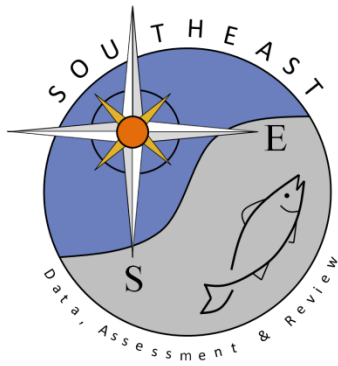


**Excerpt from the October 2017 SAFMC SSC Minutes
(Pages 37-66 where SEDAR Activities were discussed)**

SAFMC SSC

SEDAR60-RD11

9 July 2018



control rule. Level 4 is ORCS, and Level 5 is the decision tree, and it's basically landings only, and I can list out all the stocks that fall into the categories.

DR. REICHERT: I think we have a list. I know there's a list.

DR. ERRIGO: There have been attachments before where they've been broken out that way, but I can have something.

DR. SCHUELLER: Yes, but there is a new person on the committee, and so it would be good if that came out, and I know it's --

DR. ERRIGO: I can incorporate that into the trends sheet that I provided.

DR. NESSLAGE: Just to be specific, if you're going to provide landings trends with the ABC, having, as a horizontal line or a vertical line when that ABC was set would be good, and so like a cross-section of --

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, and, just to explain how the trends sheet works now, you will see that the ABC is on there, and it appears when the ABC was first put into place.

DR. REICHERT: That is that Attachment 6 that Mike was referring to. That has all that information there. The trends actually are all in there. My list of attachments is out of order, and so keep that in the back of your mind when I mention attachments. Okay. Anything else? If not, let's take a no more than five-minute break, and I will talk with Mike and George a little bit about the agenda, and then we'll move on to SEDAR activities. Five minutes, and no more. Thanks.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. REICHERT: Welcome back. Our next agenda item is SEDAR Activities, and I am going to ask if there is any public comment before we start, because we have a number of sub-items, and I think we're going to have discussion on each of those, and so I'm going to ask, if anyone has any public comment, to please come to the table now. I also want to remind everyone that there is a public comment period at the end of the SSC meeting on Thursday. Seeing none, then I am handing it over to Julia.

SEDAR ACTIVITIES

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Marcel. I'm Julia Byrd, one of the SEDAR Coordinators, and so I'm going to cover a few of these items, and then I will turn things over to John, and he will cover a few of the SEDAR update items as well. The first thing we wanted to go over is just a note that the SEDAR Steering Committee met on September 26, and the draft committee report is provided to you guys as Attachment 7.

The one thing we did want to highlight within this report is that, at this meeting, the SEDAR Steering Committee supported conducting the scamp as a research track assessment, and it would be a pilot, and so the kind of next steps in this process will be the Science Center has been tasked with developing a work plan, which would include draft terms of reference, and a project schedule.

We are hoping to have this near or around November 1, and then there will be a team put together that will review that work plan, prior to the consideration and approval by the different councils that would be involved, which are the Gulf and the South Atlantic Councils, and so that plan review team will be composed of Science Center staff, representatives from both the Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs, as well as council staff and SEDAR staff.

Kind of the first thing we want to ask you guys is if anyone is interested. We're looking for two SSC representatives to serve on that kind of review plan panel. The idea would be that there would be a webinar held before the end of the year. Thank you, Luiz. Anybody else willing to do that? Rob, thank you. Okay.

The next thing is we wanted to just mention -- This is a little bit of a reminder. At your April 2017 SSC meeting, you were updated on the Southeastern black grouper assessment, and there were a variety of issues identified during the data stage of that assessment, and the assessment was halted, and so we just wanted to make you guys aware that the data workshop report is available online, where you can read a little bit more about some of those issues, and so that's more of just kind of an FYI, and there is no action item there.

The next thing that I wanted to talk about was the cobia assessment, and I am going to -- I made a couple of slides to kind of walk through this, just to make sure that I covered all the issues. They are basically kind of highlighting points that are in that overview document, and then I made a table to help kind of characterize what SSC representation we want during different steps and then ask for volunteers.

After the last SSC meeting, cobia was originally scheduled as a research track assessment. At the May 2017 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, this was changed to a benchmark assessment, with a stock ID evaluation happening prior to the data workshop. The cobia stock ID process is a multistep process that the SEDAR Steering Committee laid out in September of 2016. There are multiple kind of review stages.

First off, there is a stock ID workshop, where recommendations are developed. Then there will be an independent peer review workshop, and that will include CIE as well as SSC and other technical reviewers, and then there will be a third review stage, and that is going to be a joint kind of sub-panel cooperator technical review, and so SSC representatives from multiple councils and the commission will kind of review that, via webinar, similar to what was done for blueline tilefish.

Then the fourth kind of stage, if necessary, is there would be a science and management leadership call to address any issues, if the boundary changes a lot, and the councils may want to request that certain things be included in the TORs, as far as what kind of management parameters they would like to see come out of the assessment.

An organizing committee was put together, and I guess I will take a step back for a second. The stock ID process is going to involve the Gulf, the South Atlantic Council, ASMFC, as well as the Mid-Atlantic Council, and so there are multiple kind of cooperators involved in this process. We wanted to make sure that anyone who could be affected by the outcome of this stock ID workshop is involved in the process from the beginning.

An organizing committee was put together with representatives from those different groups, and they provided -- They developed draft terms of reference and a schedule. The draft terms of reference were sent out to you guys for review via email. ASMFC also reviewed those via email, and there were only minor kind of editorial changes. The Gulf SSC will be reviewing the terms of reference and providing feedback at their October 31 webinar meeting, and then the SEDAR Steering Committee will be the group that will end up approving those terms of reference and schedule, and I believe that it is Attachment 8. If you guys want to see those draft terms of reference again and the schedule, those are provided for you guys.

As far as action items for this meeting, we're looking for SSC participation at the multiple stages for this stock ID process, and so I just wanted to kind of go over what kind of representation we're looking for and then ask to see if there are any kind of volunteers that may be interested in participating in any of these stages. The first stage is the cobia stock ID workshop. Go ahead, Marcel.

DR. REICHERT: Can you also mention, in case you already know, where those meetings are held? That may be useful for SSC members, in terms of, if they're at that place, that may be easier for people to attend.

MS. BYRD: Sure. I will note that there are no contracts in place, and so I will tell you where we're planning to hold the meetings at this point. For the cobia stock ID workshop, it's an in-person meeting. We are hoping to hold this workshop in Raleigh, North Carolina. It's April 10 through 12 of next year, and we're looking for one to two SSC panel representatives.

We're also interested in potentially getting a workshop chair. One thing I will note is that this workshop chair would serve as kind of the facilitator for the meeting. They would be responsible for kind of compiling the report that would come out of the meeting, and then they would also be responsible for helping present the result of that report, along with workgroup leaders, at the subsequent review stages, and so anyone who is interested in the workshop chair position would need to be available kind of for these other additional meetings.

Also, when we did stock ID for blueline tilefish, we got some feedback that it would be helpful to have some kind of additional experts that were kind of typically outside of the SEDAR process, and so, if you guys have any thoughts on additional experts that we should be asking to attend these meetings, we are definitely all ears for your feedback. Again, for stock ID in April, one to two SSC panel representatives. Then, if you are interested in potentially serving in this chair role or have a suggestion of someone who might be good in that sort of role, that's what we're looking for.

The second workshop will be a cobia stock ID review workshop. This will be an independent kind of peer review workshop. It's an in-person meeting, and this meeting is either going to be in Raleigh, North Carolina, or Charleston, South Carolina. It's going to be June 5 through 7, 2018.

We're looking for one SSC reviewer as well as potentially a review workshop chair, and this chair would operate similar to review workshops for normal kinds of SEDAR assessment workshops. Again, they wouldn't be a reviewer. They would be a facilitator, and they would help compile the final report. Then, again, we got some feedback during blueline tilefish. If you guys think that any kind of outside experts need to be involved in this process, you can let us know. One thing I

will mention too is that we're going to ask for three CIE reviewers to be involved in this process as well.

Then the final stage is this cobia stock ID cooperator technical review, and so this is similar to what was done for blueline tilefish, and so we're going to ask for a couple of representatives from the Gulf SSC, the South Atlantic SSC, the Atlantic Commission, and the Mid-Atlantic Council, and this would be held via webinar, one webinar. The webinar would either be in late July or early August of 2018, and we're asking for two SSC reviewers.

One thing I will note is that the Steering Committee wanted to ensure kind of the independence of the review, and so, if you're going to be a reviewer, either at the kind of cooperator technical review level or at the stock ID review workshop level, you shouldn't have participated as a participant in the cobia stock ID workshop.

DR. REICHERT: Julia, as a clarification, can the reviewer of the review workshop be one of the two of the cooperator technical review?

MS. BYRD: The Steering Committee said no, that they would like that last level of technical review to be two people who weren't involved in the process at all. That was something that came up during blueline tilefish.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you. We're asking one to two people to be part of the stock ID workshop. Who is interested in participating?

DR. CROSSON: I am not volunteering, but --

DR. REICHERT: Your name is already there.

