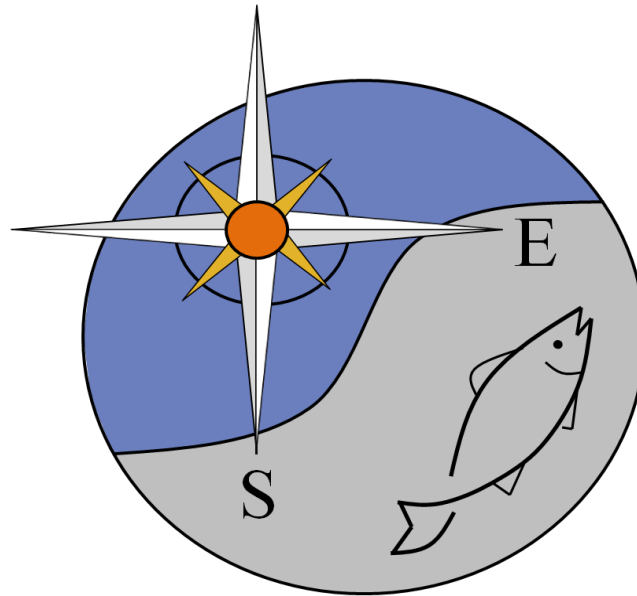


SEDAR



SEDAR Steering Committee

Summary Report

February 11-12, 2026

Charleston, SC

Report Content Note:

To provide context for recommendations and maintain the full record, this document combines the briefing summary provided to the Committee for consideration during the meeting as well as summary of Committee discussion points and recommendations.

Outcomes from the meeting are found under the section headers "Meeting Outcome" for each relevant section and are italicized throughout the report.

Version: 4

4/7/26

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Attachment 2: SEDAR Projects Update January 2026

Attachment 3: Impacts from 2025 Government Shutdown

Attachment 4: SEDAR SOPPs

Attachment 5: SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 6: Modifications to the Project Planning Grid from the August 2025 Steering Committee Summary

Attachment 7: SEDAR Process Infographics

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Meeting Outcomes Summary

This Meeting Outcomes Summary highlights the major decisions of the Committee during the meeting. Additional details can be found under the heading “Meeting Outcome” for each relevant section and are italicized throughout the report.

SEDAR Process Review and Discussion

SOPPs Review

The Committee received updated SOPPs from the SEDAR Staff in December 2025 to allow ample time to review the draft and provide comments prior to the Committee meeting. SEDAR staff received comments from the SEFSC, SERO and HMS and those were noted in the draft the Committee reviewed during the meeting.

It was noted that the SOPPs provide a large-scale overview of how the SEDAR process is structured. It does not get into the details of how individual Cooperators handle various steps in the process (e.g. ToR approval, participant approvals).

The Committee spent a large portion of the meeting reviewing, commenting on, and revising the draft SOPPs. The comments below highlight the major discussions and recommendations, but do not document all the conversations. A recording of the meeting will be provided upon request should that level of detail be needed.

Assessment Schedule Review

Timing of final report on the MRIP-FES pilot project:

- *The SEFSC shared that FES revisions will be available in summer 2026, likely August.*

Update on request to transfer analytic responsibilities for Gulf gag and red grouper from the SEFSC to the USF CEASA – SEFSC and FWC:

- *An FWC analyst will join the assessment team from the SEFSC as a co-lead for the S105 gag assessment process.*
- *Currently, the FWC will only be transitioning to leading the Gulf gag and red grouper assessments; the South Atlantic assessment for those species will remain within the SEFSC.*

Status of prioritized list of state-led items and a prioritized list of items that SEFSC can no longer complete based on new staffing levels:

The SEFSC provided an update on their current staffing levels, and highlighted areas that will impact the assessments.

