

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SEDAR COMMITTEE**

**Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront  
Cocoa Beach, FL**

**June 14, 2016**

### **SUMMARY MINUTES**

#### **SEDAR Committee**

Dr. Michelle Duval, Chair  
Zack Bowen  
Ben Hartig

Chris Conklin, Vice-Chair (via webinar)  
Mark Brown  
Charlie Phillips

#### **Council Members**

Anna Beckwith  
Doug Haymans  
LT Tara Pray  
Chester Brewer  
Jessica McCawley

Jack Cox  
Dr. Wilson Laney  
Robert Boyles  
Dr. Roy Crabtree

#### **Council Staff:**

Gregg Waugh  
Dr. Brian Chevront  
Dr. Mike Errigo  
Chip Collier  
Amber Von Harten  
Myra Brouwer  
Roger Pugliese

John Carmichael  
Mike Collins  
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin  
John Hadley  
Kim Iverson  
Julie O'Dell

#### **Observers/Participants:**

Dr. Bonnie Ponwith  
Dr. Jack McGovern  
Jeff Radonski  
Rick DeVactor  
John Sanchez  
Dr. Marcel Reichert  
Jim Estes

Nik Mehta  
Erika Burgess  
Iris Lowery  
Dr. Mike Larkin  
Jocelyn D'Ambrosio  
Dr. Joey Ballenger

Other Participants Attached

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in open session at the Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront, Cocoa Beach, Florida, Tuesday morning, June 14, 2016, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: All right, everybody. We are reconvening the SEDAR Committee. Just to remind folks who is on the committee, it's myself, Chris Conklin, Zack Bowen, Mark Brown, Ben Hartig, Charlie Phillips, and Bob Beal, who is the ASMFC representative.

One item of business that we need to clean up is SEDAR 53, which is South Atlantic red grouper. The SSC recommended that this be a standard assessment, so that we could include a new data stream, mainly the video surveys that's being conducted through SEFIS, and so, if I could get a motion from the committee to approve the requested appointments for the standard assessment panel, I would appreciate it. Again, the committee members are Chris Conklin, Zack Bowen, Mark Brown, Ben Hartig, Charlie Phillips, and Bob Beal. I am looking for a motion to appoint the suggested participants to SEDAR 53.

MR. HARTIG: **I would move that we appoint the suggested participants to SEDAR 53.**

DR. DUVAL: Thank you. Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Mark. Is there any discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Next, John is going to take us through just a little update on SEDAR projects, and then we're going to talk about future assessments.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That is correct. Upcoming things that we have, as we've seen, is SEDAR 50 and 53, 50 being blueline and 53 being red grouper. The SSC requested we do a workshop in 50 for the assessment process, along with the webinars, and so you have a schedule to approve that shows that, and the data workshop, as we've discussed, is the last week of October. The assessment workshop starts on February 27, and so roughly the first week of March. The review workshop is the end of May. That's the general schedule for there. We would ask for you to approve the schedule for SEDAR 50. Do you want to do these separate, 50 and 53, probably? The terms of reference, do you want to do schedule and terms of reference together, or are you just going to do everything separate? It might be easier to do them separate.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, let's go ahead and just do them separately. We would be looking for a motion from the committee to approve the schedule for SEDAR 50, which is blueline tilefish.

MR. HARTIG: **Madam Chairman, I would move to approve the schedule for SEDAR 50.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Ben. Is there a second? Second by Mark. Any discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Hopefully folks have had the opportunity to review the terms of reference, and so I know there were some modifications to this. The terms of reference for SEDAR 50 have had some input from the Mid-Atlantic Council SSC, which was reviewed by our SSC at their meeting at the beginning of May, and so, John, I don't know if you want to just highlight what some of those differences were.

MR. CARMICHAEL: This has a couple of things going on in it. First of all, we have the stock ID workshop, which is coming up at the end of June, and so it's got terms of reference. You approved those at an earlier meeting, and they fall under the General Term of Reference 1 for the data workshop. The Mid-Atlantic has recommended some things regarding investigating climate and ecosystem effects, and so the SSC was amenable to adding these to it. They didn't really work out wording for fitting this within the SEDAR term of reference framework.

What we did was we looked at what the SSC recommended, and they made one general statement. We looked at what's been approved in past SEDAR terms of reference, most recently SEDAR 42, Gulf of Mexico red grouper. In the SEDAR 42 example, there is a term of reference for the data and there is a term of reference for the assessment. The data deals with collecting the information, and the assessment deals with applying it, which is consistent to our process.