DR. CROSSON: I know. Thank you. I have a question. If you could refresh my memory on cobia, and did it fail the last review to be useful for management advice? What happened to cobia the last time it went through a SEDAR? Did it go through a SEDAR?

MS. BYRD: It went through a SEDAR, and it passed. The stock boundary is at the Georgia/Florida line, and so both of those assessments are being used to manage.

DR. CROSSON: That was its first assessment?

MS. BYRD: SEDAR 28.

DR. REICHERT: The data were very sparse, especially in determining what exactly the line is between the stock delineations.

DR. SERCHUK: I have another question, Chair. I know, in the past, there have been cases where, if you served as an SSC reviewer on any of the stock ID work, you could no longer serve as a reviewer on the assessment end of things, and so I think we really need to be very circumspect about this, because they're asking for maybe five reviewers here, and then there will be SSC reviewers that would be asked as it goes through the stock assessment benchmark review process, and is that correct?

MS. BYRD: I had the same concern that you did, Fred, when we were talking about this, and so, for blue-line tilefish, there wasn't this separate kind of peer review, independent peer review, workshop level, and so how we're going to handle it is, if you participate in any of these stages for cobia stock ID, afterwards the book is kind of closed, and you can participate in any stage of the SEDAR 58 assessment workshop, and so they're going to be handled separately, and so it's different than with blue-line tilefish.

DR. REICHERT: Thanks, Fred. I had that similar question, and so back to we had -- For the stock ID, any volunteers? George.

DR. SEDBERRY: That is for the in-person meeting?

DR. REICHERT: In Raleigh. Okay. So we've got two, Jeff and George. Is anyone interested in -- Well, you guys can talk with Julia if you're interested in becoming a chair of that workshop.

MS. BYRD: Or if anybody has suggestions of someone not necessarily on the SSC who may be appropriate in that role, I would love to hear that, too. You don't have to tell me right now, but please find me.

DR. GRIMES: I will do the review workshop.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. Church, and then you can discuss with Julia whether you are interested in the role as chair.

DR. GRIMES: No.

MS. BYRD: Or if there is someone else who may be interested in the role as chair. I would be all ears as well.

DR. REICHERT: The last one is stock ID cooperator technical review. Are there two SSC members willing to participate in that one webinar in July or August? Anyone? It's just one webinar.

DR. BOREMAN: I am willing to participate, but I might also wind up representing the Mid-Atlantic on the SSC. Can I wear two hats on this? It would save us a space.

DR. REICHERT: Julia, I have no problem with that.

MS. BYRD: We can check with the cooperators, to see if they have a problem with that, but, if they don't, then that would work for us.

DR. REICHERT: Eric, I saw your hand up? Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Thank you, guys. Anything else that you need from us?

MS. BYRD: Not on cobia, but moving on. Let me pull the overview back up. Next is SEDAR 59, and so this is the South Atlantic greater amberjack standard assessment. Just to give a quick reminder of what a standard assessment is, a standard assessment approach is used to incorporate

recent data into existing assessments. There is limited flexibility for consideration of new datasets or changes in model configuration. Those are generally laid out in the terms of reference, and you guys, as the SSC, are the review body, the only review body, for this assessment. Just as an FYI, the last greater amberjack assessment was SEDAR 15, and it was a benchmark, and I think the terminal year was 2006, and so it's a pretty old assessment.

What you're being asked to do, as far as action items go at this meeting, is to review the terms of reference and the schedule, and so I'll pull those up in just a second, and then also to identify SSC representation.

This is part of Attachment 9, and it's PDF page 1, and these are the draft terms of reference for SEDAR 59. I am not planning to walk through them, unless you want me to, but the thing that I did want to highlight is Term of Reference Number 2 here. It goes over the specific changes to be considered, and those include consideration of potentially two new indices, the SERFS video index and the headboat at-sea observer index. Then the second bullet says to incorporate the latest BAM model configurations and updates to data calculation methodologies, and then this third bullet is to reconsider the use of age and length composition data.

DR. SERCHUK: I have a series of questions, and, if I may, I want to just back to cobia for a second. What's not clear -- We talked about it as a benchmark, but it wasn't clear what the terminal year in that benchmark would be. Do you know that?

MS. BYRD: In some ways, that will depend on the outcome of the stock ID workshop and what that stock is going to be. If they're separate Atlantic and Gulf stocks, the data workshop for cobia will be late November of 2017, and so 2016 would be the terminal year. It's 2018, and so 2017 would be the terminal year. Sorry.

DR. SERCHUK: The reason I raise that issue is that, by that time, presumably we'll have the revised MRIP numbers, and so that will certainly be important in the benchmark. You wouldn't want to do it with only the 2016, because the MRIP will be finalized based on the information of the comparison between 2015 and 2017. That's one issue.

The other issue that I wanted to raise is I sent out an email this morning on the two assessments that are coming up now, in terms of the amberjack and the next one, and I think we lose sight of recommendations that have come out in previous assessments of research recommendations, and so I sent out, this morning, an email to the committee saying that I would like to propose, for all future standard and benchmark assessments, the following term of reference, and it is to review, evaluate, and report on the status and progress of all research recommendations listed in the last assessment and peer review reports of the stock.

The reason is, and I think we all are a little bit taken aback when we've gone through black grouper and we've gone through other assessments and we find out that the information that we thought was going to be available to do the next assessment is not available or there is some other issue, and, in most cases, the assessment reviewers and the peer reviewers are very explicit in, next time you do the assessment, here's what you ought to think about. Maybe it's a different methodology, or maybe it's a different data collection system. Maybe you ought to look at ageing, or maybe you ought to do this and do that.

It's not clear, when you start looking at these terms of reference -- That's the first thing they should be looking at, is how much progress have we made on the recommendations that were tendered the last time the assessment was done, and so I offered that, in my email to the committee, as saying that I think we need to look back and see if we have made any progress on those recommendations.

The reason I do that is I'm not clear whether considering new data and considering model configuration changes qualify for a standard update. Maybe they qualify for a benchmark. I don't know, and I asked to get the SEDAR protocols for this. They talk about these sort of things, but I don't know who evaluates it beforehand, to say this should be a standard assessment and this should be a benchmark assessment. Do we allow the group to do it, or is that done beforehand? That's a question I have, Chairman. Thank you.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, and I agree with the email that you sent out earlier, and I would actually like to add "listed in the last assessment, in the peer review report, and the SSC report", because we make recommendations, in terms of what we feel should be addressed in a next assessment also, and we actually sometimes suggest whether the next assessment should be a benchmark or an update or a standard, and I foresee that, if that the research track is something that's going to be in place, to be that too, whether we take that into consideration. Does anyone disagree with recommending that to the terms of reference? I think that is important.

DR. SERCHUK: My recommendation is it should be a generic term of reference to all of these. For example, SEDAR 15 was done in 2008. Here we are nine years later, and I would hope that some of the research recommendations that were tendered from that assessment, or from our review, have been completed or acted upon, but I have no idea.

DR. YANDLE: I just wanted to support this. It's good, fundamental public management practice.

DR. REICHERT: I would say, if anyone disagrees or would like to add to it, please -- We will make that as a recommendation to the council and to SEDAR. That kind of gets to your other remark, Fred. Does the committee feel that perhaps -- Or is it possible to spell out some of the expected changes in the model, because the latest configurations in the BAM model may be known, and I think it would be good to include them.

I am thinking about the Dirichlet change and some of the other issues that we had with golden tilefish and some of the other stock assessments, and so I think it's kind of important, because sometimes we go back and forth that, okay, this is a change, and so this is the best available scientific information, and then that changes into yet another method or the method reverts to the old method, because this new method wasn't as good as we thought. I recommend to get some clarification in that particular terms of reference, in terms of what are the expected changes, and I would like input from the other committee members. Does anyone disagree with that?

DR. SCHUELLER: You're not recommending that we state specifics on that, are you? I mean, I am against saying use the Dirichlet multinomial specifically, because I don't -- Given what happened with tilefish and what's in that report, that's not some fail-safe movement in the right direction, and so, to me, I view these as allowing for appropriate scientific flexibility with respect to the data that are available, which I don't have a good handle on what data are available for this, but I would hate for us to be specific.

DR. REICHERT: Let me clarify. If there are decisions that need to be made on the type of data that are included in the model, then that will be difficult. However, if you look -- This was, for instance, an assessment that was completed in 2008. There is now methods in the -- I can imagine there are now methods in the model that are used pretty much in every single assessment that are not directly related to the data that you input, and I think it would be good, in terms of those changes, to specify those changes, but that's a recommendation that I have, and I would like to hear from other committee members whether or not the committee as a whole feels that it would be good to get a little more specific in that particular term of reference, and, again, that goes back to a more generic way of approaching this.

DR. BARBIERI: Well, looking at that second bullet there, that might be already captured by what's in there, because there was a model configuration of the BAM for SEDAR 15, and now there will be a proposed one for SEDAR 59, and that term of reference there talks about the changes between the two. This is one side, and another side is -- I honestly, Amy, don't know how you guys handle this, in terms of the process within Beaufort, but I would imagine that you have some documentation, and not necessarily a formal manual, but you have some documentation on how you handle the Beaufort Assessment Model.

