their areas of interest is spiny lobster. The purpose of this program is to be able to look across geopolitical jurisdictions and pool data to solve science problems and management problems at a basin scale rather than by country by country, which hasn't really served us that well.

My proposal to the Gulf Council was to use the large marine ecosystem program and heightened engagement in that program to see if we could look at conducting a Caribbean-wide assessment, or at least to gather up data Caribbean-wide for a broader look at spiny lobster to understand those recruitment processes into our EEZ waters and state waters. I guess I will leave it at that now and see if there are any other questions.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Bonnie, you mentioned when you were discussing wreckfish, that there was a model for species and you mentioned with the California Current. Would you explain exactly how that fits in? I understand that would be for data-poor species and it is used on the west coast, but what does that mean for the California Current?

DR. PONWITH: This is an assessment tool that was devised for data-poor species in the California Current and was used with some level of success for Pacific Coast species. They ran, I think, about 50 species through this process based on the data that they have. Of course, in any situation where you have a data-poor assessment, it means that assumptions need to be made.

It takes often expert judgment to input. The connection to the California Current is this assessment tool was created by a Southwest Fisheries Science Center scientist and applied to

stocks that inhabit the California Current, and this would be the first time this tool would be used on a stock from the Atlantic coast.

MR. CUPKA: There is quite a large fishery for wreckfish off the Azores, but the fish there are generally smaller than what we get here. The other interesting thing is that they have caught fish in our area with hooks that are not used by fishermen in our area but are used by fishermen in the Azores.

It is kind of a non-intentional tagging experiment and shows those fish are actually – some of them, coming from the Azores over to where they are fished off our coast. It is kind of an interesting thing but there is a lot that is not known about them. Mac.

MR. CURRIN: Just a comment, and, Bonnie, it is down the road, I guess, when we start thinking about assessments for dolphin and wahoo we are going to have some of the same issues that we have got with wreckfish, golden crab, and spiny lobster from a recruitment perspective.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, Mac, that is a good example. We have got examples in other council jurisdictions where this is happening and assessments are done. You have got king crab in the Bering Sea, you have got a Russian component, you have all kinds of different countries fishing on that animal. How do they do the assessments; does the data from each country go into the assessment? Those are things we need to know and find out.

Just as an additional note, there is some NGO work going on in connectivity for the United States, Cuba, Mexico with lobster in particular as a major species, but they are thinking about other things too with the larval pathways and things, and that is down the road in the future, but there is some interest from some of these other countries to be able to do this and hopefully we can get the data we need for our different assessments to be able to do this.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Since we are sort of talking about these kinds of issues, if you remember from the king mackerel assessment we had done the last time, that one of the criticisms of that assessment was the lack of data from Mexico that was usable and that the CIE gave a very strong warning to SEDAR about this, that they didn't think that future assessments really could be considered valid without somehow accurately accounting for this Mexican data.

There were even charts that showed that those fish, which were primarily in the Gulf of Mexico, it actually showed that some of them looked like they even migrated around to the Straits of Florida. It is a serious issue. I have no idea how you are going to deal with it when you have got a country that actually; Mexico did send some data apparently at one point, but everybody looked at it and decided it was so unusable there was nothing that they could do with it so it couldn't be included.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we are not going to solve that today but we do know that is a problem, and I guess, Bonnie, your people will continue to look into this and maybe at our next meeting you can give us an update or let us know how this is working out. All right, SEDAR Steering Committee Report, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay, the earlier alluded-to SEDAR Steering Committee Report; they met in May. We finally, after several years of effort, have approved a new set of guidelines and you were provided those; and those of you familiar with the previous version, which was like Version 17 of the guidelines, and what had happened over time was every time the steering committee made a decision it was documented in the guidelines.

It was basically built from a document that was used to establish everything and to promote the project, essentially and needs change over time, so the guidelines that you see this time are quite a bit different. They are reduced in scope considerably. They focus on just the details of what is to be done and the critical decisions in dealing with the nuts and bolts and logistics of the assessment process; things like the confidentiality of data, the appointment process; much more similar now to like a SOPPs layout that you are familiar with from the council.

That being said, they are approved but it is a process in constant flux and we expect that there will be changes to that and we will incorporate them as time moves on. A comment on that; I don't have any trouble with every assessment being a little bit different from the ones that have gone before and the coordinators that we have now don't have any troubles with that either.

As Bonnie said, we are trying to get to the best assessment and as long as you guys are okay with that, we can work in the system and everyone is quite comfortable with that. When we deal with these things at these workshops and we get into these things, it does reflect everybody's efforts to do the best assessment we can, and that is a good testament to the process and what people are bringing to the table.

Along those lines, continuing to evolve this thing, a couple of things to point out with the guidelines; and another issue, please pay attention in the guidelines to the types of assessments. I think Bonnie's comment was good about summarizing those at the council level and you should look into that.

Another thing the steering committee has brought up I noted in here is the idea of creating a technical committee. What this would be would be representatives from the cooperators and from the key data holders that would work on things like project scheduling and look at the outlooks for assessments, give some guidance to the steering committee on the types of assessment that should be considered.

It was really born from some issues we have dealt with lately, say, and trying to schedule some assessments and deal with changes brought forth by this council that affected primarily the life history data and realized that through this system one of the key components now, as we deal with this, is getting the life history data in.

It is like any kind of complex system; you deal with one problem, another constriction in their bottleneck pops up. We have increased our assessment scientists and we are getting capacity there. Now the next area that is coming up as being sort of the bottleneck in the system is going to be the life history data.



Ultimately I expect the region will be at a point where we keep up with all the stocks that are going to have age-based assessments in near real-time fashion, but that is going to take time and that is going to take more resources. What we are doing with that now at the steering committee level is trying to get back to setting the assessments out a couple of years in advance so those guys can get up to speed on it.

What we want to do is say have the steering committee in May, 2012 establish the species that it is going to do for 2013 without any change and then also list what their practical priorities are for 2014 and then run these priorities through this technical committee, through the councils and find out, all right, what are the real priorities, what are the ones that can be done, what are the ones that might have an age problem or what have you.

That is what this committee is going to do and give us a way of getting us schedules that in the short-term balance the data workshop amongst the different data labs. That has been one of the key things we have been dealing with internally in terms of looking at 2012 is making sure we get the right separation between South Atlantic and Gulf and Caribbean stocks, as well as adequate time between the really critical thing now being the data workshops, because there are some data people that participate at every assessment.

We have a person who works with the discard data from the discard logbook, Kevin McCarthy, and he is at every SEDAR data workshop. We have some other people that work on indices for the region and they are at practically every SEDAR workshop, so we are trying to balance that and that is one of the things. This group is really critical to that. What we are hoping is to get the steering committee to approve this at their next meeting with a scope and a membership and different tasks that they will work on. David, do you have any comments on that?

