

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

**Villas by the Sea Resort
Jekyll Island, Georgia
March 5, 2026**

Transcript

SEDAR Committee

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Attendees and Invited Participants

Shepherd Grimes
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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea Resort, Jekyll Island Georgia, on Thursday, March 5, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We'll go ahead and call SEDAR, and so all right, and thanks, everybody for being so photogenic. It was great, and everybody is beautiful, and so we'll go ahead and start with SEDAR, with Approval of the Agenda. Is everybody good with the agenda? No objections to the agenda? Okay. The agenda is approved, and we also need Approval of the Minutes from the September 2025 Meeting. Is everybody good with the minutes? No objections to the minutes? All right. The minutes are approved, and now I will go ahead and hand it over to Judd, who will give the SEDAR Steering Committee report, and so, Judd.

DR. CURTIS: Thanks, Trish, and so a couple of orders of business in the SEDAR Committee before we get into some of the meat, and the ask of the council, but I wanted to provide just an update of the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting that took place earlier in February, the 11th through the 12th. We do not have the final report yet available. The steering committee members are still drafting the final report, but I can give a quick update of some of the high-level items that were discussed.

The majority of the time was actually spent on reviewing the standard operating policies and procedures, which were long overdue for a review, and so a good day, or day-plus, was spent reviewing language and bringing that up-to-date with how the SEDAR Committee is now, or the SEDAR process is executed.

We then looked into the SEDAR projects list, and so I'll bring that schedule up later, so we can see how the assessment schedule fits into the greater picture, what's coming down the pipeline for the South Atlantic, and I'll review some of the impacts of the 2025 government shutdown in just a minute as well, and so we'll provide the full report from the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting once it becomes available, and we can circulate that to the entire council.

Some of the impacts due to the 2025 government shutdown on the SEDAR schedule are listed here in Attachment A1b. For the most part, you can see the majority of the impacts resulted in a three-month delay to the schedule, and so we had -- The existing SEDAR schedules that were ongoing were the SEDAR 90, red snapper, and we were in the assessment webinar phase of that project, and so most of those were all delayed by about three months.

The SEDAR 104 dolphin management strategy evaluation review workshop was scheduled to occur in late spring of 2026. That's been pushed a couple months, and that will now be rescheduled for the end of July of 2026.

The SEDAR 106, gag grouper, you see here we have a couple of question-marks there. That was scheduled to begin at the start of this year. However, and this is because of the shutdowns, we have not gotten started on that assessment, and, due to other scheduling priorities, such as black sea bass, which we'll see in a minute, the gag grouper assessment is not going to begin until probably early 2027, and so we still have rescheduled dates TBD for that assessment.

Finally, the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program review workshop was initially scheduled November 2nd through the 5th of last year. That was completed January 12th to 15th of

this past year, and we are awaiting the integration of the CIE reports into the project team's final report before that ultimately gets released, and so, Chair, I'll pause here for any questions on SEDAR Steering Committee activities or impacts from the government shutdown.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any questions for Judd? All right. Seeing none, Judd, we'll go ahead and move on.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. The second order of business that I wanted to present were just some infographics and additional materials that the SEDAR team has been working on diligently over the last several months to better reflect changes to the SEDAR process and the different data components and assessment components that are needed for conducting the assessments now.

Emily Ott is here, who is the SEDAR Coordinator, and has been instrumental in putting together a lot of these materials, and so a shoutout to her for all her work in doing this, and so, right here, you see this decision tree, and this is still -- I should say these are all still works in progress, and so we are looking for any input from the council. If there's elements in the process, infographics that you would like to see, feel free to comment, and we can try to include those, where necessary. These were all provided to the steering committee in February as well for comments, and so those are being integrated as well, and so this will be the first iteration of these types of infographics that you see.

The goal here is just to capture the snapshot of the entire process, and then what elements of an assessment may be needed, depending on the data needs and assessment needs for a particular species that you want assessed, and so, if you start at the top, does it need a stock ID workshop, because of stock delineation issues, et cetera, and what types of data are needed to be involved in the process, and that dictates whether a full data workshop is necessary, if that can be a virtual data workshop or if it's just a couple of data webinars, or a single topical working group to look at a very specific element of data that the council or assessment scientists want to include into the process.

Following the arrows, you see that it leads into the different assessment components and whether this is going to be run through the SEDAR assessment and include various topical working groups, or assessment panels, or is it going to be an agency-led internal assessment, and I'll talk a little bit more about that as we get to the scopes of work for the upcoming assessments that will be agency-led internal assessments.

Then, finally, down at the last line, is the assessment -- Is an independent peer review of the assessment needed, yes or no, and the external peer reviews will continue to be organized by SEDAR, and then will be run through the SSC for final approval and setting of catch-level recommendations, that then will be provided to the council.

The latter two slides in this attachment, I just explained some of both the data components that I quickly ran through, the topical working groups, data webinars, data workshops, and what the scope of each of those types of data components are, as well as the different assessment components that can be considered for the assessments.

The second infographic is a developmental timeline of the assessment process and some of the other documents before the assessment actually begins, and so it's a long, drawn-out process, as

you all are very aware, starting with the SEDAR Steering Committee, where species are selected for assessment, and the SSC will get to review the previous assessments of that particular species, and recommend different components, such as, you know, what types of data are they looking to see in this next iteration of this assessment, and what type of review body would be most appropriate to review the next assessment, et cetera.

Then those will go -- Those form kind of the backbone for the development of the statements of work that we bring to you all, the council, for input and approval on what are the assessment components that we need to go into the next assessment before drafting these terms of reference.

The terms of reference are kind of the negotiated components of the assessment between the cooperator, the South Atlantic Council, and the Fisheries Science Center, and these are basically - - You can think of kind of them as kind of an instruction manual on how to run the assessment and what elements you want to see as far as data inputs, as well as then outputs, and they're pretty standardized language, for the most part, but there are some novelties, depending on the various species that you want to examine, get a stock assessment for.

After terms of reference are presented and approved at the council level, those go to SEDAR, and they publish those terms of reference, and then that represents the final document that the stock assessment analyst will follow in the development of his stock assessment report.

Then, lastly, and this is something that's very much still in development, but I just wanted to throw this out there, and if there's any other elements that people would like to see, but it's basically just a tracking spreadsheet for mostly our internal needs, but also that we can provide to the council, so you can see where assessments are along the process. You see a lot of the dates are still not populated, because we're just getting this going, but the idea is then to start populating each of those assessments with these dates, so we can keep track of where they are along the process and the pipeline.

This would apply to not just the SEDAR-led projects, but also things like the management strategy evaluations, center-internally-led assessment development, and other mechanisms for which we're obtaining catch advice, so that we can track them all in a centralized location. Madam Chair, I'll pause there, again, for any comments or questions on those infographic materials.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Does anybody have any comments or questions? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and thank you, Judd. Just one question, and I heard today that there may be a review of the last black sea bass assessment occurring. I was just wondering what you knew about that.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and we'll get into that in the next attachment, Jimmy, but, yes, the goal is to have a subgroup of SSC members, and potentially some external members, acting as a review body workshop before it goes to the full SSC.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Judd, I have to just say thank you, for you, and I imagine Emily, who had a lot of input into these, and this is so much more clear and concise. I really just

wanted to say thank you for putting this together. I think this is a great way to help identify the path forward, what is happening when, and the timeline, and this is wonderful, and so thank you very much, all of you.