If there is changes of the nature that Marcel was talking about, those would be updated. I mean, if those are changes to procedures that are used within that configuration, or within that framework, to conduct all assessments, I would guess that -- I mean, I look at the Stock Synthesis, and all the different versions have different updates and documentation. Not of everything, and it has been very poorly documented, but they tried to add some stuff in there to -- They just can't keep up with it, but I think that, at this stage, it would be difficult to include this for every single species, or are you talking about this one in particular, for greater amberjack?

DR. REICHERT: The reason that I am bringing this up is because, if stock assessments are relatively old, there has been some improvements made in the modeling approaches, and we've seen in the past that sometimes that makes a huge difference in the outcome of a stock assessment, and so the method that's used now may be different from the method that was used ten years ago, and, if at all possible, I would like to see a little more specificity.

DR. BARBIERI: Just quickly to that point, I think that is captured in that second bullet.

MS. LANGE: Are you suggesting, Marcel, that the actual Number 2, the second bullet, be expanded with specific descriptions or the report that comes out of the assessment as this term of reference, to detail it?

DR. REICHERT: No, I was thinking about the terms of reference. I would hope that the report would be very detailed in specifying the differences.

MS. LANGE: Right, and that's exactly what it says, is evaluate and describe, and I don't know that we can -- That sort of hamstrings, I would think, the assessment people to have it in the term of reference that specific, as opposed to allowing the analysis to proceed. I think that might have been your point, Amy.

DR. REICHERT: Fred, to that point?

DR. SERCHUK: It's to the point about the terms of reference, Chair, and it gets back to this issue of who decides whether it's a standard assessment or a benchmark assessment, and that's the reason that I queried the staff about what constitutes a standard assessment. According to the operating procedure, the SEDAR standard approach is used to refresh the data sources with the most recent information available. There is also limited flexibility to modify the assessment configuration.

I get concerned when I see something that's eight years old, or nine years old, when the fact is that things should change over that amount of time. It may be a different approach that was done before, and I'm just wondering how much insight into this was thought about before designating this as a standard assessment, and that's all. I want to make sure that we followed the protocols that were laid out here.

DR. REICHERT: Rob, I have you, but I think John came to the table to address that issue specifically, and, Genny, I have you on the list, too.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I will try. The idea with the terms of reference in the SEDAR is that there is a gray area, and when you cross the line that a standard is doing more than is appropriate and should be a benchmark is -- It's intended that the SSCs are the ones who decide that, who evaluate that gray area and decide that, okay, that seems like more changes than we're comfortable with handling in peer reviewing ourselves and with a standard process and we think it's better to go through the full benchmark, the three steps, the independent peer review and all of that.

That is certainly the vision, and, in terms of who decides sort of in the planning stages, the Steering Committee does that, and so there is consideration by the councils, as well as by the Science Center, when they're looking ahead to an assessment, as to what type is appropriate. There is often recommendations, as Marcel mentioned, and, certainly in recent years, when you guys review an assessment, we ask you to tell us when to do the next one and what kind it should be, and so that factors into it.

It can also factor into things raised by the Science Center, because they're the ones, in most cases, that are actually doing the assessments, and so what they say, in terms of the type that should be done, that always carries a lot of weight, and then they're also the ones who take the terms of reference and look at them first and do the first cut of issues that they think need to be listed there, particularly in that Item Number 2 of what the specific changes are. Procedurally, that's sort of how it plays out, and so it does fall then -- We try to lay out, as best we can, what it looks like the standard will consider and then expect that the SSC can then give some feedback. If you think it's too much, then you could recommend that it be a benchmark.

DR. REICHERT: John, for a point of clarification, this is the first time that we've had a chance to discuss SEDAR 59, correct, at the SSC?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I think that's probably true.

DR. REICHERT: But this is also presented as a standard assessment, and so my question is, procedurally, if the SSC -- The first time we get this on our agenda, is this the time where we decide that, well, given what's happening, maybe we should make this an update or a benchmark

and then based on what information, and that's why I mean, if we have more information about what changes we're considering and why those changes were considered, then, as a committee, we can say we're comfortable with a standard or, given the information before us, maybe we should recommend the benchmark, but I also realize that that has pretty significant implications for the planning, both for SEDAR and for the Science Center, because those are different processes, and so --

MR. CARMICHAEL: This is the first time you're seeing specific terms of reference, but certainly it has been on the schedule and the planning schedule and the table that we have in the overview about what's coming up as the type of assessment that's planned, and so that's certainly been out there for a while, and you're right that that does affect the planning of the overall process. You will notice, on some of these other assessments coming up in future years, we're asking you for some feedback at this point. Do you think that some should be a standard versus an update?

DR. REICHERT: I think it's good for us to realize at what point in this agenda item that comes up every single meeting we have do we have an opportunity to say, okay, we feel that this should be a benchmark, an update, or a standard, which I understand now is before the moment where we are now, and so it would be good for us to get some guidance, in terms of when we discuss the schedule, at what point does SEDAR and the Science Center and the council need feedback from us in terms of whether or not specific assessments should be -- What category specific assessments should be in, but that also means, at that point, we perhaps would need that additional information to base that recommendation on.

MR. CARMICHAEL: If you want an example, for the real-time that we're looking at now, if you look at Table 1 on page 12, that shows what is laid out for the future. 2018 is set. That's the things that we're doing, and those work plans and deadlines and all of that stuff has been worked out for 2018. That has not been done for 2019, and so there's some more flexibility say for snowy grouper and golden tilefish, but really where we're having the most flexibility, in terms of if one of these were going to be expanded to say a benchmark, then you're really looking at 2020, and so think at least two years out. That's why we give this schedule that lays it out this much in advance, because it's kind of a two-year schedule that we try to work on at the Steering Committee, in terms of finalizing things and the type of assessment.

DR. REICHERT: I agree. Two quick remarks there, and then I will go to Genny and to Fred. One is, at that point, I think it would be good for the committee to have that information. Of course, we know our standard terms of reference that we can use as a reference, but there may be some specific information that's relevant for the species under consideration. The complicating factor there is, as you know, more often than not, if you're talking about two or three years out, in a lot of instances, that is not the schedule that eventually rolls out when we get to that specific year, and so there's a little bit of that, too.

DR. NESSLAGE: I have two comments. The first comment is that, based on our experience I think with golden tilefish, we need to be very careful in how we word these TORs. It has big implications, and so the first one says to provide a model consistent with SEDAR 15 and its configurations or parameterization approved during this assessment. Who is approving it and who is approving it when, because that is not consistent with jumping to incorporating the latest BAM model in SEDAR 59.

I can tell you that I took the gag model, which was only a year old, for a version of BAM used in the gag update, and put it into the golden tilefish update, and there were, as you saw, huge changes, and I can't even imagine what that BAM code looked like for SEDAR 15. There is no way that this is -- The analysts just can't provide a model consistent with SEDAR 15 in model configuration. I mean, it's unrealistic, and so perhaps we could consider revising that wording. Whether it means it jumps to a benchmark or not, I am still not sure that I understand the subtleties in the SEDAR system here, and so I would hope for some guidance on that.

The second suggestion I have, and maybe we would need to table this for later though, but something to keep in the back of our minds is that we need to be looking out into the future and trying to determine whether or not something should be a standard or a benchmark or an update, and perhaps we might want to move this committee more towards something like what the Mid-Atlantic does, where they have species assignments.

In that, people are assigned one or more species that they're supposed to be keeping track of, and so maybe I'm the greater amberjack person, and when I see it's coming up on the schedule and John says should this be an update or a benchmark, I would go back and -- It's my responsibility then to go back and review it and say, guys, there's no way this is a standard and this has to be a benchmark and there's no way, and so it might be more work for us individually, but I think somebody needs to be looking at this, and staff can't do everything. Thank you.

DR. REICHERT: I agree with both of your statements, and I think, with the assignments that we have started, I think that's a good starting point, and so I would say keep that in the back of your mind and that we'll come back to you in the future. If you're assigned to a species that you're extremely uncomfortable with, maybe this is the time to let us know, and the other thing -- But doesn't that also address the continuity, in terms of seeing -- There is no way that you can do that, and that's perfectly fine. Briefly, John, to that point.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Regarding the continuity, in practice, what they have done recently is get as close to that as they can, recognizing the model code is constantly in flux, and so they try to capture let's say the flavor of that and the intent of that, which is so that you can, obviously, identify what -- If the model has changed or the results have changed or the outcomes have changed, how much of that may be due to differences in the actual data versus differences in the model configuration, and so that's really the intent of that, just to capture that kind of basic type of sensitivity that is expected in an assessment.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, John.

DR. AHRENS: Just a quick comment. I think, if you can't show that continuity, if you can't go from Point A to Point B, then I think you have to consider jumping to a benchmark, and I think sometimes the problem is you've had profound changes in the science, in terms of the assessment, that can cause those jumps to occur, but I agree that if you can get close enough to show that continuity, it's reasonable, but I think sometimes there is big jumps that means you're stuck going back to a benchmark.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, I agree, and the question that we will be asked, as a committee, is, if there is significant changes between the latest assessment and the previous one, is that a function of

changes in the methodology or is it a function of changes in the population, and I know we have struggled with that in the past.