- *Noted that the losses that directly affect the SEDAR Steering Committee and project planning are the stock assessment leads (down 8 from the 2025 staffing plan) and port samplers (down 10 positions).*
- *They anticipate having two stock assessment leads (one for the South Atlantic Council and one for the Highly Migratory Species Management Branch) hired in 2026 and leading their own assessments by late 2027, early 2028.*

Project Schedule Discussions:

- South Atlantic
 - *Gag grouper will be starting in late 2026.*

- *SAFMC priority list for 2027: red grouper, then vermillion then snowy*
- Gulf
 - *MRIP Update Lites: red snapper, gray triggerfish, king mackerel*
 - *Gulf Priority 2027: GAJ, scamp, vermillion, gray snapper, yellowedge*
- FWC
 - *The Gulf Gag assessment was added to FWC to reflect that FWC will be working with the SEFSC on this assessment*
 - *FWC is no longer requesting a CIE review for the Black Grouper MSE.*
- HMS
 - *Bull sharks will start in late 2027*

Other Business

Update on National Headquarters request regarding Fishery-Independent Surveys:

- *Goal of survey was to assess the utility of fishery independent surveys in stock assessments.*
- *All Fishery Management Councils participated in this survey.*
- *Intent is to circulate a draft copy of the report for review before it is shared with the public.*

Update on potential implications of new state surveys:

- *SEFSC will be working with the South Atlantic states during the EFP roll out to avoid challenges experienced in the Gulf.*
- *AL and MS are adopting the LA creel.*
- *Goal is to calibrate MRIP series back in time to the AL/MS/LA creel scale, that will allow the assessment to be conducted in the same currency as what is used for monitoring.*
- *It was noted that Texas will remain a challenge because of their different survey approach.*

SEDAR Process Infographics:

- *SEDAR staff shared several process infographics to detail the components available for a SEDAR stock assessment.*
- *The Committee was appreciative of this work and provided feedback.*

Discussion on Management History Development and Content:

- *The SEFSC has been developing a tool to automate the management history process and avoid duplicative effort and the potential for inaccuracies.*
- *It was noted that the SEFSC database will not include state regulations and may not include complete quota information.*
- *It was noted that management histories include information beyond what is in the SEFSC database, so a working group to determine what should be in the management history document would be helpful.*
- *The Committee recommended that a working group be convened after the SEFSC rolls out their management history tool.*

Table 1: SEDAR Project Grid - February 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee Outcome Grid

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects	FUTURE Requests
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING	Conducted External to SEDAR

SEDAR SCHEDULE OVERVIEW- February 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee OUTCOME

Year	South Atlantic Branch				Gulf Branch						Caribbean Branch		HMS Branch		Florida FWC		Commission RW only			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	1	2	1	2				
2026	S90 Red Snapper Benchmark	BSB			S99 King Mackerel	S100 Gray Triggerfish	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S105 Gag Grouper	S101 Sandbar/HMS Sharks	S103 Application of Alternate Assessment Methods		S101 HMS Sandbar Sharks	S770A Hammerhead Sharks	S94 Hogfish	S105 Gag Grouper				
		S104 Dolphin MSE RW																		
2027	Spanish Mack (TWG)	S106 Gag Grouper					Tilefish Complex	SATL- King Mackerel										S107 ASMFC Cobia RW		
	Red Grouper (DW/Stock ID)		Vermillion	Scamp (LH TWG)	Greater Amberjack (DW requested)		Gray Snapper											GSMFC Menhaden RW		
			Snowy (TWG)			Yellowedge	Red Grouper	Red Snapper												
2028	Red Porgy (TWG)	GAJ (TWG)			Cobia, Lane, Spanish Data Limited Workshop (PW/DW)								Bull Sharks		Gulf Red Grouper		ASMFC Menhaden			
2029	Tilefishes	Scamp																		
2030																				
2031																				
2032																				

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.

1 Introduction

1.1 Documents

- Agenda
- Attachment 1. August 2025 Draft Meeting Summary

1.2 Action

- Introduction
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Meeting Summary

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee adopted the agenda and approved the August 2025 Draft Meeting Summary.

2 SEDAR Projects Report

2.1 Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Projects Update January 2026

Attachment 3: Impacts from 2025 Government Shutdown

2.2 Summary

Attachment 2 provides a summary of recently completed, current, and upcoming SEDAR assessment projects.

