

SEDAR

SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Caribbean Fishery Management Council
NOAA Fisheries
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

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SEDAR Steering Committee

February 20 - 21, 2007

Charleston, SC

FINAL MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance

Committee Members: Alex Chester (SEFSC), Wayne Swingle (GMFMC), Bob Mahood (SAFMC), George Geiger (SAFMC), Miguel Rolon (CFMC), Roy Crabtree (SERO), Larry Simpson (GSMFC), Vince O'Shea (ASMFC).

Staff: John Carmichael (SEDAR), Rachael Lindsay (SEDAR), Graciela Garcia (CFMC).

1. Introduction and Opening Remarks

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, February 20, 2007 at the Francis Marion Hotel, Charleston SC.

2. Agenda Review

The agenda was approved without modification.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Alex Chester, acting SEFSC Director, was elected chair.

Motion made by Larry Simpson, 2nd by Wayne Swingle, unanimous approval.
George Geiger, vice-Chair.

Motion made by Roy Crabtree, seconded by Larry Simpson, unanimous approval.
The Committee agreed by unanimous consent that Chairs and vice-Chairs will serve 2-year terms. There will be no limit on terms and succession is allowed.

4. Approval of Minutes: August 2006 meeting, October 2006 conference call

The minutes were approved without modification.

Motion made by Geiger, 2nd by Mahood, to approve minutes of the previous 2 meetings.

5. Update on Recent Activities

a. Recent Completed Activities

SEDAR 10: South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Gag Grouper

SEDAR 11: Large Coastal Sharks

SEDAR 12: Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper

b. Current Activities

SEDAR 13: Small Coastal Sharks

SEDAR 14: Caribbean yellowfin grouper, mutton snapper, queen conch

SEDAR 15: South Atlantic greater amberjack, white grunt
SAFMC: Vermilion Snapper update
FL FWCC: SA/GOM Mutton snapper benchmark

c. Discussion

Differences in Red Grouper and Gag

ACTION: Plan to address S10-S12 differences

Process guidance for future

John Carmichael updated the committee on current and scheduled activities. The committee discussed differences in treatment of key data sources (discard size/age allocation, natural mortality scaling, time-varying fishery-dependent CPUE catchability, times series duration, and discard mortality rates) between the gag assessments (SEDAR 10) and the Gulf red grouper assessment (SEDAR 12) and agreed that it was worthwhile to revisit the gag assessments in light of further developments in the red grouper assessment.

The Committee agreed that similarities in species biology and the fisheries for Gulf of Mexico gag and red grouper would likely lead many to expect similarities in the assessment decisions. The Committee agreed that knowledge regarding critical data sources and methods for treating particular data challenges has increased with each SEDAR assessment, and that the red grouper assessment benefited from lessons learned during the gag assessments. The Committee noted that updates conducted for SEDAR 1 and 2 assessments both allowed inclusion of model advancements and alternative data treatments developed in later SEDARs. The committee agreed that perceived differences in the assessments are especially noticeable in this instance due to the successive timing of the SEDAR 10 and SEDAR 12 assessments. The Committee agreed that the SEDAR process is intended to be adaptable and that the primary goal of SEDAR is to ensure reliable assessments.

After discussion the Committee agreed with the need to convene a special review panel to further scrutinize recent grouper assessments. The issues for resolution are highly technical and represent the cutting edge of assessment methods. It is important to pursue varied opinions and apply a very rigorous evaluation, including independent review, before reaching any conclusions regarding perceived inconsistencies in the assumptions and decisions made in each assessment.

The Committee does not consider its recommendation to pursue additional review of the SEDAR 10 and 12 assessments to establish any precedent beyond that of the Committee accepting responsibility to convene special reviews when necessary. The Committee's actions regarding this issue should not be interpreted as an expectation for undue consistency in assessment methods.

