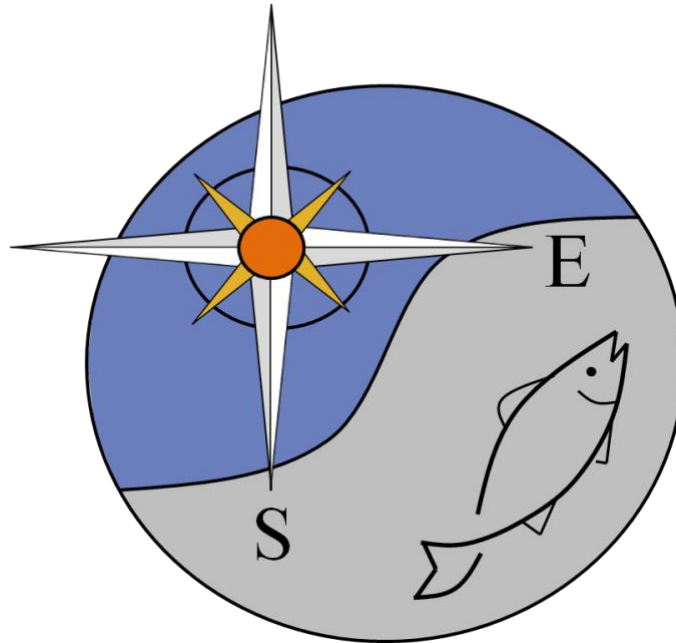


SEDAR



SEDAR Steering Committee

Meeting Brief

February 7-8, 2023

Charleston, SC

Webinar link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8263945214962238807>

Version: BB_Final

1/24/2023

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1 Introduction

1.1 Documents

- Agenda
- Attachment 1a. May 2022 Draft Meeting Summary
- Attachment 1b. September 2022 Draft Meeting Summary

1.2 Action

- Introduction
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Meeting Summary

2 SEDAR Projects Report

2.1 Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Projects Update December 2022

2.2 Summary

The projects report (Attachment 2) provides a summary of current and recently completed SEDAR assessment projects.

Highlighted project developments:

SEDAR 74 – Gulf Red Snapper: The Data portion of the Research Track required more time than was originally scheduled, with the DW report not being released and final data not available until October 2022 rather than July 2022. This delay caused a subsequent delay in the Assessment development process. The Review Workshop is now slated for July 31- August 4, 2023 (originally scheduled for April 2023), with the final report scheduled for release in September 2023.

SEDAR 77 – HMS Hammerhead Sharks: The Research Track Assessment process was scheduled to be completed in November 2022. Additional webinars were requested due to staffing and analysis complications. The assessment process was extended to March of 2023 with the Review Workshop being postponed from March 2023 to August 2023. The assessment is scheduled to be released to NOAA: HMS in October 2023.

SEDAR 79 – SE US Mutton Snapper: The State of Florida and the SEFSC worked together to determine a new Project Schedule for this assessment. The terminal year of data for the assessment will be 2022, though the SEFSC can only guarantee data through 2021. Data Scoping will be held April 2023, with a Data Workshop scheduled for August 21-25, 2023. Assessment webinars will be held from November 2023 to April 2024. The Review Workshop is scheduled for July 9-11, 2024.

SEDAR 80 – Caribbean Queen Triggerfish: The Final Stock Assessment Report for Queen Triggerfish in Puerto Rico was released on 20 July 2022. The CFMC SSC reviewed the assessment at their August 2022 meeting. The SSC had some concerns with the assessment and provided some guidance on ways to improve the assessment from

their perspective. The SEFSC provided a presentation to the SSC at their October meeting, where they received additional feedback. An updated assessment for Puerto Rico was presented at the December 2022 SSC meeting.

The Final Stock Assessment Report for Queen Triggerfish in St. Thomas/St. John was released October of 2022 and presented at the December 2022 SSC meeting. The analytic team received feedback on potential modifications and an updated assessment will be presented in 2023.

The Final Stock Assessment Report for Queen Triggerfish in St. Croix has not yet been released.