DR. CURTIS: I will say, on behalf of SEDAR staff, thank you very much. They've been working real hard for that, and so, yes, full credit for Emily and Julie in putting these materials together.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anything else? Anybody else? I guess I'll suggest that this get -- That these infographics get added to our binder, and that would be cool. Yes? Okay, and so let's add them to the binder. That will be -- Because the process gets a little cumbersome, and so it's nice to be able to have an infographic just to go right back to it. All right. With that, I guess we are going to the -- Okay.

DR. CURTIS: Just in response to that, right, and so we're still drafting kind of the finalized versions of the documents, but certainly we can add those into the binders once they've been finalized.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. That will be great, and so are we ready for the TORs discussion? I think that's you too, Judd.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair, and so, next up, some of the meat and potatoes of what we need to achieve during SEDAR Committee this week is we've got what we're calling scopes of work, even though they're not kind of the more traditional scopes of work that we've seen in the past, for reasons I will elucidate, and then there's three terms of reference documents that need to be approved by the committee.

We started talking a little bit about black sea bass, and the next iteration of that assessment, and so what I'm calling it here is a scope of work. It's really just an update on what the anticipated schedule for the next black sea bass assessment looks like, as well as some of the uncertainties that were identified from the last assessment that will be considered in this next version, and we're looking for feedback from the council to see if we've included all the necessary elements and uncertainties based on that past review, and we'll get into that in just a minute, and the same can be said for vermilion snapper.

This is also going to be a Southeast Fisheries Science Center internally-led assessment. You see on the schedule, down in 2027, the vermilion update, and, as such, it will not have SEDAR involvement, but it will still get a review from the SSC on the backend before catch level recommendations are made to the council.

Moving on to the terms of reference, those are three documents I'll bring up after this slide show, and we're looking at Atlantic Spanish mackerel, South Atlantic king mackerel, and then the dolphin MSE review workshop. On the right side, you see kind of a snapshot of where the assessment schedule is as of the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, and you can see the scopes of work of the species just reference where they fit into the schedule. All the other species, up through the ones in orange, have either gone through the terms of reference approval process or the scopes of work approval process, and then the ones in light blue are species that have yet to go through that process.

One thing to note is, on the right side, you have the South Atlantic king mackerel assessment, and that's going to be conducted by a Gulf analyst, using the Stock Synthesis program, as opposed to the Beaufort Assessment Model. We'll get into that a little bit more when we talk about the terms of reference for that species, but I just want to mention that's why that's lingering over there in the shaded column. I'll pause here for any questions on the overall schedule.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions from anyone? All right. Carry on, Judd.

DR. CURTIS: Okay, and so the next black sea bass assessment, right, and Mike did a great job outlining kind of where -- What has gotten us to this point so far, and what's being done as far as the amendment process, and I'm going to talk specifically about the next assessment process and how that's -- The timeline for that assessment and the uncertainties.

The methodology for this assessment will be conducted internally by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and that's in order to make it more timely. As you recall, you know, we've gone through several iterations of black sea bass assessments, SEDAR 76 and the SEDAR 76 update, and it's gone through the SSC, and so we've accrued a pretty substantial body of information identifying the uncertainties and things needed for that next assessment.

One of the hitches, I would say, in the review of that assessment, right, was that we tried to accomplish that during SSC meeting time, in addition to all the other business that the SSC typically had to do, and so it was felt, both from the SSC and I think the council voiced the same opinion, that there didn't seem to be an adequate amount of time for a thorough review of that last SEDAR 76 update assessment, and so the recommended approach now is to conduct a review workshop that would be comprised of an SSC subgroup, and potentially some other external members, that would serve as a focal review workshop and provide the document that then would get relayed to the full SSC before they give it the stamp of approval and set the catch level recommendations.

A preliminary schedule for what that next assessment may look like, and you've got kind of the quote scope of work being presented to you right now, during the March council meeting, with your recommendations and any comments. I will start drafting terms of reference, and those will be presented to the SSC at the April meeting.

We're hoping then, with the SSC's approval, we can turn that around and get the council to approve these terms of reference in an expedited fashion, which would mean the chair of the committee and the executive director, if that's correct, and that would be a request to the committee, if you would be willing to allow the chair of the council, or the chair of the SEDAR Committee and maybe the chair of the Snapper Grouper Committee, to the review the terms of reference, as modified by the SSC, just to get a more expedited terms of reference done so the stock assessment could get started faster.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with that? Okay. I'm seeing heads nodding in the affirmative.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Thank you, and so, once the terms of reference have been formally approved, they will be sent off to the center to begin the assessment, and the plan is then, from June to August, they'll begin aggregating that available data and develop the next assessment

model. The linchpin in all this process really is that MRIP-FES calibrations, right, and so, right now, the latest information that we have received is that these will be completed by August 31, at which point hopefully all the data will be finalized going into the assessment model.

The next several columns, you have a target date, as in like October 15, and then an estimated range of weeks it would take to complete that next stage beyond that August 31 date, and so the idea here was to paint kind of a picture of how long it might take in order to get recommendations to the council. Again, everything hinges upon that August 31 date, if that can be completed. If we can get the black sea bass information in sooner than that, the whole process can move up just a -- It just can move up accordingly, but, as of right now, this is the information that we have.

Following the finalization, all the data and the calibrations of the MRIP-FES data series, the analysts will integrate that new data stream, recreational data stream, into the assessment model. That final assessment model and report will be submitted by November 1, approximately six to eight weeks after we receive the calibration from Office of Science and Technology. The idea is that a month would elapse between the assessment report being submitted and convening a review workshop, and that would be that subset of SSC members and others.

They would really dig into the assessment report for a day, or two days, and I guess a question that will I posit to the committee too is if there's any preference on if that is done in-person or remotely, and, again, some of the timing of -- The format of that might be dictated somewhat by the timing of when we received that information. In order to have a full SSC review, and the setting of the catch level recommendations, we'll have to hold a special SSC meeting sometime in January of 2027 in order to get recommendations to the council for March of 2027, and so this is the unfolding of the process.

Again, everything is hinging upon that August 31 date, and so that's kind of the critical step that needs to happen before we can start with the rest of the process, but Chip and I have been talking with Dr. Erik Williams and Nikolai Klibansky, the analyst and the Beaufort Lab section head, to try to work through as many of these elements ahead of the release of that MRIP-FES calibration data, so that we can hit the ground running once that does become available.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Judd, and I've got Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I just want to point out that, the weeks that are in parentheses underneath the dates, those are days from, or weeks from, the initial timeline, and so from August 31, and that's what that means, and so, as you can see, it's a pretty aggressive timeline.

There's time in there for the reviewers to look at the documents. There's times for the analysts to respond to the comments from the reviewers, and so all that takes time to redevelop the information, you know, make sure it's getting adequate reviews, but just wanting to make sure that those -- You were looking at those weeks properly. Sometimes I was looking at them a little bit differently. I was like, holy cow, it takes sixteen to eighteen -- Or fourteen to sixteen weeks for that, and, no, and it's from the original date, and I just wanted to make that clear.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Chip. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry if you said it and I missed it, Judd. The June to August aggregate available data, do we know what year the data is going go through, which year it's up through? Basically, that's still being decided. I would say, giving your best educated guess, are we talking 2024 data, or 2025 data?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and so that will be drafted into the terms of reference. It will include all available data, and so I guess it's through certainly 2025, potentially some elements of 2025 data. Things like potentially the, you know, SERFS video survey, and things that have to get read, that are on a little bit of delay, they may all not be able to be included.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, just to confirm, so we're not really doing hard terminal years any longer. We're basically saying, if you have any available data, and it goes even in small chunks, it's ultimately going to be evaluated at least, and is that still the plan?

