

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

**North Charleston Marriott
North Charleston, South Carolina
September 18, 2025**

SEDAR Committee

Trish Murphey, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Robert Beal
Amy Dukes

James G. Hull, Jr.
Kerry Marhefka
Charlie Phillips
Andy Strelcheck

Council Members

Gary Borland
Judy Helmey

Dewey Hemilright
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Kathleen Howington
Allie Iberle
Kim Iverson
Kelly Klasnick

Dr. Julie Neer
Ashley Oliver
Emily Ott
Dr. Mike Schmidtke
Rachael Silvas
Nicholas Smillie
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Wiegand
Meg Withers

Attendees and Invited Participants

Monica Smit-Brunello
Chris Schieble
Sonny Gwin
Dr. Walter Bublely
Dr. Clay Porch

Rick DeVictor
DeLaney Farrell
Kathy Knowlton
Kristen Foss

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, September 18, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, guys. Let's go ahead and get started. We're on the home stretch, and so this is the last committee meeting for the day, and the last committee meeting for September, and so this is convening the SEDAR Committee.

Members of that committee is myself, as chair, Jessica, as vice chair, and we've got Bob Beal, Carolyn Belcher, Amy Dukes, Jimmy Hull, Kerry Marhefka, Charlie Phillips, and Andy Strelcheck, and so those are our members, and we'll go ahead and turn it over to Chip to do a steering committee update. Do I need to do --

So, first, before I turn it over to Chip, I would like to have the agenda approved. Is everyone good with the agenda? Do you have any objections to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved, and also the meeting minutes from the March 2025 meeting. Any substantial changes or edits to those? Any objections to those minutes? The minutes are approved, and so now we'll hand it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, and, just in the interest of time, I'm not really going to go over the SEDAR Steering Committee updates. We do have several people that are engaged in the SEDAR Steering Committee. We have the chair, Clay Porch, as well as Andy, Trish, and John Carmichael. They all sit on the steering committee, but the outcomes of the steering committee are really driving what's in 2, 3, and 4, and so we're going to get into that. If you would like to see the details of it, you can read those committee reports.

The most recent committee, steering committee, there's not a final report, but you can see basically what they talked about, and so, we can -- I'll bring that to you in the next SEDAR meeting, and so that will be March of 2026, but, going into the next piece of information there, I'm just going to go into Attachment 2, which is going to be the SEDAR process changes, if that's okay with you, Chair. All right. Unless you -- Were there any highlights that you wanted to do from the steering committee?

MS. MURPHEY: Nothing for me.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and so just going back over, you know, what is SEDAR, and SEDAR has a lot of cooperators. I know Clay often says that they basically manage four different councils, but I think that's even selling it short. He's doing more than that.

They're also working with some of the commissions, Atlantic States and Gulf States, and so here you can see a presentation that was put together by SEDAR staff, and really talking about all the different cooperators that they have involved, and so, within the federal system, we have the National Marine Fisheries Service. We have Andy and the Southeast Regional Office, and we have Clay and the Southeast Fisheries Science Office, but they're also working with Highly Migratory Species. They do a lot of the stock assessments for them.

They help to work with three different fishery management councils. We've got the Gulf Fishery Management Council, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and then the Caribbean

Fishery Management Council. In addition to that, they work with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and also the Gulf States Commission, and then we also have Florida in there as well. We put them on the SEDAR schedule. The reason for that is they're providing several stock assessments, and now they're doing some management strategy evaluation, and we'll get into that with black grouper.

So what is the general process for SEDAR, and, just to go over this again, SEDAR is the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review, although, with the new process changes, it might be better off to say Southeast Data, Assessment, or Review, because it's going to be looking at different components that folks might want to have in their assessment process.

The general SEDAR process is there's a data stage, and this can be an in-person meeting, or it can be done by the agency itself, and, basically, what they're doing is collecting landings data, or the data necessary in order to conduct a stock assessment. An important piece of this, that can throw a wrinkle in many things, is a stock ID workshop, trying to identify where the stock boundaries are. This can be challenging, and so, something like red grouper, we put a delay in some of the processes, in order to develop that stock assessment, because we feel like there needs to be a stock ID workshop to identify where the data sources are for that.

Going into the next stage is the assessment stage, and this is basically where they're making the stock assessment. They're putting all that landings data, the indices data, the age data into a stock assessment product, and they're going through and building this process, and, in the past, this has been an area, at least in the South Atlantic, where we haven't gotten all that much great comment, and so SEDAR has been working -- SEDAR and the National Marine Fisheries Service have been working together to develop a better process in order to get more feedback during this assessment stage.

There can be a review stage for the stock assessments, and this is an independent review stage. All stock assessments are reviewed by the SSCs when they are used to develop annual catch limits, or acceptable biological catch levels, and so, the independent review, these reviewers are typically what's called the CIE reviewers, and I think you guys hear that quite often. These are the Center for Independent Experts. They are experts in stock assessment from around the world. They quite often will come to the region for a few days, discuss and provide recommendations for the stock assessment, and each of the reports are available on the SEDAR webpage, if you would like to see some of those comments.

They can also do what's called a desk review. This is basically you send the stock assessment to the CIE, and they'll review it at their desk. It's not an in-person meeting, and so it misses some of the nuances that you kind of get from an in-person meeting, where you can have feedback between the analyst and the reviewer.

Post-SEDAR is where we have our Scientific and Statistical Committee review the stock assessment and develop some of the acceptable biological catch levels, and then it comes to you all, as the management body working on how to develop ACLs from the ABCs that the SSC provides.

Going to one of the big changes that they're talking about in the SEDAR process is adding topical working groups and technical teams, and what I would like to do is get into the details on what

these topical working groups are going to do, versus what a technical team would do. The big thing is the topical work, and, I mean, both of them are going to have stakeholders from the SSC, technical experts, and potentially fishing expertise, in the groups.

They're designed to be small teams working on specific issues. However, with the technical team, there is no SEDAR involvement in there. This is going to be led by the agency, or the stock assessment group that's leading the stock assessment, and, within the technical team, there's not going to be any public input during their meetings. These are going to be closed meetings. They're designed to really focus in on a few issues. It's not really any of the big issues that are going on in a stock assessment.

Hopefully, those would be accomplished through a topical working group, where people can get together and hash out the ideas. The technical team is really designed to make sure that the stock assessment is on the right path, and there's no big issues that are coming up.

In addition to the technical team, and we'll get into it on the following slide, but there's going to be potentially an SSC preview of a final stock assessment, where the SSC would be able to comment as well. Does anyone have any questions on the difference between a topical working group and a technical team?

Seeing no questions about it, all right, and so what we have presented here is some color codes that are going to be used for the next two slides after this. In green are going to be boxes that the SEDAR staff are in charge of, or are responsible for leading, and then we also have the lead analytical agency, the cooperator team, and that's going to be in yellow, the cooperator in blue, and then we have commissions, although I'll probably skip over the commissions, because that's not really important for this group.

What I want to do is let's first talk about this top piece here, and these are going to be stock assessments led by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and, with these, there's going to be a data scoping that's going to be led by the agency, as indicated in that bluish-gray color. Then the agency is going to conduct a stock assessment. Based on what's going on in the stock assessment, they may request a technical team meet, in order to discuss some of their findings, or they may request that it goes to the SSC for essentially a check-in.

