

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

**Savannah Hilton DeSoto
Savannah, Georgia**

March 4, 2014

SUMMARY MINUTES

SEDAR Committee

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Charlie Phillips

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Dr. Michelle Duval

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Observers/Participants:

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Karen Antrim Raine
Pat O'Shaughnessy

Monica Smit-Brunello
Phil Steele
Doug Boyd
Tracy Dunn

Other Participants Attached

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Madison Ballroom of the Savannah Hilton DeSoto, March 4, 2014, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: Good morning! The SEDAR Committee is in session. The item on the agenda is approval of the agenda. Are there any additions to the agenda? Is there any objection to approving the agenda? Seeing none; the agenda is approved. The next item of business is approval of minutes. Are there any corrections or deletions to the minutes? Seeing none; is there any objection to approving the minutes? Seeing none; the minutes are approved. That brings to the closed session portion of the meeting.

(Whereupon, the meeting was in closed session from 8:30 o'clock a.m. to 8:47 o'clock a.m.)

MR. HARTIG: Let's open the meeting back up again; and we'll go right into the next agenda item after we let the people outside come back in. All right, the next agenda item is SEDAR Activities Updates; and those will be Attachments 1 through 3. What are we going to be working off on that one, John, which attachment for your overview?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm just going to be going through the overview; and I'll call up Attachment 2, which is the memo from the science center about blueline; and then we'll call up Attachment 3 when we look at the objective for the workshop. Gray triggerfish, as we discussed the aging work which was the issue in the assessment, that has been underway and don't see any issues with having that done for the data workshop in August.

SEDAR 36 is the standard of snowy grouper. Recall the SSC didn't look at this in October but are on track to look at that at their meeting in April and we get recommendations for you. This will be the first change – Florida is working on mutton snapper and it is not going to quite make the April SSC meeting. Luiz said they'll have that ready for the SSC in October.

Also in October we'll be getting the Florida assessment of hogfish. We'll have a couple of assessments that we'll be reviewing in October, and you'll get your recommendations in December from the SSC. I know the next topic should generate some discussion, and this is the timing of blueline.

At the last meeting we talked about blueline tilefish and the uncertainties in the projections and asked the science center to look at the opportunities for doing an update of that assessment, another benchmark or what have you; and so the science center sent memo, which is Attachment 2, which lays out the range of alternatives. As you'll see, it is a full range because it includes things that I think for the most part people probably would not do like bumping red snapper in lieu of blueline tilefish.

What we'd like to get here is some discussion from the committee about the alternatives and what we might like to do for blueline tilefish and when we want to do the next assessment and what type of assessment perhaps that should be.

DR. DUVAL: I think Option 1 probably makes the most sense starting an update in 2015. I think the data from the current assessment goes through 2011, I believe, and that way we'd have at least two possibly three more years of data. I think doing an update in 2015 as proposed under Option 1 certainly keeps red snapper in its place. I don't think anybody wants to change that. It simply replaces a vermilion snapper update. I think that would be my preference, but I'd also love to hear from others around the table.

MS. McCAWLEY: I'm just wondering what document we're looking at; where is this Option 1; what document are you on, Michelle?

DR. DUVAL: It's Attachment 2.

MR. HARTIG: Right; Attachment 2 is the letter from Theo from the science center on the options.

MR. PHILLIPS: When would we do vermilion if that's what we do?

MR. CARMICHAEL: At the next opportunity we have to do an update. Well, at this point it is kind of hard to say. It would be 2016 or so, probably, maybe late 2016 and try to get it to the SSC April 2017.

DR. CRABTREE: I'm not on your committee but I think you need to give some thought to several things; one that John brought up, which is what type of an assessment would this be? I'm not convinced at this point that an update is adequate. Maybe it is; but if you look through the review panel comments, there are issues with the recruitments in the assessment.

They're related to the fact that the CPUEs were only computed for areas south of 35 degrees north. Yet we know there was a lot of fishing effort north of Hatteras that resulted in those landings. If you read through the reviewer comments; they say that one implication of this is that the BAM Model fits the increase in landings as an increase in recruitment; and so you end up with these really big recruitment deviations in the final years of the model.

They point out that this clearly has implications for projected future stock productivity. I think that's the fundamental problem with the projections that we have is they're assuming that recruitment falls way off; and that leads to the extremely high fishing mortality rates. According to the projections, we will catch virtually every blueline tilefish there is over the next five years.

If you go through the report, it says that given a large portion of recent landings are being reported north of Cape Hatteras and they're not included in the commercial CPUE indices, the effects on the abundance indices are unknown. The review panel suggests the increased catches be addressed and this apparent inconsistency between the indices and the fisheries be resolved before the next stock assessment.

The question is can you resolve that problem in an update? To me resolving this problem does not mean just updating a few more years of data and rerunning it. It means changing how things are configured in the model. I guess I'd like to hear comments from John and I guess Bonnie on

that; and I think that's something we probably ought to have some discussion at the SSC and get that resolved, because I think it will have implications for scheduling your timing.