DR. CURTIS: So this has been kind of a point of discussion going between the council, SSC, and center, but we've landed, at least the last couple terms of reference, on specifying a terminal year, with the caveat statement saying include all available data, up to the discretion of the analyst, and you'll see that language written into the terms of reference coming forward, but, yes, I believe the council did like the idea, and the SSC as well, of having a set year, and the center I believe as well too, to be able to schedule accordingly.

DR. COLLIER: Just to make sure, this is a -- This would be along the lines of what Clay has been calling an update lite, and it's going to be done with the available data. We're not going to be searching for new data. They're going to be using the data that's available, just to make sure it can go as quickly as possible, and so you guys can potentially act on those catch level recommendations quickly as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and just explain to me, because when they -- The MRIP-FES calibration, the way I think of it, is they're finding a number, or some sort of way to calibrate the numbers that came out the very first time we got all of those CHTS to FES numbers, and there's going to be some multiplier, or something to like calibrate, and then that's used every time you're doing that transition, and I guess what I'm trying to say, very clunkily, is that all happened years ago, the conversion, and so you -- The 2025 black sea bass MRIP data, that's all already in FES, and so it's not calibrated, and do you see what I'm asking?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and so I think I can answer, and maybe I'll ask Clay to jump in too, but so the -- Based on, right, the survey results that identified there might be some biases in the MRIP-FES survey, right, they're adjusting, or calibrating, based on the findings of that study, and so you'll have a new data stream of FES numbers that will then be back calibrated with the entire time series, so that you're all in the same currency, which would be that new modified FES data.

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Did you need to add anything, Clay, or is it good?

DR. PORCH: No, and the description is perfect.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, did you --

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I know we talked about this a little bit with black sea bass earlier in the year, or earlier in the meeting, but there's going to be no, in essence, changes to the assessment, no changes to the stock structure, anything like that, correct?

DR. CURTIS: So I think -- Let me move on to the next slide that helps kind of identify some of those uncertainties, right, and so, because it is going to be kind of this update lite, there's not going to be any significantly new data streams being incorporated. That doesn't mean we're not going to be looking at, or the analysts will not be looking at, some of the major uncertainties that were identified from the SSC's review, and so I've gone ahead and updated some of these in addition -- Or reported some of these based on our SSC reports, and discussion from the council as well.

Kind of the four major uncertainties that were identified, right, is this MRIP-FES recreational catch time series, and so we talked a little bit about that. They're going to update that, and back-calculate it based on the calibrations. We also have several more years of data too for that time series now, and that was one of the big uncertainties, was that terminal year of data in the MRIP was highly uncertain, and that was affecting some of the projections moving forward.

The second main uncertainty was that the assessment used a direct estimate, or the latest iteration of the assessment, I should say, used a direct estimate of MSY, versus a proxy, which was done in SEDAR -- The previous iteration of SEDAR 76, and this was a highly -- A decision that contained high uncertainty, as identified by the SSC. There was concerns with whether using that Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment relationship, and what that estimation of steepness was, versus a mean recruitment time series, and we had a presentation on that from myself and Luiz last June of some of the impacts that decision then bestows upon the assessment and some of the projections.

We also identified, right, that there's potentially some non-stationarity that could be occurring, and that could be driving some of the recent low recruitment and biomass effects, and then a big one was that magnitude and selectivity of the discards. There was a single selectivity curve used for the general recreational fleet that was derived from -- Mainly from headboat data, and so we know that the selectivity of the general rec sector, especially the shore mode, probably looks a lot different than what their headboat selectivity looks like, and so that is one area where we -- I think we have some new data that we can use to inform a different selectivity curve for the general rec fleet, and also get at kind of that second bullet point, the trends, the differing discard trends, in the inshore versus the offshore components of the stock.

Then the reporting of the commercial logbook discards is also a high amount of uncertainty, and so those are elements that we're going to be looking into, and will be drafted into the terms of reference for the analysts to look at.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So can you go back to the previous slide, Judd please? So with the review, and this is maybe just not being as familiar with what we're redoing with the process, and I apologize,

and I just don't have the infographic easily in front of me. We're doing two levels of review on an update, because then, again, back in the early, early years, generally, if we did update, it was a sub-portion of the SSC that did a review, and then it went to the SSC, and so is that a CIE review?

DR. CURTIS: No, and there will not be a CIE review, but it will be akin to like a review workshop, comprised of three or four SSC members, and maybe one external center member, another SSC member from the Gulf or Mid-Atlantic, something like that, but not a CIE review, just because that adds substantial length on the process on the backend, but it is -- It will go through kind of a double iteration of review, if you will, where you have that subgroup that is really going to get into the nuts-and-bolts of the uncertainties and then relay that information to the larger SSC before they make the catch level recommendations.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that. That was basically how we did it a number of years back, and I just wanted to make sure I understood that.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions? Let's keep going.

DR. CURTIS: Okay, and so the next step along this process then is I'll take some of these uncertainties, as well as any other discussions from when we talked about black sea bass from council meetings, from SSC meetings, and draft terms of reference, and then we'll begin that negotiation with the Science Center, send the chair a copy, so that we can get that expedited review after the SSC has a chance to comment and weigh-in.

The next center-led update assessment will be vermilion snapper. If you remember from the schedule, this will go through just a single full SSC review, and the preliminary schedule we have outlined for this stock would be approving terms of reference at the next SEDAR Committee meeting in September. The assessment would begin a year from then, full SSC review in April of 2028, and a recommendation to the council around June of 2028.

DR. COLLIER: This is essentially an opportunity for the council to say we want something else for this, and so what we're proposing, as staff, is an internally-led Southeast Fisheries Science Center assessment, and so this is going to be a pretty quick assessment. It's going to have very minimal public input. The SSC is going to review it. It's just going to be that sole review in April, and so, if the council is okay with that, this is what we're going to progress forward with, and develop a term of reference from there.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts from the council on vermilion and how to move forward? I think the staff has laid out a pretty decent plan, and so, if everybody is good with that, we'll move with that. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Sorry, and my question going back, and seeing that process for vermilion, can you explain why we would do a subcommittee of the SSC followed by a full SSC? Is there a possibility of saving time for black sea bass if they were done similar to vermilion? Has that been discussed?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and, I mean, you would get a time savings there. The drawback is that that's the approach that we took for SEDAR 76, and it didn't seem to lend itself enough time, or in-depth review, during the full SSC meetings, and so we thought that this subgroup approach, where you

have a dedicated body that can really dig in over a day, or a day-and-a-half to make those recommendations in the review before it goes to the full SSC would be the best avenue for that particular assessment, given all the uncertainties that we had during the last review of SEDAR 76, and so this is a different approach being then recommended for the vermilion update assessment.

DR. BELCHER: So would it be possible to consider, whether it's an extended SSC meeting or something, to address it a little bit differently? I mean, I'm just trying to think about a way that -- If there's concerns about timeliness of black sea bass, is there a way that you could potentially condense that timeline if it's the SSC, or a subcomponent of the SSC, and I don't know. We used to do a couple of days, I think, and I'm looking back to John. It's been a while since we did those, when we would go to Beaufort, and we were there two or three days to discuss it. Would it be a savings or not to do that?

