

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

Webinar

March 4, 2021

TRANSCRIPT

SEDAR Committee Members

Mel Bell, Chair

Dr. Carolyn Belcher

Tim Griner

Andy Strelcheck

Steve Poland, Vice Chair

Dr. Kyle Christiansen

Kerry Marhefka

Council Members

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Chis Conklin

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Kim Iverson

Dr. Julie Neer

Dr. Mike Schmidtke

Christina Wiegand

Julia Byrd

Dr. Chip Collier

John Hadley

Allie Iberle

Kelly Klasnick

Roger Pugliese

Suz Thomas

Attendees and invited participants attached.

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Thursday, March 4, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: I will call to SEDAR to order here, and away we go, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so the first thing on the agenda that you have listed there is the Approval of the Agenda and the Approval of the Minutes, and I will send it back to you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BELL: Yes, and so any changes or additions to the agenda from anybody for today? I don't see any. Any problem with approval of the agenda as it stands? No hands, and so the agenda is adopted. Next would be approval of the minutes from our previous meeting, and are there any changes or edits to the minutes from the previous meeting? No hands. Any objection to approval of the minutes? I don't see any hands, and so the minutes stand approved. Chip, it's all yours.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. The one last thing that I did want to point out are the committee members, and you can hear Mr. Bell talking, and he's the Chair. Steve Poland is the Vice Chair. Bob Beal, Carolyn Belcher, Kyle Christiansen, Tim Griner, Kerry Marhefka, and Andy Strelcheck are all committee members for the SEDAR Committee.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The first thing on the agenda is SEDAR Attachment 1, and it is SEDAR 79 terms of reference, and this SEDAR 79 is the mutton snapper stock assessment that's going to be conducted by FWC, and this is going to be a joint assessment with -- It's going to include information from the Gulf of Mexico as well as the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council regions, and so both councils are working together to develop the terms of reference for this.

Because this assessment is being done by the FWC, they use a slightly different process than what's being used by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The FWC is going to continue using the update/standard/benchmark approach that we had previously, and so this stock assessment is going to be a benchmark stock assessment, which means it's going to have a data workshop, assessment workshop, and review workshop.

Within these terms of reference, we have terms of reference for each one of the workshops, and I will go through these, and I'm not going to go through them in great detail, but what I will do is allow you some time to review it, to make sure it has all the pieces of information that you would want to have considered.

As you go through this, if I can make one request. Because it has been approved by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, as well as SSCs from the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, and has been reviewed by staff of FWC, as opposed to changing any of the terms of reference, or removing any of the terms of reference, please just add to. That way, we're not having to go back and do additional approvals by all those other groups, and so thank you for that.

Going into the terms of reference for the data workshop, the first one is review stock structure units, stock definitions, and consider whether changes are required. The next one is a typical one that is included in benchmark assessments, which is review, discuss, and tabulate different life history information, and, under that, we have a series of bullets. Then the third one that I have

displayed up here is recommend discard mortality rates, and this is very similar to other ones that have been done. Then, if there's any questions, please just raise your hand.

Then I will scroll down to the fourth bullet, and the fourth bullet is provide measures of population abundance that are appropriate for the stock assessment. Essentially, this is creating an indices of abundance. I will leave this up on the screen for a second. All right. I'm going to scroll down to essentially the fishery-dependent data. Number 5 is looking at commercial statistics. One thing you will note here is it has information going through 2020, and that means the terminal year of the data is going to be 2020. Number 5 focuses on commercial, and Number 6 focuses on recreational.

Under the recreational, there has been some additional terms of reference put in there looking at the transition from the MRIP Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the new FES system, as well as exploring some of the state reef fish survey data from the State of Florida. Seeing no hands, then we have 7 through 11, and these are really tying up the rest of it. 7 looks into describing some of the ecosystem, climate, and species interactions that could affect population dynamics. 8 looks at some of the socioeconomic information. Then 9 is providing research recommendations, 10 is to evaluate and provide a report, or 11 is provide the report, and 10 is review, evaluate, and report on status of progress of the research recommendations in the last assessment. Any questions on those or any suggestions to incorporate other information?