SEDAR created a table reflecting timing impacts on assessment schedules due to the 2025 Government Shutdown. Impacts are delineated by cooperator. The impacts reflect updated project schedules, or adjustments using the same timing between events as the original schedule. Modifications to the impacts may be influenced by the discussions from the Committee during the meeting.

2.3 Action

- Informational; none required

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee asked a few clarifying questions about Attachment 3 (Impacts from 2025 Government Shutdown) but made no recommendations.

3 SEDAR Process Review and Discussion

3.1 Documents

Attachment 4: SEDAR SOPPs

3.2 Summary

SSC Feedback on Proposed Process Changes:

During the February 2025 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, the Committee recommended that the Council Science and Statistics Committees (SSC) receive presentations on the proposed modifications to the SEDAR process so they may provide feedback before the changes are implemented. The Council Cooperators were asked to share the feedback they received from their SSCs. The Gulf Council shared their SSC feedback at the August 2025 Steering Committee. The South Atlantic Council are asked to share the feedback they received from their SSCs at the October 2025 SSC meeting.

SEDAR SOPPs

SEDAR staff revised the 2015 SEDAR SOPPs to reflect the SEDAR process changes that have been discussed at the Steering Committee meetings. The updated SOPPs documents current administrative practices and includes the current policies from the Reference and Process Components documents that the Committee has been acting under and approved over the last few years.

3.3 Action

The Committee should:

- Discuss any issues and provide recommendations if needed
- Approve the SOPPs if appropriate
- Recommend how often the SOPPs should be revised.

MEETING OUTCOME

SSC Feedback on Proposed Process Changes:

The Committee did not discuss this topic, as it was accidentally skipped before the SOPPs review, and once that discussion was completed, it was determined it was no longer necessary.

SOPPs Review

The Committee received updated SOPPs from the SEDAR Staff in December 2025 to allow ample time to review the draft and provide comments prior to the Committee meeting. SEDAR staff received comments from the SEFSC, SERO and HMS and those were noted in the draft the Committee reviewed during the meeting.

It was noted that the SOPPs provide a large-scale overview of how the SEDAR process is structures. It does not get into the details of how individual Cooperators handle various steps in the process (e.g. ToR approval, participant approvals).

The Committee spent a large portion of the meeting reviewing, commenting on, and revising the draft SOPPs. The comments below highlight the major discussions and recommendations, but do not document all the conversations. A recording of the meeting will be provided upon request should

that level of detail be needed. Specifically, the Committee:

- *Discussed what is meant by consensus and clarified that consensus does not necessarily mean that everyone agrees with the approach or results, but rather that all viewpoints were heard and the rationale for the final decision is clearly described.*
- *Discussed and defined the following components: cooperator, data scoping, data webinar, pre-data workshop webinar, post-data workshop webinar, scoping topical working group webinar, and recommendations topical working group webinar.*
- *Clarified that a SEDAR Cooperator is an organization that both participates in SEDAR and provides oversight of the program. With this clarification, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will now be named as an official Cooperator. SEDAR Staff will prepare a list of appointees for each SEDAR project to be made available upon request.*
- *Confirmed that it is the responsibility of the Cooperator to send formal invitations to their appointees for participation in a SEDAR assessment. It was also noted that SEDAR Staff will continue to send a follow-up email to appointees confirming their appointment and providing information relevant to the assessment.*
- *Discussed who should be able to provide feedback on draft data and assessment reports, and agreed that the appointed panel, Cooperator staff, and appointed observers may receive the draft reports.*
- *Revisited the option of hybrid meetings and workshops, and agreed that the majority of assessment meetings and workshops should be in-person. However, it was noted that the current process, which includes flexibility for limited virtual participation on a case-by-case basis at in-person workshops or fully virtual workshops, is working and no changes are needed.*
- *Confirmed that the Stock Identification process will be conducted via webinars for most projects.*
- *Decided that Topical Working Groups should be described once as a possible process component in the SOPPs with the note that they can be utilized for both data and/or assessment topics.*
- *Decided that a rapporteur needs to be identified to take notes for each topical work group.*
- *Discussed the approach needed to determine and ensure participation of individuals with appropriate expertise for different stages of the process.*
 - *It was suggested that the Cooperators requesting the assessment and the lead assessment agency discuss what expertise may be needed.*
 - *It was noted that the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) has a form that they use when reviewing individuals to participate in a Research Track assessment, and something similar may be helpful for the Cooperators to consider.*
- *Discussed the Agency-Led Internal Assessment process:*
 - *The Committee recommended appointing individuals to a Technical Team to support the analytic team during model development of the Agency-Led Internal Assessment process at their August 2025 meeting.*
 - *NOAA General Counsel expressed concern about the Councils creating and appointing*