2.3 Action

- Informational; none required

3 SEDAR Process Review and Discussion

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3: Description of the Role of the SSC from the SEDAR SOPPs

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Attachment 9: Hybrid Meeting Discussion Document

3.2 Summary

- Topical Working Groups (TWGs) Process Updates

Data Requirements and Timing: SEFSC Staff have noted that TWGs are taking more time than initially planned. The TWGs are tasked with providing an in-depth review of the topic they are assigned to discuss, and in some cases that is requiring several webinars and additional data analysis. The Center has suggested that, for planning purposes, it

should be assumed that a TWG will take 2-3 months and there should only be one TWG underway at any time.

Administrative Responsibilities: One advantage of the TWGs was the ability for appointed participants to meet and discuss issues outside the publicly- noticed webinars that SEDAR coordinates. Those additional webinars are not coordinated by SEDAR but rather by Center personnel. A record of who attends these webinars is needed for the Administrative Record. Guidance regarding who is responsible for these administrative roles is needed.

Follow up on Need for TWG Member Appointments: During the May 2022 Steering Committee meeting, the Committee discussed the need for participants in a TWG to be appointed by a Cooperator. Subsequent discussions with NOAA General Counsel have verified that for someone to participate in both the publicly noticed and non-noticed TWG discussions, they must be appointed by a Cooperator. It was further clarified that an individual member of a TWG may reach out to an individual not on the TWG regarding a topic or data set, and those discussions should be reported back to the TWG.

Feedback on TWGs from SEDAR Participants: SEDAR has received feedback on the TWG process from various process participants and several common themes have arisen:

- While TWGs have resulted in more focused discussions on the TWG topic, those discussions are in some cases far more detailed and require more analysis than was expected, thus lending them to be less efficient than predicted.
 - Restricting discussions to just TWG topics means that the bulk of the data and assessment decisions are not reviewed by anyone outside the analytical team until the release of the SAR and presentation to the SSC. This has had the unintended consequence of SSCs raising issues during their review about topics not covered by a TWG, and subsequently requesting additional analyses before utilizing the assessment for management. More on this is described in the discussion of the role of the SSC in reviewing OAs below.
 - It is believed by many that reverting to OAs Panels for species where there are known issues that need to be reviewed will provide more efficient feedback. The Panels allow all data to be reviewed, even if just to verify that the data resembles what was used in the previous assessment, and questions identified during the development of the assessment. The Panels also provide a group for the analytical team to turn to for feedback, when something in the assessment is not working as expected.
- SEDAR Review Process Discussion (Attachment 3)
Update on Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA) Framework for the Southeast Region: Chair Porch will provide an update on this topic.

Role of the SSC/Technical Committee in Reviewing Operational Assessment Reports: The Cooperator's Technical Committees are responsible for providing a review of the final Stock Assessment Report (SAR) that results from a SEDAR assessment process to

determine whether it is consistent with BSIA, and useful for providing management advice. In the case of a Benchmark or Research Track (RT) assessment, there is a Review Workshop as part of the SEDAR process that is held to provide a detailed review, and a report from that review is included in the SAR. For an Operational Assessment (OA), the review is done by the Technical Committee. The SSC is the Technical Committee for Council Cooperators.

The SSCs have started receiving OAs conducted with Topical Working Groups (TWGs) rather than Assessment Panels and some unanticipated issues have arisen. One issue has been that an SSC may express concerns over data sets or analytic approaches which were not covered by a TWG, but which may have impacts on the model performance or outcomes. As those components of the model development were not reviewed by anyone outside the analytic team until the release of the SAR and presentation to the SSC, the SSCs questions/concerns are being identified very late in the process. How to manage those concerns is proving to be difficult.

The level of feedback and additional requests by the SSCs in reviewing recent OAs has suggested the need to clarify at what point has an SSC stopped acting as a review body, and instead is behaving as an assessment panel, developing the assessment product.

There is guidance in the SEDAR SOPPs for both Review Panels for Research Track/Benchmark assessments and SSC reviewing other types of assessments.

For Benchmarks and RT Review Panels:

- Review panels may not conduct alternative assessments. Panels may request additional sensitivity runs and minor corrections. Results of such runs should be documented in addenda to the assessment report.