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So, when we were thinking about this, you know, the subgroup idea was really coming forward to allow some -- If there were some changes that were needed, this gives the ability to put those changes in there in a thoughtful process. You know, they have a couple of weeks to reanalyze the data, and then maybe revise the report. If you do it in one of those day meetings, you know, it's -- Or five-day meetings, it's extremely rushed. You might not be able to get into some of the bigger level questions that the SSC might identify in this deeper dive into the assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Amy, and then Kerry.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm trying to wrap my head around this, and I asked Emily to come over, and so, to kind of go back to your first question, Carolyn, the SSC review is technically the technical committee review process with an agency-led assessment, no independent review, and I like the idea of this special SSC meeting to ensure that they have the time to run through all of this and be able to see the progression, honestly, from 76 to the 76 update. I'm using it as the 76 update squared, because there's like three things happening here.

I don't know if I had a question over -- I'm just trying to process out loud a little bit. I fully support the SSC reviewing this and being able to provide their scientific hat on this before coming back to the council. I'm just worried about -- We just don't know what this looks like. It's the level of uncertainty for us, who have not experienced this, that I think is giving me the cause to pause a little bit.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I think too where I kind of was trying to think was if there was a way that you could collapse those is, because even though you have a subcommittee of folks that are getting more into the weeds, you know as well as I do that it's going to get to the SSC, and they're going to dig into the weeds again.

The question is, unless we somehow bound how that's going to be handled within the SSC meeting, I still think there's going to be concerns of people getting more into the weeds on it again, and so, similarly with vermilion, you would think you would run that same risk, right, because there isn't -- Either vermilion would need a similar approach to this, or this would look more like vermilion, whichever way would seem appropriate.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and there's a new option within that process where the council could request an SSC check-in, and so there would be a possible webinar that the SSC would have, a special webinar, maybe in January, prior to their April meeting in 2028, and so that would give them the opportunity to really -- Or the analysts would be able to ask questions of the SSC, saying, all right, this is an approach that we took, and are you okay with this approach, identify some of the uncertainties that might be coming into the assessment, or the problems that they're identifying, and then they would get the full review at the April meeting.

That is that maybe an interim step in there that you're kind of looking for, it sounds like, for vermilion snapper, or at least -- You might not be looking for that, but it sounded like Amy was definitely looking for that, and so we could take that, and I think the SSC kind of wanted that style of approach as well, because they were a little bit cautious about the complete change to the internally-led and not having much input on those.

MS. MURPHEY: Before I go to any other questions, this was kind of my take on everything, and tell me if I'm wrong, but I sort of saw this subcommittee -- You said, you know, this was to check the nuts-and-bolts. To me, that was a committee that would say did you try running it this way, and maybe you can do this and then have all those intricacies worked out by the time you got to the SSC, and they wouldn't be asking those questions of did you run it this way, and did you run it that way, and that was kind of how I pictured the subcommittee to do -- You know, to work out all the kinks, and then -- Instead of the SSC working out the kinks, and that was my take on it, but I'll see if you guys say --

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and that's exactly what our thought process was with this approach is, you know, based on the review of 76, where the SSC then made different base model requests, and then different projection requests, and it went back and forth and back and forth a number of times, and, again, never really had a dedicated chunk of time to really dig into it and run some additional model runs then and there, and so this subgroup, the subgroup approach, will hopefully be able to address that and prevent that back-and-forth, so that, when it does get to the full SSC, then, you know, the catch level recommendations can be made, and we can proceed on to the council without a number of iterative back-and-forth meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Before I get back to Amy and Kerry, Clay, did you want to add in this process?

DR. PORCH: Yes, and thank you. I just wanted to point out that there's a very fundamental difference between the vermilion assessment and the black sea bass, in that vermilion is a strict update. It has already approved all the pieces of the puzzle, and it has already been reviewed. All we're doing is just adding years to it, and so I don't see that we need to have this extra level of review like we are with black sea bass, where we're fundamentally looking at some key changes, like the size of the discards, re-examining the spawner-recruit relationship, and all of that.

I get a little nervous when we start adding pieces. I think the council has to be cognizant of the fact that, the more pieces you start adding extra reviews, it's going to slow down the process, and

we're sacrificing throughput again, and we're right back where we started from, and so it's kind of a slippery slope.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, and then I'll go back to Carolyn.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I think you'll see there are some uncertainties with the vermilion assessment, that I've outlined in the next slide, that will need to be considered, but I think, right, we have the avenue in place, through either an SSC check-in or the assessment -- What is it called? The assessment review team to consult as an intermediary stage before it gets to the full SSC review.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn, to that.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and, I mean, the main thing is just, having sat on the committee for a number of years in the past, and knowing it's going to take you guys really putting down the ground rules with the SSC, because, even with a subcommittee, you've got a large group of people with stock assessment experience, and, if you're only taking a subset, as much as those guys have put their hats on, those folks at the table at the SSC meeting are going to be putting their hats on too, and so, again, just as long as the ground rules are laid out, and the SSC understands how this is going to be working moving forward, then I don't necessarily foresee a problem, but, again, it is going to be a paradigm shift in how they've done deliberations over these in the past.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and we had a similar event in the review with the mutton and yellowtail snapper, which was joint with the Gulf, right, and so we had a subset of the South Atlantic and Gulf SSCs participate in the review of those assessments, and set the expectation ahead of time, made clear those were the final recommendations for each of the SSCs when it got brought back to the respective South Atlantic and Gulf SSCs. It was an informational update on decisions that were made, but they were not going to revisit the decisions and review the review, so to speak, but, yes, and that's a great point, Carolyn. We'll make sure to set that expectation for this subgroup as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and thanks, Carolyn. I had Amy. Did you --

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Clay, I appreciate the additional conversation, and I go back to staff. If the discretion is available to have an SSC check-in prior to that April of 2028, I think it could be helpful, but I would also defer to the SSC, to get their input if they feel if this is a true update assessment, and plug-and-chug is what I like to call it, then they may say no, but I appreciate the subcommittee in the black sea bass, as well as ensuring that we have enough appropriate time for them to fully flesh out if things are in fact being recalculated in that black sea bass update squared.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and the vermilion update assessment here, as outlined, is kind of the more -- This is on schedule, if you will, compared to the black sea bass, which is kind of more of an emergency action to get that assessment completed again, and so there are times, during development of scopes of work, terms of reference, that we'll not only get SSC input, but further council input on things that they want to see, like the check-in, other elements that then can be explicitly written into the terms of reference.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good? I did understand we're going to look at having -- Adding a check-in to vermilion, and is that what we've decided? Okay, and, Kerry, did you -- Are you sure? Okay. Any more discussion? I think this was good, kind of clarifying how the process is going to work, and I guess this is really kind of a new process that we're doing.

DR. CURTIS: Before we leave vermilion, so I've got a note to add an SSC check-in to the terms of reference for your vermilion snapper assessment. The slide in front of you now are some of the uncertainties identified during the last SSC review of SEDAR 55 and then 83. Again, right, we're waiting for the updated MRIP-FES calibrated recreational catch series. One of the high uncertainties identified from the SSC, in both those assessments, were potentially poor index effects, both from the SERFS fishery-independent index, in that it was not tracking abundance, and there were some deficiencies in the ability of the fishery-dependent indices as well.

That led to, in SEDAR 83, which was tackled to be an index-based interim analysis assessment not being recommended for use in management by the SSC, but, as a health check, it was sufficient, and so those are some of the elements that would need to be further explored by the assessment panel, or the analyst.