I don't think we want to go through an update just to find that we have all the same problems and we haven't adequately addressed them. The other thing I think you need to think about – the SSC meeting is in April, John?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes.

DR. CRABTREE: And they're going to review the current projections; but depending on what comes out of that SSC meeting, I think it will have great bearing on the timing of all this and what we do. We're close to publishing the emergency rule that the council requested; and if that's approved and goes forward, that would be in place in March and would expire in March of 2015.

At that time if we don't have something else put in place, the catches will revert back up and we'll be in an overfishing situation again. We really need to be ready to vote on something by the September meeting. If we come out of the SSC meeting with some satisfactory resolution of all this, that is one situation. In that case I think doing the assessment in 2015 makes sense.

If we come out of the SSC meeting with projections that don't adequately deal with these recruitment issues and lead us to closing this fishery down; I suspect that is not going to be a satisfactory situation, and we're going to need to redo the stock assessment immediately to avoid closing the fishery down or find some other resolution to all of this. I think those are some issues that the committee probably ought to tackle. I guess, John, your comments on what type of assessment should this be might be a way to kick that off.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think those are good points, Roy, and I think it really behoove us to ask the SSC to weigh in on the type of assessment and get a sense of whether or not they think those issues can be addressed in a standard. I think a standard is much more appealing than an update if we're going to look at some of these CPUE issues and the spatial things that might be going on.

That was one, in talking with Erik about this assessment, in the recruitment and what they could do with recruitment and the other issues. That is one of the things that came out is like many of these snapper grouper species, it seems that fishermen finds groups of fish and they exploit them. We saw this heavily snowy grouper and documented it.

In that case we had a lot better indicates and age data and were able to. We suspect maybe the same kind of thing is going on in tilefish where they find a group of fish and they have good age structure and they fish them. Well, that kind of wreaks havoc with model because it thinks as you fish, you're taking it out of the same group of fish and your age structure should go down; but if can go around and find old fish in aggregations and remove them, then that typically gives these models a lot of trouble.

That's possibly something that is going on in looking at the CPUE and getting the indices in other areas should help that; so a standard maybe to bring in some additional CPUE and knowing that fishery north of Hatteras is more recent; so in doing a standard, we'd also have the benefit of more years of data on that fishery and more age composition from that area, which they didn't have at the last benchmark, might let it perform a lot of better in a standard. I think getting the SSC to weigh in on that and knowing, as Roy said, what they do with the projection scenarios will have a big influence on the timing.

If we could hear from the SSC and sort of make this as a package, depending on what you do with the timing, this is going to affect what we need with this assessment. Like Roy said, if they stick with the projections and we have this emergency rule coming out, we may need to force this assessment to happen sooner somehow if that's at all possible, which we don't know. So I think if we have time to take this SSC in April and purposefully withholding finalizing their agenda until this meeting to see if anything else came up, so there are no problems with taking this to them.

DR. DUVAL: Well, that was really helpful for me to hear those comments. I sat through the review workshop, Roy, so thank you for reminding me of the concerns that a lot of the reviewers had with regard to how the indices were developed and the concerns regarding I guess the geographic truncation of those indicates as well and the conversations that there were about whether or not this is actually really a coast-wide stock or if there were actually subpopulations.

There was a lot of protracted discussion about that and the model simply could not differentiate spatially between different populations. I would be more than happy to let the SSC weigh on this and hear what they have to say once they've had the opportunity to review the projections and let that inform the decision as to what type of assessment would be conducted. I think I was responding simply to the options that were laid in Attachment 2; so I would absolutely agree with the approach that Roy suggested.

MR. PHILLIPS: And getting back to what we're going to move where; could John give me some pluses and minuses on moving vermilion or tilefish or red grouper. I know vermilion was the last one done, but that does not necessarily mean that automatically means that is the one that should be kicked out first. There are going to be pluses or minuses no matter which one we do; but could we get a little more of an overview of why we might want to do one over the other.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, my recollection of vermilion is it is the most recent one; and that obviously isn't always the concern. That stock was not overfished and not overfishing; and I think we're fishing around the OY.

So contrasted with, say, gray triggerfish, which is a big uncertainty and have been trying to get that assessment through for a while and people have been burning the candle at both ends to get that age data done, we sure hate to bump that out and pull the rug out from underneath those folks who have worked so hard.

With red grouper, it has been a while since that assessment was done; and it is on a rebuilding plan. We probably should see if we're track with our projections, how the biomass is doing, if

the yield under that rebuilding scenario should go up or is the stock perhaps lagging and we need to make an adjustment to make sure we don't start backsliding.

I think of all of those, vermilion is the one that – in terms of things that the fishermen really think about what is going to give you more fish; it is probably unlikely given the status of the stock and where it is that the vermilion update would do that. We want to make sure that we're not hurting the stock in any way; but I don't consider that one as critical.

MR. HARTIG: The blueline tilefish assessment; I wasn't very in tune to it; but when it was done and looked over how they did it, I couldn't have been more disappointed that they ignored the North Carolina was just a majority of the fishery. To me you make that determination as you look at what model you can use to do the assessment.

