



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
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August 15, 2017

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Gregg Waugh  
Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

**FROM:** Bonnie J. Ponwith, Ph.D. *Theo R. Beirne*  
Science Director

**SUBJECT:** Research Track Information for SSC Review

The following summary serves as a general outline for how the SEFSC envisions the Research Track proceeding. We fully expect the details of this plan will need further refinement, which is best handled with input from the SAFMC and SSC.

### Summary description of proposed research/operational track

#### *Intersessional workshops*

Stock ID workshops as currently practiced (could be multiple species, scheduled in anticipation of potential future research tracks)

SEDAR Methods workshops as currently practiced (focuses on addressing specific issues, standardizing and streamlining the assessment process)

#### *Research track assessments*

1. Data Stage: (5 months) similar to DW phase, with a data report deliverable similar to the current process. Primary change is a shift in focus from completing an assessment input dataset with the most up-to-date information to identifying and evaluating data issues and developing a preliminary data set (which may be incomplete in some aspects)

2. Assessment Stage: (variable duration, depending on progress, but less than 10 months) similar to the existing benchmark assessment phase, but without a firm deadline at the outset, and removing the expectation to provide management advice in the assessment report.

3. Peer Review Stage: (2 months) Similar to existing peer-review process and review

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workshop, but scheduled during the assessment stage only after analysts determine that sufficient progress has been made to ensure a reviewable product (and a minimum of 3-4 months in advance to accommodate CIE constraints). SEDAR role concludes upon report dissemination (same as with current process).

5. Post SEDAR: (variable, depending on scope of recommendations) Research Track assessment tool is revised per the peer review, reviewed by SSCs, updated data obtained. Administrative record responsibilities shift to assessment agency and cooperator

*Operational assessments*

Operational assessments (3 months), scheduled according to need, prepared with most recent data similar to existing update process. Cooperators approve TORs that define the nature of the operational assessment and the role of their technical reviewers.

In cases where there is pressure to conduct an operational assessment immediately after the research track, the anticipated time from beginning of research track to end of operational would be 16-21 months. Otherwise it would be beneficial to schedule operational assessments at regular intervals as done in several other regions.

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cc:

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