



Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
SEDAR Steering Committee
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, FL 33149

April 23, 2012

RE: Considering Warsaw Grouper and Speckled Hind for SEDAR Assessment Schedule for the Gulf of Mexico

Dr. Ponwith and members of the SEDAR Steering Committee:

On behalf of the Pew Environment Group's Gulf of Mexico Fish Conservation Campaign, we request that you consider including **Warsaw grouper** and **speckled hind** on the SEDAR Assessment Schedule for the Gulf of Mexico as early as 2014 or 2015, depending on other species priorities, scheduling, data availability and staff resources.

We think a SEDAR assessment for Warsaw grouper and speckled hind is warranted for these reasons:

1. Both are slow-growing, slow-maturing deepwater species and are considered highly vulnerable to exploitation.¹
2. They have been listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as "critically endangered" since 2006.²
3. The Gulf Council's SSC placed the deepwater grouper complex, which contains Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, in the "Tier 3b" category of the ABC Control Rule – the most conservative category reserved for species with landings that may not be sustainable.³
4. The stock status of these two species in the Gulf is "undefined," and the rate of fishing mortality relative to a healthy population is "unknown."⁴

¹ MRAG America, Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Productivity and Susceptibility Reports, March 2009.

² Speckled hind listing at <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/7854/0>; Warsaw grouper listing at <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/7860/0>.

³ Tab G-4, Gulf Council April 2011 briefing book. Standing and Special Reef Fish SSC Committee Report, March 23-25, 2011 meeting, New Orleans, LA.

⁴ National Marine Fisheries Service 1st Quarter Report, 2011. Table B. Summary of Stock Status for Non-FSSI Stocks.

We recognize that other species are a high priority for assessment in the coming years, but we think these two deepwater grouper species are important as well. If the steering committee agrees, these two species could be listed in available slots to be assessed either together or separately. Alternatively, if it was deemed by the Steering Committee that these species are of higher priority than other species already on the SEDAR schedule then perhaps Warsaw grouper and speckled hind could be swapped out for these species.

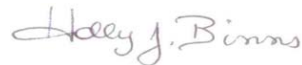
We respectfully recommend consideration of Warsaw grouper and speckled hind for inclusion on the SEDAR assessment schedule for the Gulf of Mexico at the earliest available slot.

Thanks for the consideration. We'd be happy to discuss this further with the Steering Committee members.

Sincerely,



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Gulf of Mexico Fish Conservation Campaign
Pew Environment Group



Holly Binns
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