MR. CUPKA: I know it seems like we are making the process more complex by adding this committee, but it really is important, I think, because a lot of times the members of the steering committee are given direction so when we have our meeting they might want to change priorities from species A to species B.

That is easy for us to do, but in actuality sometimes it creates problems because if these people are doing biological studies and collecting hard parts, they need to know a year or two out; and it is easy to say, well, let's do this species instead of this other species, but it is not always feasible to do that because they don't have the hard parts or the new data they need to really do an assessment. I think once this committee gets up and running, we will be able to make more informed decisions on what the priorities should be. Bonnie, do you want to add something?

DR. PONWITH: I agree there are multiple angles to look at priorities from. One is from the science standpoint, and that is going to the SSC and asking them what they think the scientific squeaky wheel is, what stock that hasn't been assessed should be because they are concerned about it, or what stock do you think might be rebuilding faster than the rebuilding plan and warrants doing a check-in to see if that is true based on feedback.

The other side is from the management side, the managers are cutting regulations and feedback into the success of those regulations in achieving the desired outcome is critical to how you make

those decisions on regulations into the future. Did a time area closure work better than a bag limit, did a trip limit work the way we thought we did?

Those stock assessments are pretty critical to answering those questions. Then the third part is the logistics and that is the keeping up with the biological sampling, the reproductive analysis and the age analysis. The notion of this group is to get those three representations from those three components of this enterprise together to say here are the things that are contributing to my priority list, seeing how those priorities mesh and then going back to the councils and to the steering committee to kind of refine that.

The idea of doing it that way is to avoid a situation where we make a decision in the steering committee, merrily plod down that path and then take a right-hand turn six months later because of some unanticipated issue and having that mess up the throughput on the age analysis. I think this is going to be a vast improvement in smoothing the way we create our plans going into the future.

MR. HARTIG: I have something to Bonnie's point and then I've got another issue. One of the things that we don't look at in the steering committee, as we schedule these animals we don't look at the sampling and what sampling has been done, how many otoliths, what was the sampling protocol, is that being met? Do we have enough information for that species to actually do a valid assessment?

I think that is one thing that the steering committee needs to be able to see and look at in trying to schedule some of these stocks; and if you see a problem, if you are scheduling two or three years down the line, maybe you want to hit that particular stock hard in one year and be able to collect enough information to elucidate age classes in the assessment. Certainly if we did that, that would be helpful in the process.

The other thing I had was as a council member now in this process and kind of been deemed to be an observer, it wasn't a problem in red snapper, I didn't have a problem, they were eager for the information I had and I didn't have a problem; it was a problem in Goliath grouper because I have a hard time, when I have an intimate knowledge of a stock, biting my tongue when things are being said wrong at an assessment.

Frankly, I wasn't going to bring this up, but I am going to bring it up anyway because it has been bothering me since I went to this Goliath grouper assessment. Half of the panelists there didn't want to see it reopen, so you have already got a bias in your panel that doesn't want to see it. I was lectured by one of the panelists on why we shouldn't reopen it; and we had comments made by one of the panelists on why we shouldn't reopen this stock on the record.

When you have that kind of a panel set up, there is no way to get a fair hearing for the stock. I gave my observations of this stock over time, which are over the whole rebuilding plan. I mean I went from the point to seeing one Goliath grouper diving to watching them repopulate the whole area and it has been, as you watch it, the range, the depth, the habitat has all expanded through this time.

The main contention in that assessment was that there is enough mortality going on by poaching and people just killing them that it is hurting the rebuilding. Well, if that was the case, then I would not be seeing the expanded range in habitats and depth and throughout the entire South Atlantic, so I got overruled.

That was where the point of contention came. When I gave that statement, people were going, well, you shouldn't be able to get involved in a conversation. That was very problematic for me. How to solve that is – in 5.1 it says council members attending as official representatives are considered appointed observers.

Then I would add “council members with an intimate knowledge of a particular fishery may serve as panelists” and that would take that out of the loop because you have got to have people like me. I mean I fish for everything in the South Atlantic, every species except wreckfish. I have landings for everything.

I can be a member of most of the assessments done and have information over 40 years of experience on the water on most of these stocks. I would like to go into a number of these assessments as a panelist and not as an observer; and if we can accommodate that, that would help I think at least when you have people like Tom and I who have intimate knowledge of the fishery and participate in them.

MR. CUPKA: What I would suggest is that you get that suggested wording to John and let him incorporate it because they are still working on the “final copy”; and once we get that, we will distribute it prior to September and it will give us a chance to go over some of these changes maybe.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would think that is a change in policy of the steering committee, so that is something we can bring in at the next meeting about council members serving as representatives and certainly discuss that and I think get some sense here about whether or not the committee overall supports that as well. It has been a hotly debated topic in the past, for sure.

MR. CUPKA: Well, again, I think we could provide those comments. It would have to go to the steering committee in October is what I was getting at, but we need to put it in there and maybe highlight it to show that it is different from what we have seen before and then we can consider it and decide what we want to do with it. Bonnie.

DR. PONWITH: I could wait until the steering committee to make this comment, but I think in the interest of full disclosure I would make it here so that you know where I would stand on this. I think that having AP members participating in stock assessments to be able to bring the institutional knowledge of those fisheries to bear in the stock assessment is a critical and positive step. I also am a very firm believer in separating the management from the science.

My opinion on this is that you should have council members responsible for management and because of that job it precludes their involvement in the science. That wouldn't preclude a past council member; it wouldn't preclude having an AP member who is extremely familiar with the

fishery serving on it. I really think it is important to keep a separation between those two elements of this very challenging process.

MR. CUPKA: There is wording in the guideline and all the SEDAR coordinators have been instructed if the discussion starts to get into management area that it shouldn't happen, it doesn't need to be happening and can't happen. It needs to be just focused on science and also this is, as Bonnie says, a science project, but it is not a political process; it is a scientific process. Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: I see where Ben was coming from. Ben is very knowledgeable and he wasn't talking about providing policy. He was talking about providing information, but having said that I agree with Bonnie. You can't have a council member serving on a science panel, because even if the best intentions, you know it is going to get turned the other way at some point in time.

I think that is why we have that in our policy as we have it now. I think what could happen, and we have discussed this I think before, is a council member with a lot of expertise in that area, make sure that he gives people on the panel that have that expertise and have that knowledge or somebody he can impart that knowledge to.