participants to a technical team if the technical team did not meet in a publicly accessible format.

- *If a technical team is appointed by the Councils and convened as a Council body, all meeting policies under the Magnuson-Stevens Act apply.*
- *Alternately, if the SEFSC determines who should be consulted for feedback, greater flexibility is possible, as Magnuson-Stevens Act meeting policies would not apply.*
- *The Committee agreed that allowing the SEFSC to reach out to individuals as needed was appropriate and will not convene technical teams as a Council body.*
 - *It was noted that the lead analytic agency may reach out to Cooperator staff to obtain contact information for individuals they may wish to contact.*
- *As there is no technical team group convened through the Council/SEDAR process, SEDAR will not provide any coordination for these activities.*
- *Agreed that documentation of assessment updates conducted outside of the SEDAR process will be posted on the SEDAR website project page for the previous SEDAR assessment.*
- *Discussed whether certain operational process descriptions should be included in the SOPPs.*
 - *It was noted that some operational processes such as Data Scoping or TWG webinar details were included in the SOPPs but others such as pre- and post-data workshop webinars or CIE work statement development process were not.*
 - *The Committee decided to remove such items from the SOPPs and instead include such processes in appendices to the SOPPs.*
 - *The Committee felt including processes in appendices would allow for greater flexibility when modifying operational processes as needed. Further, such a split would require review and approval of only the appropriate appendix, rather than reviewing the entire SOPP document.*

4. Assessment Schedule Review

4.1 Documents

Attachment 5. SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 6. Modifications to the Project Planning Grid from the August 2025 Steering Committee Summary

4.2 Summary

The SEFSC will provide an update on the current staffing and budget issues and discuss how that may impact the upcoming SEDAR schedule, particularly 2026. Additionally, the SEFSC will provide an update on the timing of final report on the MRIP-FES pilot project and potential delays in integrating the results into assessments. Topics for the future projects (2027-2029) discussion may include, but are not limited to, transferring analytic responsibilities for Gulf gag and red grouper from the SEFSC to the USF CEASA – SEFSC and FWC and holding SEDAR alternative assessment methods workshops for Gulf and South Atlantic stocks. Modifications to the schedules may be influenced by the discussions from the Committee during the meeting.

4.3 Action

- Consider any needed modifications to the 2026 Projects
- Discuss Future Project Requests (2027-2029)

MEETING OUTCOME

Timing of final report on the MRIP-FES pilot project:

- *The SEFSC shared that FES revisions will be available in summer 2026, likely August.*

Update on request to transfer analytic responsibilities for Gulf gag and red grouper from the SEFSC to the USF CEASA – SEFSC and FWC:

- *FWC has been working with USF to expand its analytical capacity.*
- *An FWC analyst will join the assessment team from the SEFSC as a co-lead for the S105 gag assessment process.*
- *FWC shared that during the training period of this transition, the assessments will take longer, however, this will ultimately result in increased efficiency for future assessments.*
- *Currently, the FWC will only be transitioning to leading the Gulf gag and red grouper assessments; the South Atlantic assessment for those species will remain within the SEFSC.*
- *FWC confirmed that the intent is to have these assessments run through the SEDAR process.*

Discussion of holding a SEDAR alternative assessment methods workshop for Gulf and South Atlantic stocks:

- *Gulf and South Atlantic Cooperators agreed that they would monitor the progress of this assessment in the Caribbean then reassess its utility in their regions.*
- *SEDAR staff noted that conducting this alternative assessment methods workshop for the Caribbean is using resources that would otherwise go towards single species assessments.*

Status of prioritized list of state-led items and a prioritized list of items that SEFSC can no longer complete based on new staffing levels:

The SEFSC provided an update on their current staffing levels, and highlighted areas that will impact the assessments.

