

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SEDAR COMMITTEE

**Sea Palms Resort and Conference Center
St. Simons Island, GA**

March 8, 2011

SUMMARY MINUTES

SEDAR Committee

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Other Participants Attached

The SEDAR Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Sea Palms Resort and Conference Center, St. Simons Island, Georgia, March 8, 2011, and was called to order at 10:07 o'clock a.m. by Chairman David Cupka.

MR. CUPKA: If you'll take your seat, we'll go ahead and convene the meeting of the SEDAR Committee. The first order of business will be approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? I have one under other business; an issue I would like to bring up relative dolphin and wreckfish, but we'll get to that under other business. Any other additions or changes to the agenda? Is there any objection to approving the agenda? Seeing none, then the agenda is approved.

The minutes of the last meeting, are there any additions, changes or corrections to that. Seeing none, then the minutes are approved. That brings us down to SEDAR activities and John is going to give us an overview of recent SEDAR activities.

MR. CARMICHAEL: In the South Atlantic area, right now we're in the midst of SEDAR 25 for South Atlantic black sea bass and golden tilefish being pursued as a standard assessment under our new criteria. So far they've held data scoping back in February and the data workshop is coming up in April.

We provided via the e-mail the most up-to-date copy of the participant list for SEDAR 25. There were some changes in some of the state personnel; the issues going on with the states and people who can make and people who can't and trying to make sure that we've had all the people who have the data to bring on the list. I just wanted to provide you with an update of the participants.

One question that was brought up and we discussed this at some of our planning calls with regard to the recreational statistics workgroup, and during the scoping the leaders of that group pointed out that they didn't have any fishermen representatives on that. We discussed on the chair's call about the possibility of trying to get some fishermen on that.

If someone from one of the states knows someone in mind, perhaps you could suggest the name now. If we do bring in somebody to serve as a panelist, we need to have someone who is on our SEDAR pool; ideally someone who has participated before and thus we know that they're in the pool. That is the one issue for SEDAR 25 we would like to bring up.

MR. CUPKA: Let's go ahead and deal with that now. Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: If you don't mind me interrupting here, were you thinking in terms specifically of somebody in the for-hire industry like a headboat participant or an individual hook and look or both or just one participant. I think there are probably significant issues for both of those two parts of the recreational sector in this fishery.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'd say we're thinking of both at this point, but we certainly would like to at least get someone from one component of the recreational sector if we can. I think I would point out that back when we sent out the initial planning for this, black sea bass was one of those stocks that there is a lot more interest in it now than there was nine months ago.

MR. CUPKA: And we would need to make that appointment before when, John?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'd say by mid-March so they can make travel plans, but certainly before, say, two weeks before the workshop, but we'll work with whatever we get; so the end of March, the first of April.

MR. HAYMANS: Is that purely recreational or for-hire as well?

MR. CARMICHAEL: It's one, both, either; whatever you guys have.

MR. HAYMANS: So I think at least from Georgia Steve Amick and Zack Bowen are both approved already, so I would recommend either one of them being contacted or do I need to do that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: You can suggest their name here; and if the committee agrees, we'll move forward with that. I think it would be nice to get someone north and south. If there was someone in North Carolina who was active, that would be helpful.

MR. HAYMANS: Well, I would certainly suggest one of those two.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, we'll need to take formal action and what I was going to suggest is I know this is kind of hitting everyone cold, and maybe if you had somebody in mind, if you could get in touch with them and maybe at full council we could take action to approve them. Our process does allow us to approve people outside of a council meeting, but if we can get that set up by the end of this meeting I would prefer to do that if we could. If you have anybody in mind, if you can get hold of them and make sure they're willing to serve, then at full council we could have a motion to appoint them to the panel. Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I know right now Tom Burgess is talking to Terrell Gould, but he is a name who I would probably want to have considered from North Carolina. As a headboat operator he is very interested in what is going on with black sea bass right now. We would have to see if we can come up with a name for a recreational angler individual if we wanted to put one forward there, but I'm not sure who has even been approved on your list that would make sense. At this point I can't definitely offer a name there. I'm not trying to usurp what Doug is saying. I just want to get a list of names that we can all consider.