I think it is important that we have all the information. The minute you start putting council members on there. I could see putting George Geiger on a SEDAR Panel and there would be people that believe even though he might have some good information, they might think he might be biased in one way or another. That applies to all council members no matter how good the intentions are.

MR. ROBSON: To this discussion, I think it would at the very least be important to remember that when we have the SSC review of a stock assessment and we get a report from the SSC on that assessment, that we need to make sure we include comments and review or some form of information that we get from our council observers that were at the SEDAR process. I think we've always done that a little bit informally, but it might help in the future when we are actually hearing the SSC on a particular assessment to make sure we also hear a report from the council observers that were part of that SEDAR process.

MR. CUPKA: Are there any other comments on the guidelines? We will have another opportunity I guess in September before the October meeting if anyone wants to suggest any changes. Anything else on the committee report? Tom.

MR. BURGESS: I am the observer on the black sea bass stock assessment and to address Mark's comments about giving a report; during the data workshop the groups split up to their different groups, indices, commercial, recreational, life history. What I did was I moved about the room and got into some of them, but it is a little tough to comment on all the groups at all the time.

You could make a report on where you sit in and maybe your comments and discussions and things of that nature, but because of the large group at that area it might be a little difficult but something could be done.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that is a good idea. I can talk with Bob and I guess David and Gregg about it procedurally, but from the South Atlantic perspective I would see nothing wrong with having the people that you appointed as observers to submit a report to be available for the SSC to look at and for the council to look at. I think that would be great.

They are being supported to be there and stuff and I don't think that is too much to ask. Anybody who thinks it is too much to ask, I think you need to say, well, we are giving you this opportunity, there is a chance to have direct input and you should welcome it, not see it as a burden. I wouldn't see it as a burden. I think it would be very useful information.

Ben's comments about some of the statements made, hopefully off the record, at Goliath are a little bit troublesome. We try to stomp that management out every chance we get and sometimes the coordinators give the evil eye at them and they are like that is management and we are not going to talk about it. We will keep up the vigilance, clearly.

MR. CUPKA: It is a problem the way the data workshop is structured to be involved in all those groups but there also is a report that comes out at the data workshop that is passed on to the assessment workshop group that will give you some insight into what was discussed in all of them. I think a report from an observer; they could report on things that they saw that wouldn't necessarily represent what when on for the entire workshop because of the nature of the way it is conducted. Mac.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, I think it is a good idea. I just think we should make sure we have realistic expectations in deference to what Tom said, because there is no way you can capture all of it so don't expect some complete comprehensive report from an observer.

But having their views and impressions and observations I think would be useful to the council. I certainly wouldn't expect any ten-page diatribe, but a couple of pages of something just with impressions and how things went I think would be useful for the council.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, John is over here making notes and I'm sure will bring all of this up at the steering committee meeting in October. The next item is the administrative?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, we have got to take action on the stocks for 2013. There is an action item from the steering committee report here where we are asking from some prioritization of stocks for 2013. The best place to look is in Attachment 1, the Steering committee Report. Table 1 is a summary of the stocks planned for the next couple of years.

This is a table that we have developed at the steering committee as a way of managing the workload. It essentially has entries under each key assessment team that reflects the number of lead assessment analysts available, which is the first point of determining how many assessments we can do within a given year.

We have worked out 2011 and we are under progress; 2012 is final. There is a little bit of an issue with 2012, however, because white grunt looks like it is two stocks of white grunt and there is actually a technical memorandum published through the Science Center by Jennifer Potts

several years ago that highlights the differences in genetics and growth and several other factors, otoliths and such and draws a pretty clear indication that there are two stocks.

We talked about this on a planning call last week. It seems to be sort of a North Carolina/South Carolina stock and then more of a southern stock. There is some thought that the southern stock perhaps has some connectivity with the Gulf of Mexico stock. So that being two stocks, that is really two assessment analysts that will be required for white grunt.

The other issue is they want to do cobia in the Atlantic through a Beaufort team as an Atlantic stock; we want to do that with someone from Beaufort, and that means Spanish mackerel and cobia. What we are looking at for 2012 is essentially six possible slots needed and we have four analysts available.

I want to give you some other information on Spanish that I think will be well received. In the planning call we discussed the issues with the Spanish model from last time; the inability of the model that was used to reach conclusive results; and looking at doing the first one for the Gulf, the teams agreed that the goal for Gulf and Atlantic Spanish will be to find one model to use for both stocks.

They are considering stock synthesis as one but right now the understanding is the door is wide open and the Beaufort and Miami teams are going to work together through this and try to come up with whatever model package we use, we are going to use it for Gulf and Atlantic Spanish, which is I think a good thing in this step.

The issues with the Spanish model the last time pretty much say that there is no expectation that we would just try to fix that model. They want to look beyond that and say given what we have and where we want to get, is there a better approach. We expect a lot of effort to go into Spanish and cobia it's going to be the first time. We expect a lot of effort to go into that as well.

So for 2012 the issue that Bonnie's team is going to have is not being necessarily able to do everything. One proposal is to focus the white grunt benchmark on the north stock, a possibility, and then consider doing the southern when you do the Gulf because of the possible connectivity there. They will put one person on that, and then Spanish and then cobia and then that leaves us basically one person to spread between these two updates.

I think it would be helpful for Bonnie at this stage if the council had some feeling about vermillion or red porgy, which one would perhaps be done first if one had to be pushed back because of personnel. I don't think we know at this time just how all the personnel are going to work out, but a prioritization there.

Then the other big thing is to look at 2013. At the steering committee time we had hopes – and I guess Bonnie will fill us in where we stand on that – hopes of having six assessment leads in 2013. Right now we have six, seven, eight, nine stocks that are listed, so we have to pare down 2013 quite a bit.

Another thing to point out is quite a few of those are benchmarks. We know from the process overall we can't do that many benchmarks. It looks like in working with our data folks we can do within a given calendar year four benchmark data workshops and give them the ample time, so that would give us four SEDAR projects with benchmarks.

That is spread out between South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. We have got to balance all of these different competing interests. I think the first thing is 2012 and some guidance and then we will talk about 2013 and hopefully we can prioritize all of those stocks.

MR. CUPKA: All right, 2012, we need to prioritize between vermillion and red porgy, but again do we know what if there are any scientific constraints to either one of those in terms of biological samples or anything? Bonnie.

DR. PONWITH: From the biological standpoint for red porgy, there are about 13,000 otoliths. It would take a considerable effort to be able to get the – did I just say vermillion?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, you said red porgy.

DR. PONWITH: I'm sorry, red porgy there are about 4,300 otoliths that we have to be able to grind and read. For the vermillion there are about 13,000, so considerably more effort to get the vermillion up to speed. The big challenge is that in conjunction with the white grunt. Now if we go to the northern only, right now there is a backlog of about 13,000 white grunt otoliths.

