

SEDAR Steering Committee Overview**October 5 - 7, 2010****Charleston, SC****Contents:**

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Agenda Review	3
3.	Approval of Minutes	3
4.	Activities Update	3
5.	Budget Report	4
6.	Council Assessment Needs	4
7.	SEDAR Process Review	4
8.	Coordination and Communication.....	6
9.	Guidelines, Policy, and Documentation.....	6
10.	Schedule Review.....	7
11.	Openness and Transparency	9
12.	SEDAR Products and Outputs	10
13.	SEDAR Communication and Dissemination.....	12
14.	Other Business	14
15.	Next Meeting	14

Documents:

attachment 1 May 2009 Summary
attachment 2 February 2010 Summary
attachment 3 June 2010 Summary
attachment 4 2010 Activity Schedule Update
attachment 5 2010 Budget Overview
attachment 6 DWH Budget Addition
Attachment 7. GOM Reply
Attachment 8. SA Reply
attachment 9 Time and Participants review
attachment 10 Revised AW Process Proposal
attachment 11 Example Administrative documents and memos
attachment 12 SAFMC SEDAR Administrative Process
attachment 13 SEDAR Admin excerpts
attachment 14 Minutes August 2003
attachment 15 Minutes January 2004
attachment 16 Revised Guidelines
Attachment 17. SEDAR Workplan
Attachment 18. SEDAR Planning Schedule
attachment 19. 2011 Budget Planning Worksheet

1. Introduction

2. Agenda Review

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1. Documents

attachment 1 May 2009 Summary
attachment 2 February 2010 Summary
attachment 3 June 2010 Summary

3.2. Actions

1. Approve minutes

4. Activities Update

4.1. Documents

None.

4.2. Overview

Completed Activities, May 2009-May 2010

SEDAR 18: Atlantic Red Drum
SEDAR 19: SA & GOM black grouper, SA red grouper
SEDAR 20: ASMFC Menhaden and Croaker, Review only
SEDAR 7 Update: GOM Red Snapper
SEDAR 10 Update: GOM Gag Grouper
SEDAR 12 Update: GOM Red Grouper
SEDAR Procedures Workshop IV: Uncertainty

Activities Currently Underway

SEDAR 21: HMS Shark
SEDAR 22: GOM Yellowedge Grouper and Tilefish
SEDAR 23: Goliath Grouper
SEDAR 24: South Atlantic Red Snapper
SEDAR 8 Update: US Spiny Lobster
SEDAR 9 Update: GOM Greater Amberjack
SEDAR 2 Update: SA Black Sea Bass
SEDAR 9 Update: GOM gray triggerfish

4.3. Actions

None

5. Budget Report

5.1. Documents:

attachment 4 2010 Activity Schedule Update

attachment 5 2010 Budget Overview

attachment 6 DWH Budget Addition

5.2. Overview

The updated 2010 activity schedule, providing detailed expenses for completed and future workshops and other activities, is attached for review and information (attachment 4). An overall summary of the 2010 budget is also provided (attachment 5).

An opportunity arose recently to request additional grant funds to increase assessment efforts in the Gulf of Mexico related to evaluating impacts of the Deepwater Horizon spill (attachment 6). Part of this funding is proposed to support an additional SEDAR coordinator devoted to Gulf Assessment activities. Adding an additional coordinator will allow SEDAR staff to devote extra needed attention to assessment projects in the gulf region and provide greater process support.

5.3. ACTIONS

Determine the funding source for council member salary payments.

Determine the funding source for SSC participant stipends

Approve additional SEDAR Coordinator

6. Council Assessment Needs

6.1. Documents:

Attachment 7. GOM Reply

Attachment 8. SA Reply

6.2. Overview:

During the June 2010 Conference call the committee agreed that each Council would consider its long-term assessment needs and report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

6.3. Actions:

Quantify long-term assessment needs and overall regional workload

7. SEDAR Process Review

7.1. Documents:

attachment 9 Time and Participants review

attachment 10 Revised AW Process Proposal

7.2. Overview:

The SEDAR Steering Committee implemented significant changes in the process following the May 2009 meeting. Most apparent is a shift from holding assessment workshops as physical meetings to holding them as webinars. SEDAR 24, Atlantic red snapper, 21, HMS sharks, and 22, GOM yellowedge grouper and tilefish are the first benchmark assessments to follow this new process. Also included was a public comment period on the draft assessment report

As expected, there have been some snags and challenges. These are summarized below, organized by the major changes of the webinar and public comment period. Details on participation and duration of the assessment webinars is provided in attachment 9.