MR. CUPKA: Well, we have people that are kind of pre-approved that are in the pool; but if they're not in the pool, then it would be the same process as appointing an AP member with checks and all, but we need to do it fairly quick because the data workshop is coming up. If by the end of this committee meeting, if you get some indication from an individual or by the time we get to full council, we can entertain motions there.

MR. HAYMANS: And that's for the data workshop?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, it's for the data workshop, April 26-28, in Charleston.

MR. ROBSON: Can we have e-mailed to us the pool list or is there a place where we can review that again? It is not in the briefing book?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, it's not; we should be able to do that. It's tracked as the other APs and such are tracked, but I think Kim and them probably have a list that we can send to you. It would probably be difficult, considering how we handle the pool, to get someone new into the pool given the timing that we're dealing with, so it would be nice to know.

I would think there is a possibility that you could consider appointing someone if you think they'd really be the right person for the job. They just wouldn't be an official participant and listed as panelists, but you could appoint someone at least to observe. It's the data workshop and it's the least formal of the SEDAR workshops, and they would have plenty of opportunity to participate.

MR. CUPKA: Well, we'll ask staff to provide that list of people in the pool; and if you'll be thinking about that before we get to full council and then we will deal with it then. Okay, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next item is the report of the SEDAR Steering Committee. The steering committee met last week via conference call. We e-mailed out to you guys – the draft meeting summary hasn't been approved by the steering committee so please recognize it as draft. It documents the issue of business the steering committee was addressing, which are changes in the SEDAR process.

As I reported in December, when the steering committee met in October they came up with some changes to the process but weren't comfortable rolling them out fully without getting a more in-depth review and without getting consultation from those who are involved in the day-to-day operations and doing most of the heavy work under SEDAR.

We convened a task force to look into those procedural changes and they reviewed them and came up with some additional suggestions and provided a proposal back to the steering committee, which the steering committee then reviewed on their conference call. The steering committee, then the next step, they endorsed these changes. We're moving ahead with assessment in 2011 following this process.

At their next meeting they'll approve the final guidelines which fully document all of this. There is a summary in their report of some of the big issues that they talked about. Really, what it comes down to is agreeing that SEDAR will pursue three types of assessments in the future; the first being the benchmark assessment, which is similar to what we do now.

There is really no appreciable changes in that process from we do now as a standard type of SEDAR benchmark assessment. The second thing is the standard assessment, which we discussed some at our last meeting. The steering committee has agreed with that and the other group agreed with that and to be pursued under a bit of a streamlined process. The standards will be done, say, through a combination data/assessment workshop. This approach is really very similar to what the update assessments became over time.

There will be allowances to bring in some new data, to bring in new data sources, and I think the best example of the types of new data sources that we would bring in would, say, the new independent monitoring that is going on in the South Atlantic. It's envisioned that we would go through a data source like that for many species and agree to how it should be handled and then be able to bring it up into specific assessments during the standard assessment process.

We wouldn't be looking at new models, but the model framework would have to be amenable to bringing in that type of data, but we would bring in some limited new information. If there is new research on a controversial issue, that would be considered. But if there are perhaps things that we simply have no further information on, then the previous benchmark type decisions would stand.

The idea is to streamline it some but to be effective and bring in new information to the extent that we can. The final part then is the update assessment. The idea behind the update assessment is that they really go back to what updates originally began with in SEDAR so many years ago, it seems, where the update was very strict. It implies that you add new points to the time series you have. You add new years of data. You don't bring in any new information of any type.

You simply add the catch, you add the survey, you add the age compositions, you add all that type of information into your model. The updates will be developed through the Science Center. The analysts will solicit the data based on what was used in the previous assessments. They will get the updated points to add to their time series and their input files, and they will submit this out to the SSC then for review.