- *Suffered extensive loss to staffing levels (Planned 2025 staffing levels: 252; Actual staffing levels: 163).*
- *Noted that the losses that directly affect the SEDAR Steering Committee and project planning are the stock assessment leads (down 8 from the 2025 staffing plan) and port samplers (down 10 positions).*
- *They anticipate having two stock assessment leads (one for the South Atlantic Council and one for the Highly Migratory Species Management Branch) hired in 2026 and leading their own assessments by late 2027, early 2028.*
- *SEFSC also shared that they have been able to hire two survey positions to support the new research vessel.*
- *The Committee requested approximation of the port sampling coverage lost and it was stated that there has been a 50% reduction in port sampling capacity with a majority of this reduction being in the Gulf. It was noted that the loss in coverage is not uniformly distributed.*

Project Schedule Discussions:

- South Atlantic
 - *Gag grouper will be starting in late 2026.*
 - *SAFMC priority list for 2027: red grouper, then vermillion then snowy*
 - *SEFSC priority list for FES pull: BSB, then red snapper (MRIP lite), king, Spanish, gag, red grouper, vermillion, snowy*
 - *It was noted that king mackerel must start after the Gulf red snapper finishes because it is the same analyst.*
 - *King mackerel should have FES pull before Spanish Mackerel because the model complexity for king mackerel will take longer than Spanish.*
- Gulf
 - *MRIP Update Lites: red snapper, gray triggerfish, king mackerel*
 - *Gulf Priority 2027: GAJ, scamp, vermillion, gray snapper, yellowedge*
 - *Gulf gag will be extended into 2027*
 - *Gulf red grouper and red snapper were added to 2028*
- Caribbean
 - *No changes*
- FWC
 - *The Gulf Gag assessment was added to FWC to reflect that FWC will be working with the SEFSC on this assessment*
 - *FWC is no longer requesting a CIE review for the Black Grouper MSE. Given that, it was removed from project grid to reflect that this will be completed outside of SEDAR.*
 - *Gulf red grouper was added to 2028*
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
 - *No changes*
- Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
 - *No changes*
- HMS
 - *Bull sharks will start in late 2027*

5 Other Business

5.1 Documents

Attachment 7: SEDAR Infographics

5.2 Summary

Fishery Independent Surveys:

The SEFSC is asked to provide an update on National Headquarters request regarding Fishery-Independent Surveys and impacts this could have on the southeast fishery independent surveys.

New and Updated State Surveys:

The SEFSC is asked to provide an update on potential implications of new MS and AL creel surveys on Gulf assessments, and state surveys being developed in the South Atlantic region.

SEDAR Process Infographics:

SEDAR staff presented a series of infographics to aid in communication regarding changes to the SEDAR process at the Summer 2025 meeting. SEDAR staff created an additional series of process infographics further detailing modifications to the SEDAR process (Attachment 7). The Committee is asked to review the current graphics and provide comments, as well as suggestions for additional topics that should be considered.

Discussion of Management History Development and Content:

SEDAR and Council staff have had discussions regarding the management histories contained in the Introduction section of the final Stock Assessment Reports. These management histories are important for several reasons but are time consuming to prepare for Council staff. Staff would like to recommend a working group of SEDAR, Council, and SEFSC Staff be convened to review the management history development process and content. This group will review the content to ensure what is being provided is useful and determine an efficient process for developing these documents. The Committee is asked to provide feedback on the current uses of the management histories, and discussion if a working group is needed.