What we have recommended here, or the staff recommendation, is this Option c, which you can see, and this will be under Term of Reference 7, would be considering ecosystem and climate issues that could affect population dynamics, and it would say identify and describe available data sources to investigate the effects of abiotic and biotic factors, for example, climate change, predator/prey interactions, et cetera.

This is identify and describe available data sources, and then we go to the assessment workshop, and it's very similar. It comes in under Assessment Workshop Term of Reference 8 and Option c is consider incorporating those factors into the assessment, and so I think a motion that said approve the terms of reference with staff recommendation of Option c for DW 7 and AW 8, if you support the staff recommendation to split that wording up and apply it to each process.

DR. DUVAL: Before we do that, I apologize that I was unable to attend this part of the SSC meeting, because I was attending the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting at the time, but some of the other -- There are a couple other modifications to the assessment workshop terms of reference that deal with spatially-explicit modeling approaches, addressing the management unit, ID, and I was hoping you could review that for us, John, and what the SSC's comments were in response to what the Mid-Atlantic put forward.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and these are the other changes. This is a rather complicated set of terms of reference actually, and the other changes come in with in the assessment workshop -- We have a management unit. We know it exists. It's got council-defined boundaries. The stock ID is looking at the stock units, and what the Mid-Atlantic would like to do is consider spatially-explicit modeling approaches to evaluate the management jurisdictions, and what we want to do is have a means of developing the management reference points and fishing level recommendations, in the event there is a single stock.

What we've tried to do is draft terms of reference that fit this into what we kind of know about management jurisdictions and what could be the outcomes with regard to biological stock jurisdictions. What this is, it's some clarification in terms of how you develop the population models.

The other items that come in is there is some additional information that hasn't been brought in in the past, but it's something that we saw, for example, with the red snapper assessment, and it's asking to have more of a description on how the results have changed between one assessment to

the next and how much is related to model structure versus data changes versus the signal of the data themselves that might have changed over time, and that's what this third bullet here under Number 2 addresses.

A similar thing comes up here, under Number 3, with a third bullet to compare sort of the outcomes. In SEDAR 41, we saw the example of pretty different productivity measures between assessments, and this is an attempt to get that acknowledged and discussed through that assessment panel group of experts and the review panel as well.

DR. DUVAL: John, I just had a question. Under Assessment Term of Reference 2, those first two bullets, were those -- Those bullets were suggested by the Mid-Atlantic SSC or was that our SSC's recommended language to address the Mid-Atlantic?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The Mid-Atlantic addressed some language and our SSC supported some aspects of it, and one of the issues there, I think, as we discussed, is it's kind of inherent that what we do within SEDAR is to develop modeling approaches that are compatible with the data and the information that you have.

It's just putting this in there kind of makes it clear that that's one of the things that would be considered, if possible. If we could do a spatially-explicit model, then obviously that would be ideal, and our process with our term of reference, which you see up here normally, says develop models that are compatible with available data. You could certainly, if you had data and the need, you could do spatially-explicit models in there. This just, by including this in there, I think it gives a little bit highlight to make sure that is discussed and considered specifically, versus, if it's not in there, there is a possibility that it wouldn't be -- You don't want to it, I guess let's say, let's don't let it flip under the rug or fall through the cracks, and that isn't at least acknowledged of the need for some spatial consideration.

DR. DUVAL: I guess what I'm trying to get at is are those first two bullets that say "consider spatially-explicit modeling approaches", are those part of the terms of reference?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Thank you. Two thumbs up. All right. What I would need from the committee is a motion, now that we've run through all the changes in the terms of reference for SEDAR 50, I would need a motion from the committee to approve the SEDAR 50 terms of reference with the staff-recommended change of Option c under Term of Reference 7 for the data workshop. If I could get a motion from the committee.

**MR. HARTIG: Madam Chairman, I would move to approve the SEDAR 50 TORs, including the staff recommendations for Option 7c for Data Workshop TOR 7 and Assessment Workshop TOR 8.**

DR. DUVAL: There's a motion by Ben and is there a second? Seconded by Mark. Is there any further discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: It will get easier with red grouper, I promise. The next item is SEDAR 53, a standard assessment of red grouper. It gets a lot easier with the schedule. You can actually see

it on one screenshot, which makes things obviously must simpler. The way the standards work is the data is gathered. There is a number of webinars where we review the data and the information and go through it. There is some limited allowance for changes within a standard, as opposed to say a benchmark, and we will discuss those on the terms of reference.

The general process is getting the data together in August and having the assessment webinars in late winter, during winter, and having the report done and ready for the council in February of 2017, so it can come to the spring 2017 SSC meeting.