These are the fishery-dependent otoliths right now, the ones that are in the holdings of the Fed. About one-third of those are from the northern group and two-thirds are from the southern group. If the decision was made to work the northern group only, that makes getting the white grunt otoliths up to speed considerably more manageable.

MR. CUPKA: When they are working on some of these other species, that means they are not reading the other otoliths; so the fact that they have got 13,000, if nothing gets done in the meantime, then next year we are going to be looking at 13,000 otoliths unless there is some work going on during the period they are looking at these other species.

DR. PONWITH: There are two steps to this. There is clearing the backlog, which we have a backlog of otoliths for all species right now. My vision for the future is that we clear the backlog for all stocks, for all species and that in any given year what we are working on that year are the otoliths exclusively from last year. That is the perfect world.

That makes the system more limber to changes in decisions about what the stock priorities are for stock assessments. Part of the reason we are in the situation right now it is not as limber is that there is a backlog. We will work on one species. For example, when we did red snapper, it took a long time to get all of those otoliths up to speed and basically required stepping away from just about everything.

We made some preliminary decisions on what was going to be coming up in queue in the future and the otoliths readers, both from the fishery-dependent side on the federal side as well as the

states who are working on some of the fishery-independent otoliths, would go to work on those. Then we would sort of calibrate that decision and switch to a different species which cleared the backlog for Species A but created a bigger backlog for Species B.

MR. HARRIS: Bonnie, isn't reading otoliths something that we could contract or the Science Center could contract out to an outside entity to do? Once you have learned how to read the otoliths for a certain species it is fairly simple. It needs to be, of course, checked by somebody else, but still it seems like we could move forward much more quickly if we could contract it out.

DR. PONWITH: The answer to that is absolutely it can be contracted out so here is the glitch. Right now we are doing this in combination with people who are Federal FTEs as well as contractors who work for me, for the Center. The two things that have to happen to be able to increase the number of personnel power is you have got to have the money to pay for it.

What it would require is for me to take money that we were devoting for the collection of new data, the survey data, and pull back on that a little bit and readjust the apportionment between what we are applying to the number of hands preparing and reading those otoliths versus collecting more, and that can be done.

This is an iterative process and it is a matter of making really good decisions about how you apportion those data. The other glitch is this. Anytime you have more than lab reading otoliths; for example, I'll use the white grunt for example. We are going to be reading the otoliths for the fishery-dependent data; South Carolina will be reading the otoliths for the fishery-independent data.

What that requires is those two labs holding a workshop to be able to calibrate their otolith reading to make sure that if we hand an otolith that we aged at three to the next lab, they age it at three as well. That way we don't introduce any scientific uncertainty in because of having more readers.

The more labs you have reading those, the more careful you have to be and expense there is associated with calibrating. You get to a point where you have to make decisions about is it smarter to consolidate and reduce the amount of potential entrance of human error in that or are you better farming it all out and getting it done faster but make those investments into those calibration workshops. So those are some of the things that we are thinking about in trying to balance this effort.

MR. PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, I am not on your committee, but rather than put off an assessment couldn't you just do a representative sample of as many as you could so you could still have the assessment?

DR. PONWITH: That is a superb question. It is such a good question that I will confess to you that was my very first question to staff; we need to subsample in a scenario like this. The response back is that subsampling is what you do when you have a large volume, when you are in the asymptote in terms of information content of your collection.



When I spoke with the analysts their assessment of where they were in terms of the amount of otoliths we have got is that we are low enough in the information content curve, in other words, we are getting just enough otoliths right now that to cut back would actually add a high level of uncertainty into the estimate. If we had collected enough that we were, you know, one more otoliths just doesn't give you that much more information, then we would absolutely subsample, but unfortunately we are not quite there yet.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, that still leaves us with the issue for 2012, what you want your priority to be, the vermilion or red since we can't do them both and vermilion has a lot more otoliths that need to be read, but if we selected that, could it be done, Bonnie?

DR. PONWITH: Would you say that one more time, I missed it?

MR. CUPKA: If they were to give vermilion a high priority over red porgy, there are a lot more otoliths that need to be read to do vermilion, so is that even possible I guess is what I am asking?

DR. PONWITH: The combination of doing vermilion in lieu of red porgy may be doable if we drop the southern group for white grunt. I would have to go and consult my folks to find out precisely, but doing white grunt and vermilion in total would have been impossible. Doing the northern unit and vermilion might be possible.

MR. ROBSON: In terms of prioritizing between vermilion and porgy, a question for Bonnie; you said that we are low on the information curve, I guess for both of those is what I think I heard you say, so is it more important – is the sheer number of otoliths available for analysis making a difference? In other words, would we be better off spending the energy on a better information level with 13,000 vermilion otoliths than we would with a smaller number of red porgy. Would we have better quality information with vermilion if we got that done?

DR. PONWITH: I can't answer that actually. What I would have to do is take a look at what that represents – how many they have already done. In other words, I don't know whether it is 4,300 out of a whole lot more than that or whether it is 4,300 total, and then I would have to evaluate that against what the landings were to be able to answer that, but I can check in and get an answer to that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Getting back to the question that was being asked about whether we should be looking at the B-liners or the red porgy for the assessment, I believe the recommendation that had come from the council regarding this in the past was that we had red porgy originally scheduled for 2012 and then vermilion scheduled for 2014.

I believe the council's recommendation was if it was possible was to reverse the two, not to do both of them in 2012; the idea being that in the case of the vermilion, that was a fishery that was important to a number of states whereas I know that red porgy was one that was more localized in the northern end of the council's range.

I would like to hope that we could work out something. If we could only do the northern end of white grunt and the vermilion, I think that would probably be the most that would be the assessments that I think most people would prefer to have done. I know that we had some discussion in North Carolina about the red porgy assessment, which is due in 2012.

I posed the question would we rather have a vermilion assessment from a North Carolina perspective or a red porgy assessment, and the folks really would much rather have the vermilion assessment than red porgy even if we had to wait a couple extra years. We know there are indications that the red porgy are rebuilding and that is going great.

The fact is that from our perspective, that B-liner fishery is just so much more important than the red porgy one. If there was some way that we could make that happen, I think you would probably find enough support from folks on the council to do that. If you could see if your folks can do that, I think that would be greatly appreciated.

MR. CUPKA: I agree with you, Brian, and it would be kind of nice to have a motion and see if the rest of us feel that way. Mark.