Use of Webinars

- More webinars required than optimistically desired, however, hours spent in webinars are $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of that for a previous AW week-long workshop
- Some participants are uncomfortable with the format
- Considerable increase in coordinator time and effort - must arrange multiple meetings
- Scheduling, especially accommodating FRN requirements, is challenging.
- Lack of non-verbal communication clues is a challenge with tough issues
- Tends to create the impression that more can always be done - assessments move toward 'research projects'
- Tend to rehash issues with each webinar, especially when considerable time elapses
- Gulf Council raised concerns over stipend payment expenses during webinars
- Reduced travel expenses and travel time
- Allowed time for greater evaluation, development of issues
- Removed the 'dead time' common during workshops, while analysts completed runs
- Increased participation - SEDAR 24 doubled over SEDAR 15 (see attachment 9)

Public Comment Period (Based on SEDAR 24)

- Fewer comments than anticipated given widespread interest and controversy
 - 42 comments from 13 individuals (9 from 1 individual)
- Several comments received from active participants in the AW, repeating issues raised during the process
- Several "agree with the attached" comments received, reiterating comments provided by others
- Further discussion of issues resolved at the DW and initial AW webinars with no change in panel recommendations
- No critical mistakes, errors, or omissions noted
- 1 additional sensitivity suggested
 - Also suggested by a panelist
- Considerable criticism of the comment process - notification, length of comment period, complexity of the document

- Added considerable time to the process - 2 to 3 months minimum

SEDAR staff developed further procedural changes for consideration by the Committee (attachment 10). The proposed approach for the assessment process is a combination of both a physical meeting (workshop) and a series of webinars. The meeting is held first, and is intended to address the primary issues and controversies of the models and data, resulting in a base model configuration. It was recognized during the recent webinar process for SEDAR 24 that the most difficult decisions, arguably the ones that benefit most from one-on-one interactions, took place early on during base model development. The overall process is streamlined, with the intent of completing SEDAR work by November 1 and including data through the prior year, which typically become available June 1. This compresses the benchmark process to 6 months.

7.3. Actions:

Recommend procedure revisions

8. Coordination and Communication

8.1. Documents:

attachment 11 Example Administrative documents and memos
attachment 12 SAFMC SEDAR Administrative Process

8.2. Overview

SEDAR staff is moving toward increased formality in fulfilling administrative tasks, such as participant appointment and schedule and TOR approval, as shown in the example memos in attachment 11. This builds a better administrative record of the process. Members should be aware that the overall process is under increased scrutiny and attention so it is important to adhere to administrative policies and to develop a strong administrative record. SAFMC recently adopted a set of guidelines to document administrative procedures and decisions and to establish standards for communication between SEDAR and Council staff. These are offered for review and consideration as attachment 12.

8.3. Actions

Clarify the responsibilities and expectations of Council and SEDAR Staff
Consider formalizing the communication process for all partners

9. Guidelines, Policy, and Documentation

9.1. Documents:

attachment 13 SEDAR Admin excerpts
attachment 14 Minutes August 2003

attachment 15 Minutes January 2004
attachment 16 Revised Guidelines

9.2. Overview

The committee is asked to review basic administrative policies, including the procedures through which SEDAR staff interact with Council staff to address administrative requirements. In addition, Council representatives are asked to report on progress in implementing administrative procedures.

When SEDAR was organized, NOAA General Consul provided advice regarding the obligations of the Councils in modifying their SOPPs and other documents to accommodate SEDAR. The Steering Committee discussed and approved these requirements, as shown in minutes from early Steering Committee meetings (attachment 14, attachment 15). Additional guidance is provided by excerpts from the SEDAR Guidelines (attachment 13).