The BAM Model can't deal with spatially differentiated fish; so what do you do; use SS-3. These are things that are available where you can actually use these types of models to assess the stock. To me it was almost a waste of time, to be honest with you, to do this assessment the way it was done and not take into consideration that group of fish off North Carolina, which is so different than anything else that I know of that occurs in the South Atlantic.

There is nothing that I have ever experienced or talked to anybody where those types of animals congregate and can be targeted in that type of volume. For us blueline has always been a bycatch of the snowy fishery; and it has never been targeted animal. When you talk about small catch levels for the rest of the jurisdiction; that's fine and that will work for us. I don't have a problem with it. But to take those fish in North Carolina and not assess them with a model that is capable of looking at that; that is very, very, very disappointing to me. Enough said. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So does it perhaps sum it up that Option 1 is the preferred unless there is an issue with the projections that comes from the SSC meeting that would necessitate some earlier considerations? We'd also like the SSC to consider, in addition to timing, the type of assessment which should be conducted. We would like to focus their attention on if a standard can deal with some of the spatial issues that the review panel noted.

MR. HARTIG: I'm seeing heads nod; so do you want a motion on that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Sure; that wouldn't hurt. Let me see if I can write something up here. At least it will be clearer.

MR. COX: While they're working on that, I have a question. Why wasn't the right assessment done the first time on blueline tilefish; what happened?

MR. HARTIG: Well, it is not to say that the right assessment wasn't done. It is just there are models available that take into consideration these spatially differentiated groups of fish. In blueline tile; this is one of the few fisheries I know of that we have this spatially differential areas of animals. There is a model that could have done it.

It wasn't used; and I don't know of all the thought processes that went into that. Heck, I could be speaking out of turn. It is just from my observations of looking from the outside in, it just seems to me that if you have situations like that; I mean, why wouldn't you run the BAM Model twice on two different groups of fish. To me those types of decisions could have been made; but people with a lot more scientific ability in doing assessments and the reviewers didn't go in that direction. It's just sometimes commonsense in these things to me makes sense. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: The problem is there are these issues with the assessment; but what we're faced with is when you do the projections out into the future, the magnitude of them grows; and they become even greater and so you end up with projections that aren't realistic. They have fishing mortality rates in a five; and I don't know anyone who believes that could happen.

The removals are not realistic. What has disappointed me about that is we've gotten this far out from the assessment; and now we're coming up on the SSC Meeting and there has been little willingness to try and find some way to deal with these in a way, as you say, that shows some commonsense and gives us more realistic results.

I think where we are is if we come into the SSC Meeting and they're unable to resolve this and they want to see additional projections and additional work done; then we're going to have the center scrambling under a very tight line and we're going to need to schedule an emergency SSC Meeting sometime in May because we're going to have some resolution to this by the June council meeting.

Otherwise, I think where we are is going to be we've got to redo the assessment and we've got to start work on it right now; and that is going to create a whole host of other problems. By not dealing with this, we've created a whole mess for ourselves potentially unless the SSC is able to sort all this. I'm optimistic and hopeful that they will be able to.

DR. PONWITH: We have a stock assessment that was completed and we have projections that are based on that stock assessment. The projections' methodology that was used is the standard approach that we use; so no unusual thing was done to generate those projections. The projections are peculiar; and I think it's very smart to be taking a look quantitatively at the things that have contributed to the projections showing the patterns that they do.

I think it's important to hold those discussions with the SSC to collect the information, to put collective wisdom of the group together into contemplating what things are contributing to this and to make some decisions on the record on how to explore those patterns to be able to really understand what is contributing to the unusual fishing mortality that we're seeing.

It is really important I think when we have a completed stock assessment and then projections that are based on those; that when you start looking for hypotheses of what is contributing to a pattern that we haven't seen before in stock, to be doing that in a methodical, well thought-out way. I know that creates some timing challenges, but I think it's important to have those deliberations on the record, using the advisory panel that the council has put together, to make sure that the things that we're looking at are sort of the top candidates for contributing to the patterns we're seeing.

I think it's smart to be holding these discussions with the SSC. I don't disagree with Roy. We may be in a situation where based on those deliberations we end up having to think about holding an emergency meeting of the SSC to look at further analyses; but I think having those discussions on the record is really important.

DR. DUVAL: Mr. Chairman, I guess I would make a motion to recommend Option 1 for the blueline tilefish update, which is a 2015 update; to the SSC in April 2016 as preferred unless the SSC recommendations on the current projections necessitate an earlier assessment. The SSC is asked to consider timing and the type of assessment required, particularly whether an update or standard is appropriate to address spatial CPUE distribution and recruitment issues identified by the review panel.

MR. HARTIG: Seconded by Jack. Anymore discussion? Is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none; **that motion is approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: I told you there would be some discussion on that. All right, we will move down the list. The next item is the Shrimp Procedural Workshop. We addressed the participants; and I just wanted to really just bring this to everyone's attention and let you see what it is that is planning to happen at this workshop.