DR. DUVAL: All right, and so I would be looking for a motion from the committee to approve the schedule for SEDAR 53.

MR. BOWEN: **I would make that motion to approve the schedule for SEDAR 53.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Zack and second by Ben. Is there any discussion? **Is there any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: The terms of reference for SEDAR 53, the last assessment, the benchmark, was SEDAR 19, and so Term of Reference 1 is updating the SEDAR 19 with data through 2015. Here, in Number 2, list things that are going to be considered through the standard process, what we have is considering the SERFS video index. You know the expanded fishery-independent sampling, they have added video components to that, and so they want to consider bringing that in as some additional fishery-independent information and also bringing the BAM model to the most recent last peer-reviewed, benchmark peer-reviewed, configuration.

Then the items in bold just talk about making sure that there's a look back to SEDAR 19, to consider how population parameters changed and how the trends in the management benchmarks have potentially changed since SEDAR 15 and the last time. The discussion we had in SEDAR 41 was very helpful in that regard, and we're going to start getting that within each assessment.

DR. DUVAL: All right. If there are no questions for John, I would entertain a motion to approve the terms of reference for SEDAR 53.

MR. BROWN: **I make a motion to approve the TORs for SEDAR 53.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Mark and seconded by Ben. Any other discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** The next item is an Update on the SEDAR Projects, and I believe this is Attachment 3 in your briefing book.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Attachment 3 is just something we share with the Steering Committee every time they meet, and it shows you what's been going on within SEDAR, things that have completed since the last time we reported and things that are underway. We have recently completed assessments for the red snapper and gray triggerfish, as you saw in SEDAR 41. There is an assessment of goliath grouper that went through peer review in mid-May for SEDAR 47, and that assessment did not survive the peer review, essentially. It wasn't put forth by the reviewers. There were a number of issues with the assessment.

It was chaired by Marcel Reichert, and I believe the report from the review panel, if it didn't get to Julie Neer over the weekend, probably early this week. Marcel was the Chair, and he was trying to wrap that up, and it's due this week, and so we don't quite have all the details yet, of course, for those of us who were not there, but we do know that the assessment did not survive, and I guess that's one of the things we're going to talk about at the Steering Committee.

We can talk about that there versus talk about it now, but we're going to talk about maybe some process for assessments like that, that are done where SEDAR provides the peer review, but they are led by an outside entity, about what we can do to maybe make the process a bit more robust leading to the peer review, to try to avoid this happening. We never want to have that investment in something and have it get to the peer review and not get through and not get something out of it that helps us with the management of the fisheries.

We know what we're doing with 50 and 51 and forging ahead, and so, unless someone has any questions about any of these specific topics, I think we can probably move on, in the interest of time.

DR. DUVAL: I would suggest we just keep plowing ahead, given that we're eating into Chester's time for AP Selection.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next one is cobia, and this has definitely become quite an issue in recent times. It was, I think, a stock, up until a few months ago, I kind of felt was one that was a good candidate for an MRIP revision. There wasn't a lot of controversy surrounding it, but then we got the latest catch estimates from the last year, and, as you know, we triggered an overage of the ACL, and we're having to take actions to reduce the season for this year, and so I think that has certainly elevated the level of concern with cobia. We would like some discussion for, when the Steering Committee meets in October, as to where you would like to see cobia coming in as an assessment.

Cobia was one of the ones where there is a complicated stock structure. There was clearly a delineation between Gulf and say the northern portion of the South Atlantic, but there was a lot of gray area in terms of where that boundary actually existed, somewhere between central Florida up through South Carolina somewhere, and we also have those inland stocks, where there is an inland stock or two in South Carolina. The Chesapeake Bay stock seems to be an inland stock of its own as well, and they have a little bit different migratory movements and such, and so it's a very complicated stock structure.

Florida also is underway with a tagging study, to try and better define that boundary between the Gulf and South Atlantic portions of the stock within the northern Florida/Georgia and maybe southern South Carolina range, and so there is a lot going on with regard to the cobia stock structure.

For those reasons, and considering the schedule that we have now with SEDAR and the need to do MRIP revisions in 2017, and we have the scamp assessment that's coming in through the research track, one of the next available slots really to bring this in as a benchmark is 2018. For discussion purposes, I have suggested cobia as a benchmark in 2018, if you look in our attachment about the MRIP revision assessments, and I think that's a good place to start.

DR. DUVAL: I will just say, on the SEDAR Steering Committee webinar that we had at the beginning of May, one of the -- A couple of things. One of the topics that came up is the SEDAR Data Best Practices Panel is looking to have a stock ID meristics workshop, and so they are looking to have that in 2017, I believe. I think, originally, they were thinking 2016, but they asked for a little bit more time for preparation, so that additional stocks could be considered for that stock ID workshop.