Additionally, some concerns that were raised with the steepness profiling, again this fixed steepness versus estimated steepness that was used in prior assessments, and we've got language built into all new terms of reference now to investigate, right, that steepness parameter, and whether it's more appropriate to use an MSY estimate or proxy estimates, and then there's potential changes in selectivity due to management actions, as is the case with all assessment updates based on the management history.

These are elements -- Again, as Chip had mentioned, these are elements that I'll build and draft into the next terms of reference document that you all get to review, but is there anything else pertaining specifically to vermilion snapper that you would like to see in the terms of reference before we draft that and send to the SSC?

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts on vermilion? I am not seeing any, and so okay.

DR. CURTIS: The next order of business is getting into the specific terms of reference for Spanish, king, and the dolphin MSE. Would you like me to begin going through those documents? Okay, and so the terms of reference for the next Atlantic Spanish mackerel assessment are on the screen here, and so you all reviewed, right, that scope of work for Spanish mackerel, and that was information based on the previous assessment, uncertainties that were identified, the research and recommendations plan, and input from the APs.

All those go into drafting that scope of work, and then, from there, I used that information to build these terms of reference. These were circulated to Dr. Erik Williams at the center in Beaufort, and we worked on some wordsmithing some of the language, and so this is the latest iteration of this document draft, and so I'll go through this here, kind of one-by-one, and then some of the language is pretty standard that carries over between each of the different terms of references for each species, and then some are specific to that particular species, which I'll identify as we go through it.

Term of Reference 1 gets at that terminal year determination and what data should be included. In this case, the request is to update the SEDAR 78 Atlantic Spanish Mackerel assessment model with a terminal year of the 2026 to 2027 fishing year, and here's that statement of data providers may include preliminary or partial data for more recent years that could be used in the stock assessment model or projection analyses with inclusion of that -- With inclusion in the stock assessment model determined by the lead analyst based on quantity and quality of the most recent data.

The second term of reference gets to the model configurations, and so it's going to go through the Beaufort Assessment Model, or the BAM model, configuration that was used for the last Spanish Mackerel assessment, the SEDAR 78 operational assessment model, and, in accordance with NMFS Procedure 01-101-11, there's a request to provide a model run using the SEDAR 78 assessment configuration with the most recent years of data.

The third term of reference is when we start considering some elements that are specific to that species, as far as the data inputs are concerned, and so, as always, we'll consider new -- The analyst should consider new and updated information on life history, natural mortality, discard mortality, the stock-recruit relationship, commercial and recreational landings and discards, and then documenting changes or corrections made to those data streams. Specifically, we're requesting that the center provide commercial, recreational, and combined landings, discards in pounds and numbers.

One area that was a specific request from the SEDAR Committee at a previous meeting was to look at these recommended approaches for recreational catch data series -- Recreational catch data to reduce PSEs below 50 percent. Specific for Spanish mackerel, we had a couple of cases of these potential outliers in wave-specific estimates, and so it was desired to further dig into those and potentially consider those -- Consider some statistically-valid methods for modifying that data to limit the influence of those potential outliers.

Then 3c is to consider the newest and best methods for estimating natural mortality and considering estimation of natural mortality within the stock assessment model. This was one of the largest uncertainties, I would say, coming out of the SSC's review from SEDAR 78, that the natural mortality estimator was using literature that was maybe a little bit older than was desired, and so the natural mortality estimates will be updated in accordance with this next assessment.

Term of Reference 4 is evaluating and documenting the specific changes in the input data deviations from previous assessment models, and so looking at sensitivity analyses to compare the assessment results in this new assessment with the values from the SEDAR 78 stock assessment model.

Another unique aspect and request in this term of reference is to incorporate fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data streams north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and to investigate the use of fishery-independent data to develop a relative abundance index for the coastwide stock. This is a new data element that was not considered in the previous assessment model.

4c is to apply the best method to estimate commercial discards considering the observer program and commercial discard logbook information, and 4d is use data from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center observer program to expand the bycatch observations in the gillnet fishery.

Term of Reference 5 gets at some of the model parameter estimates and their variances and the estimates of stock status in the various management benchmarks, and so we're requesting that the center explore the use of a recent average recruitment with recruitment deviates, instead of a model-derived recruitment from the stock-recruit relationship, as was done previously in SEDAR 78, and determine an appropriate MSY proxy and time series for average recruitment, if appropriate.

5b is to determine the best estimate to use as that management benchmark, and is that either a direct estimate of maximum sustainable yield or a proxy, and including appropriate characterization of the uncertainty for the chosen management benchmark. If that proxy is chosen, include sufficient justification for the decision to use a proxy, and then ii. is provide a range of plausible proxy values and their associated uncertainties and iii. provide a run using the default proxy value or direct estimate of MSY, if it's available, as specified in the FMP.

We do that because we need that as a comparison and a no action alternative during the amendment development, right, and so kind of getting ahead on the amendment process there, and then 5c is providing fishing mortality, yield, discards, biomass, spawning stock biomass, and recruitment levels associated uncertainty levels corresponding to MSY or its proxy.

6 is pretty standard language across most of the different terms of reference. It's computing the short and long-term population projections to give us the overfishing limit and ABC advice, and then also addressing as many recommendations of the catch level projections workgroup that are outlined at the link there that's attached there.

For inclusion -- Term of Reference 7 is for inclusion of those northern data streams. The suggestion is to convene a virtual data workshop, or a data webinar, that includes the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Mid-Atlantic state representatives, industry representatives, and other technical experts to discuss a comprehensive inclusion of relevant data sources north of Cape Hatteras.

Term of reference 8 is to convene that assessment technical team, including the SSC and industry representatives, to meet via webinar, or in-person as needed, to review that model development and provide guidance, as well as scheduling an SSC check-in, or this pre-decisional briefing, to review the model development and discuss assessment uncertainties, and then, lastly, Term of Reference 10 is to develop that stock assessment report, address these TORs, and fully document all the input data methods and results.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Judd, and now I have Jessica has a question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and thank you, Judd, and so just I was going back to look at all the different things that the SSC had expressed some interest in or concerns about last time, and so one of them was revisiting model choices. I think that that was covered maybe in 3 or 4 here, but I just wanted to make sure you felt like that was possible with these terms of reference.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I went back and reviewed some of the language as well, and I think we're covered here. I think that was pertaining specifically to -- It compared to a lot of things, but the MSY-derived benchmarks versus incorporation of a proxy would be one area where they're

looking at different model developments, and I think we've got that covered in the language here, but, if you disagree, I'm happy to add --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it's okay. I just wanted to make sure that you thought that was covered, and then this is like a full-blown assessment, and not operational, and we don't have those categories anymore, right, and like so this is just a full assessment, right?

DR. CURTIS: Correct. Yes, and so the suggestion here is to have -- To convene this virtual data workshop that would include those different data sources, and so this would be akin to like a benchmark, what we used to call a benchmark, or a research track assessment, and that is also an area where we have a different model development process, right? The last SEDAR 78 was an operational assessment, where there was limited flexibility on what parameters you could change within the assessment model.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Judd, I really do feel that the terms of reference that have been outlined here are really good. I just have, I guess, a comment and a question. Under 4, I appreciate the incorporation of fishery-dependent and independent data streams north of Hatteras, and this idea of the coastwide stocks, and so my question would be how are we looping all of this in with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I've spoken with Jim Gartland on the SSC, who, for those that don't know, he's based out of VIMS and runs the NEAMAP, or helps assist with the NEAMAP program, to start identifying data sources, and he's been in touch with them for Mid-Atlantic stock. I forget which species right now, but that incorporates NEAMAP surveys, and they've been looking at pulling Spanish mackerel data as well, but the idea is, right, to get state partners involved as well, as the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. We started talking about that, but haven't quite started making the inroads yet, as far as that data collection. Also, I did mention this at the ACCSP Biological Committee last week, to get that on the radar of people, the state partners, as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, in addition to that, you know, as we're trying to reach out to find who is most appropriate, who might have data in the Northeast, obviously, we're going to get up with ASMFC staff, to make sure that we're getting the appropriate people that would have information for the stock assessment model.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Chip. Any other questions? So that is it for the Spanish mackerel TORs, terms of reference?