For SSC Reviews:

- SSCs may request additional sensitivity analyses if deemed necessary to adequately characterize uncertainty, and additional projection analyses if necessary to adequately evaluate management alternatives.
- If the SSC determines that an error or omission has been made in the assessment model or in any input datasets, and further determines that such issues significantly impact the assessment results, and in particular the magnitude and direction of required management actions, the SSC shall prepare a written report for submission to the Council and SEDAR Steering Committee which details (1) the nature of the concerns, including appropriate documentation of the correct information; (2) possible impacts; (3) specific concerns related to the issues raised, including the estimated parameters that are affected; and (4) the recommended process and timeline for correction or revision, review, and reconsideration by the SSC.

The Committee is asked to discuss the role of the SSCs in reviewing OAs, specifically with regards to the extent of additional analyses requests. The current guidance on the role of the SSC from the SOPPs can be found in Attachment 3.

- Discussion of Review Types (CIE vs Cooperator Level): There are two main types of review processes used for SEDAR products. For RTs and Benchmarks, there is usually a Review Workshop (RW) that is part of the SEDAR process. The Workshop Panel consists of both independently appointed reviewers from the Center for Independent Experts (CIE), and Cooperator-appointed reviewers, usually from the Cooperator's technical body, such as an SSC. The RW is usually held in-person. The Panel reviews all aspects of the process and produces a report of its findings which is included as part of the SAR for that project. The RW Panel does not offer management advice. While the intent is to convene a RW for each assessment, there are cases when a Desk Review is needed. In such cases, no workshop is held. Rather the assessment is usually reviewed by CIE reviewers in isolation, and reports of their findings are submitted to the SEDAR.

In the case of OAs, the review of SEDAR assessment products is handled by the Cooperator's Technical Bodies. This review is outside of the SEDAR process and directly handled by the Cooperator.

The SEDAR Review Process for RTs provides an independent peer review of SEDAR stock assessments. The intent of the review is to ensure that the assessment and results are scientifically sound and that decision makers are provided adequate advice that reflects uncertainties in the data and methods.

Operational Assessments are follow-up assessments to a Benchmark or RT that has undergone a rigorous peer review. The foundation of any OA is the previously approved assessment, thus the need for an external review panel may not be necessary.

The Committee should discuss if changes to these parameters should be considered.

- Research Track – Operational Assessment Process Evaluation (Attachment 4-7)

The Cooperators' need to receive more scientific information in a timelier fashion to support management decisions continues to be an issue. The SEDAR process underwent large programmatic changes in 2019 with the shift from the Benchmark-Standard-Update approach to the Research Track (RT) -Operational Assessment (OA) process that is currently in use. Unfortunately, the changes to the process have not produced the increases in productivity the Cooperators had hoped for. The SEFSC will present a proposal on possible modifications to the current SEDAR process (Attachment 4a-c). Attachments 5 and 6 provide a summary of how the process is currently structured for your reference.

To support this discussion, SEDAR Staff have gathered background information on the development of the RT – OA process for reference. Attachment 7a is a summary of the evolution of the process since 2019 when the process was approved for the pilot RT; SEDAR 68 Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Scamp. Attachments 7b and 7c are attachments from the May 2018 Steering Committee meeting which summarized the development of the process and contain reference materials to that time. Attachment 7d is the SEFSC detailed proposal provided for the May 2018 Steering Committee meeting, which served as the foundation for the existing process.

- SEFSC Proposal on Management Procedures (MPs)/Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs) (Attachment 8)

During the May 2022 Steering Committee, the SEFSC introduced the concept of MPs/MSEs as an additional approach to increase the throughput of management advice. The Committee was interested in the potential of this process but was uncertain how it would work within the SEDAR process. They requested the following:

“The Committee requested that the Center produce a document outlining what the Center envisions as the path forward, specifically the role of SEDAR in the process, and including the separate roles of SEDAR, the SSCs, and the Cooperators. The document should be provided for the Fall 2022 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting.”

- Update on SEFSC COVID Travel Policy

It is unclear what the current policy/directive is regarding SEFSC personnel requirements to attend SEDAR meetings. The Committee would like to get clarification on the current policy and find a mechanism for changes to that policy to be communicated to the Cooperators in a timely fashion.