The Committee agreed to task an ad hoc workgroup convened by the SEFSC director and including analysts from the SEDAR 10 and 12 assessments, qualified assessment scientists from the Gulf and South Atlantic regions, and possibly a NOAA Fisheries assessment scientist from outside the SEFSC to examine the SEDAR 10 and 12 assessments in light of advice provided by the SEDAR 12 review panel. This workgroup will prepare a report and any additional assessment runs necessary and present its findings for review by a special SEDAR review panel. The Workgroup should meet in March 2007 and the review panel will be held in May 2007, timed such that the final report can be available for the GMFMC & SAFMC June meetings briefing mail-outs. The Steering Committee reviewed

and approved draft Terms of Reference for the Review (Attached). The Councils will be given an opportunity to appoint AP, SSC, and Council members to observe the review panel, though travel may need to be covered by the appointing council.

The Committee agreed to issue a press release from the Steering Committee announcing its recommendations regarding these grouper assessments.

TASKS:

SEDAR

- Organize grouper assessment evaluation, completed by June 2007.

Proposed Terms of Reference for Grouper revisit:

1. Review SEDAR 10 and SEDAR 12 reports, relevant supporting documents, and recommendations, along with any additional research available since the SEDAR assessments, regarding the following specific topics:
 - A. The length of the time series to be used for the base cases in each assessment (Gulf gag, Atlantic gag and Gulf red grouper).
 - B. The treatment of the catchability coefficient for fishery-dependent indices of abundance in each assessment.
 - C. The estimation of the number and size composition of discarded fish, as well as the fraction of the discards that die in each assessment.
 - D. The treatment of the natural mortality rate and, in particular, the method used to scale the Lorenzen curve in each assessment.
 - E. The choice of reference points (minimum stock size threshold, maximum fishing mortality threshold and optimal yield) and whether those choices are consistent with the goals of the respective Fishery Management Plans and reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Sustainable Fisheries Act in each assessment.
 2. Discuss how consistency in methodology should be balanced against the need to address differences in the data, fisheries and biology of the three stocks in question. Include in this discussion the significance of using different stock assessment algorithms for each stock.
 3. Formulate recommendations for any additional analyses, sensitivity runs, or changes to the base cases that need to be made to the Gulf gag, Atlantic gag, and/or Gulf red grouper assessments based on the reviews of the specific issues addressed in TOR #1 and given the conclusions reached during the discussion of TOR #2.
 4. Prepare a consensus report documenting committee discussions and recommendations. The report should be finalized by the end of the workshop.
6. Research Needs and Prioritizations
- a. Priority Species & Stocks of Concern

The Gulf and Caribbean Council SSC's have not addressed this issue. Each is scheduled to do so at their next meeting. Action is delayed until the next steering committee meeting.

There was further discussion regarding the intent behind the 'stocks of concern' designation. Unlike 'data poor', which describes the current data status of a species, the 'concern' designation is intended to highlight particular stocks for which additional data are desired. The categorizations used here are intended to define the universe assessment

and research and monitoring planning; therefore a stock may be both a 'priority species' and 'data poor'.

There was discussion of how the word 'concern' may be perceived, especially given its use in protected species regulations. "Stocks of interest" was suggested as an alternative, although the Committee did not reach clear consensus at this time.

b. Research Priorities

Council SSC's have not completed research prioritizations at this time. This issue has taken greater importance with the recent changes to the M-S SFA and should be addressed by the SSC's during 2007. It was agreed that research prioritization would be discussed in one year, during the Winter 2008 meeting.

c. Effectiveness of impact on RFP's & Region-wide planning

Long-term assessment planning initiated through SEDAR has allowed RFPs to better synchronize with assessment needs.

d. Appropriate minimum monitoring requirements for all managed stocks

As part of the stock categorization and research prioritization activities, SSC's are asked to develop minimum data elements for all stocks. It was noted that not all fisheries in the region identify all landings to species. This item was discussed in light of recent requirements to develop annual catch limits for all managed fisheries, and the committee recommended that SSC's develop recommendations that will ensure ACL's can be developed as required.

e. SAFE report contents

The Committee reviewed the draft SAFE report outline and agreed that the basic framework proposed was appropriate. A team approach is required to complete the reports on a timely basis, with teams consisting of SEFSC, SERO, and Council representatives. SEFSC will provide the basic data, SERO will provide fishery and regulatory information, and Council staff will handle edits and overall report compilation.