I made the request that cobia be added to the list of species that are being considered there, given the difficulty with which that decision was made during SEDAR 28, and so hopefully I have the support of the committee in putting that forward to be included in the list of species for that stock ID workshop. It's included there in the Draft SEDAR Steering Committee Report, and then the next item that John referenced, in terms of a benchmark for cobia, would follow in 2018.

Obviously you want to have the stock ID nailed down before you would move forward with a new benchmark, and I know also that the Gulf Council mentioned that they were interested in at least an update to the cobia assessment. I think they had mentioned that as one of their priorities for 2019, I believe, and so I think the pieces seem to be falling into place for doing something on cobia, but questions or recommendations from the committee?

MR. BROWN: I just have a quick question. Has Virginia always been a state that caught the largest amount of cobia, historically?

DR. DUVAL: I would say it's gone back and forth between North Carolina and Virginia in terms of the largest proportion of catch, but, yes. I mean if you look at the catches by state for the past ten or twelve years, Virginia has had 400,000-pound or 500,000-pound catches of cobia before, and I think you see that in some of the materials for the Mackerel Committee meeting as well, and so, yes, cobia has always been an important recreational fishery for the State of Virginia. Any questions?

I'm assuming that silence means assent, and so, if I look around the table, I feel like I am seeing thumbs up, heads nodding, with regard to including cobia for the stock ID workshop and then also recommending it for a full benchmark in 2018.

DR. PONWITH: The notion of benchmark is to capitalize on what you learn from the stock ID and be able to incorporate that?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, ma'am.

DR. PONWITH: Because, without that, it would be a prime candidate for an update, but I can't argue that, if we can get more clarity on the stock structure, that would lend itself then to looking at a deeper look at that. A couple of other stocks that come to our minds, just from the life history, a combination of the life history of the stocks and the age of the stock assessments, are greater amberjack, black sea bass, and red porgy, in addition to cobia. I just put those on the table to think about in terms of the interest or the concern relative to putting them in the circulation as a standard.

DR. DUVAL: Bonnie, those were greater amberjack, which I believe had been on the list and just got bumped down, greater amberjack, and red porgy was the other one?

DR. PONWITH: Then the third one was black seas bass, just to make sure that we're considering those when you're looking at possible candidates.

DR. DUVAL: For scheduling, and you're saying those as standard assessments?

DR. PONWITH: The notion of standard would be to give the latitude for incorporation of a video index, in the event that that video index is possible for those stocks.

MR. BOWEN: In regards to cobia, I know we have some data gathering, for lack of a better term, going on now. Will that be concluded, such as the tagging program and the genetic studies that are being conducted right now? Will that be concluded at the time that this cobia assessment would start in 2018, so that that information gets included in the assessment?

DR. DUVAL: I guess I would look to folks from Florida for an answer to that, because I think it's a -- Is it the State of Florida or is it one of the universities that is doing the tagging amongst Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia?

MS. BURGESS: That data is currently being conducted by one of our FWRI biologists out of Tequesta Lab. However, it is a tagging study, and so, depending on the results that come in, whether it will be available or not for the stock assessment and whether we will have enough data to inform the stock assessment is undetermined at this point.

DR. DUVAL: Zack, it sounds like, if we can include it, we will.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I actually misspoke when I said the assessment. I was actually meaning for the stock ID workshop, and not necessarily Florida, but I know there is some tagging and genetics sampling studies going on with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. That's the study I was talking about.

DR. DUVAL: South Carolina DNR has obviously been very involved in conducting cobia tagging studies and genetics work over the years, and I would anticipate that anything that they have that's available would be incorporated as part of that.

MS. BECKWITH: I apologize, and I think this is going to sound like an ignorant question, but, talking about the benchmark of cobia in 2018 -- We had a major overage in 2015. We may or may not have an overage in 2016, given some of the state decisions that have been made recently. We are going to implement new regulations probably for the 2017 season, and I would assume that the terminal year of data for this assessment would be 2017, and so we wouldn't --

We may have one year of the new regulations sort of kicking in, and so I'm not having any crystal ball to sort of understand how that would impact the assessment. Would that put us in sort of a worse position for outcome, rather than waiting to 2019 or to at least have one full year of the new regulations in place that might be able to be put into the assessment, and can someone kind of walk me through that?

