



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100

Tampa, Florida 33607 USA

Phone: 813.348.1630 • Toll free: 888.833.1844 • Fax: 813.348.1711

www.gulfcouncil.org

5 September 2014

Bonnie Ponwith, Ph.D., Director
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
75 Virginia Beach Dr.
Miami, FL 33149

006409 SEP 30 14

Dear Dr. Ponwith,

During its October 2013 and January 2014 meetings, the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) Steering Committee discussed introducing a new methodology for conducting benchmark Assessment Workshops. This new methodology would employ an approach similar to that used for the fishery management plan amendment process, where an Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) convenes behind-the-scenes to develop and edit documents under the publicly administered guidance of the Council. The SEDAR Steering Committee discussed this idea under the same premise, whereby the analytical team would be given additional autonomy to conduct the more technical aspects of the assessment process by conversing as-needed with other members of the Assessment Workshop Panel, with all work reviewed publicly during Federal Register-noticed webinars prior to submittal to the Review Workshop.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) fully supports this proposed improvement to the process, as both the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee have often objected to holding Assessment Workshops solely via webinars. The Council anticipates improvements in assessment quality and throughput by transitioning to this IPT-style approach, and requests that the SEDAR Steering Committee make this transition a top priority.

If you have any questions about this request, or if there are ways in which the Gulf Council can assist in expediting formally introducing the IPT-style approach, please contact the Gulf Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Gregory".

Doug Gregory, Executive Director
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

RR

cc: All Technical Staff
SEDAR Steering Committee
Gulf Council