5.3 Action

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

MEETING OUTCOMEUpdate on National Headquarters request regarding Fishery-Independent Surveys:

- *SEFSC shared that the goal of this survey was to assess the utility of fishery independent surveys in stock assessments.*
- *All Fishery Management Councils participated in this survey and their responses will be compiled into a report.*
- *The SEFSC informed the Committee that the intent is to circulate a draft copy of the report for review so Councils should see it before it is shared with the public.*

Update on potential implications of new state surveys:

- *SEFSC shared that they will be working with the South Atlantic states during the EFP roll out to avoid challenges experienced in the Gulf.*
- *The AL and MS are adopting the LA creel approach and their survey protocols as currently under review for certification.*
- *SEFSC shared that the goal is to calibrate MRIP series back in time to the AL/MS/LA creel scale, that will allow the assessment to be conducted in the same currency as what is used for monitoring.*
- *It was noted that Texas will remain a challenge because of their different survey approach. Discussions continue between Texas, GSMFC, and SEFSC to address the issue.*

SEDAR Process Infographics:

- *SEDAR staff shared several process infographics to detail the components available for a SEDAR stock assessment.*
- *The Committee was appreciative of this work and provided feedback on these infographics such as creating an “internal agency led data stage” option and possibly adding in approximate timing of all components.*

Discussion on Management History Development and Content:

- *The SEFSC has been developing a tool to automate the management history process and avoid duplicative effort and the potential for inaccuracies.*
- *It was noted that the SEFSC database will not include state regulations and may not include complete quota information.*
- *Recently there has been conflicting information with what is in the management history provided to SEDAR by Council staff and what is listed in the SEFSC database, requiring additional time to reconcile those differences.*
- *There is a desire to ensure that what is included in the management history section of the reports is being utilized by the analytic team.*
- *SEDAR staff suggested creating a work group with representatives from each cooperator and SEDAR to discuss the content and process for developing the management history for the assessments.*
- *It was noted that management histories include information beyond what is in the SEFSC database, so a working group to determine what should be in the management history document would be helpful.*
- *The Committee recommended that a working group be convened after the SEFSC rolls out their management history tool.*
 - *Group will discuss a process for using the database to develop the needed management histories for SEDAR assessments, including if there is any additional information that needs to be included that is not in the SEFSC management history tool.*

6 Next Meeting

The Committee is asked to make scheduling recommendations and suggest topics for the next meeting. SEDAR Staff would suggest the following:

- Webinar 1-day Meeting – Options include week of July 6, 20, 27, Aug 10, 17, or 31

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee provided feedback to refine potential meeting dates: July 9, 10, 20, 24, and Sept 3 & 4. SEDAR Staff will send out a doodle poll to determine Committee availability.

Table 1: SEDAR Project Grid - February 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee Discussion Grid

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects	FUTURE Requests
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING	No SEDAR Involvement

SEDAR SCHEDULE OVERVIEW- February 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee DISCUSSION

Year	South Atlantic Branch				Gulf Branch						Caribbean Branch		HMS Branch		Florida FWCC		Commission RW only	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	1	2	1	2		
2026	S90 Red Snapper Benchmark	BSB RW?			S99 King Mackerel	S100 Gray Triggerfish	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S105 Gag Grouper	S101 Sandbar/HMS Sharks	S103 Application of Alternate Assessment Methods		S101 HMS Sandbar Sharks	S770A Hammerhead Sharks	S94 Hogfish	Black Grouper MSE RW		
		S104 Dolphin MSE RW			MRIP and other data updates			SATL - King Mackerel (Gulf Analyst)										S107 ASMFC Cobia
	Spanish Mack (TWG)	S106 Gag Grouper			Vermillion (Update)	Yellowedge Update	Tilefish Complex	Greater Amberjack (DW requested)										GSMFC Menhaden RW
2027	Red Grouper (DW/Stock ID)	Vermillion Update							Gray Snapper Update									
		Snowy Update /TWG				Scamp (TWG)											ASMFC Menhaden	
2028	Red Porgy (TWG)	GAJ (TWG)			Cobia, Lane, Spanish Data Limited Workshop (P/W/DW)								Bull Sharks					
2029	Tilefishes	Scamp																
2030																		
2031																		
2032																		

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.