DR. SERCHUK: Two issues. One issue is I think if something is more than five years old, quite frankly -- I mean, we can talk about things, but this is an assessment that is at least going to be eight years old. Come on. I mean, we don't expect things to be that static over that amount of time, either in terms of our methodological approaches or our acquisition of data.

Here we're talking about bringing in a new dataset. I think you ought to think about some guidelines in that sense. If you're doing assessments every three years, things shouldn't be very much different than they were three years ago, but this assessment is an old assessment already, and that's one issue.

The other issue is the discontinuity that's in the table on page 12 in the terminal year for this assessment and what's put in the terms of reference. The terms of reference talks about 2016 being the terminal year, and, on Table 1, it looks like it's 2017, and so that should be the same. The other thing that I am concerned about, and I don't know how we deal with this as a committee, is my understanding is about half of the catch is made up from the recreational fishery, and my feeling is, if you start off with an assessment that you know you're going to have big MRIP changes in it, you might want to wait until you get the whole MRIP data series standardized. Otherwise, you're going to have to come back to it quickly after that.

MS. BYRD: So I guess two things. One is the terminal year is 2016, and so I guess that just wasn't caught in the table. The council originally asked for 2017, but, due to the spacing out of data deadlines, 2016 ended up being the terminal year, and so that may be the reason for that change. 2016 is the correct terminal year.

Then the data deadline for this assessment is late May of 2018, and it's my understanding that the MRIP revised numbers will be coming out in July of 2018, is what we've been told, and so I don't -- There may be an issue there, or perhaps the new numbers will be out before this assessment is complete, which is at the end of 2018, and so perhaps they could be incorporated.

DR. REICHERT: John, a clarification of that point?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, yes, that's right. When this was set in, the plan has always been to have the revised MRIP numbers in this assessment. I talked with Dave Van Voorhees yesterday, and they're saying they still are on track to have them for July of next year. I guess, can we change the schedule enough to incorporate them? I think I would have to turn to Erik, to see what he thinks about that. He is probably pondering that as we speak, but I think we would like to get the revised numbers in there, rather than have to do this one through a revision assessment. If you guys feel strongly about that, I think that's certainly a point that you should make, and we'll work it out.

DR. SERCHUK: Just one issue that bears on this. As you know, I was designated as a participant from this SSC to serve on the peer review of the calibration model for MRIP. Unfortunately -- We did have the peer review, but the report is not finalized yet, and so I really can't speak to it

without having the report, but the revisions are going to be substantial for the recreational estimates, and there could be anywhere from four to six to ten times higher than that.

That will have huge implications, not only on the assessments, but it will obviously have huge impacts on allocations. If you have catches that have to be divided between user groups, and so this is the reason that I keep raising this point about do we want to do an assessment on an important recreational species before we have the MRIP numbers, because, once those MRIP numbers come out, there is going to be great political pressure on the councils and on the assessment themselves to update those numbers. I realize that you can't do everything at once, but the magnitude of the changes are likely to be significant, in terms of the standardized series of recreational catches.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Fred. Based on what you and what John just said, should we, as a committee, recommend that the schedule should, if at all possible, be such that those --

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think you should recommend that this assessment include the revised MRIP numbers and leave it at that.

DR. REICHERT: Okay.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Which may mean we still have a May data deadline for all the commercial data and indices data and everything else and then they may be able to get started and then just bring in that revised MRIP data and keep the thing generally on track, and so, again, give us some flexibility, but maybe make that in the terms of reference, to be sure that this includes the revised MRIP data, and end it at that.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. I like that much stronger text than what I had proposed. I have another unrelated question, and so let's put this one to bed first. Does anyone disagree with that recommendation? Seeing none, I have a question about the data. We have seen some complications with gray triggerfish and blueline tilefish, and amberjack is certainly not one of the most easy species to age.

I would recommend -- There is two questions that I have. The data deadline is coming up pretty quickly, if you're talking about ages. I am not sure how many ages in the fishery-dependent realm need to be aged. Our fishery-independent ages, and I will put on my MARMAP hat, there are not that many, but I would ask the committee if it would be a good idea to recommend an age workshop, to avoid the issues that we have had, perhaps, with blueline tilefish and gray triggerfish, and I just wanted to put that on the table. I don't believe -- I forgot to check, but I don't believe we have done that for this particular species. I would at least recommend perhaps an exchange of otoliths, so we at least have a handle on the potential ageing issues. I would recommend an age workshop and an exchange of the calibration set.

MS. LANGE: I will second that.

DR. REICHERT: So let's make that a recommendation, in particular, as I said, relative to what we went through with some of the other species. Anything else?

DR. BELCHER: Only because we're going to talk about it later, and just going through the ABC control rule, the projection criteria are pretty prescriptive, and so one of the things that we're

supposed to be talking about relative to the ABC is how the P*s are determined and all of that, and so I'm just putting it out there. I understand if we need it as a placeholder, but, if we're going to be basically dumping the whole basket out, it might be something worth talking about.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and thank you for bringing that up, and I actually made a note here that do we -- John, is the council expecting that this is going to be completed after the new ABC control rule is in effect?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, we think this assessment will be completed before the new ABC control rule is implemented.

DR. REICHERT: Okay.

DR. BELCHER: It's also in the one that follows for red porgy, at the end, and so, again, it's pretty prescriptive. I am just saying, again, as we've looked at the language, and everything is trying to get a little bit more or less specific, and this is --

DR. REICHERT: Anyone? What do you propose? Do you have any recommendation in terms of how to approach this?

DR. BELCHER: No, and, I mean, the thing is it's kind of like, as you try to -- I am comparing the two. There is language for one that you're looking at OFL at P* equals 50 percent and then at FMSY. ABC being determined for P* equals 40 percent, 75 percent, FMSY, but then, when you drop to red porgy, there is similarities, and then it goes to something about evaluating the existing rebuilding plan with a fixed exploitation of 75 percent FMSY, in addition to reporting yield and stock status. For this projection, also report the probability that SSB is greater than SSB MSY.

It's just different language that's in there, but specific thresholds. If we're going to specifically ask for projections repeatedly the same way, it would be good to know why we're repeatedly asking for those, but yet our risk assessment -- We're looking to be a little less specific. I just feel like we're pointing one way, but yet, as we review the ABC control rule, we're actually asking to kind of be a little more -- I don't want to say vague in our approach, but that's what it feels like. We're being more open-ended in our approach through the control rule, but yet these are very specific, and I just would like to have a little bit more understanding of the specificity here, that's all.

DR. REICHERT: I think John is willing to provide that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The why is, because these are standards, they've been done before. We have an ABC recommendation, and we have a control rule evaluation, and so the standards attempt to get the MSY/OFL projections, the P* 50 percent, probability as being the essentially the same, and also whatever you have recommended the ABC on in the past, and so that's why there is different P*s between this stock and red porgy.

Red porgy is under a rebuilding plan, and so you have all the details for the council to evaluate the rebuilding plan. Is the stock rebuilt? Are we making adequate progress? All of the things of that nature, and so they're very specific, in this case, to the situation for each stock, and we know that, as is often the case, the status can change. Your evaluation of the control rule can change once

you look at this assessment, and so there is an expectation that, after the SSC's review, you may have to request specific projections that include the ABC control rule value that you select based on this assessment. These are intended just to give you something to work on, something to see how the results are, to be informative, but they may not end up being the ones we use for ABC, depending on how it all plays out.

DR. BELCHER: Maybe some language just to -- I am just thinking of a point of clarification for people who are looking at TORs and seeing two specific projections there, but there is not in addition to SSC ad-hoc-derived ones or however you want to put that, because it just -- For me, it felt like it was only running these two projection models and that was what we were going to be working on for our evaluation, and so that was why, to me, it seemed like we're going more in a flexible route, and this seems kind of inflexible for what we could potentially be looking at in the future.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think part of that is because this is to deal with the SEDAR aspect of doing the standard. Once that is done, SEDAR is done. When you ask for additional projections and scenarios and all of that, you and the council, that plays out over a number of years, and that shifts over to the responsibility of the council for administrative record purposes and all the legalese of our lawyer sitting there in the back.

SEDAR's responsibility and administrative record-keeping and things of that nature extends through what's in here and giving us basic projections that provide some information, but when the SSC does whatever it's going to do and the council does whatever it's going to do, there are going to be four or five multiple projection scenarios that we ask of the Center, and then those fall over to the council for administrative record-keeping. It's kind of a convoluted answer to the bureaucratic nature as to why we get there.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you. Julia, we need representatives for this assessment, and how many? This is all done by webinar.

MS. BYRD: It's a series of five webinars that start in March. I think the last webinar is in October, and then the final report is done in December. We're looking for two to three SSC reps to serve on the panel.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Did you approve the terms of reference and schedule?

MS. BYRD: That's what I am -- I want to make sure that I understand what you all's changes are.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you. Do you, or is that a question?