- Discussion of SEDAR Policy on Hybrid Meetings (Attachment 9)

It is a long-standing policy that in-person SEDAR meetings are not broadcast, nor are there any provisions for hybrid meetings to be conducted. Data and Review Workshops are held in person, and the assessment process is conducted via webinars. In either case, all members participate in the same format, allowing all participants to interact in the same mode.

Many believe in-person workshops provide the most thorough and efficient way to review large volumes of data and make recommendations on its use. Gathering key personnel together for a designated task allows for a level of focus that is not present when all participants are not located in the same space. In-person workshops provide a feeling of urgency and a need to complete tasks by the end of the workshop. Additionally, the in-person format seems to promote far more discussion than a virtual-only or hybrid meeting.

The SEFSC has requested that the Committee discuss options for hybrid components for future in-person SEDAR processes. Travel budgets continue to decrease, and the flexibility some partners have regarding requiring travel to meetings is becoming increasingly difficult for SEDAR to manage. Hybrid meetings can be logistically complex to coordinate, particularly when there are multiple groups interacting at the same time, such as at a Data Workshop, but may prove useful for certain aspects of the process.

3.3 Action

- Discussion of the Research Track and Operational Assessment Process to determine if changes to the process need to be considered.
- Provide guidance on the role of SEDAR in Management Procedures/Management Strategy Evaluations
- Provide guidance on current SEFSC travel policies and discuss communication pathways
- Consider if hybrid meetings should be considered for future SEDAR Processes

4 Assessment Schedule Review

4.1 Documents

Attachment 10. SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 11. Project Scheduling Parameters and Guidelines

Attachment 12: Modifications to the Project Planning Grid from the September 2022 Steering Committee Summary

4.2 Summary

Review of 2024 Project Scheduling:

- Following the Fall 2022 Steering Committee a Master Scheduling webinar with SEDAR and SESFC was held on November 16, 2022, to implement the guidance provided by the Committee. SEFSC Staff took the lead in producing the discussion draft for the webinar. During the development of the 2024 schedule, Center Staff developed a variety of parameters and guidelines to aid in scheduling. These guidelines can be reviewed in Attachment 9.
- South Atlantic Project Schedule Updates: The Red Snapper RT will begin in late 2024. The shift in the timing of the Red Snapper RT allowed for the Tilefish and Blueline Tilefish OAs to be accomplished in 2024. The OAs will need to be staggered, with one occurring earlier in the year, and the other later.
- Gulf of Mexico Project Schedule Update: It was noted that the Gray Triggerfish RT scheduled for 2024 needs to be focused on the core issues for that species, such as ageing, and other conceptual aspects. The Terms of Reference developed will have to be specific. Additionally, the vermilion OA requested for 2024 was turned into an interim assessment and removed from the SEDAR schedule.

Discussion of Modifications to the Scheduling Process:

- There is a well-defined process for producing Statements of Work to describe the scope of work that will be involved with requested OAs not following a RT (Attachment 4). Cooperators spend considerable time and effort to produce those in accordance with the timeline requested. During the Fall 2022 Steering Committee meeting, the following was agreed upon:

“It was noted that the SEDAR/SEFSC Master Scheduling Call may need to be held before the Spring SEDAR Steering Committee meeting. A shift in timing would allow the SEFSC to have a more complete understanding of what might be accomplished for the discussion with the Cooperators at the Spring meeting. Holding the Scheduling Call earlier in the year may require a shift in deadlines for the SoW reviews and negotiations, which will be discussed at the next meeting.”

The Committee is asked to discuss the role of the Statements of Work, along with the timing of their production and that of the Master Scheduling Call.

4.3 Action

- Consider any needed modifications to the 2024 Projects
- Discuss if modifications are needed to the timing of Statements of Work and the Master Scheduling Call

5 Other Business

- Update on the NMFS White Paper Revisions and Timing:

Chair Porch will provide the Committee with an update.