MR. ROBSON: Well and I am prepared to do that, but I had one more question and that question was if we didn't do white – if we put off white grunt, both the northern and the southern, could we do both vermilion and red porgy? That is I guess a question for Bonnie and I don't know how important white grunt is in terms of getting an assessment done immediately, but it doesn't seem like it would rise to the level of both vermilion and red porgy.

DR. PONWITH: Strictly from an otolith standpoint, dropping white grunt would make doing vermilion and red porgy certainly more executable. What that does is gets back to the scenario where we are continually updating already regularly assessed stocks at the expense of ones that never seem to bubble up in queue. I think what I would have to do is touch bases with the stock assessment folks themselves regarding their concerns about that stock.

MR. ROBSON: Well, certainly we welcome some discussion but I would like to go ahead and make a motion then that we postpone or put off the white grunt benchmark assessment both in the northern and the southern part of it for some future year and instead go ahead and do both the vermilion and the red porgy update in 2012.

MR. CUPKA: We have a motion; is there a second. Brian. Seconded by Brian. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: John, can you remind us when did we last do vermilion and when did we last do red porgy?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I looked that up for you already because I knew someone would ask. You last did vermilion in 2007 and you last did porgy in 2006. You did vermilion as a benchmark and porgy as an update.

DR. CRABTREE: The problem is – I agree with the motion, white grunt is a pretty minor fishery compared to these two. Red porgy is in a rebuilding plan and here we are six years with

an assessment. Vermillion, we are closing them down so quickly and got all these problems there.

I don't like the situation that we have all these stocks that don't get assessed and we keep focusing on our major fisheries, but it is not like we are doing assessments on our major fisheries every year. We are going six, seven years between major fisheries and that is a lot more of a concern to me than white grunt is right now. I just don't know how to get out of that until we get in a situation where we can generate more assessments.

MR. ROBSON: That is my purpose in making the motion. I think we all recognize we have got a lot of species we would like to be able to do assessments for, but I think given the constraints we have, we have to focus on those high-value, high-importance, high-use species. Both vermilion and red porgy certainly seem to fit that category for all of the states.

MR. CUPKA: Further discussion on the motion?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Want me to read it?

MR. CUPKA: Yes, go ahead and read it.

**MR. CARMICHAEL: The motion says move to postpone the white grunt benchmark and to prioritize updates for vermilion and red porgy for 2012.**

**MR. CUPKA: Okay, you have the motion; is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, then that motion is approved. Roy.**

DR. CRABTREE: So that leaves us we are going to get vermilion update, red porgy update and a Spanish benchmark, and that is it for the South Atlantic for 2012?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Spanish and cobia are benchmarks.

DR. CRABTREE: Spanish and cobia, benchmark.

MR. CUPKA: That is a recommendation to the steering committee.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next year is 2013 and we had six leads penciled in. We would probably be looking at six stocks to be prioritized; and as much as you can list them in priority order would help in case we don't have those six lead slots, because who knows what is going to happen between now and 2013. I think, Bonnie, are you guys still anticipating hopefully that you will have the six at that point?

DR. PONWITH: The plan right now is to have six. We have gotten word of a retirement in August, and I have asked my folks to begin the recruitment process to backfill that position immediately mainly because of the threat on the Hill right now of putting in place a bill in which only one backfill for every three vacancies can be recruited for.

I think that would be a very tough situation with some of the baby boomers reaching their retirement age. We are working on getting that recruitment package in place. If that person comes on and can function through 2012 as an assist, they should be positioned to be able to be a lead scientist in 2013 and that puts us at six lead capability.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Bonnie, I think it would be really important – and this gets back to something I believe that you had said earlier – is that I have a concern about the first three species that we have listed for 2013, which is wreckfish, Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, as to whether there truly will be the data to do benchmark assessments for those three species; and in the case of wreckfish whether the assessment would be even valid because we may not have been capturing enough of the stock to even warrant doing a benchmark assessment through SEDAR.

I do know that both Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, I believe it was SEDAR 4, tried to assess them and it was abandoned at the data workshop when it was determined that there was not enough data to do those assessments. Is there some way that we could get a pre-SEDAR determination as to whether NMFS would even recommend us leaving those species on this list at this point?

All along some of the issues that I had with Amendment 17B and that whole deepwater closure that we were shutting down even what remote chance we had of doing data collection for Warsaw grouper and speckled hind. I can't see how the data collection has gotten better since SEDAR 4, and I would just like for somebody to try to do a predetermination on that in the next year or so, so we can determine can we get those three species off that list now and that would solve our problem.

DR. PONWITH: My recommendation, I think on that is that I would be happy to go to the analysts, based on what they are aware of for new data sources and new assessment techniques that may have bubbled up since the last time we tried this, to give their best pre-assessment assessment of how assessable these are.

You are correct; the slots for these assessments are at such a premium we don't want to head down a path that we know in advance isn't going to make the grade. I will ask my folks their viewpoints on this, but I think the way to proceed then is to rank these without regard to how assessable they are; in other words, take a look at each of these stocks on the merits of their own concern both from a science standpoint and a management standpoint and say how do you prioritize these? Then we can go back and revisit them based on either new methodology or new data streams that didn't exist the last term. That is definitely a legitimate request.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think wreckfish may be one. Bonnie mentioned looking at that through some other methods within the Science Center and that may be one that you can remove from the list for 2013 pending that outcome and seeing what comes from that effort.

DR. PONWITH: It is possible we could remove it from the list. It is also possible that this methodology actually shows great promise in that we may choose to use that in a full-blown SEDAR. This analysis of wreckfish is going to happen this summer, and I should have a pretty

good feel for how successful it was in being able to deal with the scientific uncertainties at that point.

MR. CUPKA: Bonnie, in terms of red snapper, are we going to have that much additional information over what we had before? I would hope we would. I guess part of it is we've got that independent sampling going on, so how would that figure in? I would hate to go any – I mean it seems like every time we turn around we are doing red snapper, but it is important and I think we need to do one as soon as we can that is worthwhile doing if the information is available.

DR. PONWITH: I'm glad you brought that up. Red snapper was done one year – we turned around and did red snapper again and the rationale behind it was the benchmark data stream that we used to assess that stock was ending and that is that fishery independent or fishery-dependent index of abundance.

The rationale was that data stream has ended, we might as well do the stock assessment now with the full suite of data that we have using the methodologies that we've been to represent the status of that stock pre-closure. Now that the fishery on that stock is closed it will require a completely different data stream to be able to assess that; hence, it is going to have to be a benchmark stock assessment.

There is no way you can do a standard because the methodology you used can't be used anymore. We will have 2010, 2011 and 2012 data available in 2013. The real question is when you have one year of data you have a point floating in space. When you have two years of data you can actually draw a line between them.