This will be up to the agency to do it however they feel, but it would be good to, you know, have some front-loading on what they think might be needed for a stock assessment, so that, if they feel like there's going to be some minor changes coming up, it might be good for a technical team to get together and make sure they're good with some of those changes, and discuss some of those changes, or, if there's big changes, a long time between stock assessments, an SSC check-in might be good, just to make sure that they can iron out any of the wrinkles that might be in the final report. Then finally, in blue, we have the SSC process, or the SSC review, and that's where the SSC would review the final product and develop ABC recommendations from there.

DR. BELCHER: I'm sorry, and my brain gets stuck in old tracks, but is this similar to what we used to do with the updates, like way back, and not recent definitions of updates, but like, early on, we didn't really have any involvement, other than a small group of SSC members getting together to talk, and then it would go to the SSC as a whole later. Is that basically what the idea is for that process?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and it's basically -- Clay, you can speak to it if I'm off, or Julie or Emily are here as well, and they can speak to it, but it's essentially the update, with the caveat that, if they're seeing some things that are, you know, piquing their interest, it might be good to have that technical team get together and talk about some of the issues that they're identifying.

MS. MURPHEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: If I could add that, in a way, it's almost like the old stock assessment panels we used to have. The agency would lead, you know, pretty much in all phases, but get advice from the panels, and so, in this case, it's the technical team, and I think it's key that, as Chip mentioned, it's optional, because in the case of say what we were calling update lites, where all we're adding is a few key datasets, there's not going to be a need for any technical review. We just run it, crank it out in a matter of weeks, and then send it to the SSC.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. I've got Dewey. Thanks, Clay.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thanks, Clay. I'm not on this committee, but I have a question pertaining to the involvement of a fisherman with knowledge into the SSC process. My last experience with the blueline tilefish, I sat through a lot of webinars, sat through the whole process, the SSC, and I heard a lot of questions that nobody around the table had the knowledge to answer the question, and I'm sitting there -- I'm sitting there at my house like -- Well, sort of screaming, but, you know, and there's enough chairmanship of the SSC that somebody is not going to be running on their mouth, but there was clearly stuff that like nobody could answer the question, and there was -- It wasn't just one instance, and there was multiple instances.

How does somebody pass the litmus test to be able to be involved as on standby, or somehow on the SSC, because it's killing me when somebody -- When you've got knowledge, and they just sit there and ask the question, and, okay, let's go on to the next thing, and, the next thing you know - - Multiple questions never got answered, and they asked them, and so how does that work, or how could this work in the future?

DR. COLLIER: I think that's a really good point, and it's kind of out of the SEDAR process, but, thinking about that, I think one thing that we could do -- You know, you were part of the topical working group for blueline tilefish, and so, during that assessment process, you know, maybe it's good that we have somebody that is appointed from the industry for -- That could be engaged in the review at the SSC level, to make sure that they're available, and, you know, we communicate with them when it's going to be going on, and hopefully they can have the time. I know it takes time for them to be off the water, and it's a cost to them, but hopefully they could be available to help guide some of the discussion.

I think the SSC would be welcoming of that. Judd, if you don't think that's a good idea, you can come up here, but I think that would be a good opportunity, making sure that, you know, we follow through to the end, that some of the stakeholders are engaged.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I just think it's a vital part of, when you have multiple questions during that time of being asked, and nobody can answer them. They wouldn't be asking if they

didn't want to know what the answer was, and so I just think that's a valuable part of it. Thank you.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, I do. I think that's a critical component of the new phase, and I think that illustrates, you know, that -- If we're looking at that top grid, or the SSC check-in, the initial one would be a great step, where we could then incorporate some of the stakeholder feedback, because that would be a publicly-announced meeting, whereas some of the other processes, including like the technical team, might all just be behind closed doors, but that would be a point in the process where, you know, we can get the stakeholder feedback, and they can ask the questions to help guide that assessment development.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, the one thing about it is it wouldn't be until the SSC asked a question, because I need to hear their question to have the possibility of answering, and so, you know, what drives me is to answer their question, from a fishery knowledge or whatever, that they don't have that, and so that would be -- I just don't need to be there during a check-in, or somebody, but you need to be there when they're asking the question.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I think that's something that either the analysts, or myself, or Chip, or other people, can reach out to the various stakeholders that have interest in that particular stock assessment, to then verify, you know, some of the questions they might have. My point with trying to get some -- To incorporate the stakeholder feedback into the SSC check-in point is before it gets to a formal review where it's mostly completed, and then you start having all these questions that then, well, it's like they don't -- That's not jibing, and I wish we had gotten that information earlier on the process, and so try to integrate that knowledge earlier in the process is -- I think it's key for this new process to work.

MS. MURPHEY: That totally makes sense, and so thanks, Dewey, for bringing it up. I've got Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Chip, thanks for the schematics. They're very helpful, and so, going back to slide three, the topical working group versus technical team, I understand the topical working group is -- Their meetings will get noticed in the Federal Register, and it will be a public kind of thing, and so -- As opposed to the technical team, which will not be a public-involved process, and so I'm assuming the results -- Whatever questions were asked of the technical team, the answers to those will be brought back into the public process of the topical working group? That's one question I have.

DR. COLLIER: So, with the technical team, that does not necessarily mean that they're going to go back to the topical working group. What they could do is present their recommendations at the SSC check-in, because that would be a public meeting, making sure that it's agreed upon at that public meeting, or it would be at the SSC meeting, where the final review would be occurring, and the SSC would be checking off on the changes based on the recommendations from that technical team.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you, and then, you may have mentioned this, but I guess I would like a little more clarification. It's a cooperator-appointed technical team, and so who appoints the technical team?

DR. COLLIER: So, with this, the cooperator here for the South Atlantic region, that's going to be the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will be appointing that team, and the way that at least we're envisioning it here at the South Atlantic Council is we're hoping to advertise in the upcoming months for the technical team to be appointed in December.

With that, we would like to have kind of a fixed technical team, and maybe it's a quasi. We're still working on what we might need for it, but it would be nice to have some really good stock assessment folks that are engaged with that team, and then maybe move in and out some individual fishermen that might have expertise for a certain species, and like Dewey is an expert on blueline tilefish, but he might not be the best person for yellowtail snapper, making sure we get the appropriate person engaged, and the analysts can reach out to them.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay, and so the council is going to appoint this technical team, and they're essentially on call, if needed. Okay, and so I would like to think about this a little further, and maybe talk with some folks in my office, to make sure that we don't have any FACA concerns, and that any kind of information then that would come out of the technical team would be able to be used, because, you know, the Magnuson Act has requirements that things are done in a public process.

I want to make sure that these are advisory kind of things in nature, and they're not set in stone, those sorts of things, because that then triggers a lot of other kinds of requirements, which would essentially mean that would have to be done in some sort of public process, and I don't think that's what you all had intended, and so let's work together on that, to make sure that it's done the right way.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Monica. I had Kerry, and then Carolyn.

MS, MARHEFKA: My brain is a little twisted around, and you might have said it, and I missed it, but, traditionally, there's been a council member who has been a witness or a -- I don't know, whatever the right -- Not a witness, but an observer, a liaison, throughout the process, and so did you say if that was being retained in both columns here or not, and I just missed it?

DR. COLLIER: I did not say if a council member would be engaged in the topical working groups. In the past, we haven't necessarily had the council members engaged with that. We've been trying to have that more with SSC engagement, but we could definitely include the council members on that. These tend to get to pretty technical pieces, but we would welcome council members attending.