The Steering Committee has not formally documented Council progress on implementation of these various requirements. Specific items to consider include:

- Creation of the Council SEDAR Advisory Panel “Pool”
- Development of procedures for populating the SEDAR AP
- Appointment of SEDAR Steering Committee as a Council AP
- Designation of Council staff contact person for appointments and other administrative duties

The SEDAR guidelines document was significantly revised in response to the procedural changes developed in 2009 (attachment 16). A streamlined format is applied, with content intended to provide clearer guidance and less background and supporting documentation. The full text, including rationale for many of the items, is currently preserved in a separate document. Note that this version describes the process as developed in 2009 and does not include any possible changes stemming from this meeting.

9.3. Actions

Ensure administrative requirements are fulfilled
Provide additional guidance and clarification on administrative policies
Review and approve guidelines document

10. **Schedule Review**

10.1. Documents:

Attachment 17. SEDAR Workplan
Attachment 18. SEDAR Planning Schedule
attachment 19. 2011 Budget Planning Worksheet

10.2. Overview

The Committee annually reviews planned assessments and updates for the coming 5 years. Supporting documents for this task include the 2010-2015 work plan, based on results from the June Conference call, and the long-term SEDAR planning schedule.

Once the Committee develops the 2011 work plan, Council representatives are asked to provide preliminary estimates of workshops and participation to guide the 2011 budget development process. A worksheet is provided for this task (attachment 19).

Councils have submitted the following requests for consideration:

Gulf of Mexico

Benchmark Assessments

SEDAR 25 – GMFMC and SAFMC Scamp and SAFMC Cobia- 2011
 SEDAR 26 – GMFMC Spanish Mackerel – 2011
 SEDAR 28 – GMFMC Red Snapper – 2012
 SEDAR 30 – Gulf Menhaden Review - 2013
 SEDAR 31 – GMFMC Gag and Red Grouper - 2013
 SEDAR 32 – GMFMC and SAFMC Blackfin Tuna - 2014

Update Assessments

2011 – Snowy Grouper, Golden Tilefish, Gag, and Red Porgy – SAFMC
 2011 – Gray Triggerfish and Vermilion Snapper – GMFMC
 2012 – Vermilion Snapper and Greater Amberjack – SAFMC
 2012 – Spanish Mackerel – SAFMC; Cobia - GMFMC
 2013 – King Mackerel – GMFMC and SAFMC
 2014 – Greater Amberjack – GMFMC; Red Grouper and Red Snapper – SAFMC

South Atlantic:

2011 Elevate black sea bass update to a benchmark
 Update - golden tilefish, red porgy, and gag
 2012 Benchmark - golden crab, wreckfish
 Update and benchmarks - CMP stocks as appropriate

Gulf and South Atlantic, FWC lead

2011 Benchmark - yellowtail snapper

Commissions, FWC lead

2011 Review - Gulf Menhaden

Caribbean

2011 MPA data and evaluation workshop

10.3. Actions

Recommend stocks for benchmark and update assessments, 2011-2015.

11. Openness and Transparency

11.1. Documents:

None

11.2. Overview

Distributions

Questions have arisen during some recent workshops as to the distribution of materials, including posting of preliminary documents and presentations to websites, and to the availability of draft reports beyond workshop participants. Current policy is summarized as follows:

- Working papers are considered draft documents until conclusion of the workshop for which they are provided and are not distributed beyond workshop panelists.
- Draft working papers and workshop reports are not distributed beyond appointed workshop panelists and are not posted to the website.
- Workshop working presentations, such as those provided by data workshop work groups at plenary sessions, are considered ‘works in progress’ and are not distributed beyond the appointed panelist. Such presentations are retained in the SEDAR AR but they are not posted to the SEDAR website.
- Final workshop reports and working papers are posted to the SEDAR website once approved by the workshop panel, typically 4-6 weeks following the workshop.

Posting of Steering Committee Documents

Briefing materials for Steering Committee meetings have never been posted to the SEDAR website. Staff is not aware of any posting on Council websites. The agenda for this meeting was posted to the SEDAR website. The Committee is asked to consider whether Steering Committee materials should be posted.

Staff recommends that the current policies be retained, as they have proven successful in preventing the spread of incorrect or misleading information.

Public Comment

The Steering Committee has discussed public comment numerous times in the past. The current policy directs that public comment during workshops will be taken as appropriate and at the discretion of the chair, similar to the approach used for other Council technical bodies such as the SSC. Written comment is to be submitted in accordance with the policies of the Cooperator or Council responsible for the stock being addressed.