MS. BYRD: I don't yet, and so I want to maybe run through what I think are the changes you guys are suggesting, and I'm still unclear whether you all are okay with this as a standard assessment or not, because that wasn't clear to me.

DR. REICHERT: It was my understanding that, whether or not we are comfortable with that or not, that ship had sailed, but maybe that's not correct.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The ship certainly is getting out of sight as we speak. It would be very difficult. However, the standard process is kind of flexible, and so, if you guys have some concerns, perhaps we consider that -- We can fold in more webinars and additional work on this without having to go to the full data workshop and independent CIE-level peer review.

I think there's ways of making it a little bit more robust, and that's always been our intention, to leave this flexible, so that we can be more timely and responsive and get more assessments done, because we all know the benchmark brings a huge amount of overhead and a very long, drawn-out process, and so, if we can maybe have a little bit more robust standard, to deal with the fact that this assessment is quite old, I think it would behoove us to do so and keep us on track.

DR. AHRENS: I guess my evaluation of that would be whether or not the assessment team thinks they can produce reasonable continuity runs. If they think they can, then I am probably okay with it.

DR. SERCHUK: I really think we need to, first and foremost, find out when the SSC can comment on what type of an assessment approach needs to be done. I am still confused about that. My feeling is this assessment is an old assessment and that the assessment would be best served by a benchmark. Maybe that ship has passed that line, but my feeling is, when you're having something that was last done in 2008, the world has changed a lot since then, in terms of assessment approaches and data and so on and so forth. We would be better served by a benchmark, and, if that can be accommodated, that would be my suggestion.

Then, if I may jump ahead to the next assessment, the red porgy assessment, although that had an update in 2012, the benchmark that was done was in SEDAR 1, and that was in 2002. That was fifteen years ago, and so my feeling is that come on. Let's be realistic about things. I don't know how well the update handled the benchmark configuration, but, my gosh. You can't let seventeen years go by, or sixteen years go by, and not have a benchmark redone. That's good housekeeping. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think if you said do this as a benchmark now, then it either gets pushed off into the future sometime, when it can be fit into the schedule, or something else that's on the list in the near future would have to be bumped from the schedule. I think, in terms of saying you want to change the stock for the type for amberjack today, that's a huge problem, in terms of scheduling.

Things that you can comment on now, as I said, in the table, really we're looking at 2019 and 2020. Actually, 2020, in terms of making something a benchmark, you need to be looking at 2020, and so, if you think that gag or Spanish mackerel should be a benchmark, we would like to know that now, certainly by the April meeting, and so, like I said, we're looking at like a two-year planning window, in terms of the types of assessments.

DR. SERCHUK: I am not being critical, John, but I'm just trying to think about -- Part of the responsibility of the committee is to provide the most appropriate analyses that will have the greatest scientific integrity, and that's why I am concerned about using old configurations. It's not that they're necessarily bad, but the fact is that it's been a long time since a benchmark was done, and so I just want to learn from the process. If we can't do it now, let's think about, the next time that we look at these assessments, that we have a logical way to provide input, and that's all.

DR. REICHERT: So, as a committee, let's keep that in the back of our mind, and let's make sure that we have the information to inform us whether or not or what category of assessments we would need, and so that's -- For the terms of reference, Mike put on the board some of the recommendations we have for the terms of reference, and so, in addition to the terms of reference that are on your left-hand screen, the right-hand screen shows some of the recommendations. With those recommendations, can we approve the terms of reference plus the recommended changes?

DR. NESSLAGE: I still don't know who is going to approve the parameterization in TOR 1, and that gives me heartburn.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think the idea is that is the panel that's being convened is developing the parameterization.

DR. REICHERT: That is the entire panel, the assessment panel, or is it the assessment team?

DR. NESSLAGE: So not the SSC members?

MS. BYRD: The panel is generally made up of members of the analytical team and SSC representatives, and those would be the people who are serving on the panel who participate in the consensus decision-making about model configuration and what's happening with the data and that sort of thing.

DR. NESSLAGE: I totally understand that this is the eleventh hour and we're suggesting a benchmark and that creates major problems, and I'm sorry, John, but I'm wondering if there is some middle ground here. These seem to be a series of webinars, which I understand for budget and timing and staffing and whatever is necessary, but if there is any way that the SSC could get a mid-term update on this, and I'm not sure when you're planning on delivering it, and I would assume the October meeting of --

MS. BYRD: April of 2019, but the assessment is scheduled to be complete at the end of the calendar year, and so December of 2018, and so there could be an update provided in October, but that's kind of late in the game, maybe.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think our hope is always that when we give these you updates, like we do every meeting of the assessments that are underway, the SSC members who are involved in those assessments would be doing just that, and we have some of that with black sea bass and vermilion and these others. I mean, certainly that's been our vision of this, and that's why the SSC members are there, and, when we have meetings, if there is an issue developing, certainly bring it up.

We have had workshops, in-person workshops, in the past for standard assessments. If you feel that there is a lot of issues with this assessment and you're concerned about the time -- As I mentioned, we can have a little more flexible, robust standard process. If you guys are still comfortable doing the peer review of that and bringing the data in in a little more abbreviated fashion than the full-on data workshop, I think we can certainly accommodate that. We could do an in-person workshop and maybe have some webinars based on -- Kind of as the issues develop, maybe from the first webinar, lay out a plan for things that you think need to be evaluated, to make sure the SSC has a good hand in this.

DR. REICHERT: I also think one of the reasons that we have multiple SSC members at that meeting is so that, if there is an issue, contact us or John or others and say perhaps this is something that we should treat in a webinar, so that we can, as a committee, provide some feedback to the panel and the assessment team, so that we don't do that when we are actually reviewing this, and I don't believe we have done that, but I think that would perhaps create that flexibility, and that mechanism is in place. Does that alleviate your concern a little bit? Okay. Do we have any other -- No one hand their hand up, and so I am going back to the terms of reference with the proposed changes, the recommendations. Can we approve the terms of reference? Read through them.

MS. BYRD: Do you guys -- I just want to make sure that I understand what you're asking to be changed, so that I get it correct. The first one is pretty straightforward. It's adding the review, evaluate, and report on the status, the one that Fred suggested of research recommendations, just kind of a progress report on that. Then there was concerns with some of the language in TOR Number 1 about parametrization, and did we cover that, based on the discussion just now? Does something need to change there, or are we okay with that?

DR. REICHERT: My question to you is do you need specific language in the terms of reference to specify that, to allow for a webinar, or we can do that outside of specifying that -- So we don't need that language in the terms of reference? Okay. Thank you.

MS. BYRD: Then you want to add something to make sure that the revised MRIP data is included.

DR. REICHERT: Yes.

MS. BYRD: Then, from Carolyn's discussion, the projections were good as they are now, and so are those the only changes? The ageing workshop doesn't necessarily need to be in the terms of reference, or it can, or that can just be a recommendation that the SSC provides in the report, perhaps?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think the MRIP data, maybe, and the ageing workshop, you can just put as bullets under Number 2. That sort of lists the specific things. I think that would at least make it clear. Then, when this goes to the council for approval, they will understand the various things that you have requested.

DR. REICHERT: Okay, and some of these may come back to the red porgy and other terms of reference.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The question about the continuity, would it be better to put in there to put out a model consistent with the SEDAR 15, blah, blah, blah, or as close as possible? Would it help to just specifically say that, or are we okay with the clarification so far?

DR. REICHERT: As appropriate.

DR. NESSLAGE: Can we just drop the third sentence, and so TOR 1 would be to prepare a standard assessment and get the data together and evaluate, blah, blah, blah, is Number 2. In there, incorporate the latest BAM model. Then Number 3 is document all your changes, and we say that

actually twice, in both 2 and 3, and so we've really got to do that. If you don't do that, they're in big trouble, but I think we could drop the third sentence, because this gives me --

DR. REICHERT: Does anyone disagree with that? Seeing no one, then we adopt that change. Thank you, Genny. That was going back to I think my comment about specify model changes, and I think the committee as a whole did not feel that was important, and so that may still be in the notes, but I think the consensus of the committee, including myself, is that that may provide too much of a straightjacket for the assessment team.

The recommendation that Mike currently is working on is not part of -- There is not a change, or should that be in the -- No, that should not be in the terms, and so we can work a little bit more on the language of that later. I propose to drop the top bullet here. That's the remark that I made, and we discussed that, and I think we dropped that. Correct?

DR. ERRIGO: From the terms of reference?

DR. REICHERT: Yes.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. Any other recommendations? Is this clear to you, Julia? Okay. Then let's move to the next one.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You still have the schedule.

DR. REICHERT: I am going way too fast. We still need to look at the schedule, and we need representation. I had a question with the schedule, a quick question. At least in the text, that -- The first year of management is 2019, and I think it's much more likely that that will be 2020, if the assessment goes to the council in June. Then the first year of management -- Anyway, that's a detail.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It depends on the type of changes. If all they're doing is changing the catch limits, then it can happen in that time.

