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*Managing fish and wildlife  
resources for their long-term  
well-being and the benefit  
of people.*

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April 10, 2017

Dr. Bonnie Ponwith  
Chair, SEDAR Steering Committee  
Director, Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
75 Virginia Beach Drive  
Miami, FL 33149

Dear Dr. Ponwith,

I'm writing to request termination of the SEDAR 48 South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Black Grouper benchmark stock assessment project. The reason for this request has to do with problems with Black Grouper fisheries data.

About 3-4 weeks ago I received phone calls from Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay and Dr. Steve Turner with the SEFSC to discuss what they perceived as species identification issues and other problems with Black Grouper landings data. Drs. Cass-Calay's and Turner's comments were very much in line with similar concerns brought to my attention by FWC-FWRI staff involved in the SEDAR 48 project.

Although problems with Black Grouper fisheries data are not a new development—high uncertainty re. the level of landings associated with misidentification of gag grouper were brought up by the SEDAR 19 Review Panel—the issues recently identified raise additional concerns and calls into question their reliability for stock assessment purposes.

FWC-FWRI staff are working with SEFSC and other partners to complete the SEDAR 48 Data Workshop report and generate a working paper to document the severity and extent of the data problems identified. We'll provide these documents to the SEDAR program as soon as they are completed.

Thanks for considering this request and please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luiz R. Barbieri".

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

cc: John Carmichael  
Gil McRae  
Jessica McCawley  
Dustin Addis  
Steve Turner  
Shannon Cass-Calay