All right. We got through the data workshop, and now we're going to get into the assessment workshop. These are pretty much canned terms of reference for assessment workshops. It's going to review any changes in data or data sources following the data workshop and any analyses suggested by the data workshop.

Number 2, they're going to develop a population model that is comparable with available data and document any input data, model assumptions and configuration, and equations for each model considered. Number 3 is going to be looking at providing estimates of population parameters, if feasible. Then 4 looks at characterizing the uncertainty in the assessment. Number 5 looks at providing estimates of yield and productivity, and then 6 gets into providing the benchmarks, estimates of population benchmarks for management criteria consistent with the available data. I will scroll down to under 6, so you can look at what some of those parameters are.

Seeing no hands, Number 7 is incorporate environmental covariates. Number 8 is provide declarations of stock status relative to benchmarks. Number 9 is provide uncertainty distributions, and Number 10 gets into developing projections for future stock conditions.

Now we're getting towards the end of the assessment workshop. Provide recommendations for future research and data collection, review and evaluate status of previous research recommendations, and then develop an assessment workshop report, and that is the complete assessment workshop. If there's any suggestions that need to be added into that, please let me know.

MR. BELL: Anything missing, folks, that you think needs to be added? All right.

DR. COLLIER: Then the final one is the review workshop terms of reference, and these are pretty standard as well. Evaluate the data used in the assessment, including discussion of strengths and

weaknesses of the data sources and decisions. Evaluate and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used to assess the stock, taking into account the available data. Number 3 is evaluate the assessment findings and look at some very pointed questions under that, and then 4 is evaluate the stock projections, including discussing the strengths and weaknesses.

Number 5 is consider how uncertainties were addressed in the assessment, and 6 is consider research recommendations provided by the data and assessment workshops and make any additional ones. Number 7 is consider whether the stock assessment constitutes best scientific information available. Then provide suggestions on key improvements in data or modeling approaches that should be considered in the next assessment, and then develop a peer review summary.

We just went through a very long document, and I know we went through it pretty quickly. It incorporated a lot of other folks' input, as they developed it, and so it's pretty thoroughly developed, and so I wasn't expecting too many additions or comments.

MR. BELL: Chip, it's an awful lot of work that goes into this, and so I would encourage folks -- It is Attachment 1 under the SEDAR folder in the briefing binder, and so, between now and Full Council, if any of the council members see something that we might need to address or add or deal with, I would encourage you to write that down, and we can certainly deal with it at Full Council as well, but Chip is right that it's kind of a lot to go through, but it's been thoroughly vetted, I think, by the folks that know what they're doing with this.

Also, keep in mind that we've already populated -- In the closed session for SEDAR that we moved forward in the schedule, we populated the necessary skills in the people to actually do all the aspects of the assessment, and so we've got that, and that's the companion piece that goes along with the terms of reference right now, and so, unless somebody has anything to add at this point related to the terms of reference, we'll let Chip move along.

DR. COLLIER: Mr. Chair, I would need a motion, and I have a draft motion on the board, if anybody would like to make it.

MR. BELL: I see that in small print. Yes. If someone would like to make that motion, that would be great.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm happy to do it. **I move to approve the terms of reference for SEDAR 79.**

MR. BELL: Thank you, Kerry. Steve, are you seconding?

MR. POLAND: That is a second.

MR. BELL: All right. We have a motion, and we have a second. Is there any discussion of the motion? **Seeing no discussion of the motion, is there any objection to approval of the motion? Seeing no hands, the motion is approved.** Thank you. Chip, that takes you to SEDAR Updates on the schedule?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so I'm not going to necessarily go over the SEDAR updates. That is provided in your briefing book, and I do want to point out one item. The SEDAR 68, which is the scamp assessment, that is being delayed a little bit, but it should be coming to the SSC at its October meeting, and it's going to be available to the council in early October, and so, if the meeting is in late October, it should be there in plenty of time and stay on schedule, but the timeline is getting a little bit crunched for that.