It is going to be held in July in Charleston. Just to highlight the objectives; there is an inventory of the shrimp data; review assessment approaches and bycatch estimation methods and their data requirements; and then provide best practices for estimating finfish bycatch for the shrimp fishery and estimating population and management for shrimp resources.

We've told people this is really an open book. We want to look at the data, look at the methods and then see where the two line up well to get recommendations for how we proceed with shrimp. This workshop has been very well received so far, which is encouraging, and a lot of people really looking forward to it and having these discussions. We just want to see if anyone had any questions or anything about the workshop and just make sure everyone is aware that it is happening and what we're going to be doing and what your folks will be taking about when they show up.

MR. HARTIG: Any questions for John about the Shrimp Procedural Workshop? Seeing none; moving right along, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next item of the business is the Steering Committee Report. It was a little bit complicated. The steering committee met in October, but they couldn't quite handle all their business because of the federal shutdown. We met in January again over a conference call just to finalize the discussions that were held in October.

I will just highlight a couple of things that came up and were slightly tweaked from our October meeting; and this is Attachment 4. No, that was October; it is actually Attachment 5. The items I want to highlight here is on the list of the discussions that the steering committee had. The first one is Number 4.

This is the big deal within SEDAR. This is trying to get to sort of an IPT-like process for developing the assessments to allow the analysts to have a bit more informal and as-needed discussions with the panel that has been appointed. It has been supported by the steering committee.

The next step is the SEDAR staff is working on writing this up as a step-by-step procedure so everyone can review it in great detail and consider what it means and importantly make sure that we are in compliance with all the laws and acts that govern how we operate and, of course, maintaining transparency of our process; but in doing that, draw the distinction between decisional phases and pre-decisional preparation phases, which are sort of where everything is all together now as one piece; and as you know it is very slow and cumbersome.

The important thing is the steering committee is on board with this; and we're going to start digging into the details. The next item is Number 7, which was a suggestion to add to the terms of reference to provide information on sampling targets and details in the data workshop documentation rather than doing that in the terms of reference. This is something that evolved between the council meeting and SSC meeting.

Since the SEDAR Committee Meeting is involved into a workshop to look at fishery-dependent sampling in the South Atlantic, which is a topic we'll discuss in detail later on; so I just wanted to bring this up that this wasn't added to the terms of reference. It said direct this toward that workshop and see what comes out of it.

The last item is Number 16 down at the bottom. This is a recommendation that someone from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission be invited to join the steering committee. The idea was they work on a lot of assessments and they may have a role to play there. That was a lot of discussion in January about this.

It culminated with asking that someone from Florida come and observe the steering committee proceedings and SEDAR provide travel support for that, but not actually to sit as a member. The idea is that the discussions were about setting a precedent and having someone from a state agency come in at this level whereas the representation is intended to come through the council leadership, the Chair and ED at that level; so this is sort of a first step; and we'll see how this goes.

But also what came up there, which may worth highlighting for you guys, is the discussion again – and this was raised before about SSC Chairs participating on the steering committee. The steering committee was rather strongly divided on this as they were largely before with one group in the Gulf in particular saying they'd like to see the SSC Chair sitting there and the other representatives not seeing that.

Again, the intention of the steering committee is to be a higher level and the voice of the SSC is supposed to come up through the council and through the council leaderships. Maybe it is just a difference in the regions, but certainly within our SSC and talking with our SSC leadership, they're not interested in serving at the steering committee.

They've been comfortable with how their voice has been taken through the process. This is something the steering committee is going to talk about some more. This is the kind of thing that I think is important that guidance comes to our leaders that go the steering committee on topics like this.

MR. PHILLIPS: John, I've lost my place where I've read it, but they were talking somewhere in these documents about the update should have been taking up half a slot, and they were actually burning up a lot more time. There was not good incentive to keep things in track sometimes. They wanted to go back to using those updates as half slots and the benchmarks as full slots and so on and so forth. I didn't see any discussion on how they were going to – what they were going to change to try to get there. Is there anything that we can do to help you get where you need to be?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think some of the biggest things we're going to change to get there – and that was in the discussions about the timing and the workload of assessments. Some of the things that are changing is the two procedural workshops, one devoted to data best practices and the other devoted to assessment best practices, is identifying some common issues throughout assessments that have had common solutions now that we're in the forties on SEDARs.

I think that will go a long ways to it; because what you hear from the people involved is they do so much work up front preparing for the actual workshops, that it inhibits their ability to have someone working on an update and do that maybe over a month or two and then be able to come in at an assessment workshop part of the next benchmark. There is so much time that the assessment analysts spend dealing with data sets, dealing with calculating indices, putting pieces together, tracking down data, that they don't have that. I think that's probably the most powerful thing we'll do to get there.

The SSC will be talking about this in pretty broad terms. When they meet in April, they wanted a workshop to talk about assessment planning and scheduling of events. You know, going to longer-term scheduling where they're not scrambling to change things six or nine months out is another huge part of this to me, because then that lets the data people get their things done and we might be in a better position to really increase the workload.