DR. DUVAL: I don't think it's an ignorant question at all. I mean there have certainly been other species that have undergone regulations that have been somewhat in flux when an assessment was being conducted. I mean what comes to mind is gray triggerfish. We implemented the twelve-



inch minimum size limit that I think the analytical team struggled with a little bit, how to deal with that, because the terminal year of data was right before that size limit change went into place, but how to incorporate that into the selectivities that were being determined was a question that came up.

MR. BOWEN: I would agree with Anna. I think that, with what we have coming up, in terms of management measures and the tagging studies that probably will not be completed by the stock ID workshop in 2017, I'm not sure I could support a benchmark of cobia in 2018. I think maybe a little further down the line is the way I'm leaning.

DR. DUVAL: I mean this has to come before the SEDAR Steering Committee in the fall, where to put cobia in amongst the slots. I think what you're going to find is that, in order to -- One of the biggest issues surrounding cobia is this stock ID issue.

In order to change that, we need a new benchmark, and so you're going to continue to -- We are going to continue to be hammered on this issue, and so, if we have a new stock ID determination, the only -- I think the only way that we can incorporate the results of that is through a benchmark, and so all I'm just saying is one of the pieces to consider in the calculus is the ability to manage the fishery based on the most appropriate stock ID information, and that you may be disadvantaging both the resource as well as the fishery if we fail to act on that information as soon as we receive it.

MR. BOWEN: But my point is the studies that are going on now to maybe determine that stock ID. I'm not sure they will be concluded by the time that workshop begins, and I may be wrong, and, if so, I would love to be corrected, but I just don't think that information is going to be concluded, like I said, by the time that stock ID workshop begins.

DR. DUVAL: I definitely appreciate that concern, and I think -- I guess I would say I'm not sure if tagging studies are every really completed, if they're ever really done. I think there's probably -- You have a certain set of information that has been completed and analyzed to a certain point, and you incorporate that as best you can. Gregg, did you have a point to make?

MR. WAUGH: Yes, and I think when we get into Mackerel and you hear the public comment tomorrow, there is a lot of misunderstanding about why Florida isn't included in the Atlantic. There is a lot of deliberate attempts to spread misinformation about what happened in delineating that stock ID, and when you go to the stock assessment report, the discussion about stock ID is not very extensive. It indicates a zone of mixing and picking the Florida/Georgia line for convenience.

I think it's going to be -- The sooner we can get a more rigorous examination of that stock ID delineation, even with the existing information -- The ongoing tagging study, as I understand it, is a sonic tagging study, and so there's listening stations that will pick up that movement. I think we just work to make sure we get as much of that new information into the stock ID workshop as possible. That will help us, because there's going to be a lot of pressure continuing from the public on this issue of why Florida isn't included in the Atlantic, and the sooner we can readdress that, the better.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Gregg. Zack, I guess one more thing to just think about is that the terminal year of data in SEDAR 28 was 2011, and so there has been additional work that's been conducted

since then that would be incorporated into that stock ID workshop. We need to move on, in the interest of time, and so I think there was a draft motion on the board to request a benchmark of cobia in 2018 and to include it in the stock ID workshop. I don't know if anyone is willing to make that motion.

**MR. BROWN: I would like to make a motion to request a benchmark of cobia in 2018 and include it in the SEDAR Stock ID Workshop in 2017.**

**DR. DUVAL: Is there a second to that motion? Second by Ben. Is there further discussion? Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next item is the SEDAR Steering Committee. The committee met by webinar on May 9. You have their report, seeing the things that they discussed. A couple of things that they talked about that we should talk about some is the MRIP revisions. Remember these are the assessments to bring -- These are the special assessment category being created to deal with the MRIP calibration. The data will become available sometime in 2017, and so we need to come up with some stocks for priorities for the MRIP revisions.

With that, I think turn your attention to Attachment 6, which is a summary of that, and I think we need to go ahead and talk about that some. The Science Center provided a list based on the proportion of recreational landings for a particular stock, because obviously that's going to influence how much a particular assessment is going to change.

I expanded on that a bit and brought in some other criteria, such as how old the assessment is, because, if you think about an assessment which has a terminal year a number of years ago, it may not make sense to bring that up to that terminal year, because keep in mind these revisions are not going to add any new years to the assessment. They are going to bring the MRIP data up, correct the MRIP data, adjust the MRIP data, up to that previous terminal year.

If an assessment is say five or six years out since its terminal year, it probably doesn't make much sense to put the effort into calibrating that if we can instead find a way to do a regular update, which will bring those additional years of data into that assessment, and so that was sort of where I was heading, looking at that and looking at things like stock status, to try and decide what were our potential top priorities for these revisions, and that gave us a different ranking.