They'll prepare the report, they'll document it, here are the results, it will go to the SSC. That will really make it much more efficient because we will take a lot of this effort and discussion out of what they have to deal with and allow them to say, yes, you know, we need to do this rapidly. We're really envisioning that these updates will be when we have a concern about something that is going on in a stock, if there has been a good year class, if we see signs in the fishery, then we need to get some rapid information on that species.

On the back page of the SEDAR Report there is a brief summary of these three different types. I think the stage we're at now is to think about what our stocks in the future – how we go about assessing them. The next steering committee meeting will be held in May and the primary order of business there will, of course, be looking at the assessments that are on our schedule and thinking how we would like them assessed.

We've provided the updated steering committee planning schedule for what we plan to do in 2012, and this committee could give some guidance back on that at this meeting so your representatives have an idea if we want to do some the assessments planned in 2012 to, say, an update. Perhaps red porgy is one that is scheduled on there that we want to pursue that one as an update, to be able to allow us to meet the desired workload that's on the SEDAR table for 2012, because there is a lot of concern amongst the analysts and the data providers about the large number of assessments they're being asked for. It is viewed by doing some of these as updates that we can be a lot more efficient.

I wanted to highlight one other thing and make sure I said this is that the standard assessments will not have an independent review panel either. They'll be reviewed by the SSC. We will be doing the independent review panels only for the benchmark assessments in the future. I'll turn it back over to you, David, for any questions or discussion.

MR. CUPKA: Any questions of John on the procedural changes we're looking to begin? Of course, the idea of all of this is to get more timely assessments and hopefully more assessments particularly in regard to standard assessments and the updates. Vince.

MR. O'SHEA: Mr. Chairman, it's not a question as much as a statement. John and I talked about this offline. Up in the Northeast Fisheries Science Center we're looking at the same thing. I can't say how logical this approach is in my view. Ten years ago we had this five-year standard, but now with ACLs and AMs we have a much greater demand on stock assessment scientists. We have limited resources. It makes no sense to me whatsoever that we're going to treat all stocks across the board equally in terms of how we're looking at them.

So, life history issues, the status of the stock, rebuilding times, all those things ought to go into how – and the willingness of the managers to take action on the science advice; I think this is a much more rational and realistic approach given the limited resources of science. I was very supportive of that on the telephone call and wanted to reiterate that support, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CUPKA: Other questions of John? All right, we need to go through the schedule and see if there is any input you want to give to the steering committee when we meet in May. We did make some changes or discussed some changes at our last meeting in December. I don't know if those have been incorporated or not.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, the latest schedule was e-mailed out and it was provided in December as well so if you have that briefing book you can go back to that quickly. For the South Atlantic, in 2012 what we're planning – now what I'm going to tell you incorporates some of your suggestions from December for 2012.

Golden crab and gray triggerfish to be done as benchmarks; greater amberjack and red porgy which were suggested to be done as standards, but I think there should be some discussion about possibly doing those as updates if that would be appropriate. Then the biggie for us and the Gulf is the coastal migratory pelagic complex, in which case we're talking about king, both groups; Spanish, both groups, all have been assessed before.

I guess Spanish in the Gulf actually hasn't been assessed through a SEDAR benchmark at this point so it would be the first one for that. But cobia is also in that and you have two groups for cobia. As it stands now you have the coastal migratory pelagic complex with six assessments essentially; three species, two groups for each one.

You have things like cero and little tunny which have been in for data collection purposes. There has been a lot of talk about little tunny as well. That's the 2012 stocks that we have planned now for the South Atlantic.