It is all about all of these efficiency things coming together. The IPT-like process is a huge efficiency thing. These guys spend three months having webinars every two weeks and every webinar means a presentation prepared about where you stand now. There is a level of formality in there that – you know, we all know the formality and for preparation of documents, it all takes time. It's sort of all of these things coming together and hopefully get us to that long-term goal.

MR. PHILLIPS: I was impressed with the work and the format that was brought forth in that document in trying to make things more efficient and flow better and where people could work together better. And as I think I read, the shotgun approach of throwing out a bunch of webinars that not everybody could say I can be available for all this stuff; and it was very thoughtful.

I appreciated the work that went into that document and your work in trying to make this work, because, obviously, we need more assessments. And again today we're moving stuff around to

play catchup, so it will be nice when everybody can kind of work smoother; and I know it will be really good when you and everybody else right on down the line.

MR. HARTIG: I appreciate that, Charlie. As John mentioned the schedule and trying to keep on those schedules; and unfortunately when we get first-time assessments, it seems like many times we have some problems that come up in those assessments that have to be dealt with. Blueline tile is a great example.

Then it throws a monkey wrench into the whole schedule and trying to scramble to get these things done. Hopefully, we will get most of our major species assessed here in the not too distant future, and then we'll be on the update road and we'll be able to do things in a much timely fashion; and we shouldn't have as many changes that occur.

I think what Marcel has done is really good. I think when he gives you those fishery-independent synopsis of what has gone on over the years for different species and you see the last few years, I think that should be part of your guide on what you're trying to do. John makes that other good point about vermilion.

While we're fishing at OY now; how much more are going to get out vermilion if we do the next update; is that going to make any big difference in how much fish we're really going to be able to give back to the fishermen. All those things I think roll into this. I think the council has done a pretty good job overall in trying to keep the changes at a minimum; but we continue to get things like blueline that happen that have to be dealt with until we get a rational assessment done for that animal. We're trying. Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: We heard at the CCC meeting that there is also a national focus on stock assessment prioritization. I think Rick Methot is going to come down to the SSC meeting, which I think will be great, just to make sure that our efforts in developing a method for prioritizing stock assessments mesh well together.

I think one of the things that could probably be folded into that that would deal with some of these issues that are hampering the SEDAR process with regard to through-put and an update taking as long as a full benchmark assessment are really – you know, what are the data that we have out there for a particular species and really having basically almost like a metadata list of what we know what we don't know about the different species.

I think that would certainly help in terms of who has what data, where it is located, who you need to go to instead of having to sort of chase things down all the time. It lets you know what the gaps are, which I think can also help inform the type of model that you're going to use. I think it would be enormously beneficial to the analytical team as well to those of us sitting around the table when we start trying to provide input on prioritization decisions.

DR. PONWITH: Michelle pointed out something that I was going to raise; and that is the presentation at the CCC and the agreement by the presenter to give that same talk to the SSC. I think that the changes that the steering committee talked about at the last meeting were really

important changes that could bring a lot more efficiency into the process; and by adding efficiency ultimately lending quality to the process.

The notion of the sort of data group to be able to make framework decisions about data; so that once those decisions were made and the measures, the steps were agreed upon, it is documented once and then what that does is it helps the reports for these stock assessments to become more streamlined; because instead of repeating over and over again a repeat deliberative process on the same thing, it will be decided once and then applied evenly and cited in the report; and then the only time you have to elaborate is if you depart from that for some reason what that explanation is.

Likewise, developing the best practices for the assessment process where we pull together assessment experts from the South Atlantic and the Gulf and the Caribbean and talk about modeling approaches and in a framework scenario set those up as the way we'll proceed and then only document departures from that for gains in efficiency.

I like the idea of having a more methodical way to evaluate the priorities for stock assessments and this national approach is one where the basic concepts that can be brought down into the region and adapted or adopted to fit the decision-making within the region; and I think it is going to be really beneficial in helping make some of those decisions.

I agree with John; one of the biggest sweeping changes proposed is this kind of pre-decisional deliberation, the ability to advance the model efforts to the point where a base run is available and then doing a scheduled meeting at that point so that it doesn't break up the flow of the assessment process where you have a decision that's ready to made but you have to wait for seven days because the next webinar isn't until seven days from now; and that chops up really impacts the flow of that assessment. I think these changes are really smart and I think they're beneficial.

Another one that we're interested in exploring once we've been able to move beyond these is the idea of a standing advisory panel and to have a standing advisory panel with experts on some of these different species that have long-term continuity to advise on assessments once they're underway I think is another way to again try to make the process as efficient as possible. I'm encouraged by these changes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next topic is the Fishery-Dependent Workshop. At the last meeting there was discussion by this group of direction to convene a workshop to develop a comprehensive fishery-dependent sampling program. I talked around with some folks about that and people within the center and kind of the response was, well, you could try to do that, but there is so much going on and it would be really hard to leverage that into dictating how a sampling program could work.