That's where the age of the assessment, what it will be in 2017, the status of it, with a score for stocks that are not overfished or not overfishing, which seem like more likely candidates for this type of work, as well as the percent of recreational fishing.

There was a ranking by the MRIP Transition Team as well that considered stocks of what they thought within each region were priorities, and that included people from the Science Center as well as the Regional Office, the states and the councils, who all contributed to that, and so I felt that had some value.

Coming through all of those things together, it gave me -- In Table 2 in Attachment 6, it shows you the ranking of different species for priority as a revision. One of the things to note is red snapper comes up high. That's because it's overfished and overfishing. Its terminal year at this point is going to be relatively short, and so there's a lot of value to adding that new MRIP data to

that assessment. You have done it relatively recently. You might at first thing, well, why do that one?

Well, you're going to bring that up to the most recent information, and that is certainly one that I think, given all that goes around with red snapper, you wouldn't want to rely on some sort of multiple calibration type of step. Hogfish comes up because of its status and recreational importance. Red grouper comes up and black grouper and sea bass. All of these things I think are stocks which are not too surprising.

What I then tried to do with this was say, well, we really have a number of things here. We have, as Bonnie mentioned, some stocks that need a little bit more involved consideration. I think she mentioned greater amberjack, black sea bass, red porgy, and I certainly agree with that. There is some that need benchmarks, as we've discussed for cobia, and so what I did was come through Table 5, and I tried to address every stock that is before us that's been assessed, because we're talking about things that have been assessed when we talk about doing this MRIP revision.

I tried to go through and say, well, where within our workload and what we've done would each one of these stocks fall, and so Table 2 just gives you a listing by year, primarily, and the type of assessment. Here, for example, up at the top, is red snapper revision in 2017. The last terminal year was 2014, and so it gives you a sense of how many years you may still be out of date when you do this revision.

I think what's more useful though is bringing forward over here now, and this is Table 6 in that document, and this shows you a timeline, based on the way that we've scheduled assessments in SEDAR, which is using these quarters, and the number of assessment resources we have to bring to bear, and it shows you how this could fit into a schedule in moving forward from 2016, 2017, and 2018.

The things that you see here in bold, in the black, are things that are in that SEDAR Steering Committee Report, where the Steering Committee scheduled things out through 2018. The items which you see here in red are things that I am suggesting as a way of dealing with the MRIP revisions, as well as the stocks which may not be great candidates for just a revision assessment, but probably need that MRIP data brought in. Bonnie mentioned greater amberjack, black sea bass, red porgy. We just addressed cobia. It looks like there are resources available to do cobia here in 2018.

We would also have the MRIP revision taking -- It may have to be adjusted, in terms of the resources that it takes and the time that it takes to do those, a quarter or two, perhaps, but I think my proposal only puts forth five stocks to be done in there, and trying to get more done as standards and updates. You will note this goes all the way through 2020.

Some things maybe to discuss for 2020, and that's pretty far out, but, in terms of setting research priorities and all, it would be great if we knew what we wanted to do through 2020. We have our old friend, gray trigger, which has proven to give us quite the challenge in getting assessments done, and we also have white grunt, which is another stock which has been recognized by the SSC and others as a real candidate for having some benchmark attention. It has some stock structure questions, and so it needs to be out there, to give us a chance to do some stock ID work on that one as well.

As Michelle mentioned, this needs to be approved by the Steering Committee, and so, if you guys agree with this general framework, I think a motion that approves this table to go to the Steering Committee, to try and work out the fine scale workload details and whatnot, would probably help get this moving forward.

DR. CRABTREE: According to this, John, we would do a black sea bass update in 2018? Am I reading that right?

MR. CARMICHAEL: A standard in 2018.

DR. DUVAL: It looks like it would be a black sea bass standard in 2018, a red porgy standard in 2018, and then a greater amberjack standard in 2017, if I am reading that correctly.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The reason greater amberjack is before black sea bass is because its terminal year is 2006.

DR. CRABTREE: My concern with sea bass has to do with we're going to see, I think, a presentation in the Snapper Grouper Committee, and the CPUEs are heading down, and I keep getting emails from one of Michelle's constituents about concerns about black sea bass, and so it is one that I think we need to look at.

DR. PONWITH: I do see that we've got the proposed research track on that, and I am eager to have those discussions about the merits of the research track, based on the advice that's coming from the SSC.

The one thing is, with the research track, is if indeed a decision is made to create that distinction, the research track approach, then the follow-on would be to eventually have that show up as the actual operational assessment in some period after the close of the research track, and so that's something that -- We kind of have to thread that needle and have that in the back of the mind. That finishes the end of 2019.