With that topical working group, it's always open to the public, and so the council is always welcome to attend, and they're generally pretty relaxed, as far as the structure of the discussions. If somebody wants to speak, or has a question within those topical working groups, anybody can speak up, or at least that's what we've seen in the South Atlantic, but the technical team would be different.

Unfortunately, the names are fairly similar, and so these would be -- These meetings would kind of be when the assessment scientist needs feedback, trying to make sure that they're staying on the right path, and so, you know, making -- In addition to that, the final decision wouldn't be at that technical team level. It would be kind of made during the SSC meeting, making sure that the SSC

is comfortable with that, and so the council members are attending at the SSC level. Does that make sense?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm sure the confusion is on my part, and so just bear with me, but like, in the past, when I was the council member appointed to triggerfish, right, I sort of was along for the ride. You know, if there was a data workshops webinar where they were getting into the weeds about things, was I contributing? No.

Was I listening, so that, you know, if later something came up, and two things sparked in my brain, or, you know, other council members were like was this not on the up and up, but you know what I'm saying? It was like such an observer role, and so I'm just confused if, in this whole change, if that role of a council member is going away.

DR. COLLIER: Maybe it's going to be going -- Let me talk about this top process. You know, this top process is going to be done -- These are updates that the agency has done previously. We've had stock assessments that, basically, the agency started them, and then presented a stock assessment to the SSC, and so there was no council member really observers in that process, and that's similar to this, although it's adding a nice little feature in there where there could be the technical team or the SSC check-in, if the analyst feels like they need it. This is trying to provide them the ability to really be engaged in getting a product that is useful for management at the end. We want to make sure that it doesn't go off the guardrails at the end, and then it makes it really difficult to potentially modify.

MS. MURPHEY: So, to me, it's almost like a technical support team, right? You can run questions by, and everything, right? Okay. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So just a question, to kind of segue off of Monica's ask, and so we, right now at the council, basically go down the panelist list, right? When we do stock assessments, and we're saying who gets added, and people rotate off and rotate on, and isn't that a similar -- Isn't that technically what you would be doing for the technical team? I mean, is that different? I mean, I guess that's the question, where I was assuming we were going to do that approach, so that it would be already a public process, but I guess maybe I'm missing that linkage.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so, with the technical team, the way that we're envisioning it is going to be slightly different than what we've done in the past, where we've asked for -- At each individual stock assessment, we've asked for people to be engaged. We would like to have kind of a fixed team that's doing that. This leads to more consistent guidance when in the development of stock assessments.

Not only would it lead to more consistent guidance, but it's also helping people learn stock assessments better as well, because I feel like that could be one of the issues that we had, is people are -- They're deeply engaged for six or eight months, and then they don't do it again for a couple of years, and this might help them be more engaged and do a better review of the stock assessments.

MS. MURPHEY: Since you already came up, go ahead, and then I'll get Jimmy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just wanted to follow up on the discussion from Monica about the FACA and whatnot, and I think that would be good. We would definitely appreciate that. We kind of

thought that it happened, but this isn't just -- You know, this isn't the South Atlantic Council's proposal here. This came up from the SEDAR Steering Committee, and so I think, if there are any issues from GC about this process, they should loop back in.

The next place they should go should be to the next steering committee meeting, because we're just following along with what was discussed at the steering committee, as will be the Gulf and the Caribbean, and so, to make sure there's no, you know, like inconsistency amongst the councils, or any confusion, you know, in the spring, or whenever it is, the next meeting would be the time to bring that up for the steering committee.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you, John, and I'm not saying there's issues. I'm saying there's questions. There could be issues, but maybe there won't be issues, and so okay. Point well taken, and we'll try to get involved in that. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes. Definitely. I think that just the seal of approval would be very nice for the steering committee.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, John, and I'm sorry, but I've got Jimmy that's been waiting here, and so go ahead.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Chip, can you go back to the slide describing the difference between the setup of a topical working group and a technical team? That one. When I read the participants description, it seems like they're opposite. It seems like they should be on the other, and so, if you read participants in a technical team, it says comprised of stakeholders, which it didn't sound like that's what you were going to do, with diverse scientific experience and fishing experience. It seems like that should go over on the topical, and then, on the topical, you have comprised of members of the SSC, stakeholders, and others with technical experts. It seems like that should be over there.

DR. COLLIER: Just to respond to that, so, just to give an example of what a topical team has done in the past, is we've had one in the South Atlantic for red snapper looking at selectivity, and that was a topical working group, and it was folks really familiar with different studies that have worked on red snapper. They all had familiarity with the fishery-independent selectivity. They came together and talked about it.

As far as the stakeholders for the technical team, I think that's more of a generic word of "stakeholders", but it is meant to be people that have expertise in stock assessments, whereas the topical working group could be somebody that has expertise in something like developing or estimating maturity or fecundity of an animal, and so what we want with the technical team is stock assessment expertise, and then potentially have -- Then having some fishing expertise as well, and so they're a little bit different, and Julie is up here to do a better explanation than what I can do.

DR. NEER: Hi, all. My name is Julie Neer. I'm the SEDAR Program Manager, in case -- I think I know most of you, but in case not, hi. So, yes, and it's a little bit confusing, the two different parts. The topical working groups, which we've been using for several years now, are not changing at all. Those are designated. The people are appointed by the cooperators, in this case the South Atlantic Council, and they will be scientists, fishermen, biologists, all kinds of people.

They will come together via webinars to hold -- To talk about a specific topic, like selectivity, or new age information, or incorporating a new index. It's a specific topic, one topic, and that's all they talk about, and that's done -- It can be either in a data stage, if it's a data topic, or it can be done in an assessment stage, if it's talking about more technical feedback, and those things are appropriate -- Are appointed appropriately based on the topic.

The technical team, even though that's the term, does not mean that there's no stakeholders or industry representatives. What the South Atlantic is trying to do is produce -- Appoint a panel that has core analytic expertise that will be across multiple assessment processes. The Gulf is not planning on doing this currently. It's a different approach, and that's fine, but the point is there's a core group of scientists, or technical experts, that will be available, but there will also be -- The core will be the same, in the South Atlantic vision. The core will be the same, and that will do multiple assessments. The reason for that is so we have some consistency for decisions that are made on the technical aspects across various assessments.

In addition to that core team, the South Atlantic is planning on appointing a few industry experts for whatever stock is being used. For example, if we're doing a blueline tilefish one, let's get Dewey on there. If we're doing hogfish, let's get the hogfish fishermen on there.

That's the piece that's going to rotate in and out, depending on what the specific assessment is, but the technical team within the South Atlantic is hopefully going to be a core team, to help with that consistency. The way the technical team functions is the assessment is being run by the lead agency. Most of the time, it's the Science Center.

If they come across a stumbling block, something they want feedback for, and it's a technical aspect, they will reach out to that core technical team of scientists. If they come across a question like, gee, I don't really -- This doesn't make any sense, or how does the fishery operate when this sort of thing happens, or can someone in the fishery explain that, and they'll reach out to those stakeholders appointed to that technical team, but the point is they don't have -- They're not on call, and they don't have a set -- They're on call, but they don't have a set schedule, like we're going to have a webinar every four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks.

The reasoning behind moving to this technical team approach, which is key, is that, one, when we try and do that set schedule, as Chip had mentioned, you get people on tap for five, six, eight months at a time, as the assessment drags out, and it takes a lot of time to schedule those webinars, have the analysts produce presentations, come out, show those presentations to the public, and we get very little feedback.