MR. CUPKA: Any discussion on those? Amberjack I would think certainly we could do an update on. I'm not sure on red porgy, but if you feel like that is –

MR. CARMICHAEL: We've done an update of red porgy already; and considering that we're in the midst of a rebuilding and the plan has stepped-in increases and such and we're getting near the end, I think probably doing something that gets us an update, unless someone were to think we have new information – we may get some new information from the monitoring that has been underway, but that wouldn't be mature enough at this point for 2012 that we'd be using that, incorporating it, so I think an update would probably work for red porgy. It's at least something to consider and we'll understand that we'll work with the SSC as well as the Science Center analysts for the final decision which comes up in May, but getting some council intent here will help.

DR. CHEUVRONT: One of the requests that we made at the December meeting was to switch red porgy with the B-liners and we B-liners in 2014. The idea was that the B-liner reassessment we think would have a bigger impact than the red porgy assessment would. I'm not aware at this point of any new data streams or anything that would change the B-liner assessment that could probably be done as an update.

There had some discussion – I remember that some folks were concerned about keeping red porgy there because it's sort of its time to come in the rotation. However, I think the B-liner assessment is something that just like we've done so many assessments on red snapper and all and the updates that we're doing there, the impacts of a B-liner assessment I think would be much greater than a red porgy assessment.

John was just talking about some of the monitoring that is going on which may not be able to be included in a simple update assessment of red porgy. I think that maybe adds a little more emphasis to the reasoning behind we could maybe do a B-liner assessment in 2012 as opposed to – you know, just switching the two species around, B-liners and the red porgy I think. I would like for us to consider that again. It was a suggestion that came out of the meeting in December; and if the SEDAR Committee decided not to do that, I'd like to hear the reasoning behind it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The SEDAR Committee hasn't discussed it yet. They'll discuss it in May. I didn't have the swapping of those as a motion from my notes from December. We did have a motion to swap gray triggerfish and white grunt and then to assess blueline along with Warsaw and speckled hind. Those are the changes that are reflected here. Maybe somewhere along the way we lost the discussion of vermilion.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I keep track of the motions; and if you'd like, I can probably go through mine and find out if actually a motion was made, but I know that at one point that was one of the discussions that we had that Tom Swatzel and I had wanted to get that swapped out.

MR. CUPKA: What I would suggest, Brian, if that's what you want to go, go ahead and make a motion. Don't worry about checking back; just give us a motion.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Fine, I'll make a motion, then, that we replace the red porgy update in 2012 with a vermilion update and just switch the two in their positions on the SEDAR schedule with B-liner assessment being an update assessment in 2012. Now, I'm not quite sure how we're going to get that into the motion so we obviously have to work on the wording, but I think the gist of what I'm after is out there.

MR. CUPKA: And I think we understand the intent of your motion. Okay, we have a motion by Brian and a second by Mark. Is there any discussion on the motion? The motion is to replace the red porgy update in 2012 with the vermilion snapper update in 2014; to switch the vermilion snapper and the red porgy in the schedule. We'll get an update on vermilion in 2012 rather than 2014. In 2014 we'll get an update on red porgy.

DR. McGOVERN: One thing the committee might want to consider with this motion is that red porgy is in an 18-year rebuilding period, and the end of that rebuilding period I think is – 1999 was Year One so I think around 2013 is the end of that rebuilding period, so it would make sense to do an update for red porgy fairly soon to see if it's rebuilding on schedule. Also, the red porgy rebuilding strategy isn't a constant catch one. It has stepped increases as it rebuilds, so it would be good to see where it is.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think red porgy was in 2012 to be able to look at it before we reached the expected end of the rebuilding time, so perhaps the committee will simply ask to do vermilion in addition to red porgy. We will need to prioritize because there is a limit as to how much we can do. We don't know that the Science Center is going to be able to fill all of these slots that we have as well. I think we definitely will need to prioritize – and whether or not greater amberjack perhaps is more important than red porgy or vermilion.

MR. ROBSON: I know it's tight to get all this stuff into the schedule. Maybe it would be good to try to get both of them done, but I would echo what Brian has said. I think this vermilion fishery is extremely important and it would be very valuable with all the other things that we're doing right now and the impacts we're having to get some re-examination of that fishery and get some new information.