In practice, data workshops allow the greatest latitude to general public attendees. Members of the public are free to observe any of the working groups and given the

opportunity to participate freely in group discussions. They may also be recognized and called upon during plenary discussions. During review workshops, public observers are recognized by the chair and are welcome to comment. Typically the chair will allow the panel to discuss a topic and before taking public comment.

The current SEDAR 24 assessment of red snapper is generating numerous comments from non-appointees. These are tracked similar to working papers, will be made available to all participants, and will become part of the overall assessment record. This does raise questions regarding the intent of public comment and the extent to which appointed participants are expected to reply to or address such comments. The Committee is asked to discuss the role of public comment in a technical process such as SEDAR.

Staff recommends no changes in the handling of informal public comment during workshops at this time, encouraging submission of written comments, and that the Committee develop a formal policy for distributing such comments to participants.

11.3. ACTIONS

Review and comment on policies for document distribution.

Review and comment on policies for steering committee materials posting

Review and comment on policies regarding public input during workshops.

12. **SEDAR Products and Outputs**

12.1. Documents:

None

12.2. Overview

SEDAR is a complex process striving to address the needs of multiple entities through the mutual efforts of a continually changing group of individuals. As a result, outcomes are not always consistent when compared across projects and time. Procedural workshops and detailed guidelines are primary approaches SEDAR uses to improve consistency and outputs. However, changes in the MSRA are resulting in considerable changes in the outputs required from assessments, and as the number of SEDAR assessments increases, so too does the number of opportunities for details to be handled differently. Despite these challenges, the Steering Committee is asked to consider appropriate levels of consistency in assessment approaches, decisions, and presentation of outputs. One thing that should be kept in mind throughout such discussions is that the recommendations of SEDAR panels, including the review panel, are formally advice to the Council.

Values or Ranges

SEDAR directs workshop participants towards providing specific answers to questions such as stock status, population abundance, or exploitation rates. This is to be done while accounting for uncertainty in the data and methods. Such answers are generally taken to be discrete values, such as “the stock is overfished and B/B_{msy} is

0.75". In reality, the assessment will have considered many scenarios that may provide a range of B/Bmsy, and even the chosen scenario may use methods that evaluate uncertainties such that the 0.75 value reported is actually a midpoint of a wide range of outcomes. Assessment panels and review bodies, both within SEDAR and before, have all grappled with such issues. Often scientists feel that if a range is given, the upper bound becomes the *de facto* answer. Early SEDAR assessments, such as the SEDAR 2 benchmark of black sea bass, that attempted to bracket unknowns and provide a matrix of 'answers' created issues with determination of the proper value for parameters such as Fmsy or B/Bmsy.

The SEDAR process results in many model structures and multiple means of illustrating uncertainty in unknowns such as recruitment and natural mortality. Ultimately, however, participants are urged to recommend the 'best' answers which invariably leads to selecting a particular "run" from a suite of alternatives. Ideally the suite of alternatives will all contribute somewhat to the chosen 'best' answer, which means there should be some way of developing confidence intervals around that answer from the different scenarios. This issue was discussed at the recent Uncertainty workshop, and so far there is not a strong consensus among scientists as to the best method for combining results from various model scenarios. Moreover, even if an acceptable method is devised, development of confidence intervals around a value still implies that there is an initial value that stands as the 'best estimate'.

Information exists within the process to provide ranges for most parameters. What is required to move in this direction is clear and straightforward direction from the managers and the steering committee regarding which parameters should be reported as ranges and how traditional key questions, such as "is the stock overfished", and "how severely is the stock overfished" will be answered through reporting of ranges.

Consistency in recommendations and treatments

It has been well documented throughout this and many other processes that different groups of people will reach different conclusions when faced with uncertain information. This is the core problem all assessments face, and it can be argued that the problem is especially severe here in the Southeast due to chronic data problems, a wealth of possibly similar species, and occurrence of the same species in multiple habitats and thus jurisdictions. On the other hand, managers are continually bombarded with criticisms stemming from perceived inconsistencies and apparent differences in treatment of seemingly similar uncertainties challenges the credibility of the process.