These assessments are incredibly complicated these days, and there's very few people that can actually provide helpful information, and so the approach is, if we can reach out to the people we need, when we need them, it should make the whole process much more efficient, which will translate into you guys getting more stuff done on a more frequent basis, which I think everyone agrees we need, and so that's the goal behind the technical team process, to get more, and to only engage the people when we need them, as opposed to having everybody setting up all these webinars.

We're also hoping that, in reality, we'll actually be able to get more input from stakeholders, fishermen, industry experts, because we can say, hey, we have this question, and when can I call you, and have a chat, and answer our questions, because, a lot of times, when we schedule these things, the industry guys can't come to a call, a webinar, from, you know, 11:00 to 2:00 on a random Wednesday that it gets scheduled from, and so we're hoping to have more people involved, to actually be able to get more feedback via the technical team, versus the topical working group, and you can have both.

You can have a topical working group and a technical team for a given assessment, noting that, the more stuff you add, the longer things take, as Clay will always want me to say, and so I hope that helps a little bit, but why there's those two different components, and that is why we put this infographic together, is that they're similar, but not the same, and we believe there will be some initial confusion, as we work through it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Julie, and, if I remember right, this is really all about efficiency. A lot of time was spent, and not getting a lot of input from folks, and so this is just trying to corral the good input.

DR. NEER: One quick thing to remember is everything within even topical working groups, or technical teams, they're recommendations. The agency is responsible for producing the assessment. They have the ultimate sort of say on whether to follow a recommendation with regard to you should try this, or let's do that, and they're the ones who are responsible for the assessment, the ones that have to defend it, if there's any issues, and so all of the stages in a SEDAR process are recommendations back to the agency, to try and figure out which way they prefer to go through.

The one other thing, back to the comment earlier about public involvement, or how do we track what's discussed within the technical groups, the agency has already committed to documenting their discussions at the technical team level in the assessment reports as well, and so, in addition to when it comes out to one of the publicly-noticed meetings, such as the SSC or the presentation of the final product at a review workshop, those technical team discussions are also going to be documented within the assessment report as well, to make sure that there's a record of those conversations.

MS. MURPHEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I'm all for efficiency, and I'm all for getting more people involved, especially the people that need -- You know, that have the information. The problem is -- Just to let you know that, if we don't do things in the correct way, the ultimate end product, which, you know, you all spend a lot of time with, if challenged, can be thrown out the window, because it wasn't done correctly from the get-go, the old fruit of the poisonous tree thing that you've heard before.

When the council starts -- I hear they're appointing these members, and they're kind of doing these things, and then that leads me back to then those have to be public meetings, because, if the council, as the cooperator, or whatever we say -- The council process is exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act, FACA. You've heard us talk about that before, and so, when the council starts appointing, that's kind of when we have these big SEDAR pools.

They're huge, and the council appoints them, but that's all in a public process. The meetings got noticed, and those sorts of things, and so in this -- This is a different way of doing business, and so I just want to look into it further, and make sure that it gets -- It might have to be tweaked, based on the current setup you have in here, but I just want to make sure that it's set up the right way, so that all the product is usable, all the advice is usable, and all that sort of thing.

DR. NEER: I'm happy to meet with you, work with you, talk as much as we need.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Julie, and thank you, Monica, so we make sure we do all this right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I apologize, Chip, if you mentioned this already and I missed it. Will the Steering Committee decide who is running -- The next slide, sir. Thank you. Is it the steering committee that decides who's going to have -- Who's going to -- Well, if the assessment is going to be run by the service, or if it's going to run through a SEDAR process?

DR. COLLIER: So this is where we're developing our statements of work, and we would like you all to provide guidance to the National Marine Fisheries Service. We do have time built into this process in order to have negotiations between the Science Center and council staff and bring it back here, at the SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic, to make sure we're getting the product that you want.

Sometimes the Science Center might say that I think it's going to be better to have this stock assessment as an update lite, as Clay had mentioned, or, you know, the council might want a data workshop, and so, if you look at that process run by SEDAR down at the bottom, there's potentially a lot of stages in there. Not all of them are required. That will be up to the Council to say these are the components we want. We would go and talk to NOAA Fisheries, see if they agree with that, and maybe we come back with a different proposal to you all, and after talking with the Science Center and the SSCs on what they believe is needed to do a proper review of it, but it's going to be part of the negotiations, and this is why Judd and I have been working on these statements of work, and you guys are going to be going through them.

That's what we want you all to talk about, is what is going to be the best process, and keeping in mind that, if you add every single piece that you see in that process run by SEDAR, you're going to get fewer stock assessments at the end, and so there's a balancing act, and we want the council to be involved in that balancing, and I think those statements of work are exactly where you get to put your feedback in.

MS. MURPHEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I would just add part of the Science Center, or it could be FWC, their responsibility is to tell you this is how much time it's going to take to do this particular thing, and so, if you look at the very top one, and you say, okay, this is an update lite, and we don't even need to consult the technical team, this could be something that gets done in weeks, you know, a very accelerated schedule, and you can imagine doing those in between full stock assessments, and so maybe every two years.

Every two or three years, we do an update lite to update the advice, and it's better than doing projections. You take the data that you have, plug it in the existing assessment model, and update it. We can do that quickly.

On the other hand, if you're talking about a red snapper reboot, like is coming up, and we've got major changes in information available, including the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program, then you can follow kind of the lines down on the lower part of the graph, and that's pretty much what we think of like a benchmark assessment now, and you've got data scoping, a data workshop, assessment webinars, potentially technical teams, and check-ins. I mean, it's going to be very, very thorough, but maybe that takes two years, like red snapper is going to do, because of all the things you're trying to consider.

I think this is the best way. You've got a menu of items that you can put in, and if the council says, no, we want slow and steady, you're making an explicit choice to not do many stock assessments. If you would rather say, no, we need updates more frequently, because the fishery changes, and populations change more rapidly than every five or ten years, then you're going to pick one of the things on the top, you know, just update lites, et cetera.

Also, I would add that, ideally, we do some of this stuff kind of ahead of the schedule. We know there's key stocks, that we want to regularly assess, and maybe we do them, whatever it works out being, every five or six years, but, in between, we do those update lites.

DR. COLLIER: Now Clay got to do the other part of my presentation, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: That's actually what I was thinking, and so check that off. Any questions about -- Or anything you want to add, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: I could not do any better.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Any questions on that process, direct them to Clay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks Clay. I appreciate that. The one thing I keep hearing, and repeating here in my mind, is SSC involvement, SSC involvement, and has the SSC seen this presentation yet? I know we've talked about it in the past, but they're going to do this next month, I take it, if they haven't already.

DR. COLLIER: They have not done it. We put it on the agenda in April, and in May, and, unfortunately, they did not have time to dig into it.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: So, to Clay, so this visual that we're seeing on the two different processes would be what you've been describing as the difference between a Maserati and a pickup truck, with the top being the pickup truck?

DR. PORCH: I think that's right, but I can buy a lot of pickups for the price of a Maserati.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think -- Should we move on to the last, which there's probably not a whole lot to say about the last slide, but is everybody good with moving on? We're moving on.

DR. COLLIER: So Judd is now going to come up and talk about the statements of work for different species.

DR. CURTIS: All right. Thank you, Chip, and so, now that you've seen kind of what the process entails, we're going to dig into some statements of work for some of the upcoming assessments that are on the schedule, and, just to refresh your memories on where in the process these statements of work are issued, so, after the SEDAR Steering Committee has met, and the requests from the South Atlantic Council on which species, which stock assessments they would like to see, they get added to the schedule, the SEDAR schedule, as part of the SEDAR Steering Committee.