I think the sense is that the situation is quite different than the fishery-independent workshop that we had which led to that monitoring program. In taking the conversation further, one of the things that came up was that a real challenge is just knowing what is out there. It was interesting

that we just sort of made that statement here in the prior discussion about just knowing who has what in terms of data.

That resonated with me because the SSC made at their meeting in October; and they suggested they wanted a presentation on all of the fishery-dependent programs. They really wanted someone from the science center to come. I think the realization is that there is no one person at this point in time who is able come in and really talk about all the different fishery-dependent data that is available.

One person could maybe know what the science center does, but they won't know necessarily what goes on in all the states. There are a lot of different programs that are collecting different types of fishery-dependent data and our goal in SEDAR is to use all those sources of data; so there is a lot of time spent digging it up.

What I took away from that is it seems that there is a very real need to just take that first step, which seems maybe perhaps to us a bit elementary – it certainly does to me – but clearly needed is to just develop this type of comprehensive index and overview of just what data are out there. It is not just what is there now and what is being conducted now, but what might have been conducted 20 or 30 years ago when a lot of these fisheries were first having their exploitation ramp up.

We know from a lot of the data-poor methods and things are being developed as we speak that allow you to get a lot more content out of maybe an index 20 years ago and an index today; or an age composition for 1980 and compare it with age composition today; especially if you can figure out fish that live 30 or 40 years, there is overlap in that kind of stuff. People are mining these things and they're finding ways to get information out of these types of spotty piecemeal data, which ten or fifteen years ago an assessment that was doing VPAs and things, you didn't have a choice to using spotty data like that.

You had to fill in the blanks with something. The technology continues to evolve and the methods continue to evolve. So given all of that, it seems like a good first step might be to just try and get this comprehensive look at who has what and where is it and how do people get it, what variables were included, and just put that out there, I think that helps us decide how we do assessments and what type of assessment models we may do for various species down the road.

It seems like a really simple thing, but like so many things we do with so many entities and changing things over time, it is beguilingly complex when you actually sit down and decide that you're going to do it. I have the document here dealing with some proposed objectives which we might want to consider for a workshop of this nature.

The first is document the fishery-dependent biological sampling. This would be length, ages, weights across the region considering state and federal data. Obtain the metadata which goes with that so they know what it covered and how it was collected, you know, important things like were the ages random or were they stratified by length.

Sometimes that stuff is hard to find, but it is really critical to how the data is used in the model. Then which gets to what may be the next steps is recommend the best practices for actually developing sampling targets, tabulating and keeping up with ongoing activities, and then reporting that to the council and agency.

In talking with folks at the center, one thing they'd like to be more capable of doing is answering the kind of questions that have been asked about how many lengths, how many ages, where were they collected, and the idea to come up with some standard sampling approach that they can just populate a table regularly so that everyone is aware of what is going on.

MR. HARTIG: Certainly to me I thought the review of the sampling targets in the realm of what is needed for assessments today was an appropriate venue. I'm sorry it was lukewarmly received, but that was something that I thought was valuable; but we'll get some of that out of what we're doing.

I certainly think that the documentation of all these different data sets that we're using needs to be done and somewhere we can actually go and find – you know, right now if you want to know what targets, you're going to ACCSP. If you want to know what was actually sampled, you've got to dig through probably an assessment to actually find out what was really done. Somewhere if we can have this tabulated form of how this was done, to me that would be helpful. John.

MR. JOLLEY: Yes; I'm excited about doing some of this stuff; but I'm surprised that somehow this hasn't already been done; because when you start looking at these animals, one of the first things you do is you just absolutely scrounge all the sources of data. Anyway, I'm excited that you're going to make some move in this direction; but I'm very surprised we don't have more already.

DR. PONWITH: The notion of lukewarm, I want to be careful about that, because certainly anything we can do to be more organized is a good thing. The collection of fishery-dependent data is anything but straightforward and simple. We have states, we have academics, we had feds, we have collections of all of those and everything in between.

As precious as data are and as scarce as data are in this area, the better job we can be as stewards of those data and keeping those data organized is very good; so all of this is logical. It is just that the very same people who would benefit this process are the ones who are up their eyeballs trying to get the data ready for the next stock assessment. If there is any sense of lukewarm, this year we do have a red snapper assessment coming up and we're talking about a workshop to look at the fishery-independent indices to make sure we're comfortable with the way those indices are set up for red snapper and other stocks that are benefiting from that new data collection.

It is just a matter of finding a time to be able to give it its due and make sure that we don't have people showing up dragging in and not able to give it the attention that you would want. It is a big investment to make a workshop happen. You want to give it the highest probability of achieving that desired outcome as possible. Again, I don't think it is the subject matter that is the issue. It is timing this so that it is constructive as opposed to spreading ourselves even more thinly in what I know is going to be a challenging year.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, Bonnie, for that; I appreciate that. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say I think in listening to some of the things Bonnie said and talking about efficiencies and the process and all and some the things Michelle was saying earlier, I think this is critical. One of things that is kind of mind-boggling to me is trying to figure out the entire process from one end to the other, who all the players are and how everything links together.