Three years of data give you a feel for how stable that line is. My estimation is that three is the absolute minimum number of years you would need to represent a time series to be able to conduct that assessment. If that time series is stable it is conceivable that a stock assessment could be done using those new data in 2013. If those data are bouncing all over the place you may have to have another year's worth of data to be able to get that time series to stabilize enough to conduct a successful assessment, so the answer right now is maybe.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I don't see how we put off – red snapper is going to have to be done. If we hit 2013 and can't pull off an assessment, I think we are going to have to talk about reopening the fishery. I mean our constituents and people on the Hill aren't going to stand for it and so I think we have got to make that happen in 2013 and do the best we can on it.

The other one that I have got to talk about is blueline tilefish. That is one we have seen a big increase in the landings in the last few years and it has never been assessed really, so I'd put that. I can't see how we can deal with not doing snapper in 2013.

MR. CUPKA: Yes, I think it has got to be number one on everybody's list. Mac.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, a couple points. I hope we have got enough information on blueline tilefish to do an assessment. I don't know; I am not that familiar with the data and the data stream for

that. I will make a point that at SEDAR 4 data workshop, which I attended, there was a fair amount of discussion of an assessment for speckled hind.

They were real close to deciding that they had enough information to do an assessment for speckled hind. Now since that time I don't know what has been – it would be interesting to know how many bones have been collected from speckled hind and Warsaw grouper and if I had to guess, I would say it was very damn few. I don't know, that being said, the quality of the data and the quantity of data on an annual basis that would allow you to do an assessment.

I would have some real doubts about that, but the scientists are going to have to look at that. I am a little concerned about whether we could pull off a speckled hind assessment and a Warsaw assessment. I am very hopeful that we can pull off a blueline tilefish assessment but I have got a sneaking suspicion that we are going to be scrambling for data and hard parts and the like. I mean we are going to have some landings and that's about it, I have got a feeling; I don't know.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, and following some of what Roy was saying, I think we have also seen some huge spikes in landings in gray triggerfish in recent years because of restrictions in other snapper grouper species. I think we don't have a benchmark assessment on that species yet. I think it is probably one of our – at least in recent years has been a major target species because it has been one of the few species that has remained open during times when a lot of the other species were closed.

This could come back and hurt folks who are depending on these species now to help them get through some of these other closures. This is a stock that could potentially end up in trouble very soon just like blueline tilefish could if we don't have some kind of an assessment telling us something about the robustness of that stock.

Also, I'm just going to throw these out there as well, that gag and snowy grouper are probably also species that folks would really like to see some updated assessments on. It has been a number of years certainly for snowy grouper. I think gag was done a little more recently than that, but I think both of those species, because of their importance, are species that probably ought to be assessed as soon as possible.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we need to move on here folks; so based on the discussions we have had, does anyone wish to make a motion?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I have been trying to keep track of the various things that were thrown out there to just sort of give some feedback and then someone can make this as a motion. I put red snapper right at the top because I also think that my recollection was that was indicated and we took the actions with the closure about looking at it in 2013; that is a given.

Blueline, we heard good things about the data when this was discussed at the SSC from the North Carolina representatives, and it sounds like they have really done a lot to collect data on that increased fishery up there which gave everybody a little bit of hope there. As the fishery developed, it sounded like the state was on top of it, so that is a good sign.

Gray triggerfish, there was a lot of discussion about gray triggerfish over the last six months about it versus white grunt, and I think your discussions at the last meeting and prior meetings maybe indicate the gray triggerfish is one that should be on there. Gag was last assessed in 2006; snowy was last done in 2004.

Other ones you've talked about and other ones on this list are things that have been thrown out quite a bit, scamp, obviously. Warsaw, speckled hind have gotten a lot of attention time after time and bumped quite a few times, but again we don't really know what the data is and we are not sure of the prognosis for a successful outcome there. We still have actually wreckfish which is something to consider whether or not it goes on this list given Bonnie's discussions earlier. I guess if you all are happy with the first five priorities, what would we put in for number six?

DR. CHEUVRONT: To that point, what I was thinking that maybe what we ought to do is prioritize the remaining species in the order that we would like to see them be assessed based on the availability of data to do the assessments. I agree with Mac about speckled hind, I think that is one that clearly – if we could do that as our sixth one, I think that is a very important one that we need to do if we can, but if we don't then you just jump to the next one down the list.

I am not sure what that next one should be. I have my doubts about wreckfish and Warsaw grouper especially but scamp has not been done. I think scamp would be a good one to put in there as number seven and then probably – and I'm just going to say this and let people discuss as they want; number eight I would probably put Warsaw grouper and then number nine would be wreckfish. Somebody might want to arrange some of that order but that is my suggestion. Do you want to go ahead and make that in the form of a motion and we can have a discussion about it?

MR. CUPKA: If you will, please.

MR. CARMICHAEL: If we could discuss some gag and snowy, whether standard or update – and I admit I am not really sure at this time and maybe it would do enough for the council to just indicate that either a standard or an update and then we can go through the SSC, technical committee and everybody and try to hash that out at a later date?

MR. CUPKA: Go ahead and make a motion.

**DR. CHEUVRONT: I will go ahead and make a motion. I would like to make a motion that we prioritize the stocks for assessment in 2013; as first would be a red snapper benchmark; blueline tilefish, benchmark; gray triggerfish, benchmark; gag standard or an update assessment based on appropriateness; and then next would be snowy grouper, standard or update; then speckled hind, benchmark; scamp, benchmark; Warsaw grouper, benchmark; and then wreckfish, benchmark.**

MR. CUPKA: Okay, I have a motion by Brian and a second by Duane. Any discussion on the motion? Any objection? Seeing none, then that motion is approved. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: The only question I have got about – well, really, it pertains to Warsaw and speckled hind and snowy. Since we've pretty much – there will be some smaller snowies coming in. I guess they could be intercepted through the TIPs or through the recreational sampling program. I am wondering, Bonnie, on the independent surveys, how much of the deepwater complex are you looking at in those independent surveys that you are doing now?

DR. PONWITH: I don't know off the top of my head what the encounter rates are and what percentage of the time is spent in deep water. I do know they are sampling in deep water. I can ask that question and get back to you.

MR. PHILLIPS: Again Mr. Chairman, I am not on your committee. Bonnie, for some reason I am thinking that I heard they weren't going to do the longline studies again, so what is the independent sampling in the deep water going to look like now?