There was discussion of further paring down the contents by omitting the management summary and survey indices. The Committee decided that such elements were likely helpful for the intended audience which includes fishermen and the interested public.

The Committee recommended prioritizing items in #5 (See SAFE contents attachment) and ensuring that the appropriate contacts receive updates from CRPs.

The Committee agreed that SAFE reports must be very brief and that information content should be standardized to enable automation of annual data production. The Committee also agreed that content must be chosen that supports recent requirements to develop annual catch limits.

The Committee agreed that initial SAFE reports could be prepared during coming SEDAR assessments as all expected biological data sources and management actions are summarized during the process. This will also provide a means of phasing-in the work.

The Committee recommended preparing an example report for the next meeting based on South Atlantic red porgy and organized by SEDAR staff.

Requested Tasks

SSC's (each):

- 1) Develop a list of stocks that should be assessed regularly through SEDAR and for which adequate data exist to justify inclusion on the schedule at this time.
- 2) Develop a list of stocks that should be assessed in the future but lack adequate data for inclusion at this time
- 3) Develop recommendations for minimum data elements that should be collected: i) for all exploited stocks, and ii) for stocks subject to ACL's.
- 4) Develop a prioritized list of research needs.

SEDAR:

- 1) Prepare example South Atlantic red porgy SAFE report for the next meeting.

7. Procedural Issues

a. Review Panel Composition

The Committee agreed to allow Councils to appoint an additional independent reviewer to SEDAR review panels. This appointee will participate the same as the CIE appointed reviewers and is expected to assist equally in report preparation. This appointee will be responsible for presenting the review panel viewpoint to the Council following conclusion of the review.

b. Workshop Timing

The Committee agreed to increase the time allotted to each assessment to approximately 9 months as proposed. This will require that the data workshop of one cycle occur between the assessment and review of the previous cycle. The Committee reiterated that although scheduling is required, it is more important that assessments are done properly.

c. Increasing the SEDAR workforce

Difficulties securing adequate expertise at all workshops were discussed. Council representatives were asked to consider workshop tasks and terms of reference when making appointments, and to pay particular attention to increasing the technical expertise at assessment workshops. No specific procedural changes were recommended.

d. Improving Continuity

The Committee agreed that the SSC should be represented at all SEDAR workshops. The Council appointee identified as the lead editor will also be expected to attend the review workshop and serve as the spokesperson for the assessment workshop panel. This person should also attend the data workshop if at all possible.

e. Presenting Results to SSC & Council

The council-appointed review panelist will present review findings to the SSC and other panels as the Council deems appropriate.

f. Reducing Errors

The committee agreed with requiring development of a comprehensive input data spreadsheet during the data workshop and requiring the data workshop panel to approve the input dataset. In addition, the Chair will document all assigned tasks in writing at the conclusion of each workshop.

It was suggested that providing spreadsheets of all input data will help those at the Council and SERO who must develop and analyze management recommendations based on assessment results.

There was general discussion of regional and national avenues for warehousing assessment input datasets.

g. Addressing Post-RW assessment corrections

The committee discussed recent assessment corrections and declined to make any specific procedural changes at this time. The Committee maintains close communication with staff and associated agencies and does not perceive any problems for resolution at this time. The Committee continues to believe that the rate of post-review corrections will greatly decrease once all key stocks have been assessed through SEDAR at least once, and therefore believes this item will become moot in the future.

h. Dissemination of final reports & review workshop drafts

The committee approved the dissemination process. Final reports of workshops are posted as available, typically around the time of the next workshop in sequence. The final assessment report is disseminated once the review panel reports are complete. Draft reports are distributed to staff and panel participants for review as necessary.

i. Benchmark and Update Intervals

The Committee accepted the advice offered by the various panels. Additional consideration for benchmark scheduling will be possible once the SSC's submit their lists of suggested priority stocks.

j. Terms for Steering Committee Chair and Vice Chair

The Committee recommended 2-year terms without limit and allowing succession.

Tasks:

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- 1) Update Guidelines according to above recommendations.