Then, from there, we, as staff, develop these statements of work, based on the previous assessment results, things like the -- Sorry. I lost my spot here. On the research and monitoring plan, as well as recommendations from the last SSC review, including their list of major uncertainties, and so I'll present these to you here. We'll submit these, if there's not any major changes, to the center, and there's a period of negotiation. Assuming the negotiations go smoothly, then we will start generating a term of reference from these scopes of work for the final stock assessments, and those will get reviewed then by the SSC, and then finalized by you all, at a subsequent meeting.

For this series of statements of work, we've got three projects proposed for consideration. One is Spanish mackerel, with a data workshop via webinar. The second is greater amberjack, with a data workshop and/or topical working group, and the third is red porgy, with a topical working group, and so, as Chip had mentioned earlier, right, the determination of what type of assessment, and how many of those components in the assessment you would like to see, is up for you -- Is up for the council to determine, and then we'll discuss with the Science Center, and see what is most appropriate, and if it can be done with the timeline.

There's a lot of information in these. The main statements of work are more or less these single-page documents, that might trickle over to the second page, and then following that is just a list of all the research and monitoring plan recommendations, any recommendations from the stock assessment review, and/or the SSC's review, and any uncertainties that were identified in those reviews.

Starting off with Spanish mackerel, you have some information there, in the model and additional data year section, that lists when the prior assessment was done. That was SEDAR 78, completed in 2022. It's pretty standard language here in the model and additional data years. We have a bullet for what the data providers should provide, and it's typically just all the most recent available data sufficient for use in the stock assessment, through what we'll assume to be the next terminal year, but, if it happens to be later than a year, and then there is additional preliminary information that can be included, then that's up to the analyst to include into the recent data pull.

The model type, update the current Beaufort Assessment Model configuration, and here's where we suggested having a data workshop, and/or topical working group, and I'll get into some of the details of that a little bit later down in the next section. Some of the requested data updates, again,

this is a pretty standard language here, where we have just inclusion of any new and updated information that warrants consideration for the next stock assessment.

Following NMFS Procedure 01-101-11, doing a continuity run with the last configuration of SEDAR 78 with most recent runs and years of data, and then this is a new and unique bullet point for Spanish mackerel that was included based on feedback we got from stakeholders, through AP meetings and discussions that we've had, and that was to incorporate any fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data streams north of Cape Hatteras and working with state agencies, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and GARFO to gather any data on Spanish mackerel from these observer programs.

The next section looks at any model modifications to the previously-approved assessment, and here we see just updating the indices of abundance, and this is pretty standard language. I've also included a bullet there to look at any potential fishery-independent data and construction of an index from north of Cape Hatteras, based on data inclusion from the above section.

We've got some language there on looking at MRIP-recommended approaches for reducing PSEs below 50 percent and any extreme values in wave-specific estimates of catch that are high or low throughout the entire time series.

There's a bullet there on looking at how to estimate discards, commercial discards, through the observer program, and comparing that with discard logbook information. Another standard bullet is looking at evaluating a plausible range of SPR proxies, and that includes looking at any long-term average recruitment time series, or any recent average recruitment time series, and you got a long discussion of SPR proxies at our last meeting, and that's continuing to -- We'll continue to discuss that at subsequent meetings as well.

The next bullet is -- I'm going through this kind of one at a time, and there will be a lot of similarities with the next couple statements of work, and so we can skip over those ones, but the next bullet is looking at updating methods of -- New methods of estimating natural mortality, including various literature that's come out. The catch level projections workgroup was an SSC workgroup report that was generated that looked at some of the most appropriate mechanisms for looking at catch projections in the near-term and long-term, and then, specific to Spanish mackerel, the bullet here looking at recommendations from the Spanish mackerel SSC workgroup report that had been formed during the last assessment, and those are enumerated below.

The last bullet here for the assessment phase is to recommend splitting that catch by sector, develop an acceptable biological catch before splitting removals into landings and discards, and one caveat here is the council would need to develop an allocation by sector that includes landings and discards, and so any questions on -- I'm going to pause there. Any questions on the data inputs. or model modification bullets, before I continue?

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: So you might notice that the recommendation is a data workshop via webinar, and the reason that we're recommending a data workshop via webinar is the difficulties associated with travel right now, and also having people from two different science centers and regional offices.

We feel like it would be beneficial just -- Although there are difficulties associated with a webinar meeting, we feel like, due to the travel difficulties, it will be better to have a webinar meeting, to get input from both regions and science centers.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Thanks, Chip. He covered what I was going to cover next so.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, do you have a question?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes. Real quick, and I don't know if it's for Judd or Chip, or maybe Clay, but, with Spanish mackerel, I thought there were some questions, or issues, with regard to the shore-based landings from the previous assessment being very high, and so is that something that is explicitly called out here, or anything that we would want to further emphasize?

DR. COLLIER: It's there under the second bullet under possible model modifications, where use MRIP-recommended approaches for catch estimates with PSEs higher than 50, and we want to look at extreme values, high or low, for specific wave estimates. In addition to this, this is going to be done in 2027, and so hopefully the revised FES values will be out there, and this can potentially address some of those extremely high values that were coming out in the previous estimates through MRIP.

MS. MURPHEY: Other questions? Okay. Go on.

DR. CURTIS: Okay, and just a little bit more on the schedule, and so, as Chip already mentioned, right, we recommended a webinar for a full data workshop, as opposed to in-person. We feel like that's a more appropriate mechanism for getting the inclusion of any of that northern data and modeling included. As such, a topical working group would not be needed. The data workshop would take the place of any topical working groups, in this case, and then yes for an assessment technical team. A potential schedule would be looking to start in January 2027, and then hopefully be ready for the October 2027 SSC meeting for review.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Judd. Any questions about the Spanish? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so this is, just right now, sort of the outline of the scope of work, and not the TORs yet, and, with this idea of the technical team being needed, and the uncertainty of how that's going to look, as well as the fact that the SSC hasn't seen this, and weighed into it, I feel like there's going to be a significant increase in workload from the SSC. What is the action that you're looking for right now, just to ensure that I understand next steps?

DR. CURTIS: So this is the first step in that negotiation, as you said, for the statements of work, and then we'll formulate more formal terms of reference that outline the necessary assessment processes. As far as the role right now I think we would just need a motion to approve these various statements of work for each of these species, either as-is or with edits.

DR. COLLIER: Amy, you're right that the SSC is likely to have an increased workload, but maybe it might end up in less discussions by the SSC, right, if you're getting a better final product coming to them for final review. This is one of those ways to hopefully build in efficiencies.

The SSC, with this technical team, we're hoping that they're going to get a product that they're going to be happier with at that point, and we're not going to be requesting multiple projection runs, or multiple iterations of the stock assessment be conducted, and so, yes, in the beginning, there's going to be more work, either from the SSC or the technical team, in this case, which is likely to be SSC members, but we're hoping that's going to resolve some of the issues in the final product.

MS. DUKES: Then we will have information back from the SSC before we do anything moving forward with TORs, because we don't meet again until March, and is that correct?

DR. COLLIER: That's correct, and so what we're going to do is likely work with the Science Center on these statements of work, and hopefully have some discussions before the October meeting of the SSC, and potentially bring some -- Is the idea to bring it back in March?

DR. CURTIS: What we had previously done is, as long as there were no major changes recommended, and it was approved by the council, then we developed the terms of reference based on these scopes of work. Those then went to the SSC for review, and their recommendations, and then passed along to the council for final approval.