What I will be going over are the updates for SEDAR 79, and so that's Attachment 3. Once again, this is the mutton snapper schedule of events, and I have just highlighted, within this, exactly when the in-person meetings are and when the webinars are going to occur for SEDAR 79, and I do want to point out that this is a little bit different than how we've looked at these schedules in the past. In the past, we have been asking for approval of the schedule of events. However, due to constraints of many staff that work on SEDAR assessments, we really can't adjust things very much, and so what we're asking is for you guys to accept these as just updates on the schedule of events and not necessarily for approval of these.

We're not saying that you guys can't talk about schedules for SEDAR in general, and we think that is appropriate when we're talking about things going before the SEDAR Steering Committee, but, after it's been approved through the SEDAR Steering Committee, the SEDAR staff have to work with Science Center staff to really flesh out the nuts and bolts of stock assessments, and you can see the series of events have to occur, and some staff are actually limited, even two years down the line, what they have available, within weeks, and so it is a time constraint to get all of this stuff done, and, a lot of times, these dates are not movable.

With that being said, I do want to go through some of the key events for SEDAR 79. I know it sounds like we were getting rushed into doing some of this stuff, given that the first data workshop isn't going to occur until January of 2022. However, if you note up here, and what I am highlighting with my cursor, is we start this data scoping beginning in August, and that is to make sure that we have all the data available for the data workshop that would occur in January.

After the data workshop, you can see a series of deadlines for them, and then we go into the assessment workshops, and there's going to be a series of those done through webinar, from April of 2022 all the way through September of 2022. After that, you can see there's another series of deadlines that will come up, and then the review workshop would occur in January of 2023, and I did add, on the bottom of this, the council members who yesterday had agreed to work on this, as being the South Atlantic representatives for this assessment. With that, I will take any questions.

MR. BELL: Any questions or concerns about the schedule? We're moving right along. I don't see any hands. Okay. Thanks, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Then the next one that I want to point out is SEDAR 76, and this is an operational assessment for South Atlantic black sea bass. You can see the revised date, and this is a stock assessment that is being pushed back due to COVID implications, and so what I have highlighted here are the weeks when we're going to have -- Because this is an operational assessment, and let me go back to that, it doesn't have the panels that the benchmark assessment -- That you were seeing in the SEDAR 79, and so it's much more streamlined.

You can see when data are supposed to be available, what they're going to be using, and then I've highlighted the weeks when the actual assessment webinars will occur. You can see that there is four of them, if needed, and SEDAR staff actually build in a few more than are actually needed, just in case there is little things that come up in the assessment and things need to be reviewed, and this assessment should be available for the spring meeting of the SSC, to be coming to you guys at the June 2023 meeting.

One other thing that I have highlighted here is Nikolai Klibansky was originally going to be the stock assessment analyst for this, but the Science Center has indicated that this will likely be a -- This might change in the future, and so that one is not certain, and then I do have the council members that had agreed to work on this one, or be the South Atlantic representatives, and it's Tim Griner, with Chris Conklin as his alternate. Are there any questions on that?

MR. BELL: Any questions for Chip? I don't see any, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I will kick it back to you, Mr. Chair, if there's any other business.

MR. BELL: Well, we got through that a little quicker than I anticipated, and so is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? I will take that as a no.

DR. COLLIER: Andy Strelcheck has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Okay. I don't see it. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I won't let you get off that easily, Mel. Apologies, but I had to step away for a few minutes when we were talking about the terms of reference, and this might have been discussed, and so one thing that seems to be absent is I'm not seeing any mention of potential allocation changes and how that is handled in the assessment model and process, and I'm wondering if we need to specifically call that out, given the increases, or changes, related to FES landings data. It's not an issue of the assessment essentially determining the allocations, but the models themselves are influenced by allocation changes and the results and data that are provided to us for management advice.

MR. BELL: Okay. Chip, do you have an answer for that?