DR. CURTIS: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: It is 11:58. Do you all want to just go ahead and break for lunch, and we'll come back and do -- Was it king and dolphin? Is everybody good with that? Okay. I'm glad everybody is happy with something. All right, and so we'll reconvene at 1:30. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, guys. We'll go ahead and get started, and I've got a couple of announcements before we start. I just want to get another reminder that Mel's get-well book is out, is over there with Rachel, and so don't forget to sign that, and, to be good stewards of the environment, we've set up a recycle bag back there, and so, anything you guys want to recycle, just throw it in the bag. Thank you, Rachel, for keeping us straight, and so we'll go ahead and reconvene SEDAR, Judd, if you want to start with king mackerel now.

DR. CURTIS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so the next order of business -- We've wrapped up Atlantic Spanish mackerel terms of reference, and we're moving on to South Atlantic king mackerel terms of reference. You'll see a lot of similarities in some of the language, just specific to king mackerel, and so I will go through those a little quicker than I did with Spanish, and then there's, similarly, specific new data inputs and modeling, new modeling, characteristics specific to king mackerel for this assessment.

Just to remind the committee, the South Atlantic king mackerel will be a -- Conducted by a Gulf analyst, connected by a Gulf analyst using the Stock Synthesis stock assessment framework. This is consistent -- It will be a Stock Synthesis model, which is consistent with how the SEDAR 38 update was conducted, and so we'll have continuity there.

Term of Reference 1 outlines the terminal year of data being the 2026 to 2027 fishing year, and, again, the statement that the data providers may include preliminary or partial data, up to the discretion of the lead analyst, based on quantity and quality.

The second term of reference again, as I alluded to, it will be using the Stock Synthesis version, and so updating to the latest model version there, and providing a continuity run with the SEDAR 38 configuration. Term of Reference 3 touches upon some of the new and updated information to life history, natural mortality, discard mortality, stock-recruit, landings and discards, et cetera, again providing all commercial, recreational, and combined landings and discards in pounds and numbers. Again, the statement on the MRIP-recommended approaches for reducing those PSEs below 50 percent and investigation of any potential outliers and wave-specific estimates.

3c is looking at considering the newest and best methods for estimating natural mortality. For king mackerel, there have been some tagging studies that have been completed, and so there's a statement in here to consider any direct estimation methods from telemetry and conventional tagging approaches if they are available, and, again, considering estimation of natural mortality within the stock assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: Judd, I think Amy had a question.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Judd, can we go back to Number 2? I think I know the answer, but I'm going to ask it, and so, under the Stock Synthesis, there have been some changes in the methods from -- I'm not familiar with it at all, and so, Clay, please come in there, but I'm pretty sure, when you say model configurations for the current best practices, that's taking the F2 method versus the F4 method, that hybrid approach, and I'm pretty sure the SSC had a conversation about this too, but I just wanted to confirm.

DR. PORCH: You're talking about how we treat catches in the model?

MS. DUKES: Yes, sir.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and, I mean, that's certainly something that would be up for discussion, and it just has to do with whether you're using an approximation or whether you're actually trying to estimate the allowing for error in the catch.

MS. DUKES: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I'll go back to Judd.

DR. CURTIS: I guess just a question then to Clay, does that language capture, you know, in the best -- This is now best practices, and so that's captured within the Terms of Reference Number 2, and that will be undertaken?

DR. PORCH: Yes, I think so. I can't remember which one NMFS Procedure 01-101-11 is though. I would have to look that up, unless you happen to know the title of it. I remember the titles better than the number series.

DR. CURTIS: All right. Chip is going to quick look up the title on that, because I'm not familiar with the title of that document either.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, Judd, you referenced it in 4, with the inclusion of the fishery data, but I was wondering if it would be appropriate to add a d under 3, to see if the fishery data could be evaluated for utility when you're talking about the recreational landings and discards with the new and updated information, but it could also lie in 4, but I was just curious if it needs to be in two places or if it's good just to lay in Number 4.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and we can add that, or I can add that, up into 3. It would be a new source of information for this assessment, and so that is an applicable place to include that. Would you also want to retain it down in Term of Reference Number 4 as well, in both places?

MS DUKES: In both places, please, and I'll let you get through 4, and I might have a comment about f there as well.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. I'll put that as a placeholder there for now, and we can come back to that as needed. Anything else on Term of Reference Number 3?

DR. COLLIER: The procedural directive that was cited is the changing stock status from known to unknown.

DR. PORCH: So then that doesn't address the issue you were talking about, Amy. That's more things like -- It's actually related to the points that were raised earlier about whether you assume recent average recruitment, focus on short-term advice, and not determine overfished status, and so it just depends on the quality of information, whether you can actually do that, and so it's focused on that.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Moving on to Term of Reference Number 4 to evaluate and document specific changes in the input data or deviations from the previous assessment model, and so looking at sensitivity analyses, right, and there was a few things specific to king mackerel here, like a sensitivity run to explore the impact of the varying mixing zone classifications was one request that came out of the scopes of work, exploring alternative age references or age-specific time series for the SEAMAP fishery-independent survey, evaluating model sensitivity to the age data, and explore alternative parametrizations, such as an inverse age-length key, and those are recommendations coming out of the SSC from the last assessment review. Explore the cause of high max gradient for the model, and describe the cause and implement improvements, as feasible, and then explore the inclusion of FISHstory data as a sensitivity run where feasible.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. A sensitivity run, yes, but I was also curious if we were to leave it a little bit more open-ended under SEDAR 90, and it's being used for annual length comps, and so I'm just wondering if there's some other utilities that it could be used for as well, and so perhaps maybe to justify my reason to leave it as a d in Number 3, with perhaps an open-ended like -- However we want to do it. I just -- I want it to be a little bit more broad in scope.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. I've made an edit up there, underneath 3, to include the fishery data, not only as a sensitivity run, but in the base run model, in the base model run, and to include that length composition data, where feasible.

MS. MURPHEY: Clay, did you have your hand up?

DR. PORCH: Yes, and it's just that might be a little too specific, because it implies that it needs to be in the base model, and we haven't established that yet. I just wonder if you just say explore inclusion of FISHstory data, including length composition, because I don't know how it would be used. I mean, it has to be reviewed, and --

MS. DUKES: Okay.

DR. CURTIS: Amy, I guess the question then is so you want to explore that inclusion of fishery data throughout the entire process, either in the base run or as available, right, including those length compositions, and you also want to request, under Number 4, that it be included as a sensitivity run, should the data not be available to incorporate into the base model run.

MS. MURPHEY: So everything good with that, Amy and Judd? Okay.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Term of Reference Number 5 looks at the model parameter estimates and variances, right, the estimates of stock status and benchmarks, and so this is the same language that you saw from the Spanish mackerel terms of reference, and so I won't read these out again. They are identical, but is there any concern or recommended edits to this section?