MS. MURPHEY: So I had a question. During the last Spanish stock assessment, you know, there was a lot of uncertainties, and there was a workgroup that was put together, and had asked for additional work, and that wasn't able to be done, but it looks like it's captured here somewhere. Is this going to be brought up again, or is this just going to kind of fold into to this upcoming assessment?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, so those bullets that you're referring to right there, Trish, are on the screen now, and those have all been incorporated into the new statements of work that you just reviewed, and so you see like the more contemporary natural mortality estimation method that was talked about, looking at, you know, the MRIP information, and doing any kind of sensitivities with that, and that would all be included with the new evaluation of the MRIP-FES numbers.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. Any other questions for Spanish? Do you want to -- Okay.

DR. COLLIER: Just to point out, with many of these items listed here, the Science Center can run that without a topical working group, really diving into the details of it, and so it's not necessary that a group of people get together to talk about these things. They can look into them, and they're used to dealing with these types of issues, and so we think that it's not necessarily needed, for a topical working group for something like that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Do you guys want motions individually, or one together?

DR. CURTIS: Whatever the pleasure of the chair is. We can do them all in one at the end, if that's easiest.

MS. MURPHEY: Let's just go ahead and -- Yes, and let's do all at the end then. Thanks.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Moving along, our next species was South Atlantic greater amberjack. Again, you see the model and additional data years, the information there from the last assessment,

and the data provider statements. For this assessment, we're recommending, or suggesting I guess, updating the current BAM configuration with a data workshop and/or topical working group. This is where we wanted to get some information and input from the council.

Keep in mind that the greater amberjack is also going through an independent research program, and that will result in an estimate for the South Atlantic stock, and so the inclusion of that, similar to what we're doing with the Red Snapper Research Project as well, may merit, you know, having a more focused -- Either a topical working group or a full data workshop to include that into the assessment, and so keep that in mind as we're working through the greater amberjack.

A few additional bullets unique for amberjack is -- Well, one I already touched upon, incorporate that data from the greater amberjack independent research project, and then also considering Florida State Reef Fish Survey data for estimating recreational catch off Florida, which was not available at the time of the last SEDAR assessment for amberjack in the South Atlantic.

Model modifications to the approved assessment, and, again, most of it is pretty standard updates and language, the indices and MRIP approaches, looking at SPR proxies, natural mortality, and addressing recommendations of the catch level projections workgroup, and splitting the catch by sector to develop ABCs before splitting the removals of landings and discards.

One unique bullet, that is highlighted now on the screen, is looking at any length and age composition from greater amberjack observed on the videos from the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, fishery-independent survey, to supplement any of the trap survey data, if it is possible. We'll have to dig a little bit deeper to see if there's enough video evidence, enough video information, and I'm getting an indication from Amy that that's probably not going to be the case.

MS. DUKES: Yes, Judd, that is the case. I did confirm, before the meeting, that is not going to be possible, and so you can line item that, please.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. If there's no further comments on the data and the assessment modifications, then to the components of the assessment as a whole, and so, a data workshop, is that needed, and we thought yes, to incorporate the findings of the greater amberjack research project. A topical working group may also be needed.

This would be more during the assessment phase of the project, as opposed to the data phase, since we have a full data workshop, but, again, this is kind of a placeholder for a topical working group, to aid in the inclusion of findings of the research project during the assessment phase. Then, lastly, an assessment technical team is recommended for this, and so any input, or comments, from the SEDAR Committee on what they would like to see as far as the components of this next assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts comments, or questions?

DR. CURTIS: Or I guess any just -- Any heartburn with what is recommended on the screen?

MS. MURPHEY: It looks like everyone is happy.

DR. CURTIS: Okay and last, but not least, we have red porgy. Information on red porgy, the last assessment was SEDAR 60, completed in 2020, with a prior terminal year of 2017. For this assessment, upcoming assessment, we're recommending just updating the current BAM configuration with the single topical working group, and I'll describe what that topical working group is down below in a minute.

The data updates are pretty straightforward, just looking at updated information on those various categories, and then, again, doing that continuity run. Any model modifications, I don't think there was anything unique to -- There was one thing unique to red porgy, looking at investigating the reasons for a low recruitment, and this can be done kind of looking at the various plausible range of SPR proxies as well in the different recruitment time stanzas.

Within the natural mortality updates, we also included a bullet to look at investigating information on various potential predators, such as lionfish or red snapper, that may impact natural mortality of red porgy, and this is what the topical working group would specifically address, and so any comments on any other data inputs or model specifications that you would like to see for red porgy?

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Judd, we can add one, instead of take one away. You could add that the South Carolina SERFS data could be used to create a selectivity analysis for red porgy, using the trap in the video index.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy and I've got Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Is there utility in investigating the increased landings north of Hatteras?

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Kerry. Andy, did you have your hand up? I'm sorry if I missed you.

MR. STRELCHECK: Kerry scooped me on it. No, and we were thinking the same way, and, you know, this, obviously, could present challenges, because it could be a major expansion, or reconfiguration, of the model, but I think, as worded, it's the correct way to approach this, for the time being, and see what's happening there.

DR. CURTIS: So one thing that came to mind is, if we're -- Maybe for red porgy it's not as extensive, but, for Spanish mackerel, right, the inclusion of any data further north, and the potential inclusion of that data, we suggested a topical working group. Would this be something that would need to be done under the framework of a topical working group, or is this something you think maybe staff can investigate, and then determine if a topical working group would be necessary?

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, the only thing I will point out is that, according to that report from the Mid-Atlantic, their landings are higher than our ACL, and so that's not insignificant.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I was going to add to that fact too that, because red porgy has been struggling for -- I'm nicely saying quite a while, but since like SEDAR -- Anyway, since it's been struggling, it would be interesting to know if it has shifted or not. I mean, if we're seeing things going to the Mid-Atlantic, and if that's part of the reason why our stock is not looking so good, and, again, we're into one of those other situations of depleted versus overfished.

MS. MURPHEY: Just to add to, you know, the discussion of seeing increases north of Hatteras, I know we had some internal discussions wondering if they had been just -- That they were scup classified, and so we did have some internal discussions on that, and so that may be something you want to investigate.

DR. CURTIS: So my thought is then we could form a topical working group to address any of those kind of concerns, and that would probably be the appropriate framework. All right, and so what I'm going to do is also add then just a second topical working group, and two is the max, right, that we're supposed to be including?

DR. NEER: That's an old rule.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. It's an old -- I'm looking to the SEDAR team, and that's an old rule, and so we can have as many topical working groups as we want now, and so I think we can include both of those as top working groups for the next red porgy assessment. Then, lastly, the potential schedule for this would be targeting a start date in April 2028, with the potential completion in October 2028, at the SSC meeting, although, if we're then going to be looking at multiple topical working groups, we might need to extend that timeline just a little bit.

DR. COLLIER: Just to that point, maybe we could -- As staff, we could work with Mid-Atlantic staff and talk about some of these red porgy landings in the area north to us prior to the stock assessment starting.

DR. BELCHER: That was actually what I was going to ask. Is there some way -- I just think about there's been a couple of times we've gotten into the start of an assessment, and then something critically divides it, and we either have to park it, because we've either gone to two separate stocks, or something has changed in how we approach it, and so I was curious if there was some way we would have an earlier mechanism, to see what data we had.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, I mean, Julie is coming, but I feel like staffs could work together, in order to really think about how to get this landing stream together prior to the start of the stock assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: Julie, did you want to add?