In grappling with consistency in an uncertain endeavor, the Steering Committee should consider: the nature of the recommendations from SEDAR as advice to the Councils; where consistency should be applied, as in whether it is within SEDAR panels or within the SSCs and other bodies that ultimately make recommendations to the Council; who should make the decisions on unknowns that then become the preferred treatment; and the balance between consistency and scientific progress. Finally, the Committee should consider the specific unknowns that may benefit from consistency and clear manager guidance from those that are purely scientific and should be left to the scientific panelists.

Characterizing Uncertainty

SEDAR recently convened a procedural workshop devoted to uncertainty. The report is in progress, but not yet available for distribution. Discussion centered around identifying major uncertainties, methods for characterizing uncertainties, and carrying uncertainty through the various steps of the process, from data to management action. In addition, changes implemented through the MSRA that require consideration of uncertainty in development of ABCs have compelled ongoing national discussion on assessment uncertainty. There are still no hard and fast guidelines, and it is unlikely that a 'one size fits all' approach will emerge, but overall consistency is increasing in this area. The current direction within SEDAR is to ensure that products are provided that meet the needs of the SSCs and their control rules. Further progress is expected as control rules are adopted. This topic overlaps considerably with the prior two under this item, but the committee should consider identifying concerns with the uncertainty treatments and whether additional guidance is necessary to the SEDAR panels.

12.3. Actions

Provide guidance to SEDAR Panels on:

- Providing key parameter estimates in ranges or point values
- Increasing consistency in recommendations and model or data treatments
- Expectations regarding uncertainty characterization

13. **SEDAR Communication and Dissemination**

13.1. Documents:

None

13.2. Overview

The SEDAR process is receiving increased scrutiny and interest, which is leading to the need to clarify procedures related to communication of workshop information, dissemination of findings, and responding to post SEDAR questions and challenges.

a. SEDAR Website Content & Presentation

The SEDAR website was designed to distribute workshop information including working papers, reference documents, and final assessment reports. There is some interest in redesigning the website to better provide general information on workshop timing and location, and some aspects of the design are not well suited to current needs. The Committee is asked to discuss the feasibility of redesigning the website, and to provide guidance on features to include.

Staff recommends that SEFSC be asked to evaluate the possibility of a website redesign, and that a work group be formed consisting of representatives from each Partner organization to develop a template.

b. Workshop notices

According to the SEDAR guidelines, SEDAR staff handle required Federal Register notices of workshops and correspondence with appointed participants. Alternative methods of providing notice to a broader audience is the purview of each Council. The Committee is asked to consider appropriate means of providing wider distribution of notices.

Staff recommends that workshop notices be provided on Partner websites and distributed through Partner newsletters or press releases as desired, and that a feature be added to the website to accommodate general time and place information for workshops.

c. Final report dissemination

According to the SEDAR guidelines, SEDAR assessments are considered disseminated once the memo of availability is distributed to the appropriate partner following completion of the review workshop. At this time the SEDAR process is complete and any additional work or evaluations are pursued through the Council and SSC. Such findings should be documented through the Council process, and while the Council may choose to forward that document to SEDAR for inclusion with the other assessment documentation, Administrative Record keeping for post-SEDAR analyses is delegated to the Councils.

Staff recommends that the current policies be retained, that a feature be added to the website to accommodate post-SEDAR revisions and analyses, and that Partners provide SEDAR staff with such analyses for posting.

d. Follow-up questions and constituent comments

Assessments are increasingly subject to post-Review workshop critique and challenge. At this time there is no specific guidance from the Steering Committee regarding how such comments should be addressed and what role SEDAR should play.

Staff recommends that post-SEDAR assessment questions and comments be handled through the Council technical process, and that requests for validation or evaluation of assessment criticisms be routed to the lead analysts through the appropriate agency via memo from the Council. Agency staff should evaluate the validity of comments and criticisms, conduct any supplemental analyses that may be required, and provide the findings to the Council for review and consideration as appropriate. SEDAR staff should be included in the correspondence to ensure that any post-SEDAR revisions or corrections are acknowledged and appropriate documentation is available for the next benchmark or update.

13.3. Actions

Provide guidance to SEDAR Staff on:

Website design and intent

Distributing workshop notices

Final report dissemination
Addressing post-SEDAR comments

14. Other Business

15. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in May 2011 in conjunction with the CCC meeting.

Date: Monday, May 2, 2011

Location: Charleston SC

Doubletree Guest Suites

181 Church Street

Charleston, SC 29464