



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
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**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Julie Neer  
SEDAR Program Manager  
For distribution to the SEDAR Steering Committee

**FROM:** Clay E. Porch  
Science Director  
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center

**SUBJECT:** Center Leadership of the Assessment Component of SEDAR

During the upcoming SEDAR Steering Committee (February 2025), the Southeast Fisheries Science Center will present proposed changes to the SEDAR process. Specifically, after consulting with SEDAR and Council staff, we are proposing to take over the responsibility of leading the assessment phase of the SEDAR process. The purpose of this change is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment component by streamlining assessments. This component of the SEDAR process has become quite lengthy, and increased the workload of Center staff, SEDAR program managers and appointed panelists participating in extensive webinars. Furthermore, it has often failed to produce timely and consistent guidance. We believe that this change will allow increased assessment throughput and more timely advice. Note that the data phase of the SEDAR process (workshop and associated activities) would remain unchanged as we believe this aspect has been very successful and provides the best opportunity for the majority of stakeholders to contribute.

We recognize that transparency and external participation are invaluable to inform the best available science. Therefore, the Center requests that the Councils establish a standing Technical Team with relevant expertise, including but not limited to population dynamics, oceanography, fish biology, ecosystem science, socio-economics and fishing behavior. The Center will convene ad-hoc meetings with members of the Technical Team as needed, and those discussions will be documented in the assessment report to ensure a comprehensive administrative record. The Center also proposes to expand the role of the regional SSCs to guide assessment development by offering pre-decisional briefings to solicit feedback. Finally, we encourage the public to continue to observe and participate in the SEDAR process during Data Workshops, pre-decisional briefings held during SSC Meetings, and Review Workshops. We hope that these changes will also help interested members of the public to participate more efficiently in the SEDAR process.

Thank you,

Clay E. Porch  
Science Director  
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center

cc: Emily Ott