DR. REICHERT: Okay, and that goes back to the time between implementation of management and the terminal year, because -- I think Fred and others have said that this is continuously something that we run into as an SSC, in terms of providing management advice, is the age of the assessment by the time we provide the information to the council, and that's why I'm bringing this up.

MS. BYRD: There was some discussion about, since the assessment is so old, wanting to add additional webinars or a workshop, something like that, into the schedule, and I have the schedule up on the screen now, and what is the committee's pleasure in regards to that?

DR. REICHERT: I would argue to see how things go, because I think it would be extremely difficult to now start adding webinars and dates, but that's just --

MR. CARMICHAEL: If you feel like you would like an in-person workshop in lieu of one of those webinars, perhaps Webinar 2 in the middle or 3 in the end, however it works out, I think stating that now would help us, in terms of budget planning for SEDAR for the coming year.

DR. BOREMAN: Just remember that a webinar or an in-person meeting needs advance notice of like three weeks or something, and so you can't just say let's have a webinar next week and talk about it.

DR. REICHERT: No, and I'm aware that it's just -- Whether or not we should decide now that it would be necessary, but I do believe it's probably important for Julia and others to know whether it's the pleasure of the group to add an in-person workshop, and, personally, I don't think that may be necessary for amberjack. However, and we'll talk about that in a little bit, for red porgy, I think that may be a different issue. Anyone disagree for amberjack? We see no disagreement, and so, right now, we don't have a recommendation to add an in-person workshop for amberjack.

I guess that gets us to participation. Who is willing to participate in the amberjack stock assessment? Anne, thank you. We can certainly have some more discussion over a cup of coffee or other beverage later, to see if we can find some volunteers for this assessment. We've got Anne right now. Okay.

DR. NESSLAGE: I don't want to overcommit, but I was considering -- If you think you still need someone on the red snapper group, I would be willing to work on that. If not, if you don't think there is room, then I would volunteer for this, but you only have room for one, and so I guess, Chair, whatever you want to --

DR. REICHERT: Thank you for that responsibility. We will circle back, because we are not done yet with the SEDAR assignments, and so we have Anne, and then we'll talk amongst ourselves, and we may see if we can get some other people. To be honest, really, this has been one of my concerns, is the workload for the SSC, with all of these assessments going on and all the other things now, with the working group, but we can, again, pick this up a little more on Thursday, the last day, Thursday. Do you have enough information for amberjack? If so, let's move to red porgy.

MS. BYRD: Again, red porgy is a standard assessment. The terms of reference are on the screen right now. I'm assuming some of the comments that you had regarding the greater amberjack terms of reference may go here as well, and so I guess it would be helpful to know if that is --

DR. REICHERT: Mike, can you copy and paste them here? Then we can see which ones we need to adopt and which ones we can let go, the amberjack and the red porgy terms of reference, because some of them were so generic, like the one that Fred put up. The other ones --

MS. BYRD: The MRIP revision one, I'm guessing it would be similar here.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and, an age workshop, I will come back to that later. I don't think we need an age workshop, but we do need an update, and I asked Erik to see if he could provide an update on some developments there, and then what was the other one? This is an assessment that, since the original benchmark is rather old, I want to suggest that perhaps we should consider an in-

person workshop instead of one of the webinars, but I just want to propose that to the committee and see what you guys think about this, because this is, I think -- Actually, this is SEDAR 1, right?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

DR. REICHERT: I would like to open this up for discussion, how people would feel in proposing at least one in-person workshop, and, John, maybe you can comment on the practical feasibility at this point, but let's first hear from other people whether or not you guys would be in favor of that.

DR. BARBIERI: It makes sense to me.

DR. REICHERT: Does anyone disagree with recommending an in-person workshop? No? Then that's a recommendation that we can add as a committee.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Feasibility-wise, we will attempt to accommodate that, to the best extent of the budget that we receive for SEDAR next year.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. Sounds good.

MS. BYRD: Can I circle back to the terms? I am going back to the terms of reference, and so we're adding the one about research recommendations, we're adding the one about the MRIP revised data, and the other change was, in Term of Reference Number 1, that third sentence, and is that something that you all would want to remove from this as well?

DR. REICHERT: Yes, I think that's consistent with amberjack.

MS. BYRD: Then I will talk to Erik and others on the analytical team. If a workshop can fit into the schedule, to figure out where in the schedule may be best to place that and follow back up with you guys, because, again, we're going to be asking for participation in this assessment, and having those potential in-person workshop dates may be helpful for that.

DR. REICHERT: Okay, and then I have a remark. There was an age issue with red porgy, and so there was a validation study that was ongoing or has recently been completed, and I am looking at Erik. We can wait until Erik's update, but I just want to inform the committee that if the outcome of that study means that all red porgy otoliths need to re-aged for the fishery-independent ageing, that means up to 46,000 otoliths.

If that needs to be done, we need to -- Otherwise, there is no way we can -- There is ways to approach that, because we can sub-sample, et cetera, and we can put more people on it, but those are all decisions that we really need to start making now and not next year, and the data deadline, although that may seem a long way away, is not that long away, and so I am not sure, in terms of fishery-dependent data, whether we are talking about similar numbers, and so this goes back to the data availability, and I think that's an important issue for, in particular, this stock assessment, plus it may have implications for whether or not, and I can only speak for the fishery-independent data, whether or not we can provide age and other information for other species, because we obviously have to make choices, and so I just wanted to throw that out to the committee, and we can postpone that conversation until Erik gives his update, unless we need to know that now, in terms of the schedule. Anything else?

MS. BYRD: Once I have the tentative workshop dates, I will pass those around to you, so that people can consider whether they want to volunteer to participate in that assessment. Okay. Going back and pulling up the overview document, we wanted to update you on a few things regarding a couple of ongoing assessments.

DR. REICHERT: Do we have people for the red porgy?

MS. BYRD: We don't, but I'm guessing people may want to have the workshop week before they volunteer to participate in that, or the potential workshop week. Fred and Marcel? Great.

DR. REICHERT: Thanks, Fred. All right.

MS. BYRD: Okay. A couple of updates that we wanted to provide on a couple of ongoing assessments, and the first one is South Atlantic vermilion snapper. This is a standard assessment. It's underway now. I wanted to provide you guys kind of an update on two things. One is timing and one is kind of issues that are planning to be considered under this standard assessment framework for SEDAR 55.

First is timing of the assessment. The data deadline for this assessment was September 18, which was just after Hurricane Irma hit, and so that impacted data submission, and so a lot of the data was delayed in getting submitted, due to those impacts from the hurricane, and so a little bit of an update from what is provided in this overview. On Friday, last Friday, we had a SEDAR 55 webinar, and the analytical team gave us a status update on where things stood, and the SEDAR 55 panel discussed what that meant, what these data delays meant, for the overall assessment timing.

They are recommending that the assessment timeline be extended by about a month, to incorporate time for those data delays. The final data is not all available yet. It should be by the beginning of November, and so they are recommending extending that assessment by a month, which would mean that assessment would be complete mid-April, and April 16 is the date, and so a memo was sent out this morning to council and SEDAR Steering Committee leadership, to let them know of the SEDAR 55 panel's recommendation.

I mention that to you as an FYI, and I'm not sure if you want to discuss this now or later, Marcel, but that may have an impact on when that assessment is available for you guys to review. It's supposed to be reviewed at the April 2018 SSC meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for late April, and so this delay may impact the time you have for the review of that report.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and I mentioned that I was going to talk with the committee to see if there was an opportunity or a willingness of us to postpone that meeting, maybe by a week. I had planned to bring that up, and so you can take a look at your agendas and see what your thoughts are, and maybe we can pick that up on Thursday and then let Julia and John know whether or not we feel that we can accommodate that. In the meantime, please check your calendars.

I think, if we move it up one week, that would give the -- Based on the conversations at the webinar, that would give people enough time to get that to us, provided there aren't any other glitches, and I also want to remind everyone that the SSC reps for this assessment were Luiz, George, and Anne.

MS. BYRD: The other thing I wanted to note is that there was a data scoping webinar for SEDAR 55 held in August, and, on this, the analytical team had identified some additional changes that they wanted to potentially consider under SEDAR 55 that weren't included in the terms of reference, and so the SEDAR 55 panel kind of discussed those, and so I just want to let you guys know what those are, so that, if you are uncomfortable with those being considered under the standard assessment framework, you can speak up.

If you think it's too big of a change to happen under the standard assessment, that's kind of the input that we would want to hear from you now. We're not asking you to evaluate the changes. The SEDAR panel will do that, but more of if you think a change is too big for a standard, and so those changes are they want to look an alternative method to estimate recreational historical catch, and they want to look at considering a method that's been used in the most recent assessments.

DR. REICHERT: Sorry to interrupt, but those are recreational catches.

MS. BYRD: Recreational historical catch, correct. They also would like to use all of the available ages for the last vermilion assessment. There was a sub-sampling method that was done to select the otoliths to age, and that was due to time constraints, and all the otoliths have been aged, and so they want to include all the ages. They would like to consider using the number of batches by size and age and reproductive analyses. That wasn't used in the last vermilion assessment, and then, also, I wanted to note that they're looking at a new method to combine the SERFS video and trap indices.

