

SEDAR Research Track – Operational Assessment Approach

Development and Discussion Background

April 30, 2018

The Research Track – Operational Assessment approach is a potential modification of SEDAR practices that would redefine the current assessment categories (benchmark, standard, update) and modify how assessments are developed. The Research Track (RT) component would be used to develop assessment “Tools”, i.e. models and model configurations. These tools would not contain the most recent and up-to-date data observations and would not provide management advice. Otherwise they would be similar to the existing benchmark process by including a data evaluation, assessment development process, and independent peer review. Operational Assessments (OA) would provide the information necessary for management. Recent data would be added to the assessment tool developed through the RT to provide up-to-date management information on a timely basis. Operational assessments would be similar to the current standard-update assessments, potentially encompassing the range of flexibility now allowed by those categories.

Since 2015 the SEDAR Steering Committee (Committee) has held several discussions on the proposed Research Track assessment approach. A chronological summary of those discussions and the resulting outcomes is provided in the following bullets.

- September 2015: Dr. Ponwith presented a “Research Cycle” assessment process to the Steering committee. It would include a research step to develop the assessment and operational phase to provide management advice with the most recent information.
 - Steering Committee Concerns: Time required for the research step; ensuring it concludes within a reasonable amount of time; impact on overall productivity; clarification of benefits to Cooperators; and transition to the new approach and what it means for existing assessments
 - Direction: SEFSC should present the approach to Cooperator technical groups (SSCs), including a timeline, by April 2016. Further discussion will be held at the STC meet in Spring 2016.
- October 2015: STC proposes Scamp as a Research Track Pilot. Research Cycle is now referred to as Research Track (RT).
- May 2016: Planned presentations to SAFMC and GMFMC SSCs were not fully completed, as planned, prior to this meeting. The SAFMC SSC received a presentation the week before the May Steering Committee meeting, leaving no time for Council review of the SSCs recommendations. Therefore, further STC discussion was withheld until the Fall 2016 meeting, to allow Cooperators further time to consider recommendations from their technical advisors.
- September 2016: The Committee received a RT proposal and summary presentation from SEFSC. At this point greater attention was directed toward the details.
 - Approved RT for Scamp in 2018
 - Approved RT for Cobia.

- The STC directed staff to begin preparing SEDAR SOPPs revisions while the Scamp and Cobia RTs are underway, to expedite final approval once they are completed and the process evaluated. A SOPPs review group was identified and authorized.
- Spring 2017: SEDAR and SEFSC staff hold several webinars intended to address RT specifics such as project schedules, terms of reference, participant expectations and transition from the current approach to the RT-OA approach. Despite these efforts, uncertainty remained regarding RT-OA details. This led the group to recommend that Cobia not be conducted under the RT-OA process due to the need to begin the assessment.
- May 2017: The Steering Committee reviews several documents developed through the SEDAR-SEFSC webinars. A complete description of efforts up to this point are contained in the meeting report; the following are highlights.
 - The RT-OA approach is not ready for implementation: additional process and procedure details are required.
 - A strong SSC presence is required throughout the RT-OA process.
 - Productivity benefits may not be realized given current SEFSC data delivery capabilities.
 - The impacts on non-SEFSC data providers need to be identified and considered.
 - SEFSC committed to further developing the RT proposal and resolving internal differences with RT-OA details, particularly the time allotted to the RT component and how CIE reviewers will be incorporated with the suggested flexible schedule.
 - SEFSC recommendations would be reviewed by the SOPPs workgroup prior to the September 2017 STC meeting.
 - Cobia reverted to a Benchmark (not RT).
- September 2017: The STC discussed ongoing developments in the RT process and additional Cooperator recommendations. SEFSC was unable to provide further details on the process so the planned initial review by the SOPPs workgroup did not occur.
 - Concerns were raised with the time necessary to complete the RT, and the impact that has on overall assessment productivity.
 - Concerns over the impact of data bottlenecks on current productivity were reiterated; skepticism was expressed that the RT process would resolve them.
 - Continued concerns were raised with the inability of SEFSC to reach internal consensus on how to implement the RT process, and the STC stated that the process must be clearly and thoroughly outlined before the Scamp pilot begins.
 - The STC maintained support for an independent peer review of RT products.
 - SEFSC was requested to develop a work plan for scamp by November 1, 2017. The plan would be reviewed by SAFMC and GMFMC representatives by the end of 2017. This group was directed to consult with key data providers to ensure realistic expectations. The goal is to develop a draft schedule and TORs for Scamp, for review and approval by GMFMC and SAFMC by June 2018.

- March 2018: SEFSC provides GMFMC and SAFMC a revised, broad-picture RT-OA process that includes interim analyses and regular assessment scheduling for key stocks. The key stocks-interim analysis approach is based on a proposal put forth to the SAFMC SSC by SAFMC and SEFSC staff. SEFSC provides a statement of work addressing the RT approach applied to Scamp.