DR. COLLIER: I will say what I said similarly for the other ones. What is actually put in the assessment are the observed catch ratios, and it's not necessarily -- Because the ACL is not achieved equally by both the recreational and commercial side, and, therefore, that's what they use, and that's what they project forward, going into the projections. Clay might be able to explore it a little bit more, or anyone else from the stock assessment team.

MR. BELL: Does anybody else want to weigh-in on that? I am not seeing any hands. Andy, does that help?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I don't know if Clay or John are on and could weigh-in on this, but my understanding is, with Gulf assessments, that they're able to look kind of dynamically at these allocation shifts, and I don't know if that's been addressed for the South Atlantic or FWC assessments.

MR. BELL: All right. Let's go to Clay for that, and, Tim, I will come back to you.

MS. BYRD: Clay, we're not going to be able to unmute you until you enter your audio PIN.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mel, if you would like, I can take a stab at it, while we get Clay online.

MR. BELL: John, that would be great.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think what happens in the assessment is the observed landings are fed into it, and you get a selectivity that's output and becomes part of the model estimates that is based on what's observed, whether it's by age or size compositions of the fishery, over the whole time, and there may be various periods of that selectivity, if they think, for some reason, fishery practices have changed, regulations or preferences, et cetera.

The allocations, as the council has imposed them, don't really influence any of that sort of thing, and they influence what you observe in the catches, and potentially the makeup of those catches, but they don't influence those catches as they are input into the stock assessment. As you move into the projections, if the council does change allocations, and those change in allocations potentially change the selectivity, then, yes, it might be worthwhile to look at how that change in selectivity -- If the sectors perhaps have a considerably different selectivities, then that could be expressed in the overall stock selectivity somewhat different, and it might be worth looking at that.

It's very similar to if the council were to change the size limit. Well, that's obviously going to change the selectivity of the fishery, in most cases, and then they may wish to account for that in the projections, because that's directly linked to the available yield. A lot of times, we don't do that, because, in many cases, what the fishermen actually catch may be very different than what the specific size limit is to begin with, and, in a lot of cases, the selectivities of the fisheries in the South Atlantic are often not all that much different. In snapper grouper, they're both using hook-and-line gears, and so there's a lot of similarities there, and you may not have as many differences, and I think that's probably one of the reasons why this hasn't been as big of an issue in the South Atlantic has perhaps it has been in the Gulf.

DR. PORCH: It sounds like John pretty much answered the question. Even in the Gulf, we've done it where we just assumed the current allocations that were actually realized will continue in the future, and, in other cases, actually imposed rigidly what the allocations would be, assuming that, in the future, they would actually be met, and there's obviously a variety of opinions, as John expressed, about what's the best way to go forward, and so I won't repeat all of that.

You could conceivably ask the State of Florida to do that, and I believe they do this assessment with Stock Synthesis. If they haven't done that before, we can work with them, to show them how we enforce the allocations in the projections, but I wouldn't want to volunteer them for anything, and I think Luiz or somebody needs to weigh-in on it.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Clay. Andy, does that answer the question a little bit? I don't know if Luiz is even on, if he wants to weigh-in as well.

MR. STRELCHECK: It does, and John said it so much more eloquently than I did, and so I think my concern, going forward, is, with the allocation changes, obviously, making sure that those are reflected in projections and yield streams and things that we're getting out of the assessment, and so I don't know if we need to include it in a term of reference, or that's more just kind of understood going forward.

MR. BELL: Chip, have you got an understanding of the best approach here?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I'm scrolling down to project the future stock conditions. If there is anything that Andy thinks is missing that needs to be included, please let me know.

MR. BELL: Again, we can always -- If we need to think about this a little bit, we can always insert something in the discussion and bring it back to Full Council, when we get to the SEDAR portion of that. All right. Any other things related to the question that Andy brought up? If not, I will go to Tim, since Tim, obviously, has a question. Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, after John and Clay, I'm so thoroughly confused now that I don't even know what day it is. I will talk to John offline, but I just had some questions about how the new MRIP-FES goes back through the time series and how that affects, back in time, everything, and not just the recreational landings, but it seems like, to me, it should be affecting the overall ABC and everything, but I probably just need to sit down with John, because it's thoroughly confusing for me, and it's a little bit over my head. Thank you.