You don't want that operational assessment to happen immediately following, or it basically gets caught up in that same Catch-22 we're in right now of benchmarks, but I just wanted to put that in the works, that it would pay to think about that in, if not 2020, somewhere in the future after that, to follow up on the actual operational assessment.

MS. BECKWITH: I was just going to bring up, as the Dolphin Wahoo Committee Chair, that we have had some public comment of folks requesting consideration of a dolphin assessment, but I think John, at the last committee meeting, did a really good job of explaining to us why an assessment for dolphin would be difficult, because of all the issues with aging, and traditional assessments would not be appropriate.

It would be more appropriate if there became available a data-limited technique that would better be considered for dolphin, but, for the moment, I am not requesting for dolphin to be put on the SEDAR schedule, not because I'm ignoring the public comment, but previous discussion has indicated that that's not the best course of action for this particular species.

MR. HARTIG: I would just speak to what Roy said about black sea bass and the concerns that people have about it and not the concerns about greater amberjack. I mean greater amberjack, for the first time in the history of the fishery, I think, we caught the allocation last year and we closed a month early. Having said that, there is a really strong year class or two coming up behind the fish that were caught in that year, and so greater amberjack, functionally, is looking pretty good. Black sea bass, probably not so good, and so I wouldn't have any problem switching those two, based on the stock observations that have occurred through MARMAP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I wanted to talk about something in this document. There is a bullet in here that says it's highly unlikely that current resources available for critical activities, such as evaluating age structures and survey data and fulfilling assessment data requests, are adequate to meet the intensive schedule shown here. I guess I'm just trying to understand, looking at this schedule, what does this mean for our regular assessment schedule? Does it affect that, because we need slots to do the MRIP piece? I'm just trying to understand.

MR. CARMICHAEL: What that's referring to is basically this table in its entirety, and it has more assessments in it than we've had in the past, but it has an assessment workload that is certainly consistent with where we're trying to get, and we just don't know if it's possible to get, for example, in 2018, scamp, cobia, greater amberjack, and red porgy ages all done and caught up and that sort of thing.

I think this is a way of saying this is where we would like to get, but there may be some things that perhaps slip a little, in response to getting all of that other work done, and it might depend on how much Bonnie is able to get extra resources from somewhere to let those types of programs keep up with where they need to be. While I have got you here, I have moved black sea bass up to 2017 and dropped greater amberjack to 2018. Is that the group's preference? It sounds like at least two folks are onboard with that.

DR. DUVAL: I am seeing some thumbs up in that regard. This is probably a question for Bonnie, just in regard to the MRIP revisions, but there is a couple of slots in this table here. Do you have any sense yet, Bonnie, and I know we've talked a little bit about this before, but how many MRIP revisions could be conducted in one of those quarterly slots? Is it two or is it three?

DR. PONWITH: It's certainly a lighter lift than a typical update stock assessment, and it's because, as John has already brought out, we won't be updating the indices of abundance. We are just dropping the revised recreational landings into the existing most recent stock assessment to that point, and so the answer is challenging.

Let me consult on that. The reason I don't have a definitive answer is this is new ground. We haven't done this, and there is a working group that's been working on creating the methodology, and the process of creating that methodology may be enlightening, in terms of how complex it is to roll into the last assessments, and so let me consult on that and get back to you.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that, Bonnie, and so I think, in terms of committee action, we would need, as John said, a motion from the committee to approve this table, as we have revised it. John has switched around greater amberjack and black sea bass in this table. Again, this is something that we would try to carry forward to the SEDAR Steering Committee.

Then I think, in terms of those two MRIP revision slots that are in there right now, John has showed you and reviewed proposed candidates for those revisions, based on -- I think that's in Table 5. That's based on multiple parameters, and so it looks like that list is red snapper, hogfish, red grouper, black grouper, and blueline tilefish. Am I reading that correctly? I just was wondering if we needed to identify at least a couple of top candidates for those MRIP revisions or are we operating on the assumption that those five species would be the ones that would move forward into that MRIP revision slot? That's just what I want to clarify.

There is a draft motion up on the screen to approve Table 6 in Attachment 6, with the assessment priorities as well as those priorities for the MRIP revision assessments. I will just let everybody take a look at that, and then perhaps we can get a motion from the committee to approve that. Is there someone willing to make a motion in that regard?

**MR. HARTIG: Madam Chairman, I would move to approve Table 6 in Attachment 6 as the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council assessment priorities, with red snapper, hogfish, red grouper, black grouper, and blueline tilefish as priorities for MRIP revision assessments.**

**DR. DUVAL:** There's a motion by Ben. Is there a second? Second by Zack. Is there any further discussion on this motion? **Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** John, it looks like the next order of business is the Assessment Priority Process.