I guess in my simple way of trying to do things, I'd like to create like a flow diagram or something and plug everything at the appropriate place; but given that we live and die these SEDARs, that is something we've got to really focus on that's the end product that we're working with and then what it takes to accomplish those and do it in a timely manner and repetitively as we have to and also just in a thorough manner.

I think we have to pull something like this together to understand how we can sort of get this whole huge orchestra to play together. A lot of times it is just understanding what is out there, who has got what and how that plugs in. I realize that people are just really strapped and we're all busy, but I think this is essential somehow that we pull this together. Again, it is all about what comes out of the SEDARs. The decisions we make here and things that eventually are turned into regulations is critical so we need to focus on that. I'm not on our committee and I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

DR. DUVAL: I think some of these data sets that we use in SEDARs are kind of standard data sets; so a lot of the sort of what I consider to be programmed documentation is contained and repeated throughout each SEDAR Data Workshop; things like commercial landings, recreational statistics information.

You sort of have some of that metadata already capture within existing SEDAR documents and I think maybe it's John, and whoever else is appropriate as part of this kind of little steering committee that he has proposed to shepherd this process along, coming up with a format for the metadata elements that you need and then that can potentially be circulated to be filled in.

I think the point is just that there are some data sets out there for which we do have that knowledge that could be filled in. It's really chasing down all of those other things that have been produced historically and are maybe currently underway by academics; and I think the challenge is who going to then keep up with updating this metadata data base. I think it is a critical-like preamble to having a good productive workshop like Bonnie said and people are just strapped.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee either, but a tangential source of data, which we have discussed in the past, are the museum records for all these species. It is kind of sort of a little eccentric data set that sits out there but on occasion has proved useful particularly for the speckled hind and Warsaw grouper discussion. That is another source that we might want to try and assemble some information on. I would be willing to assist John in that regard since I have contacts with a lot of the museum folks.

DR. DUVAL: John, do you need a motion from this committee in terms of kind of bringing some closure to this topic? I know this is at least in the overview some guidance on steering committee participants and appointments, timing and workshop, that sort of thing. I just want to make sure that you get what you need out of this conversation.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think some guidance on where we turn next. I think we've had a good discussion of what we might want to do, and it seems like there is support for taking this potential first step of just figuring out what is out there. I think the steering committee just maybe give an idea – I would be looking for obviously some council staff, someone from the science center, maybe some SSC folks would be what would come to mind first for me.

Timing I think is a big one because as Bonnie said the same people who are going to be working on this are working on all these other things we have talked about. Particularly when you start talking about data, think about the shrimp workshop. We're kind of doing this on a smaller scale with shrimp and I'm looking forward to learning a lot about how that worked, how much time it takes for the shrimp folks to do this.

It will be some of the same people so I think the timing on this is 2015, honestly; so I think if we get sort of a big picture of timing and some thoughts on people for a steering committee, then we could come back at the next meeting with names and get more formal approval and start turning it loose. If there is consent with rough objectives, give us some sense of some folks you think would be good on the steering committee and we'll start assembling the names and try to take the more formal step at the next meeting. It sounds like a plan.

The steering committee members, I would say me, probably Mike Errigo from the council, a couple of the SSC folks. What I'd really look for is the state representative, one state representative from each state, because the states are so involved in the data, and then someone from the data team, someone like Dave Gloeckner, perhaps, Bonnie, and then probably someone from the assessment group because they're the ones who are out there shaking the bushes. I'd start there and get some names – and someone from ACCSP also I wanted to call. That is who I would be thinking; so if there are any other broad areas you think maybe we really need to bring somebody in, shout it out.

MR. HARTIG: All right, that one is good.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes; the timing would be probably next year and then funding, since it is the next year, it will be budget dependent at that time. We'll have a little more structured guidance and things to approve at the next meeting on this. We can move on to the Wreckfish Assessment Peer Review. I think people are pretty well versed in this.

The SSC met in January and they discussed the peer review process, identified the reviewers that they'd like to see take part. They agreed with the process that was proposed of doing it over a series of webinars. The workshop is going to be held like two weeks from now, 17th, 18th, 19th. There was a memo that went out to the council. The X's here on the overview; that's February 10th, I think it was, that the memo went out to you guys that fills you in.

The Federal Register has been put in to indicate when the workshops will be held. We'd like formal approval of the committee here on the terms of reference. We've already dealt with the participants. The terms of reference are the standard SEDAR Peer Review Workshop terms of reference.

One addition that the SSC had in their review of these, and I'll highlight here in 1A, and that one says are the data decisions documented consistent with the initial proposal and working group recommendations or deviations documented and are they sound and robust. Normally we ask if the data decisions are documented and sound and robust.

In this case they added this phrase of dealing with the initial proposal and the working group recommendations and if they document any deviations. That is kind of a unique part of the wreckfish assessment in our peer review process. They added that there and they added that bit of language down in 2A where you talk about the methods. Otherwise, it is pretty much the standard SEDAR peer review terms of reference; so we'd like to get I guess a motion to approve these.