MR. HARTIG: Well, pertinent to that discussion, certainly greater amberjack could be pushed off until a later time period. With vermilion, I would certainly support that. We're not approaching quotas on greater amberjack and I think vermilion would be much more appropriate if you wanted to do that.

The other question I had was on Atlantic Spanish. When you had the last assessment that didn't come to a biomass estimate, what choices do you have, John, on going forward with – what kind of assessment would you have to do with that problem in that assessment?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think part of it was probably related to the data so getting more data and being able to look at it again. I think that's why we'd like to probably consider Atlantic Spanish as a benchmark to see if some of those issues can be resolved and start from a different direction.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, and that gets me to a fishery that should be on autopilot, which we should be doing updates on Spanish in my opinion, you know, boom, boom, boom with the assessment history that it has, and now we have to switch and do a benchmark on Spanish because of that. I would like to see some discussion on a way that we can get around that; that we don't have to put that much resources into Spanish mackerel based on the assessment history that it has. I don't know; I'd just like to see you guys discuss that and see if there is a way that we could do a standard assessment for Spanish coming up.

MR. CUPKA: Before we do that, let's get back to our motion on the red porgy and vermilion. What I would suggest, based on the previous discussion, is that maybe we withdraw that motion and maybe have a motion to do all three but to prioritize them, something along those lines.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Actually can we modify the motion – would this help if we changed instead of red porgy that we talked about greater amberjack. That's not on a rebuilding schedule right now. I guess that would be less an issue. I hadn't taken into account the things that Jack had said about the rebuilding plan for red porgy, and that kind of makes sense.

Frankly, greater amberjack aren't in any kind of trouble and seem to be doing well. It would make more sense to go ahead and do the red porgy and the B-liners as an update, both of them in 2012, and then just not have to worry about prioritizing if they were already planning on doing two update assessments, and then just move the greater amberjack to 2014, because that's not really a species of concern at this point. If that's okay with my seconder to modify my motion?

MR. CUPKA: **Okay, that's an amended motion and it's okay with Mark. Let me read the amended motion, which is to replace the greater amberjack update in 2012 with the vermilion snapper update in 2014; switch vermilion snapper and greater amberjack in the schedule.** Further discussion on the motion? Bonnie, did you have something before?

DR. PONWITH: Well, it may be overtaken by events here in the conversation. It's just to remind that having the discussion so we understand the logic behind this and your rationale for the priorities, the key word here is the priorities because we have to be careful about adding something in without knowing what we would be willing to swap out for it. This is a useful discussion.

MR. CUPKA: Further comments on the motion? **Is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, then that motion is approved.** Do you want to continue with the other changes, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Other issues to discuss with regard to scheduling and starting with what Ben said, and he raised the question of doing a standard for Spanish. I guess I would not be in favor of that because we'll be looking at a benchmark of Gulf Spanish, and there may be some insights that come out of that. There may be some more information that comes to light.

I wouldn't want to get in a situation where some advancement is made for Spanish in the Gulf and then the South Atlantic is held at having looked at a standard without being able to incorporate some of those changes, maybe a whole new model. We deal with the consistency

issues all the time, and that's one of the reasons why I've been a huge proponent of needing to do this coastal migratory pelagic complex together as a complex.

I hear from the Gulf and the South Atlantic that there are other issues out there that not all of those species are necessarily as high a priority as some of the other species on our list, but I simply don't see any other way we can be appropriately consistent in a group of species that are so closely related and historically were assessed together without considering all of those at one time. I'd hate to see us pull out the South Atlantic and Gulf cobias and pursue them on different paths and end up with different decisions made by different groups of people because that's where we'll end up and we'll be right back at the table with whichever side doesn't like its outcome, criticizing the process that said those guys used a different decision and they got a different outcome.

