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*Managing fish and wildlife  
resources for their long-term  
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February 29, 2016

Dr. Julie Neer  
SEDAR Coordinator  
Science and Statistics Program  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Dr. Neer,

I'm writing to request that the SEDAR 48 South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Black Grouper benchmark stock assessment originally scheduled for completion in December 2016 be postponed to April 2017.

As you know, SEDAR stock assessments for species that are disproportionally caught off Florida are routinely conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. Given some recent staff changes in our stock assessment group (2 new assessment analysts are still in training) and the decision to conduct the Black Grouper assessment using the SS3 software, we envision that additional time will be required to complete this assessment. Additionally, we feel that postponing completion of SEDAR 48 until spring 2017 would allow us to have 2016 as the terminal year of data in the assessment.

Thanks again for all the help getting this issue addressed and please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely

Luiz R. Barbieri, Ph.D.  
Program Administrator  
Marine Fisheries Research Program