DR. NEER: No, and I actually just have a question with regard to, since you have these various start times of January and April, is that indicating to SEDAR staff that that's your priority, and you would want this assessment first, then this, then this, because we don't have a lot of say in the order of -- Of the timing of when assessments begin. The Science Center has to balance all the processes across the entire Southeast region, which is a lot, and so it's good for us to know what's your first priority, versus your second priority, versus your third priority, so that we can convey that to the

Science Center when they start working on the 2027 scheduling, so they can try and start certain things earlier in the year, versus later in the year, and so, if that's what you mean, then great, and then I can work with this.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I think that's actually what we're going to look at next, on a more kind of holistic scheduling, where these assessments might fit in in the grand scheme of things.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Wel, since Julie said prioritize, they -- Both the AJ and the red porgy are slated to start in April of 2028, and are we looking to say which one should come first, or can they go simultaneously?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, who knows which one could start first, but your recommendations I think would be greatly appreciated, which one you would like to start first.

MS. DUKES: To that point, I would pick AJ, all day long, this side of the table.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I heard several people agree with AJ. Okay. Several yeses, and so, Charlie, you look thoughtful -- Do you -- Okay. Charlie is good, too.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Then I'm just looking for a motion, and I've got a draft motion ready to go, if someone would like to make it.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have someone who would like to make this motion? Okay. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to make the motion to approve statements of work for Spanish mackerel, greater amberjack, and red porgy, with suggested edits.**

MS. MURPHEY: I have a second from Amy. Any discussion on this motion? **Any objections to this motion? The motion passes.** All right. Well, thanks, Judd, for going through all that, and so I guess one last thing, and Chip is going to go over the species for the 2025 to 2029 assessments.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so I'm going to go over currently the ongoing projects that SEDAR has, some projects that are going on outside of SEDAR, and then potentially have discussion of the 2029 stock assessments, if you all are ready to do that, or we could postpone that to March, because I have a feeling that people are worn out, and so I will go fast. That way, you all can end at a decent time tonight.

We've had two completed projects. Blueline tilefish, there was an operational assessment, and you guys have been working on the response to that, obviously, and then yellowtail snapper, and that was completed and reviewed by the SSC in February.

Some ongoing projects, and it's already been talked about this week, SEDAR 90, which is the South Atlantic red snapper stock assessment. You can see the timelines for those. One of the big things for this stock assessment is it's going to be incorporating the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project. That's going to be a really interesting project, and, right now, we're in the assessment phase for that.

We've had a hogfish, the southeastern hogfish, snapper startup, a benchmark. This is being conducted by Florida, and they're looking at the Florida stocks of hogfish. There's two different stocks off of Florida, one in the Panhandle and one down towards the Keys. This is mainly looking at both of those. They're not looking at updating the Georgia to North Carolina stock.

In addition to that, the cobia assessment is ongoing, and it's being delayed. It was postponed in the fall of 2024, and we're hoping it's going to resume in 2026, but we're not certain exactly the scope of the upcoming assessment for that.

Some upcoming SEDAR projects with planning underway, another one that you've been talking about, and you talked about I think on Monday, and it feels like a world away, but that was the dolphin management strategy evaluation. We're working on terms of reference for this. We're going to be taking that to the SSC, and then hopefully getting review by the chair. John Hadley had already talked to you about this, but have the chair of the council, the chair of the Dolphin Wahoo Committee, and the SSC liaison review those terms of reference.

Another project that's going to be starting up, or is underway, is the South Atlantic gag. They've done the data scoping for this, and so we're going to be working in addition to that. It was requested, I think at the September meeting of last year, that we provide some of some information on projects that are being done outside of SEDAR. That way, you are aware of all the projects that are going on.

One that we've been talking about quite a bit this week was the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation. You can see that timeline there. There's also a strategy evaluation being conducted by FWC on black grouper. That's expected to be completed in October of 2026. There is a Shrimp Futures initiative that was talked about during our research and monitoring plan, and that is continuing on. A lot of work has been done in the Gulf of Mexico, but there has been engagement in the South Atlantic, talking with some of the fishermen.

We have the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim and Ecospace model. This is looking at the -- It's being configured to look at potential distribution changes of black sea bass, and potential causes for that change, and hopefully that's going to be available in October of 2025, and then we're going to have a -- Or we've already talked about the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program, as well as the Greater Amberjack Research Program, and so I feel that covers most of the projects that are going on.

I feel like the one I might have missed on this is we have a wreckfish project that's going on as well, looking at management strategy evaluation for that. The stock assessment part is being done by Jeremy Collie, and then we're having outreach being conducted by Josh Nowlis and his group.

That was more in a written form, and so this is looking at it in a project form, just seeing where it's going to fit into the SSC, when the different components are going to be done, and so this could potentially help with scheduling SSC meetings, and also your meetings, to develop responses to the findings.

Then, finally, in Table 2, I have the SEDAR project grid, that usually comes out of the stock assessment -- Or out of the SEDAR Steering Committee meetings, and what I have is the full

workload that the agency is going to be doing over the next few years, which is pretty heavy, but I also highlighted what's going on in the South Atlantic, trying to make that a little bit easier for you all to read, and so you can see all the projects that are going on.

For 2029, staff have been developing recommendations here, and, if you look at that, we currently have scamp, as well as tilefishes. With the “es” on the end, that means blueline and golden tilefish, and so, if there are any questions please let me know, but I know you guys have had a busy meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: My question is actually for Clay. Clay do you know the timelines with the Shrimp Futures? Georgia is still working fisheries disaster, and we've got a project going on with Georgia Southern, and so Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, and they're doing infrastructure and boat assessment, but I'm just kind of curious to see how your timeline might overlap with ours. We're hoping to have that project wrapping up in late 2026, for us to use in 2027.

DR. PORCH: Thanks for the question. Shrimp Futures, in concept, is really big, and so there's not a fixed timeline. There's a lot of aspects to it. Some of them are slowed down, and like we were going to develop an ecosystem model that looked at potential productivity changes and the implications with the shrimp fishery. That is slowed down, whereas a lot of the socioeconomic work, and the interviews and all that, have been wrapping up. Maybe the best thing to do is put our leads in charge with yours, and get them talking together, because it really depends on which aspect of the project you're talking about how close we are to completion.

DR. BELCHER: The other thing was contacts for folks, and so, if you're talking about the productivity and all, who is handling that part of the research? I'm just thinking, from the standpoint of when you look at long-term time series, Georgia has got a very comprehensive shrimp trawl dataset that we use for our openings and closings. It goes back into the mid-1970s, and so just, again, ideas of what we've done to-date to try to help, potentially, or at least offer some data that might be of assistance with some of that.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and, in the case of the productivity modeling, that, you know, I would say is indefinitely paused, simply because the people that did the work were fired, and so, you know, once we get -- Hopefully we can get somebody onboard that can do some of that.

We are trying to combine what used to be the CEFI program, you know, the Changing Ecosystem and Fisheries Initiative, with the IEA program that you heard about a little bit earlier today, and so they can collaborate, and hopefully we can resurrect some of that work, but, ideally we were going to look at how shrimp productivity changes with the climate and ecosystem, and then maybe do a little bit of forecasting, and even wrap that into an MSE-style analysis, and so a lot of that has been put on pause, but we are looking for partners, and, you know, if we can share some ideas, and share some labor, we might be able to make more progress together.