MS. MURPHEY: It looks like everything is good.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Not seeing any, then 6 kind of goes hand-in-hand with that, looking at short-term and long-term population projections to get OFL and ABC estimates. Number 7, unlike the

Spanish mackerel, where we're going to convene a data webinar, or a full data workshop, the king mackerel assessment is not going to include that step along the process, right, and this will be mostly relying upon the old data streams, with the one inclusion then of FISHstory data as a potential new data source, and so there's no data workshop currently scheduled for this assessment.

We would have an assessment technical team, and that's comprised of SSC and industry representatives and technical experts, to meet as needed to review that model development data inputs, and provide new guidance, and then we would have that SSC check-in to review the development of the model along the way and provide some guidance before the analyst issues a stock assessment report and it is reviewed by the full SSC.

DR. COLLIER: I do want to highlight here that this is part of that new process, right? You know, Judd had mentioned, in that infographic that SEDAR staff had put together, where there's an assessment technical team, and this is basically -- Just imagine that the assessment folks are reaching out and calling a friend, where they might have questions about what's going on in the data, and they might say, all right, it appears that selectivity blocks might have changed over time, and so they might reach out to different people.

It's not required that they reach out to people, but that they could reach out to people, and that's what is described in 7, and then 8 is that SSC check-in, and just making sure that this is the level of review that the council would like for this, and, you know, I feel like this is a pretty important step for the council to consider as we're moving forward with these stock assessments.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts on that, or is everybody good with this, how this is laid out, the check-ins and review. Okay. I'm seeing heads shaking, and so -- Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and I like the idea of 7. You include industry representatives, meaning, to me, fishermen, because the mackerel stock has done some strange things off of my inlet the last few years. I mean, they have disappeared, and, just like the bass, this year, they're back in full force, you know, and so you need to hear that. The analysts need to hear that in trying to figure out what's going on, you know, and so thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Okay, Judd.

DR. CURTIS: Okay, and last, but not least, we have the dolphin MSE review workshop terms of reference, and I'll pull that up here. This is a little bit different than the terms of reference that you saw for the Spanish and king mackerel assessments. This is unique to the MSE review workshop, and so this language is drafted by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and sent to council staff to have a look at, and through our SSC. We also got recommendations, and any edits, from the SSC, and those were incorporated into this document that you see here. Given that this is a MSE exercise, and not a stock assessment, you'll see the language is somewhat different than what is just presented from the king and Spanish mackerel terms of reference.

In the review workshop, Term of Reference Number 1 -- Rewind, and so the format for this review will comprise a CIE review, which would also include potentially a couple South Atlantic SSC members, and potentially other SSC members from other regions, given that the nature of the stock range goes up to the Atlantic, and the CIE reviewers would provide those independent reports, that

would then get consolidated into a single report, and provided to the analysts, and then provided to the council.

The current schedule for this, as I alluded to, is we're looking at late July for the review workshop to take place, and so this is just kind of the final step in approving the terms of reference for the members that will comprise that review workshop.

First is to evaluate the types and ranges of uncertainty used in the management strategy evaluation, or MSE, and explicitly consider the uncertainty in data, life history, process error, non-stationarity, and fishery dynamics, if appropriate. You see selected axes of uncertainty, and you can think of axes as just the different types of uncertainty at different levels for the MSE. Are the selected axes of uncertainty relevant to the stock and fishery and appropriately characterized? Were the levels of each axis meaningful? Were uncertainties appropriately classified into reference or robustness set and sufficiently explained?

Number 2 is to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used to simulate the stock, and so this would get into that operating model that is used to then form the basis for those management metrics, and so the CIE team, or the review team, will look at the robustness of the model, of the operating models, and make sure they're scientifically sound and any uncertainties are adequately characterized, and so that's what these -- I won't read through these a through e bullets here, but that is what that section is getting at.

Number 3 is to evaluate the operating model conditioning. Is that operating model on available data -- Does it result in simulated data with reasonable statistical properties relative to what would be available to the management procedures?

Number 4 is to evaluate the management strategy evaluation projections. Did the operating model project data that would be available to the management procedure, or project some projection assumptions reasonable and appropriate for the stock? Evaluating performance metrics, and this is where I think, during the dolphinfish presentation that is upcoming this afternoon, they'll be asking you to make sure that all these types of performance metrics are adequately characterized within their model, and so, directed towards the research team, or the review panel team, and excuse me, when they're evaluating performance metrics, do all these include the legally-mandated management objectives outlined in the MSA, and so we're making sure that there are not any management procedures are not in violation of MSA, i.e., we're selecting a management procedure that is overfishing or results in overfished status. Do these performance metrics sufficiently capture the manager and/or stakeholder objectives to achieve optimum yield?

Number 6 is to evaluate candidate management procedures. Did the candidate management procedures only utilize data available for the stock in practice? Did the management procedure explore management tools and controls that are applicable to the stock or top-performing management procedures tuned to minimally achieve all satisfying criteria? If empirical management procedure, does the MSE include a mechanism to periodically update that stock status?

Term of Reference 7 is provide or comment on the recommendations to improve the MSE process, and then Term of Reference 8 is to prepare a review workshop summary report describing the panel's evaluation of the MSE and addressing each TOR, and that review workshop summary

report will become available to the council for review prior to the selection of those management procedures in the MSE process, and so a lot to swallow there, and I am not an expert in the MSE review process, by any means, and so I'll try to answer questions where possible. If not, we may then just defer to the dolphin presentation as well, or the people actually conducting the MSE might have a better handle on how to answer some of those questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any comments or questions? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think it's a good place to start. Thanks for taking a stab at it, because I don't think any of us know what it should look like, per se, and so, I mean, I think it delivers.

MS. MURPHEY: So I guess, right now, right now everybody is good. I'm sorry. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't -- Under Number 1, uncertainty in data, life history, blah, blah, blah, non-stationarity, and so, with mahi being a species that is more -- I think we accept might be more susceptible to oceanographic changes, would you consider that included in that top bullet? That's my question.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and so we could be more explicit in that Number 1, if desired. I think the non-stationarity gets a little bit at that. It's, you know, the changing environmental conditions can result in different levels of biomass and recruitment that could potentially change those benchmarks, right, and that gets there. We could be more -- Or you could request to be more explicit and with specific environmental drivers there, if desired.

MS. MURPHEY: Would you like that, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know.

MS. MURPHEY: Do you have some more --

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm looking at Chip's face, and the look he was making made me think that maybe I don't want to request that, or that I don't -- Or that maybe I'm not -- It's not appropriate to request that as more.

DR. COLLIER: No, and I was just trying to think through. I wasn't saying yes or no to this. You know, it's -- I haven't been as involved with this as other staff. I don't know if they're diving into the any environmental changes in the model. It might be included in the index of abundance somewhat if they have sea surface temperature in there, and so I would -- It's probably in the presentation later, and maybe that's covered under some of the process error and in the encompass plausible uncertainty.

MS. MURPHEY: So, just thinking about, you know, when we got together with stakeholders before, and so here's an example. Down in the Wilmington area, they talked about how the blue water was moving further out, and would that be captured in non-stationarity, or environmental, or would it be -- So how would -- Just thinking of an example, that maybe you were getting at, how would that be captured?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, in different populations of Mahi -- Like in the eastern Pacific, there's a pretty clear driver of El Nino, El Nino years, that sort of you can -- You can look at the data and see it at play. Is it correlation or causation? Not my job to figure out, but certainly interesting for mahi, given that it's just so unknown what is happening, and so I don't know how to get at it. I'm certainly not a smart enough person to do it, but I don't know how you look at a species like mahi, that is so dependent on sort of those oceanographic changes, and not model that somehow, but that's why I don't have three letters after my last name.