DR. PONWITH: Again, what I want to do is go back and talk to the folks and find out what their sampling rates in different depths are. We are not doing the gill net – or, I'm sorry, the bottom longline sampling this year. We did that last year pretty much for that very specific research question of is there a differential age distribution in the shallows versus in the deep water. Let me consult with our folks and find out what percentage of their time they are spending at different depths and get back to you on whether that sampling is going to be representative of the deepwater species.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, Charlie, I am glad you brought that up. I don't think the longline survey has to be done every year but I think it has to be done periodically. The samples in mutton snapper, black grouper and I think red snapper in the Gulf, the oldest animals that came from all the sampling came from longline gear.

I would certainly hope that we would use this to augment all of our assessments in the future because we are collecting other animals besides red snapper in this longline survey. I think it is extremely important that on a periodic basis we need to use this survey to continue to try and answer the question that was answered initially. I think that is important.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we need to move on here. John, our next agenda item is the SEDAR Administrative Procedures. I believe that is behind Attachment 4.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, Attachment 4 is a document that just guides how the South Atlantic Council goes about dealing with its administrative responsibilities under SEDAR, making appointments, dealing with terms of reference, that sort of thing. At an earlier meeting of this committee you discussed a process for appointing alternates for representatives to SEDAR workshops.

The language that has been highlighted in Attachment 4 reflects your discussions for managing that alternate process. It just makes it clearer that there is some expectations for someone who does not attend to let staff know and then we decide who the alternate should be and to ensure that if someone can't make it, the right person is appointed as the alternate.



When you guys discuss making appointments and alternates, you will need to provide some guidance as to if a person can't make it, who goes in their place. You have discussions when it comes to appointments about ensuring you have regional as well as sector representation. That is the way alternates should probably come in.

MR. CUPKA: Any comments on the administrative procedures? Seeing none, then we will move ahead, John, to appointments for SEDAR 27.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, appointments for SEDAR 27; this is yellowtail snapper and Gulf of Mexico menhaden. SEDAR is running it as a review. Yellowtail snapper is being conducted by Florida and the Gulf of Mexico menhaden is being conducted and coordinated by the Gulf States Commission with the analyst done through Beaufort lab folks because they worked on menhaden for so many years.

We discussed at the steering committee about each council appointing two reviewers. It was initially agreed the Gulf was going to appoint two reviewers from their SSC and a Review Panel Chair and then decided that they weren't going to appoint that person because based on the transfer of yellowtail snapper to the South Atlantic states, then they wouldn't be involved in it and now there is some complexities with that.

There may be some further appointments coming from the Gulf. That is complex. The simple issue is for your appointments, two reviewers from the SSC of the South Atlantic and an SSC member from the South Atlantic has also agreed to chair the workshop.

We have John Boreman and Churchill Grimes who have said they are available at that time. They are interested in doing it and Luiz Barbieri is interested in being the Chair and willing to do it. So if you will make those appointments it would be much appreciated.

MR. CUPKA: We actually had volunteers to fill those so I would be glad to entertain a motion to approve those individuals. George.

MR. GEIGER: So moved, Mr. Chairman, and I guess it was John Boreman, Churchill Grimes and Luiz Barbieri as the Chair.

**MR. CUPKA: I have a motion by Mr. Geiger; second by Mr. Harris. Okay the motion is to appoint John Boreman and Churchill Grimes as reviewers to the SEDAR 27 Review Workshop and Luiz Barbieri as the Chair of the Review Workshop. Any discussion on the motion? Any objections? Seeing none, then that motion is approved.** That brings us down to other business. Is there any other business to come before this committee? Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we kind of got by it in our discussions. In the Spanish mackerel assessment that I went to a couple of years ago, that was a change in labs between Miami and Beaufort. I guess Beaufort is going to do it this time. I don't have any problem with Beaufort doing it.

What I would like to see though is that someone who was familiar with the Spanish mackerel done at the Miami Lab participate in the assessment in Beaufort and someone familiar with the software for doing a continuity run on that assessment also have that software available at that assessment so we can do a continuity run for Spanish mackerel.

I was given a number of excuses why we didn't do a continuity run last time. I think it is important because in Spanish mackerel it was one of our best success stories and the assessments over time were boom, per boom, per boom, boom, boom and jived with the fishery and all the observations. I think it would be very important especially in this case to be able to do that if we can.

DR. PONWITH: Right now my understanding is the plan is to have a lead from both the Gulf and South Atlantic working on this.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, Ben, you are suggesting a continuity run back to the mackerel assessment panel assessments. We won't do a continuity run to the prior assessment that didn't go anywhere most likely, but we will try to go back farther in time.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, that would be excellent.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We'll bring that up with the terms of reference. I think my expectation is you will probably, depending on the timing of this, either be asked to approve these in September or December. We will add that to the things to consider.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I didn't have a comment on that; I had one on another issue that we have already passed that I'd like to go back to real quick.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: John, would you tell me the SEDAR Policies and Procedures; we had a bit of discussion today about a number of different items in there and will that then go back to the SEDAR Steering Committee and then that then goes to the council? What are the next steps in this document?

MR. CARMICHAEL: That was the document that you all saw was approved by the steering committee, the content of it. There were some further editorial changes. The document that you have may have reflected all of those. I have to look back at the timing of it and when you got this one. There were some minor changes added to that.

That is essentially the policies as they exist; and then if more changes are made based on the things discussed here and the discussions in September, if the steering committee says they will make policy changes in October, then we do a revised version of that document dated for like October 2011.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So it is kind of an ongoing, living kind of document, I guess?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, absolutely.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, maybe I won't take up much time here but I think I would like to just provide a little more guidance at some point to the steering committee only with the one section that discusses the public participation. It says SEDAR is a council process with public participation during workshops and other meetings governed by council policies and practices.

Then it discusses a couple of items it points out, public comment is not taken at SEDAR benchmark review workshops. Written comment is not accepted at those workshops. That is fine, I can imagine why that is true at the review workshops you don't take public comment. Maybe I could get with you and we could add a statement or two in there as to why you are not doing it at that workshop, because you have already said public participation is supposed to happen during all the workshops. Just to kind of make that in sync so that the public will understand why during the review workshops they are not taking comment at that point.

MR. CUPKA: Yes, we would welcome any input along those lines; anything to beef up the guidelines or maybe be a little more explanatory. If you want to provide some of that to John, it would be most welcome. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Another comment and a bit of a spoiler, we have had a lot of discussions amongst SEDAR staff about the public comment process within SEDAR and we are kind of coming to the opinion that maybe we need to have some more specific policies that are SEDAR specific and oriented.

Originally when SEDAR was set up, the statement from the steering committee was that, well, the councils all have policies for accepting comment and that is what we will follow. SEDAR has gotten much more of a life of its own perhaps than was envisioned at that time. We are planning on the steering committee bringing up the issue of having some guidelines for accepting public comment within the SEDAR process.