That's why I think it's important to put the resources into looking at that whole complex together. There are a lot of issues in that complex. I think Ben is right; we need to get those to a functioning place where we can not have to do benchmark. We've done benchmarks of king mackerel twice already within the SEDAR process. We need to get to a point where we can do more of these as standards and updates in a much more timely basis.

MR. WAUGH: To follow up on what John said, I think we can't lose sight of the fact that there is one king mackerel stock. We manage it by two migratory groups but there is interplay there; the same for Spanish, it is one Spanish mackerel stock; and the same for cobia, it's one cobia stock with exchanges and we're just managing it as separate migratory group. I think the idea of when we do a stock assessment, that we do it for the stock involving both migratory groups at the same time is a good approach.

MR. CUPKA: One of the things that I notice here in 2013 is we've added blueline tilefish to this group of species and one of the species is the wreckfish. I guess that kind of brings me up to the other business item I was going to bring up, and that is they just an assessment on spiny lobster that there were problems with and it was not accepted.

I think part of the rationale for why it wasn't accepted it was recognized that spiny lobster has recruitment from areas outside our area of jurisdiction. We've got species in our area of jurisdiction that had the same consideration and those are wreckfish and dolphin. Dolphin is obviously a wide-ranging species and occurs outside of our jurisdiction as does wreckfish.

There are wreckfish that occur over in the Azores and areas beyond our EEZ. It kind of raised the issue that we need to be thinking about; is that going to be a problem when it comes time to do dolphin and the wreckfish assessments? Are we going to run into some of the same concerns that we have with spiny lobster? If so, what does that do relative to the priority that we give them in the SEDAR assessment? John, do you have any thoughts on that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I think we've had some discussions of wreckfish at the SSC and what it means and the realization that we do see a portion of that stock. I think there probably will be similar issues to be discussed as we move into the assessments of these species and not

having influence over their entire stock or over the entire range which a species may travel such as with dolphin.

We may see the bulk of the stock at some point during the year, but there is an awful lot of distance it covers that we don't have control over. I think in most cases there probably will be some assessment issues and we may end up in cases like wreckfish where it's very difficult for us to estimate biomass and thus estimate productivity.

I don't think that several of these are probably going to turn out as cleanly as spiny did where at least you have sort of this flow of the young into the Florida area and they settle there and you have a pretty good case that whatever goes on in Florida doesn't strongly influence the overall spawning biomass versus some of these others that may be a harder case to build; in which case then you do have the issue of protecting what you have but also not knowing that protecting what you have will be enough to ensure you can reach maximum productivity. But I think it is quite a quandary and it does create a real assessment challenge and we might need to think about handling these in some special ways.

DR. CHEUVRONT: And along the same lines, if I remember correctly from the king mackerel assessment that the independent committee was very concerned about Mexican fish and that stock, saying that they were very much a part of the same stock and there were not reliable landings available from Mexico; and they warned the SEDAR process that without taking that into account, that we were not ever really going to get an accurate assessment of king mackerel in the Gulf of Mexico.

There were maps that showed the migratory patterns of these fish, and clearly there is fish going back and forth between Mexico and the Gulf, coming all the way over as far as Florida and perhaps even coming around – some around the Straits of Florida. I think that's a real issue. We need to have a plan to figure out how we're going to deal with fish that we can't account for. In this case we have no idea how many fish there are coming in and out of Mexico.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I wonder if we should perhaps ask the Science Center to – you know, these are coming up in 2013 and we have some time. Maybe their folks can look into this and give us some feedback as to what we can hope to do with these stocks and what they think is realistic.

I don't think anyone here wants to be in the position of requesting a benchmark assessment and having the analysts look at that and going, well, it would be ludicrous for us to try and assess that stock given the U.S. situation within the overall stock picture.

MR. CUPKA: Bonnie, do you have any comments on that? It would be helpful I think to the steering committee and the council to get some input like that.