DR. BELCHER: I mean, I'm sure my workgroup will probably fall over, but we do have a very comprehensive dataset. I mean, it goes back to Susan Shipman's time, and so there's a lot of gray literature in the building that talks about migratory patterns, basically a lot of the characteristics of reproduction, and there's tagging studies, and there's a lot of resources that we have at the office.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I'll just add the same for North Carolina. There's a lot, especially from the 1960s and 1970s, on shrimp. There was a lot of work done in our shrimp fishery, and so don't forget us. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Clay, yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. I would also say, Clay, reaching out to South Carolina DNR, and there's quite a bit of shrimp data in our history as well, with a lot of lengths, and, actually, it was kind of funny. We talked about lengths the other day, and we've got like hundreds of thousands of lengths over time, and so it's something to be aware of. We're happy to help.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: So I can use the three of you as contacts? All right.

DR. BELCHER: Or my replacement, depending on how hard you push.

MS. MURPHEY: So I would say yes. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Chip, could you tell me quickly what the timeline is on the wreckfish MSE?

DR. COLLIER: They're going to be presenting a draft stock assessment model at the October SSC meeting, and then the full timeline for that is to be expected to be completed in 2027.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: I might be losing my mind, but I was trying to recall that we took vermilion snapper off this list.

DR. COLLIER: So it was taken off the list for 2027, and we moved it down to 2028, and then the agency had indicated they might be able to get it done in addition to the Spanish mackerel update, if the Spanish mackerel stock assessment wasn't going to be overly complicated, but, with the addition of some of that northern data, it might be complicated, and I'm not positive, and so that's why we're going to have to have some of the discussions.

MS. MURPHEY: We did decide to bump Spanish up a little, right, and so -- Anything else? So I guess the last thing of the day is we've got tentatively, I guess, for 2029, scamp and tilefishes scheduled. Any thoughts on that, or everybody is good with that? I mean, I guess it's always -- It could always change, but, right now, this seems to be fitting in. Any comments, or thoughts, or is everybody good with this so far? I see thumbs-up. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: You know, you're setting out these schedules, and, at the end of the assessment, you'll have the SSC, you know, come before the council, and then how do we do like -- Have it scheduled to where you'll do a framework, if there's fish to be given to the fishermen, in a timely fashion, but, if it's fish to be taken away from the fishermen, take your time.

I mean, I'm just saying like how do we get a placeholder of this stuff, when we're experimenting something, or when we're looking at something, to be able to get the fish into the bank of the recreational and commercial fishermen, you know in like two meetings, very similar to the

experience -- The experiment as what's going on now with blueline, and I'm just wondering about, you know, you've got a lot of schedule in here, and you've got a lot of moving parts, and, if you don't get your -- It seems like, if you don't get your placemaker up on the board, you might get passed over.

I just wonder about thinking about that, as we're moving along on this stuff, when you get closer to finality, where the SSC is going to get it, make their decision, whatever it may be, and then we move -- You know, get it to where the council has a bite at it, and then, you know, the process there, and so just be thinking about that, because I'm going to be thinking about that, you know, for while I'm here. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Dewey.

DR. COLLIER: I'll work on it, and I'm sure Andy can have some much better comments than what I'll provide, but, you know, Clay had mentioned this idea of interim assessments, or interim updates, and what I'm hoping is, if we get more frequent catch level advice, we're not going to have to have the shocks to the system that require a lot of changes in the stock assessment, or in the catch levels, and, therefore, what a trip limit would have to be, what a season would have to be, you all would just be able to do simple adjustments to the catch level, and that could be implemented through that abbreviated framework that you had mentioned that's being considered for blueline tilefish.

Some of these processes that we have now, and, you know, having eight years between stock assessments, it could lead to significant changes in the population, and, therefore, you have to have big changes on how the fishery operates, and I think that leads to much larger amendments, and slows down the entire process, and so, if we have more frequent catch advice, I feel like we can get things done a little bit quicker, because you're not going to have to do as much at one time.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anything else? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, just to add to that, I mean, Chip showed, a little bit earlier, in terms of different scheduling approaches, but the bottom line is we want to move away from this, you know, plug-and-play approach, a Tetris approach, in terms of scheduling assessments. We're going to have, obviously, stock assessments for key species, but then, as Chip and Clay and others are pointing out, trying to get into a more regular rhythm, with some simpler approaches, processes that can move stock assessments along faster, so that we get more advice, more regularly, that aligns more with the current fishing conditions, right?

So, you know, we'll see how it bears out, and what's to come, but, ultimately, at the end of the day, I'm hoping that we'll be able to see a different approach, in terms of how we present these assessments going forward, that it's inclusive of not only the key stocks, but those more simpler interim approaches.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Andy. Anything else? Any other business to discuss? Seeing none, Chip, do you have anything else, or are we finished? Are you finished? I think we're all done. All right, everybody. Thanks for hanging in there.

We're actually still getting done a smidge early, and so yay. Everybody is happy, right? Yes, everybody is happy, and so okay. Well, I'll go ahead and adjourn today, and we will meet back tomorrow morning at 8:30 for the last day of the fun.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 18, 2025.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
October 27, 2025

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1	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Trish Murphey (Chair)	NC	NC Division of Marine Fisheries	State Agency
2	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Jessica McCawley (Vice-Chair)	FL	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	State Agency
3	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	WEP Robert Beal	VA	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	ASMFC
4	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Dr. Carolyn Belcher	GA	GA DNR Coastal Resources Division	State Agency
5	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Amy Dukes	SC	SC DNR Marine Resources Division	State Agency
6	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ James Hull Jr.	FL		Obligatory
7	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Kerry Marhefka	SC		At-Large
8	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Charlie Phillips	GA		At-Large
9	Data Assessment and Catch Advice	✓ Andy Strelcheck	FL	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region	NOAA Fisheries

Chris Schieble

Sonny Gwin

Rick DeVactor

Monica Smit-Brunello

Clay Poch

Kathy Knowlton

Kristen Foss

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Walter Buble

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			Vice-Chair	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
✓ Jessica	McCawley			Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
web ✓ Robert	Beal			GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
✓ Carolyn	Belcher			
✓ Gary	Borland			
✓ Amy	Dukes			SC DNR Marine Resources Division
✓ Judy	Helmey			
✓ Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright			
✓ James	Hull	Jr.		
✓ Kerry	Marhefka			
X Tom	Pease			Seventh Coast Guard District
✓ Charlie	Phillips			
X Tom	Roller			
X Robert	Spottswood	Jr.		
✓ Andy	Strelcheck			NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
	Warner-			
X Deirdre	Kramer			Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD			U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

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September 2025

Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 07:15 AM EDT

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09/18/2025 07:39 AM EDT

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

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Not applicable for staff

Attendee Details

Last Name

First Name

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Dustin

Aines

Alex

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bell

Mel

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Bogdan

Jennifer

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

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Christopher

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McCoy	Sherylanne
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vara	mary
zales	bob
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Alexander	Nathan
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Clinton	Haley
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Ingram	Jamal
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Keppler	Blaik
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Lorenzen	Kai
Martin	Drew

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Mikalian	Amanda
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O'Donnell	Kelli
Perkinson	Matt
Peterson	Cassidy
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Reed	John
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Rule	Erica
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Saurman	Emma
Sedberry	George
Simmons	Carrie
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Leah
Smith	John
Spratt	Paige
Stemle	Adam
Tidball	Victoria
Turley	Brendan
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Walsh	Mick
Warren	Camilla
Wiegand	Christina
Wilms	Sean
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oden	jeff
vincent	matthew