There is a term of reference that says consideration of this video trap indices, but I wanted to make you guys aware that they're looking at a new way to kind of put those indices together. Those indices have both been used in past assessments, and they've been combined using a Conn method. They're looking at a new kind of state-space model method, and so what was provided to you, and I believe it's Attachment 10, is the draft introduction and methods to the working paper for that new method. We figured, in order for you to better figure out whether that's amenable under a standard assessment or not, it may be helpful to provide a little information on the methodology and kind of the rationale for that methodology.

Again, what we're asking here is -- Please let us know if you're uncomfortable with any of those changes being considered under a standard assessment framework, and, if there is any kind of additional guidance you would want to provide the SEDAR 55 panel and analytical team regarding analysis you would like to see to evaluate those changes, you're welcome to do so now, too.

DR. SERCHUK: I am a little bit uncomfortable with some of the changes in a standard assessment. If you're going to be revising an entire time series of recreational catches, for example, that could have huge impacts, and I'm just wondering -- Those seem more like you would want to have in a benchmark, because it could completely change the landscape. These are not trivial changes, and so I'm wondering. We probably should have some discussion of this, because it can change the landscape completely.

DR. REICHERT: Anyone else? Do you, Fred -- Does that mostly relate to a -- Go ahead.

DR. NESSLAGE: I agree with Fred that these are major changes. I am struggling now with the concept of whether the SEDAR schedule has the time to be this flexible, to change everything to a benchmark, because it looks like, reviewing a bunch of these, looking ahead, these seem like they need to be made -- I reviewed the Gwinn paper, and I thought it was great, and I would love to see these changes made, and I just worry that we're putting up artificial definitions between standards and benchmarks that, if we can get the work done, we should get the work done, if we think this group can adequately review it, and that's -- It's not whether the work should be done. It obviously should be done.

These things need to be changed, in my opinion, but do we have the time at the next meeting, or whenever this is going to show up, to adequately review it, and so we have the expertise to review it on this panel? I think that's the real question of whether it should be a benchmark, and so maybe if you could just kind of -- I agree with you that the changes are big, but can we deal with them at this group?

DR. REICHERT: I agree, and I know that some of these methods will be reviewed within the assessment process. I also have a question of whether or not we as a committee feel that we should perhaps look at those methods and review them separately from what's happening within the SEDAR process. I just want to bring that to the committee, and I don't have a -- I am not sure yet how strongly I feel one over the other.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, Genny, those are the right questions to ask, is are you comfortable reviewing this, and it can be a big time demand, and certainly our meeting time gets pretty tight here as we sit around this table twice a year. I think, as John mentioned, we don't always have to wait. We have certainly said in the past that we can have webinar meetings, and we've had plenty of webinar meetings.

This might be the kind of thing that you want to say, hey, let's have a -- Before it goes to the full SSC, maybe you have a sub-group that does an in-depth webinar meeting and reviews these things in-depth, more of like you would do with kind of a peer review. It doesn't have to take multiple days, but maybe you spend the better part of a day getting an in-depth presentation and talking about it and bringing in some other SSC members, in addition to those who are serving on the panel, and you try to lay out some strawmen that then can pave the way for that being discussed here around the table in person.

I think, to me, that's the kind of flexibility that we're thinking. The reality is that, yes, we can't do everything as a benchmark, and, if I hear what's coming out of the discussions that we've had around the SEDAR Steering Committee table, certainly the impression I'm getting from the Science Center and others is moving to fewer benchmarks, as much as possible.

If you look at the flavor of the research track process, it's getting away from that. There has certainly been questions posed during the deliberations on that as to whether or not even these independent-type peer reviews are even necessary, once you have done the initial assessment or you've got the tool -- There are some thoughts that even, once you've built the general model, you could put multiple stocks through there without having the independent peer review, and so I think we're under a lot of pressure to do fewer of those, for sure, and, as much as we can do with this group, and if it means maybe an extra meeting to be able to have the time to dig into something in more depth, I think that would be a better way to go, because it is true that we're going to have a

hard time getting everything and more things as benchmarks, and time passing or not, it's just getting more and more challenging.

DR. REICHERT: To that point, real brief, John, you said review these things, and so I see two things. There is the review of some of these methods, in particularly the recalculating or calculating the historical catches and the new method to combine the trap and the video index, and that's a new method, and maybe the -- We have already used that in other stock assessments, and so the method is -- We actually have looked at that, and then ages is just we have more, and I would assume better, data, and so, in particular, those two, or are you talking about something that we talked about earlier, is, midway or before the assessment starts, have the SSC review some of these issues or some of the problems that the assessment team or the panel ran into, because that's what we talked about when we were talking about amberjack, and so can you clarify what you were envisioning there?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I was thinking of dealing with the issues raised in this assessment and the need that maybe it needs a little more time for peer review, and so just a way of getting you to deal with this assessment and what comes out of it. If you think you're okay and comfortable with making those changes, you're the group that can review those, and you just may need a little bit more time than the normal meeting time to get this adequately reviewed for this particular assessment.

DR. REICHERT: I agree, and I think we can possibly streamline that by giving us an opportunity to perhaps review some of the new methods that are used, so we don't have to do that after the fact. That what I was asking.

MS. LANGE: I agree with that approach. I mean, it seems foolish to go back in time. If we've got new methodologies that the Center is working on that have been used and that are appropriate, to not use them and to go back to basically an update, and that's basically what you're saying, is go to an update and just use the same methods and the same data that were used before, and I would much prefer to move forward.

If we can do that without doing a benchmark, by having an additional couple of webinars to bring everyone up to speed to feel comfortable with the new types of analyses, then I think that's the best approach, or certainly better than throwing the whole assessment out and going back to the old way that was done.

DR. AHRENS: I guess I think one thing to consider is, if you're moving away from benchmarks, are we providing sufficient ability for other stakeholders to comment and interject in that process? I know, as you go through the data workshop and the assessment workshop, you get a lot of really good feedback, particularly from the fishermen that are involved in it, and so, if you're kind of moving away from that process, are we ensuring that we're still able to gain that additional information and participation if we move to standards?

MS. BYRD: One thing to that point, for standard assessments, there are still panels, and there are still appointed fishermen, observers, who are asked to participate in the process, and they're not part of the consensus decision-making, but they are there to provide input on the fishery and ask questions and provide comments, and so, in the standard process, there are still kind of constituents who are involved in the process. One other thing I will note too is this alternative method to

estimate recreational historical catch, this FHWAR, is the acronym for it, has been used in previous assessments, and it's actually the SEDAR data best practice now.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you for that update. Yes, I forgot about that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: To Rob's point, I think that is one of the challenges, as SEDAR looks at different ways of doing the assessments, is maintaining that public involvement, and Rusty mentioned that earlier in his comments, about the importance of that, and so I hope that that stays at the forefront as we look at different changes in the process, that we maintain at least that transparency and that opportunity to have the interaction with the public.

DR. SERCHUK: Can you tell me when the last benchmark was done for vermilion?

MS. BYRD: It was SEDAR 17 in 2008.

DR. SERCHUK: 2008?

MS. BYRD: Yes, with a terminal year of 2007.

DR. SERCHUK: I guess are there any rules of thumb for the number of years that ought to be -- How often a benchmark ought to be done?

DR. REICHERT: No, I don't think we ever discussed that, did we?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and I think, early on, there were some rules of thumb. Lately, there's really not any rules of thumb regarding a benchmark. There's a little more discussion of how long it goes between doing an assessment, and certainly that's been one of the -- That's another topic grappled with around the Steering Committee table, that of is a standard versus an update an inferior product, and the idea has been trying to say that they're both assessments and they're done by slightly different processes, but it shouldn't always be viewed that it's an inferior product when you do a standard versus an update instead of a benchmark.

They should both be strong, robust, valid assessments. They're done by a slightly different process, and I think, based on that reasoning, it's probably one of the big reasons that we haven't gotten into saying, well, if it's been X number of years, then you have to do a benchmark, that coupled with the fact that, the number of stocks that we have and the number that we get done on an annual basis, that would become really prohibitive in a hurry.

DR. SERCHUK: My concern is the world can change a lot in ten years. The assessment could change a lot in ten years, and my feeling is -- My feeling is that, if you tried to do a standard assessment and subsume benchmark type of things in it, new datasets and a new way of looking at it, you're really going between categories, and the idea of a benchmark, quite frankly, is to bring that outside expertise in and to have something that will maintain itself for the next umpteen years.

You don't want to do a benchmark every three or five years, but you ought to be able to come back and say, wait, ten years have passed now, and is there any reason -- I am seeing some of the changes that are being discussed here are not small, incremental changes. You're talking about changing sort of the essence of the inputs to the assessment, and my feeling is that those really would require

a benchmark look at it. I realize the schedule is really tight, and I understand that a benchmark is a completely different activity than a standard assessment or an update, but we should not fool ourselves, quite frankly. The fact is, if you're going to be changing the input data to the assessments in a significant way, that's not an incremental change. That's a big difference.