Part of it is there is a lot of people paying attention to what goes on and we get a lot of comment, and there isn't really a clear process within it for getting comments and putting them in the system. Now we've done some things to deal with it. We have compiled comments and treated them as working papers, but they don't really fit in with working papers well.

What we have decided is the best solution is we need to consider a third type of document within the process and treat comments separately and have a specific means of addressing them. We will bring that up at the steering committee in October.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I think that is a great idea and our office is very willing to help with that. That then would also let the public know how these are going to be dealt with and where they can participate in all that, so I think that is a great idea and I would like to work with you on that.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, Monica. Other business to come before the committee? I don't think we are going to try and give you a timing and task motion. John, I think you know what needs to be done. We will go ahead and adjourn. That will pretty much put us back on schedule, and I know this took longer than what it was scheduled for and I was worried about this when I saw

SEDAR Committee  
Key West, FL  
June 12, 2011

the time allotted to it, but I think all these are important discussions and it was time well spent. With that we will adjourn the SEDAR Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 4:32 o'clock p.m., June 12, 2011.)

Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# South Atlantic Fishery Management Council 2010 - 2011 Council Membership

## COUNCIL CHAIRMAN:

**David M. Cupka**  
P.O. Box 12753  
Charleston, SC 29422  
843/795-8591 (hm)  
843/870-5495 (cell)  
palmettobooks@bellsouth.net

## COUNCIL VICE-CHAIRMAN

**Dr. Brian Chevront**  
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries  
P.O. Box 769 (3441 Arendell St.)  
Morehead City, NC 28557  
252/726-7021 Ext. 8015 (ph)  
252/726-6187  
brian.chevront@ncdenr.gov

**Robert H. Boyles, Jr.**  
S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources  
Marine Resources Division  
P.O. Box 12559  
(217 Ft. Johnson Road)  
Charleston, SC 29422-2559  
843/953-9304 (ph)  
843/953-9159 (fax)  
boylesr@dnr.sc.gov

**Tom Burgess**  
P.O. Box 33  
Sneads Ferry, NC 28460  
910/327-3526  
tburgess@embarqmail.com

**Dr. Roy Crabtree**  
Regional Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
727/824-5301 (ph); 727/824-5320 (f)  
roy.crabtree@noaa.gov

**Benjamin M. "Mac" Currin**  
801 Westwood Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27607  
919/881-0049 (ph)  
maccurrin@gmail.com

**George J. Geiger**  
566 Ponoka Street  
Sebastian, FL 32958  
772/388-3183 (ph)  
georgegeiger@bellsouth.net

**Charles Duane Harris**  
105 Demere Retreat Lane  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
912/638-9430 (ph)  
seageorg@bellsouth.net

**Ben Hartig**  
9277 Sharon Street  
Hobe Sound, FL 33455  
772/546-1541 (ph)  
bhartig@bellsouth.net

**Doug Haymans**  
Coastal Resources Division  
GA Dept. of Natural Resources  
One Conservation Way, Suite 300  
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687  
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)  
Doug.Haymans@dnr.state.ga.us

**Deirdre Warner-Kramer**  
Office of Marine Conservation  
OES/OMC  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Department of State, Room 5806  
Washington, DC 20520  
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)  
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

**LTJG Matthew Lam**  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Brickell Plaza Federal Building  
909 S.E. First Avenue  
Room 876/ DRE  
Miami, FL 33131-3050  
305/415-6768 (ph)  
305/415-6791 (f)  
Matthew.R.Lam@uscg.mil

**Dr. Wilson Laney**  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator  
P.O. Box 33683  
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617  
(110 Brooks Ave  
237 David Clark Laboratories,  
NCSU Campus  
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)  
919/515-5019 (ph)  
919/515-4415 (f)  
Wilson\_Laney@fws.gov

**John V. O'Shea**  
Executive Director  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries  
Commission  
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N  
Arlington, VA 20001  
703/842-0740 (ph); 703/842-0741 (f)  
voshea@asmfc.org

**Charles Phillips**  
Phillips Seatood / Sapelo Sea Farms  
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.  
Townsend, GA 31331  
912/832-3149 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)  
Ga\_capt@yahoo.com

**Mark Robson**  
Director, Division of Marine Fisheries  
Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
620 S. Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)  
mark.robson@myfwc.com

**Tom Swatzel**  
P.O. Box 1311  
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576  
843/222-7456 (ph)  
tom@swatzel.com

*JACK MCGOVERN*

*OTHA EASLEY*

*BOB GILL*

*BONNIE BONWITH*

*PAUL STEELE*

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# South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Staff contact: John Carmichael

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✓ Vince O'Shea  
✓ Mark Robson  
✓ Tom Swatzel  
Staff contact: John Carmichael

# South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Staff

## Executive Director

Robert K. Mahood  
robert.mahood@safmc.net

## Deputy Executive Director

Gregg T. Waugh  
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

---

## Public Information Officer

Kim Iverson  
kim.iverson@safmc.net

## Assistant Public Information Officer

Andrea Grabman  
andrea.grabman@safmc.net

## Senior Fishery Biologist

Roger Pugliese  
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

## Staff Economist

Kathryn (Kate) Quigley  
kate.quigley@safmc.net

## Science and Statistics Program Manager

John Carmichael  
john.carmichael@safmc.net

## Coral Reef Scientist

Anna Martin  
anna.martin@safmc.net

## Fishery Biologist

Mike Errigo  
mike.errigo@safmc.net

## Fisheries Social Scientist

Kari MacLauchlin  
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

## SEDAR Coordinators

Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net  
Kari Fenske - kari.fenske@safmc.net

## Fishery Scientist

Myra Brouwer  
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

## Administrative Officer

Mike Collins  
mike.collins@safmc.net

## Financial Secretary

Debra Buscher  
deb.buscher@safmc.net

## Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya  
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

## Purchasing/Adm. Assistant

Julie O'Dell  
julie.odell@safmc.net

## SEDAR/ Staff Administrative Assistant

Rachael Silvas  
rachael.silvas@safmc.net

# PLEASE SIGN IN

Please sign in so that we will have a record of your attendance at each meeting, and so that your name may be included in the minutes.

**SEDAR COMMITTEE MEETING**  
June 12, 2011  
Key West, FL 33040

P.O. BOX/STREET  
CITY, STATE & ZIP

AREA CODE &  
PHONE NUMBER

NAME &  
ORGANIZATION

Sara Denmark (Pew)	910-685-5705	Belvia NC 28422	32303
Rudolph Johnson (SEA)	386-239-0948	2107 Malberry Blvd, Tallahassee, FL	
Holly Grims (Pew)	250-322-7845		

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405  
843-571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10