DR. DUVAL: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HARTIG: Moved by Michelle; seconded by Charlie.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The motion was move to approve the wreckfish peer review terms of reference.

MR. HARTIG: Any further discussion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that **motion is approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next item was the approvals, which we dealt with. The wreckfish assessment is going to be reviewed in March and the SSC is going to look at it in April. In June you will get recommendations. Also I think one of the things the SSC will be doing is reviewing the process, our peer review process, this new process and considering how it worked and where we might want to adjust maybe where our timing is a little off now that we have some experience.

I'm looking forward to having a discussion I guess with this group in June where we will report to you on how the process worked. I think that is going to be really interesting. That's all the items that I had. We're on to other business.

MR. HARTIG: Is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? I have one item, John. I've been thinking about this and I talked to Erik about it quite a while ago. It was actually after the second benchmark red snapper assessment. I said can we characterize this stock in terms of E to X power eggs. Do you need a term of reference if you want to add it to the assessment? If you want to look at the fecundity changes in the stock over time; do you need to have a term of reference to do that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, possible. I mean one the assessment will be providing is measures of productivity over time; so we already get the over-time component. The other question is then can you characterize it in terms of eggs. Sometimes it is done in terms of eggs and sometimes it is done in terms of spawner biomass. It kind of depends on the data that are available. I think maybe a request to look at it in both ways if possible might be feasible at this time. I don't recall what we did on the last red snapper, if it was biomass or if eggs were done.

I know that one of the issues with eggs deals with these snapper grouper species and how they spawn and how frequent they spawn. If they're repetitive spawners and they do batches of eggs another time, then actually calculating how many eggs and how many eggs are going to spew out each time they spawn gets really, really complex. It is probably why in a lot of species we haven't seen it done, but it's certainly something that could be asked for. If the data are available, I don't see why it wouldn't be provided.

MR. HARTIG: Well, having said that, do you think it would constructive to look at the stock in terms of that? I'm just looking at the size of these animals and the changes in egg production over time. To me that seems significant in the stock; but if it doesn't give us anymore information in the end, I just wonder about the tradeoffs of doing it that way. Bonnie, do you have any thoughts on that? We do it with mackerel. In the king mackerel we've used E to the X-power eggs for characterization of that stock.

DR. PONWITH: I think John did a good job of bringing up some of the complexities of that; and maybe the best way to do this is make it clear in the terms of reference that the results are presented in the way that is most informative and supported by the data we have. That way you're not boxing yourself into one or the other.

You can look at the data; and John is right, fecundity of batch spawners is challenging but can be informative if you have the data to support it. If you put something in there to use the methodology that is the most information given the data available, it gives the assessment body the choice of taking the path that is going to be the most productive.

MR. HARTIG: Well, Roy, in the Gulf have they ever used that way to look at the Gulf stock of red snapper to your recollection?

DR. CRABTREE: I think in the Gulf we have used every conceivable way to look at everything with red snapper; but that all gets tied up into the steepness issue. The steepness has always been very high, approaching 1 in the Gulf; so if you believe that, it doesn't really matter how much egg production there is; recruitment is not determined by that. It might be informative to look at it, but I think it is only informative in the context of what you know about steepness, which is often one of the least well-known parameters we have.

MR. HARTIG: Well, I'm not sure where that leaves us. I think Bonnie gave a pretty good characterization of we use the best characterization of the stock; and if egg production is part of that, I'd certainly like to see it used. Erik said they could do it when I talked to him. It is just somehow to make that communication to the assessment analysts that we would like to see it, if

possible, and not make it a terms of reference; I think that would be fine. All right, any other business? Seeing none; we are adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 o'clock a.m., March 4, 2014.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

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SEDAR Committee Meeting: Tuesday, March 4, 2014

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MARCH MTA DAY 2

69	Mehta, Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	406 min
65	Lamberte, Tony	tony.lamberte@noaa.gov	281 min
52	Reed, Michelle	reedmich16@gmail.com	104 min
52	Barbieri, Luiz	luiz.barbieri@myfwc.com	89 min
49	Mealey, Christophe...	cmealey13@gmail.com	406 min
48	eich, A	annemarie.eich@noaa.gov	406 min
47	wyanski, david	wyanskid@dnr.sc.gov	217 min
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41	Powell, Jessica	jessica.powell@noaa.gov	395 min
41	malinowski, rich	rich.malinowski@noaa.gov	64 min
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27	Gerhart, Susan	susan.gerhart@noaa.gov	100 min
26	Brogan, Gib	gbrogan@oceana.org	24 min
26	Jepson, Michael	michael.jepson@noaa.gov	213 min
25	Byrd, Julia	julia.byrd@safmc.net	406 min
25	Fitzpatrick, Eric	eric.fitzpatrick@noaa.gov...	784 min
25	Waters, James	jwaters8@gmail.com	21 min
23	levy, mara	mara.levy@noaa.gov	118 min
23	Ballenger, Joseph	ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov	108 min
20	Helies, Frank	fchelies@verizon.net	41 min
20	L, I	captaindrifter@bellsouth....	192 min