DR. REICHERT: Fred, I see where you're coming from, and I don't disagree. My question is, for this assessment, is our request to have a workshop for this assessment -- Would that perhaps address some of these concerns of yours?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't know that we can have a workshop for this assessment. We were talking about having an SSC review, probably a webinar meeting, to give an in-depth review.

DR. REICHERT: Forget what I said. It's been a long day, and I mixed up red porgy and vermilion snapper, and so sorry. Sorry, Fred. I mixed those two species up.

DR. SERCHUK: I am going back to the information that I've gotten from the council staff. A standard approach is used to refresh the data sources with the most recent information available. That's the first line, but now we're talking about changing the databases completely.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Doesn't it also say that there is an allowance for other changes and bringing in new data and such? It's gray, and it's up to you all to decide, and I guess one of the problems we're running into is these issues are coming up very late in the process. This ship has sailed. It's about to arrive in its homeport where it was headed to.

I think, as we look to the stocks in 2020, I get a sense of maybe you guys want to see some more information about the potential changes that are going to be considered say for the 2020 stocks, in terms of the standard assessment. Maybe we need to get ahead of that a little bit more and give you some of that information, so that, in April, if you think some of those should be a benchmark, you can make that recommendation.

DR. BARBIERI: Mr. Chairman, to add to that, Fred, I think your comments are actually helpful. I mean, you are seeing these things, and you pointed them out, and I don't see why they cannot be included in our report to the council, and it can be made as a recommendation to the SEDAR Steering Committee. That's a concern that the SSC has identified that needs to be addressed.

DR. SERCHUK: I am not trying to be a gadfly here, believe me. I am just trying to think that a period of time goes by, and it's time to have -- If there are changes being done analytically or new data sources are coming in, we have categories here. If we can accommodate it, fine, but I just think -- I just think we need to keep our eyes open, that's all.

DR. REICHERT: To both of your points, recommend -- Mike just put that mark up there but I also would say -- I thought that you captured that last remark, in terms of recommending -- I thought you had already written it there, but a recommendation to -- Fred, please help me with the language, and I may ask you to help us with drafting that later, but a recommendation to look at the standard assessment and recommend clarifying what would be acceptable as a standard or when and when we should move to a benchmark. John, I think you had some language just a while ago.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You may just want to wait and see what happens with the whole research track movement and what goes on there. I am really -- Personally, wearing my SEDAR hat now, I don't know that it's going to be a wise use of time to get into a bunch of stuff like that if, a year and a half from now or two years from now, we're coming back and now we're doing a research track approach, but I think we take this under advisement and understand it, and, like I said, if there is additional information that we could provide you in April for 2020 stocks, to help head off some of this, then that would be helpful.

If you guys really think that, if it's been more than ten years since the last benchmark, that you need to do another benchmark, then put that on the table, and we can have it discussed at the Steering Committee level and see what sticks. If you really think a hard-and-fast timeline like that is going to mean something, then we can try.

We certainly have had that discussion in the past, and it's gone by the wayside, just because of the productivity needs, and we're under probably greater pressure than ever now to get more throughput, which is why there's a lot of discussions of, well, you know, maybe some of this transparency needs to soften, and this is obviously directly contradictory to the kind of direction I feel things are going, and so, if you guys feel strongly about this, by all means make that statement and make it clear, because it's going to be extremely important as the process potentially changes in the next few years.

MS. LANGE: Mike, is what you're putting up here, is this related to vermilion snapper, or is this general discussion?

DR. REICHERT: This is under the vermilion.

DR. ERRIGO: This is under the vermilion snapper bullet, but it can be generalized.

MS. LANGE: Okay. Then the last bullet -- I mean, I'm not sure that when John had suggested having -- Is that to perform an in-depth review of the assessment or the proposed changes, that last -- I thought it was just the proposed changes to the assessment.

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, what I was suggesting is that you could have a webinar to really devote greater time to providing a peer review of this assessment when it's done.

DR. REICHERT: Go ahead, Luiz.

DR. BARBIERI: No, thank you, Mr. Chairman, but I think the point has been made.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. It is 6:20. We were supposed to go through 5:30. I think the discussions and the conversation we had were very valuable, and I wanted to make sure that we got through at least a number of significant agenda items, and I also wanted to allow ample time for this discussions. What we have left is the black sea bass and then the schedule. I propose that we allow Julia to give us an update on the black sea bass and then perhaps start with the schedule tomorrow morning.

MS. BYRD: Okay. The update on black sea bass, it's a standard assessment. It's ongoing now. After your April 2017 meeting, we received a memo kind of requesting a delay in this assessment,

due to late data submissions, and that was discussed by the SEDAR Steering Committee. Originally, this black sea bass assessment was supposed to come to you to review at this meeting. Due to the requested delay, there was also an interest in adding an additional year to the assessment, and so the terminal year was advanced to 2016, and the assessment was delayed over a longer timeframe to allow for that, and so now it's supposed to come to you at your April 2018 meeting.

That is kind of a timing update, and then I also wanted to let folks know that there was another kind of issue identified that wasn't specifically laid out in the terms of reference that the panel would like to consider, and that's a new discard mortality paper has come out since the last assessment, and so the panel is interested in considering that under this assessment framework, and so the same question is asked to you that we just went through with vermilion. If you have concerns with that being considered under the standard assessment framework, please let us know.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Julia, and this was a paper that -- The Rudershausen paper was not included in the briefing book, but I contacted Jeff, and he's one of the co-authors, and so I asked Jeff to very briefly tell us what the key findings are, in terms of the effect, the potential effect, on the assessment.

DR. BUCKEL: Sure, Marcel. I believe, in SEDAR 25, they used Paul's early work, and this uses a relative risk approach, where there is a -- Black sea bass are tagged and released, and they are scored in different condition categories, and the early work had the best-condition fish. They were released at the surface, and then the return rates of those were compared to the return rates of fish that were in worse condition, and so signs of barotrauma, for example. From that, an estimate of survival was made, but it was predicated on the assumption that the fish in the best condition had 100 percent survival, and those were released at the surface.

We wanted to test that assumption, and so, in follow-up work, we used traps to catch black sea bass on the bottom, and then scuba divers pulled the fish out of the traps on the bottom and tagged the fish at depth. Then we looked at return rates of those fish relative to return rates of fish that were released at the surface, and we found that that assumption of 100 percent survival of the best-condition fish at the surface was not correct. It was around 85 to 90 percent survival, and so those survival rates that were used before have been brought down slightly.

I think that these are an improvement. It leads to lower survival, and this -- One caveat of the work is that this was at a discreet depth, and we did apply that to fish at different depths, and so, when you get to shallower water, all the fish are in really good condition, and so you end up with higher survival, but we were assuming that we were using these survival rates measured with this scuba experiment at that deeper depth, and it was around 120 feet, and so that is one caveat of the work.

I think, just to get it on the record, one of the things that we don't know, from black sea bass discards from MRIP, is the depth at release, and so that's a big unknown, and so, even if you knew -- If you had really good information on discard mortality at different depths, you don't have the information on where those discards are taking place, and so that's a research need for this type of work, but, to get back to the discard mortality paper, it's an improvement, in my mind, because we tested that assumption of the previous work.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, and, just for the information of the committee, this paper, I assume, will be reviewed within the SEDAR process.

MS. BYRD: It's actually available. It's one of the SEDAR 56 reference documents, and so it's up on the website.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. The question is if anyone has any heartburn with including this new information in the assessment? That is the question for us. Seeing none, is that all you need from us today, Julia?

MS. BYRD: Yes, and the second action is just if you need to provide any additional guidance regarding that change, in order for you guys to evaluate it.

DR. REICHERT: Seeing none, John.

DR. BOREMAN: I forgot to mention this during the discussion on the last species, but I think -- I couldn't make the webinar in September, but I sent out a little note to the SSC prior to the webinar regarding how the Northeast handles operational versus benchmarks, and we did come up with a list of criteria, a checklist, that we used on the eighteen groundfish assessments this past summer, and so that could be a starting point for discussion at least, because I think that's what is needed, is a checklist. Basically, it gives the scientists an idea too of when they might be going a little too far, in the eyes of the SSC, and so I can resend that, if you want.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, I think that would be -- I have that, but it would be good to resend that to the committee, so we all have that, and we can take that into consideration. Thanks, John. With that, I think we should recess.

MR. HARTIG: Marcel, I had this question on vermilion, but it's been an overriding topic through the discussions on each of the assessments. You're between a rock and a hard place. John is saying you need to get your information to us two years prior about what improvements you see, but the analysts don't get their improvements until the year the assessment is being done, and so that needs to change if you all want to have any kind of meaningful input into when those need to be done, and so those two need to match up to be able to give your recommendations two years ahead of time.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Ben. That is a very valid point, because sometimes developments take place, and we don't know that, and then we still want to use the best available analysis or scientific information, and so that obviously creates a bit of a tension there. Okay. It is 6:30. We will recess until tomorrow, and I will talk with George and Mike and John a little bit about the agenda for tomorrow, and I will report back to the committee what we came up with, and we can take it from there. 8:30 is the current calendar, 8:30 tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 24, 2017.)

- - -

OCTOBER 25, 2017