DR. PONWITH: I think that this is a useful discussion. I think the way forward on this might be for the Science Center to tackle looking at the life history and the distribution of species like that and come up with either a presentation or some sort of a white paper. We can do this unilaterally

or we can get it started and work with the SSC in terms of creating some options for how we would move forward.

One of the things that we try to do within the Science Center is take a look at the list of species that are within our stewardship reach; and based on the current published literature and out there at large, plus the work that we've done to evaluate the relative likelihood that we could have a successful stock assessment.

What would be interesting and I think informative is to maybe at the next council meeting share that list with you with sort of a prognosis for the species that falls soundly in the, yes, this can be done versus soundly in the, no, we don't have enough data, but spend most of time on the ones that are in the cusp to be able to evaluate what would it take to move them from the maybe to the certainly mode.

MR. CUPKA: Well, that I think would be very useful and something that I know I would be interested in seeing and I assume the other council members would as well, so maybe we can ask staff to put such a presentation on the agenda for our next meeting; and if you can have someone do that, it would be good. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: What would be really productive if somehow whatever appropriate agencies contacted Mexico and said we need your Spanish mackerel and king mackerel landings over X-amount of years. If we can get that information, that would be what we really need.

MR. CUPKA: Well, I don't think we're just talking about king; I think we're talking about the whole gamut of it and looking at them. Bonnie.

DR. PONWITH: I'm actually working very hard through a couple of different mechanism to do that very thing. I'm the agency point of contact for the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem Program. We're collaborating very closely with federal partners in that program, and one of the key issues is the benefits that both the countries reap by sharing data.

Another avenue for this is bilateral agreements that we have with Mexico and with the Fisheries Institute. We're pursuing through diplomatic means data sharing and I think we're making some good progress. Knowing that there is a sense of awareness and urgency on the council's behalf to have this is helpful in terms of highlighting this as an important priority in those negotiations.

MR. CUPKA: Okay, again, I think that would be useful information to get. I'll if there is any other input anybody wants to give relative to our schedule. I think we have a better feel now and we'll be addressing these in May at our SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting right before the CCC meeting in Charleston. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think as we get into the SEDAR Committee and we look at the species before us to be assessed, and there is some hope on the horizon with a lot of the actions in the ACL Amendment to remove some species; and I think as you guys get into that, think about the challenge of assessing these things, that you're weighing against those decisions there.

Another issue is there was a workshop in D.C. a couple of weeks ago put on by NMFS talking about the ACL issues and how we deal with it and some of the interesting topics were just talking about the number of unassessed species that are out there. Recognition is being given now to the geographical challenge you have in our latitudes and the southern latitudes, and it faces all of us here; it's the Caribbean, it's the Gulf, it's South Atlantic.

As many stocks as we have, as you look toward the Western Pacific Council and with the islands that they deal with – and they have an even larger issue with many more stocks – and everyone in these southern latitudes share this problem of many unassessed stocks. Some of the discussion was that, well, we're acknowledging that there are many types of assessments.

Not every assessment necessarily in every species has to be assessed through your intricate catch at age with all the sampling and the monitoring and the surveys that takes, but there are other methods for looking at species and getting some information. A little issue coming up that might – maybe this will get some national attention and affect resources is the idea that, you know, as you look in areas where you're considering big, vast ecosystem type things and very advanced models, and contrasting limited resources against areas such as ours where there are so many unassessed species, that is there some benefit at the national level of bringing everything up to a certain level before you push more resources into the most advanced methods that are going to be required for ecosystem models, because we know that we need to get something on all stocks before we can really start doing effective ecosystem models.

So hopefully that will get somewhere; and as people are out and dealing with these Act related issues and the opportunity, I think don't lose sight of these many unassessed stocks, and there is probably a lot to be gained by bringing everything up to a level two or three assessments before we start pushing for level fours and level fives on other things.

MR. HARTIG: John, have you guys talked about sampling protocols at all in your discussions in the SEDAR Steering Committee?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Not usually, no, I can't recall that we have as a general topic, no.