SEFSC Staffing Discussion, with Particular Focus on Reduced South Atlantic Assessment Staff

The Outcome Planning Grid from the May 2022 Steering Committee Meeting had five assessment team members listed for the South Atlantic, with one of those designated as an Analyst in Training for 2022 and 2023. The latest SEFSC Organizational Chart received by SEDAR January 2023 indicates that the SA Team has four analysts, with no indication that a fifth individual will be added. The South Atlantic Cooperator would like some clarification regarding the potential of adding a fifth analyst, particularly because one of the SA Team members is tasked to work on species the Council does not manage (Menhaden – both Gulf and Atlantic, and Atlantic migratory Cobia).

- Discussion Regarding When a SEDAR Project is Complete

The SEDAR Process for a particular project ends when SEDAR releases the Final Stock Assessment Report. That report is posted to the SEDAR website, and a Dissemination Memo is sent to the Cooperator and the Steering Committee. Once that happens, any additional requests, modifications, SSC review reports, etc. are handled by the Cooperator and are part of their Administrative Record. SEDAR does provide a location on the SEDAR Project Page on the website (under Post-SEDAR Documentation) where materials related to, but not part of, the SEDAR process can be housed to provide ease of locating those materials.

In the last few years, several completed SEDAR Projects have, months after release, been determined to have mistakes or changes requested. The Committee is asked to discuss if the timing of when a SEDAR project is considered completed should be modified.

- SEDAR Website Update

The updated SEDAR website is now live. It was transitioned to a new platform (Word Press) and accessibility and navigation were improved. Currently, there is no way to have a “Download All” feature for ongoing projects, as it requires a manual consolidation of the documents on a continuing basis. This feature could be added once a project is complete and if a new method to compile the files for ongoing products is identified, its addition to the website will be evaluated.

The SEDAR Public Comment forms on the website have also been updated. The program has migrated from using Wufoo forms to Google forms.

5.1 Action

- The Committee should discuss the issues and provide recommendations if needed.

6 Next Meeting

The Committee is asked to make scheduling recommendations and suggest topics for the next meeting. Based on past practices, the next meeting would be in May 2023.

Table 1: SEDAR Project Planning Grid – February 2023 SEDAR Steering Committee Discussion Draft

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects										FUTURE Requests										
Steering Committee Approved, SEFSC TENTITIVELY SCHEDULED										2024 Preliminary Projects – To Be Finalized at the Spring 2023 Meeting										
SEDAR SCHEDULE OVERVIEW – February 2023 SEDAR Steering Committee Discussion																				
YEAR	SA Team					Gulf Team					Caribbean Team	HMS Team		FL FWCC	Menhaden/ RW only	CMP				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	1	2							
2022	Scamp OA		Spanish Mackerel OA		Analyst in Training?	Scamp OA	Gray Snapper OA	Red Snapper RT	Red Snapper RT		Queen Trigger PR-STX-STT OA	Hammerheads RT			ASFMC Menhaden OA					
2023		Gray Triggerfish RT	Black Sea Bass OA	Red Grouper OA									Gulf Spanish Mackerel OA							
						Yellowedge Grouper OA								Yellowtail (PR); Stoplight Parrotfish (USVI) Benchmark	Mutton Snapper Benchmark					
2024			Tilefish OA			Red Grouper OA	Gray Triggerfish RT	Red Snapper OA	Red Snapper OA	Gulf Shrimp RT		HH OA	Hogfish Benchmark		ASFMC Red Drum (RW)					
2025	Red snapper RT	Grey Triggerfish OA		Blueline Tilefish OA											Spiny Lobster OA (all islands)			Gulf Menhaden OA	King Mackerel OA (SA & Gulf)	
		Gag Grouper OA	Atlantic Migratory Cobia OA	Red Porgy OA		GAJ RT		Cobia OA	Gag Grouper OA					Bull, Spinner, Tiger, Finetooth Sharks RT		Atl Menhaden (RW only)				
2026		GAJ RT	Snowy Grouper OA	Dolphin (MP?)			Gray Triggerfish OA	Tilefish Complex (MP?)	Scamp OA	Shrimp OA	Hogfish (PR) Lane Snapper?	Bull, Spinner, Tiger, Finetooth Sharks RT	Black Grouper Bench/MP?							
2027	Red Snapper OA													Queen Snapper	Bull, Spinner, Tiger, Finetooth Sharks OA					
2028	Vermilion OA		White Grunt RT																	

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.