MR. BELL: I understand. It's Thursday, March 4, I think, and I follow you. Is there any simple response to Tim's inquiry there, John, or someone, or should we just kind of deal with that offline?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Tim can reach out to me, and I think the quick-and-simple response is that the recalculation, the calibration, was applied back through the full time series, and so it does affect the whole time series of recreational data, and that can have an impact on the overall stock productivity. Back when this was being evaluated, there were scenarios done, and evaluations looked at various species, and it really varies a lot, depending on the individual species, where the catch was occurring, and how the calibration was applied.

MR. BELL: Thanks. Clay, do you want to add to that?

DR. PORCH: John is right, and, just to give you a little more detail, the old MRFSS survey was based on landline calls, and, obviously, over time, people used their landlines less and less and started -- If they had them, they used them just as -- You know, they screened them pretty heavily, and people started going more and more to cellphones, but they weren't calling cellphones, and so the statistics started getting more and more biased, and so the correction back in time actually accounts for the increasing use of cellphones and some other factors, and so, basically, as you go back in time, the correction is less and less, until you get back to the 1980s, when there weren't really many cellphones, and things like Blackberries was just coming in and all that, and so they did put considerable effort into calibrating the FES statistics back in time, or calibrating the old MRFSS Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates to the FES, by considering things like cellphone usage and a couple other things like that. Does that help?

MR. BELL: Thanks, Clay. Tim, is that helpful?

MR. GRINER: Yes. That is very helpful, Clay, and, like I said, I'll talk to John a little bit, but as I look back at it -- During the assessment process, as you're looking through that time series of landings, and now that the numbers have changed, going back in time to this new currency, I don't know that -- Are we making any allowances for the fact that, back then, at that point in time, the actual ABC at that point in time may have been different? Therefore, the commercial catch may have been different? Are we really actually capturing everything that happened at that point in time, or are we missing a piece?

MR. BELL: Anyone?

DR. PORCH: I guess I can jump in. From the assessment point of view, we wouldn't be missing it, because we would be adjusting for that. There is an issue of what the allocations should have been, and that's a conversation you all have been having, you know, should you adjust the commercial and recreational allocations.

MR. SANCHEZ: I would like to weigh-in.

MR. BELL: Okay, John.

MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mel. My concern with that is, unless we have back-calculated the ABCs for all these time series that are being considered, the problem is, in fully-utilized commercial fisheries, without the benefit of this shall we call it newly-found ABCs, arguably, the commercial sector would have had the benefit of that additional ABC, or quota, and they would have caught it, but that seems to be getting lost in this kind of unilateral viewing of only the recreational side, and so I concur with I think it was Tim's concerns.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, John. I mean, that's a valid question that you guys have, and I think that's something that might take a little bit more thought and explanation, and we can have some additional consideration of that offline, but that is a valid question, guys, certainly. I don't know that we're going to be able to answer all of that in detail right now, in this setting. Okay. Thanks for bringing that up.

Any other business that needs to come before the SEDAR Committee right now? Again, if you need to look at things, or think about things a little bit, we can always revisit stuff in Full Council as well. I am not seeing any hands. It's almost 11:40. What I will propose to do is -- You all have been so good today that we can take lunch from now until 1:00, and we can come back at 1:00, and we will be coming back into the Executive Committee, and we'll pick it up with the Executive Committee, and then we will transition into Full Council Session II, and we'll just roll on through the rest of the agenda and see how this goes today, and we also have tomorrow as well, if we need it, and so any questions? Anything else right now? I don't see any, and so that's the plan.

One other thing is you may have gotten -- Automatically, you may have gotten the link for the closed session, which we've already done, and so, if you're coming back in, don't click on that link. Click on the one that got you in this morning to the open session, and so we'll see everybody back at 1:00 then. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 4, 2021.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 20, 2021

SAFMC March Council Meeting

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