**MR. CARMICHAEL:** The assessment priority process, I think you guys are probably fairly familiar with that. You've had a number of presentations on it. The SSC received a presentation on it, and, as I mentioned in SSC Selection, what the SSC would like to do would be to bring in some AP folks at their next meeting to help with some of the scoring of the metrics. There is a pretty long list of twelve or fourteen different metrics that are scored to establish the priority. Some are quantitative, like stock status or landings levels, and others are more qualitative, like what's the recreational importance of the fishery.

They really believe that getting feedback from fishermen to fill those types of things in, much as we did when we did the application of the ORCS process to our stocks, would be very helpful, and so our plan is to bring in some AP folks at the next meeting of the SSC in October, to try and get the scorings done and then bring that, of course, to you at the December meeting.

Hopefully, about that time, maybe the process is becoming well enough developed and informed that it can start to help you to establish what your priorities are, and I certainly expect that, in a lot of ways, it will match the priorities that we've just looked at, because a lot of the information that's going into that prioritization is the same information that was used for the prioritization you just saw that helped me decide kind of what should go when in terms of the MRIP revisions and filling in the holes for all those other stocks, and so I expect it's going to come out very similar, but we would really be looking at that, I think -- If you look at the schedule we just saw, this is probably coming into things that we might want to look at for 2020 and beyond.

I think dolphin would certainly come up. If you wanted to say to identify dolphin as something to maybe try to get some research done on ways to assess that stock, because typical methods may prove quite difficult, just because of its life strategy and its very wide-ranging movements. You know these things don't just stay in our waters. They go all the way out toward Bermuda and

down into the Caribbean. The resource is pretty well constantly on the move, which adds a lot of assessment concerns when you're trying to deal with a unit stock and you in the U.S. only see those for part of the year. When we think of research priorities, I think dolphin is one that someone should get into that and try to come up with a way to assess those critters.

DR. DUVAL: In thinking about this, a couple of things come to mind. There is a group that I think assesses the HMS stocks, and perhaps bringing in that expertise when considering dolphin and then also there have been a couple of -- Was it the Caribbean that did a data-limited workshop for Caribbean species? I would love to see us be able to work something like that into our SEDAR schedule for some of our unassessed species.

DR. PONWITH: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for bringing that up, because that also is something that I would encourage the committee to consider. We have conducted a data-limited workshop in the Caribbean. It was quite successful in providing results that were suitable for management purposes, and it is not a magic wand.

It doesn't take a data-limited stock and suddenly make it data-rich, but what it can do is squeeze as much information as is available into decisions that are made for management as is scientifically prudent, which is often more information than you would have just using average landings, and so it's essentially to take what you have and make appropriate use of it. That was an extremely productive enterprise in the Caribbean.

We're in the process of conducting a data-limited assessment for a suite of stocks in the Gulf of Mexico right now. That is underway, and I would encourage the committee to contemplate adding something like for some of the unassessed stocks here in this region.

DR. DUVAL: Given that the Caribbean has gone through this data-limited approach and the Gulf is currently going through a suite of species for data-limited approaches, perhaps we could, as part of our tasking for the SSC, at one of their upcoming meetings, ask them for input on appropriate species to which we could apply a data-limited approach and scheduling for a data-limited SEDAR.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, we can do that for the October meeting. Absolutely.

DR. DUVAL: Is there any other business that we need to go through, John?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I believe we have covered it all. I see Gregg, and I think he might have one more thing.

MR. WAUGH: Sorry, but just on the NMFS stock assessment prioritization, at the Council Coordinating Committee meeting, some of the other councils are getting this as guidance that this will determine the schedule for stock assessments, and we relayed that the way we are interpreting this is this will inform our SEDAR Steering Committee process, and that SEDAR Steering Committee is the one that will determine the priorities, and I was just wondering if Bonnie or Roy had any further guidance on that and how some of the other councils are either interpreting it or how it's being presented to them.

DR. PONWITH: The expectation is that the prioritization process has a distinct hand in setting those priorities. I don't think that it removes any responsibility of this committee or the SEDAR Steering Committee in terms of approving a final slate, but I think that, if there are frequent or dramatic departures from the results, that a justification for those departures would be expected, and so, again, I don't think you should view that tool as handcuffs, but you also don't want to create the tool and make all the investments in how you parameterize it and then ignore those results either, and so it's kind of a delicate balancing point on that.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you for that, Bonnie. Is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? If not, the committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned on June 14, 2016.)

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

Transcribed By:  
Amanda Thomas  
July 27, 2016



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