DR. CURTIS: So, Kerry, I would say my recommendation is to put a placeholder here for these, and then, through the presentation, maybe ask the presenters if that is part of the operating model configurations, and if -- To request, right, that it be included in this Term of Reference Number 1 for the review team.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, I think that's a great idea. Thanks, Kerry. Anything else? Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and I guess I'm going to be supportive, but Judd is right, and that was really the intent with the non-stationarity, but it is jargony, but, yes, that's the whole design of this. Since we know we're not dealing with a unit stock, it's, you know, how do you best manage a variable stock, and so I'm fine with the language in there, and no need to change it. It clarifies, and it makes it less jargony.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Clay. Anything else? So I think we're good with the dolphin TORs.

DR. CURTIS: Great. **Okay, and so, lastly, with all three TORs having been reviewed and considered, we'll need a draft -- I've put together a draft motion for the committee to approve the terms of reference for the Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment, the South Atlantic king mackerel stock assessment, and the dolphin MSC review workshop, as contingent upon those potential changes, and I could use some help wordsmithing that last bit, but my thought process there was to allow the committee chair to approve any subsequent edits that were recommended. I'll make the changes and then send it to the committee chair for that final approval, if that's acceptable with the committee.**

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I've got Carolyn. Okay, and so -- It looks like Amy moved, and Carolyn seconded, and how's that? Any discussion? **Any objections?** Okay. **Motion approved.** All right, thanks everybody. I guess, Judd, do you have something else?

DR. CURTIS: One more thing, Chair. A year ago, in March, Chip presented some information on the changes to the SEDAR process, right, and we've been talking about this for over a year, and, in order to better reflect the different products that are producing management advice, such as those management strategy evaluations, management procedures, harvest control rules, et cetera, in addition to the SEDAR assessments, it was thought it would be appropriate to change the SEDAR Committee name, or the scope and the name, from something that would encompass all those different elements, and so including various data collections, assessment processes, as well as review, and so we put forth several options, if you recall.

Those are captured below here. Ultimately, the committee did like the bolded name for the new committee, the Data, Assessment, and Catch Advice Committee. However, they did not like the acronym that that produced, and so we're revisiting this again now, because it kind of got left by

the wayside, and so one simple solution would be just to remove the “advice” word from that committee name, and so it's just the Data, Assessment, and Catch Committee, or we could add a second, or another, qualifying word in there, or change it to something different, as the committee pleases.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts on a new name? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, that one's okay. It's just the words “catch next to “committee” are a little weird. I was wondering about the one right above the bolded one, and maybe that one, and so I would just throw that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts from anybody on that one? Any other -- Any thoughts? Carolyn, what do you think?

DR. BELCHER: I don't know. I'm the English person that -- Well, I'm not an English person, and so the double “and” are getting me, with the “collection and assessment planning and process”, and so you just keep adding another “and”, and we just keep adding more detail to it, but, I mean, I think it's fine. It's just a matter of capturing what we think it needs to cover. SEDAR was originally part of John's baby, and what does he think of a name change?

MS. MURPHEY: Come on up, John, and give us your thoughts. You were a SEDAR original, and so you should be able to have a say.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, we're not changing the name of the SEDAR process, and so I think that's fine, and I think, when it comes to the South Atlantic, we can call it whatever we like. If people are uncomfortable with it, you could just leave it SEDAR. We understand what it means, but I know that other people may not, which is kind of the issue. When you start having a broader scope, it's kind of a -- It maybe could raise questions, and so I'm -- You know, I'm having a hard time having a strong feeling either way.

MS. MURPHEY: Just giving you a chance too, since you were SEDAR 1.

MR. CARMICHAEL: SEDAR 1.

MS. MURPHEY: Chip, you can weigh-in too. We'll just let staff weigh-in, too.

DR. COLLIER: I was thinking SCAD. At least it's a fish, and so the SEDAR Catch Advice and Data, and so that one catches all of them. The bottom one.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I like SCAD. That sounds wonderful.

DR. BELCHER: That's not owned by a college? I was just going to say that it's not owned by a college, by any chance, is it?

MS. MURPHEY: So we've had -- Right now, we have Data Collection and Assessment Planning and Process Committee or SEDAR Catch Advice and Data, which also works out to be SCAD, which people seem to enjoy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's do that one.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy has got something.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, I would be remiss if I didn't actually let you know that staff at South Carolina DNR put our little hats onto this too, and, if I don't do it on the record, then they're going to be blowing up my phone in a minute, but so SEDAR is just going to be a really hard term to get away from, and so the idea of SEDARS and adding an "S" to it, and making it literally SEDARS, but changing everything, but I'm going to put it on the record. It's not going to happen, and I get it, but it's Systematic Evaluation of Data, Assessments, and Regulation Strategies, SEDARS. We're not doing it, I know, but I wanted to give a little shoutout to my staff for putting their little hats on.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks to Amy's staff for putting their thoughts together on it. We much appreciate it, but it looks like it's minimal, and so --

DR. BELCHER: Unlike Amy, I have someone in the back that's prompting me, and so she was thinking SECAD, for the Southeast -- Rather than just going to SCAD, just capturing the E in that.

MS. MURPHEY: Say that one more time. What was that?

DR. BELCHER: So just the acronym would be S-E-C-A-D, and so SECAD, for the Southeast, I guess.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Yes, and that's thoughtful. I've got Tom. Tom has been waiting patiently.

MR. ROLLER: So, when I look at this, I think about it in terms of a branding for the public, and I always want it to be better explained, because when people approach this process, they don't understand our acronyms, and SEDAR is enough for people to understand, right? I'm serious, and so, when we do that -- I do like the SECAD, but I also don't want to confuse people, right, and, if you have two things that look very similar, I think that will. I think that's my favorite name, because I just like the idea. It doesn't matter -- The use of assessment or catch advice or assessment planning, and I think having that in the name is very descriptive to our stakeholders, and I think that's important.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So which one do you --

MR. ROLLER: Which one do I like? I like the last one.

MS. MURPHEY: So you're supporting SECAD?

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I support a lot of these. I do like the third-to-last one. It's just so big and long.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Well, right now, I'm hearing from folks that they all like SECAD. Are we all good with SECAD?

MR. ROLLER: Do I need a motion for that? So moved.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and it looked like staff was shaking their heads yes for the last one. Okay. SECAD. Thank you, Carolyn, or thank you, Kathy. All right. Do we need a motion? Okay. Somebody needs to make a motion. Jessica.

MR. MCCAWLEY: **Approve name change of the SEDAR Committee to SEDAR Catch Advice and Data, or SECAD.**

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Carolyn as a second. Any more discussion? **Any objections? We are now SECAD.** With that, is there any other business for the new SECAD? Any new business?

DR. CURTIS: No other business from my end, unless there's any other business from the newly-named committee?

MS. MURPHEY: All right, I will adjourn SECAD. Thank you all very much, and I guess we'll take a few minutes to transition to Council II.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 5, 2026.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 20, 2026

SEDAR Thurs. - 3/5/24

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SEDAR Thurs 3/5/2024

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Jessica	McCawley		Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Robert	Beal		Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
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Deirdre	Warner-Kramer		Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

March 2026 Council

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535-165-571	03/05/2026 07:52 AM EST	8 hours 35 minutes	218

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Yes	Not applicable for staff	Council	South Atlantic

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Bailey	Adam
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