8. Schedule Review

Significant schedule changes were approved. Although the Steering Committee avoids changes in the schedule once planning is underway, there are a number of special circumstances that justified a major revision of the schedule at this time. First, at its August 2006 meeting the Committee decided to solicit SSC input regarding the schedule and thereby made known its intent to revisit the schedule. Second, recent changes to the M-S act require assessing some stocks sooner than previously intended. Third, assessment analysts and life history researchers were consulted to determine progress on key data sources for scheduled assessments.

Highlighted schedule changes and justifications.

- 1) SEDAR 15, SA red snapper replaces white grunt. This is based on red snapper stock status and the need to implement ACL's in 2010. The change is supported by the assessment team as progress on aging of white grunt is less than desired, whereas red snapper has the benefit of a recently completed graduate student project.
- 2) SEDAR 16, King mackerel replaces yellowedge grouper and tilefish. This fulfills the Committees desire to resolve king mackerel as soon as possible. The committee advised that the assessment shall be based on a 50/50 allocation of fish within the mixing zone. The committee was informed that an ongoing fecundity and life history study of king mackerel is scheduled for completion in Spring 2008 with data collected through Summer 2007. Complete histology work and data analysis may not be complete in time for the data workshop, especially if it is held in Fall 2007 in accordance with approved recommendation 7B above.
- 3) SEDAR 17. SA white grunt bumped from 15 replaces black sea bass. Black sea bass has received a benchmark and update, and therefore white grunt is considered a higher priority.
- 4) SEDAR 18. Remains red drum, though gulf SSC will consider data availability and assessment feasibility at its next meeting. Committee agreed that the final decision will be made at the next meeting in Fall 2007. A critical need is information on the offshore, adult stock component. If cancelled, Gulf yellowedge grouper and tilefish will be done in this slot.
- 5) SEDAR 4 Update, snowy grouper and tilefish. Agreed to delay until 2010 due to 2009 workload concerns and to enable evaluation of the projection that snowy grouper will cease overfishing in 2009.
- 6) SEDAR 19. Request that FL prepare a yellowtail snapper update and not a benchmark. Request FL take the lead on a hogfish benchmark.
- 7) SEDAR 20. Gulf yellowedge grouper and tilefish from #16 (see (2)) replace moved king mackerel.
- 8) Update of 9, Greater Amberjack, completed late 2010
- 9) SEDAR 21. Clarified that intent is updates for Caribbean yellowtail snapper, spiny lobster, and queen conch.
- 10) SEDAR 22. Drop black grouper and red grouper, replace with vermilion and black sea bass. Justification is that grouper will be managed as a complex based on status determination of gag grouper. Therefore there is not a need to assess multiple individual stocks at this time. Black sea bass were identified in the last update as needing a benchmark to allow model reconsideration, and it is likely vermilion will prove similar.
- 11) Add Update of Gulf gag and red grouper in 2011.
- 12) Add update of Gulf vermilion and gray trigger fish in 2012.
- 13) add Update of South Atlantic red porgy in 2012. Justification is that previous update indicated rebuilding is faster than expected. This timing will allow evaluation of that after more years, and allow possibility for an adjustment if required to stay on track to rebuild the stock by 2018.
- 14) SEDAR 24. Benchmark of Gulf red snapper. This is a primary fishery and there are many challenges that justify more timely evaluations.

15) SEDAR 25. South Atlantic. Speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. Some data are available on speckled hind, and data may become available on Warsaw under group management approaches that could allow some harvest after 2008.

16) SEDAR 26. Goliath grouper. Recent efforts underway to allow some harvest for data collection may enable a future assessment.

17) SEDAR 27. Caribbean parrotfish, grunts.

9. Regional Management Coordination

a. Council Activities Updates

GMFMC

SAFMC

CFMC

b. SERO Outlook

c. SEFSC Outlook

Committee took no action.

10. Budget Update

Bob Mahood provided an overview of the current budget.

11. Recreational Data Revision Update

a. Progress

b. Council Role & Involvement

The Committee was provided several documents detailing progress on the recreational data revision effort.

12. Other Business

No other business was raised.

13. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in St. Petersburg at the SERO. Tentative dates are September 24 - October 12. The two-day meeting will be held 1:00 pm - 1:00 pm on the chosen dates.

SEDAR staff will poll members to establish a meeting date.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.