

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



SSC Meeting Report

September 5, 2017

Meeting via webinar

**VERSION
FINAL
September 21, 2017**

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SAFMC PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Written comment:

Written comment on SSC agenda topics is to be distributed to the Committee through the Council office, similar to all other Council briefing materials. Written comment to be considered by the SSC shall be provided to the Council office no later than one week prior to an SSC meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for submission of written comment is 12:00 pm Tuesday, August 29, 2017. Submit written comments to:

SAFMC – SSC Comments
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
Mike.collins@safmc.net

Verbal comment:

The SSC will take public comment during each agenda topic. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, which may be through a show of hands or a written list if the number of interested parties is extensive, who will then recognize individuals to come forward and provide comment. All comments are part of the record of the meeting.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Documents

Agenda

1.2. Action

- Introductions
- Review and Approve Agenda

2. REVIEW OF PROPOSED RESEARCH TRACK PROCEDURE

2.1. Documents

Attachment 1. Research Track Proposal

Attachment 2. SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting Summary – May 2017

Attachment 3. Proposed Research Track Procedure

2.2. Overview

At their April 2017 meeting, the Committee was asked to comment on the Research Track procedure proposed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The Committee was provided with Attachment 1, which they felt was unclear on many of the aspects of the Research Track procedure. The Committee provided general comments and asked for a webinar, which included more thorough documentation of the Research Track procedure, in order to provide a more detailed and useful review. A webinar would also allow the Committee to provide feedback on any decisions made during the May 2017 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting.

2.3. Public Comment

2.4. Action

- Review the proposed Research Track procedure and provide any recommendations and comments as appropriate.

SSC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Review the proposed Research Track procedure and provide any recommendations and comments as appropriate.
 - *The SSC noted that the SEFSC response was brief, and did not provide much additional details on the Research Track (RT) or the Operational Assessment (OA). The SSC has essentially the same information it had in April 2017*
 - *Questions that need to be addressed –before further discussions- for SSC to formulate detailed recommendations.*
 - *What are the benefits of RT and what value do these add relative to existing processes*

- *What level of peer review is expected or required for both the RT and OA, and at what stages within each process will this be required.*
 - *How long will the processes take?*
 - *What are the costs (both fiscally and in terms of personnel resources)*
 - *What is the plan for transitioning from (or amending) the current process*
 - *What are the roles and responsibilities of the Center, SSC, and Council in the RT and OA processes*
 - *The roles of data providers need clarification in both the RT and OA, including the time needed to collect, assemble, and provide all requisite data*
 - *The scope of operational assessments needs further clarification. In particular, what changes are allowed, what are the criteria for allowing such changes, and who is responsible for making these decisions.*
 - *In the RT, clarify what constitutes “sufficient progress”, who determines this, and what is the review (update) process along the way.*
 - *Clarify the need for having a RT by reviewing the various shortcomings and recent failures of the current benchmark. Then address how existing issues or challenges would be avoided or resolved by the RT.*
- *There will be pressure on the Council to use RT results, even without the most recent data being included per the proposed plan. This will create an urgency to conduct operational assessments using the latest fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data.*
 - *Future first-time assessments will be analytically challenging, influenced by data limitations, and may likely prove difficult to accomplish on a strict schedule. An alternative approach like the RT may increase the chance of developing an acceptable assessment.*
 - *Keeping the process within SEDAR has benefits such as participation by SSC and others (state data providers).*
 - *A parallel process (RT and current SEDAR) should be considered, meaning that there could be a RT process to develop new tools and a “SEDAR” assessment process that leads to management recommendations.*
 - *Time is a critical element. Assessment development does not always proceed as planned; challenges are difficult or impossible to foresee; difficult to establish strict timelines for the various phases of the process (data, assessment, review)*
 - *Consider integrated peer review – throughout the process, as opposed only at the end. This peer review should include SSC, but can also include experts outside the SSC. The SSC clarified that this does not (necessarily) mean CIE reviewers.*
 - *The addition of a stricter category of update assessments was proposed. However, this could be included in the range of OAs. However, there may be advantages of having this stricter definition, in particular relative to the abbreviated time needed to conduct and provide such assessments. The role of the SSC for this category (i.e. review only after process is completed) needs to be clarified.*

The SSC recognizes the need for a research track type approach to addressing assessment challenges. The SSC supports the idea in concept.

Based on general nature of discussions on this call, the lack of needed details on the process, and the current inability to define benefits, it is premature for the SSC to recommend the RT process as a replacement for existing procedures at the present time. The SSC suggests that a pilot of the process be conducted and evaluated to determine (1) how the process will actually work, (2) what benefits the process will provide, and (3) how the RT process will fit into existing Council and Center processes.

To aid in this evaluation, there is a need to compare and contrast the RT and existing process on key points (such as those listed as questions to address), and to evaluate the RT with respect to generating more robust and higher quality assessments, and the delivery time of these assessment results for management use.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

SSC was updated on pending red snapper actions.

SSC was informed that research activity of the SEFSC regarding an approach to use fish independent index information to evaluate and monitor red snapper is not proceeding. The SSC regrets this situation, because the SSC considered these efforts useful for monitoring the stock and for serving as a basis for future ABC advice (as indicated in the SEFSC letter to Gregg Waugh dated April 21 2017 and provided to the SSC at its April 2017 meeting). The SSC also considers that the SEFSC research efforts have the potential to enhance and refine harvest control rules for red snapper and other species.

The SSC further regrets that the nature of the timing of the emergency action precluded an opportunity for the Committee to provide its scientific input on the proposed measures.

4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

The Committee was provided an opportunity to review its report and final recommendations.

Due to the timing of this meeting, a preliminary report on the Committee's recommendations will be provided by the Chair at the September SAFMC meeting. The Final SSC report will be available for the Council at the December Council meeting.

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