MR. HARTIG: Do you think that would be a useful topic to look at; how you set up a protocol based on where the landings occur and how many landings occur, you know, just for a species we could highlight king mackerel, where are the samples coming from, how many samples have we had, are we collecting enough samples to actually do an assessment?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Perhaps. I think a lot of that needs to be discussed with the agency, and I think in most cases the protocols are known. I know if that's the issue. I think the issue is more of having the resources to field the protocols. I'll point to our independent monitoring program. We held a workshop because in that case we didn't know the protocols, so the council and the Science Center held that workshop in the fall of 2009 or whenever it was, developed the protocols with an estimate of what it would cost, and I think we got 10 percent of what that group thought was really necessary to do it. I think that's really where the snag lies.

MR. CUPKA: Any other comments? Okay, again I'll be asking you all to think about some nominations for the SEDAR 25 recreational slot on black sea bass before we get to full council. We'll ask staff to add an agenda item to our June meeting for a presentation from Bonnie's group relative to some of these species that maybe we don't control the whole stock within our geographic area. Is there anything else to come before the committee? Mac.

MR. CURRIN: David, I'm not on your committee and I'm not sure this is the appropriate place to discuss it, but I wanted to bring it up and get some guidance on where best to discuss it. That is the issue of the rebuilding strategies for certain species, and black sea bass comes to mind. If everybody recalls, we're working under a constant catch approach with black sea bass, and we've had some troubles this year because the catches have not been going up, which a constant F approach would perhaps help the council.

I don't know whether this is where we want to discuss that or not, but I think, John, it came up on the conference call, this particular issue. So whatever the appropriate time is I'd like to offer some guidance to the SEDAR Committee and/or the committee or council to consider this constant F rebuilding strategies as we move through SEDAR 25 for black sea bass.

MR. CUPKA: And I think we're going to get into some of those discussions when we get into snapper grouper and when we start looking at things like constant catch or constant Fs and things like that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and the issue with sea bass is that it's under a constant catch rebuilding strategy; so as the stock gets better, your F is going to get lower and lower and lower, so what you're doing is you're exacerbating the difference between what people see and what they can catch, and that's vastly different from how you've rebuilt most stocks where you've used the F-rebuild so you've removed at a constant rate over time.

So as there is more fish, the fishery can see more fish; and as people see the results of their pains to give up fishing and have the population rebuild, they get a little bit back each time. The black sea bass assessment, the current rebuilding plan you have is that constant harvest so that's what would be evaluated based on the terms of reference of evaluating your current rebuilding plan.

Now, if the council wants to pursue other types of rebuilding strategies and wants to consider changing that rebuilding strategy, then it would be very helpful to get some feedback on that or at least an intent that the council would consider that so we could make sure that some other strategies are evaluated as part of the assessment.

MR. CUPKA: All of that would be included in the terms of reference before the assessment is done?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Right, and they're not in the terms of reference now. The terms of reference are to evaluate your rebuilding strategy that you have in place. That's what we normally do when you have a rebuilding plan. We don't look at multiple other strategies. We don't look at the things that you looked at in 17B and rejected.

We're going to look and see if are we going to rebuild if we stay at 847,000 pounds based on the time when that was predicted to rebuild. If you're considering changing that, feedback in advance of the assessment that you would like to pursue an F-rebuild strategy would put us in a better position to get that projection to you on a timely basis.

MR. WAUGH: That's a specific item under Snapper Grouper Agenda Item 5 where we're talking about black sea bass and golden tilefish issues. Items B and C are to get input on the rebuilding projections you want, and that would be the point to lay out what types of rebuilding strategies you're looking at so that the SEDAR assessment provides those projections.

MR. CUPKA: Other comments? If not, then we don't need a timing and task. We know what we all need to do so we will adjourn.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 o'clock a.m., March 8, 2011.)

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April 2011

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