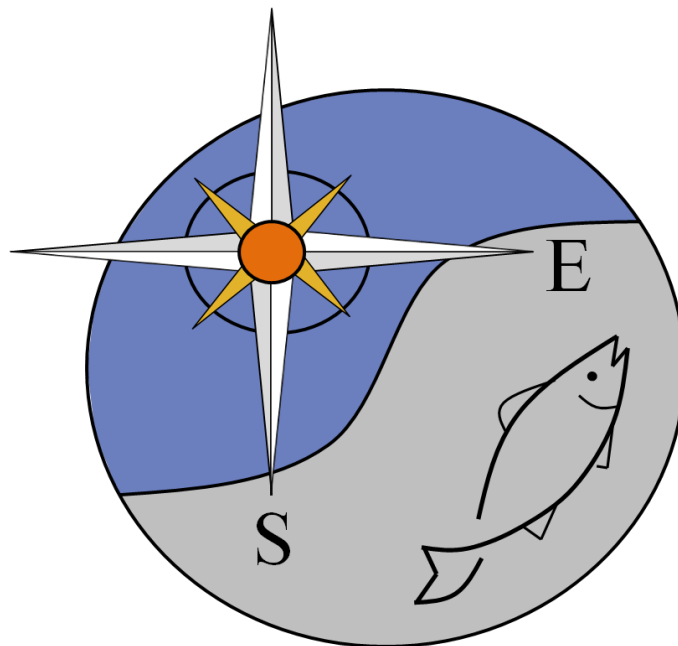


SEDAR



SEDAR Steering Committee

Meeting Summary

August 7, 2012

FINAL

Meeting Via Conference Call

PURPOSE

This meeting is convened to:

- Review SEFSC request to modify 2013 South Atlantic Assessments
- Review SAFMC request to address black sea bass

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Documents:

Attachment 1. May 2012 Meeting Summary

Attachment 2. SEDAR Project Schedule

Attendance:

<u>Committee Members</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Bonnie Ponwith, SEFSC, Chair	John Carmichael
Roy Crabtree, SERO	Ryan Rindone
Bob Gill, GMFMC	Julia Byrd
Steve Bortone, GMFMC	Andrea Grabman
Bob Mahood, SAFMC	
David Cupka, SAFMC	<u>Observers</u>
Miguel Rolon, CFMC	Doug Boyd, GMFMC
Karyl Brewster-Geisz, HMS	Chad Hanson, PEW
Larry Simpson, GSMFC	

1. Introduction

1.1. Documents

Agenda

1.2. Action

Introductions

Review and Approve Agenda

2. Assessment Schedule Discussion

2.1. Documents

Attachment 1. May 2012 Meeting Summary

Attachment 2. SEDAR Project Schedule

2.2. Overview

Although the Steering Committee intention was that 2013 assessment plans established in October 2011 were final, and such plans were reviewed and accepted at the meeting held in May 2012, a number of issues have since been raised since that require further consideration. A summary of the circumstances and background is provided below on a stock-by-stock basis. A summary table of data availability, compiled with input from monitoring and life history teams, is provided at the conclusion.

1) Red Snapper

The SEFSC indicated at the June 2012 SAFMC meeting that the requested evaluation of red snapper, scheduled for presentation to the SAFMC SSC in April 2013, would require a full assessment slot in 2013. Therefore SEFSC requested that SAFMC identify a planned update assessment to drop in lieu of the red snapper evaluation.

The SAFMC indicated that the update of red grouper could be dropped to support the red snapper evaluation.

However, it should also be noted that during the June meeting the SAFMC took action to allow a small harvest of red snapper. The Steering Committee should consider whether the additional analysis of red snapper is still warranted, given that it is now going to cost a full assessment slot, and considering the recent action to allow limited harvest.

Finally, it should be noted that a benchmark of red snapper is scheduled for 2014. The supplemental red snapper evaluation was desired to consider whether some harvest could be allowed (already addressed by Council action) and whether a benchmark could be conducted in 2014. If an analysis of red snapper will require a full assessment slot, a better use of resources may be to simply commit to a 2014 benchmark without first conducting the supplementary feasibility analysis.

2) Black Sea Bass

The SEFSC indicated that the scheduled analysis of black sea bass, added to comply with the SAFMC SSC request to have updated projection information that includes actual landings observations, will require a full assessment slot. Therefore, SEFSC requested that SAFMC identify a planned 2013 update to drop in lieu of the black sea bass projection update. The analysis of black sea bass was desired for Fall 2013 or early 2014, to support an ABC recommendation for 2014/2015. Based on the determination that a full analyst slot would be necessary to address black sea bass, and upon consideration of both anecdotal reports and recent improvements in fishery-independent surveys, the Council considered elevating black sea bass to a full update in 2013. A black sea bass update is currently scheduled for 2014.

The SAFMC indicated that the update of gag grouper could be sacrificed for black sea bass in 2013.

The primary confounding issue with an accelerated update of black sea bass is that life history work to support a full update may not be completed and available. The life history and monitoring teams have been working over the last year to update age structures, surveys, and studies of the 5 stocks supposedly finalized for 2013 last Fall. As noted many times before when considering last minute schedule changes, region-wide resources are simply inadequate to provide real-time processing of age structures. Therefore, processing is prioritized based on the SEDAR schedule. Also recall this is a primary reason why analytical groups have requested that the schedule be finalized at least a year, preferably more, in advance of the actual assessment process. To make a challenging issue worse, recent substantial budget cuts imposed upon a major ageing team in the region, SC DNR's MARMAP program, significantly further reduce the likelihood of addressing late schedule changes. The MARMAP program lost an age reader who previously worked with black sea bass, and does not foresee being able to provide age compositions in 2013 given current resources. The availability of sea bass age structures evaluated by SEFSC is unknown.

A drawback to a black sea bass update in 2013 is that an update assessment will not be able to incorporate the new SEFIS survey data. A benchmark or standard assessment is necessary to incorporate the new data series under the current guidelines.

Summary: Due to the timing of this requested change, and MARMAP budget cuts, it is unlikely that available age structures can be analyzed for a 2013 black sea bass update.

3) Gulf Menhaden

The SEFSC indicated that more resources will be necessary to complete work that still remains from the 2012 Gulf Menhaden Benchmark assessment. During the May steering committee meeting there was indication that the work was not overly rigorous and the Center did not allocate a full assessment slot in 2013 to its completion. Further deliberation between the Center and the Gulf Commission, as planned following the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, revealed that the work is extensive and will require a full assessment slot. Therefore, the SEFSC requested that the SAFMC identify an assessment to drop in 2013 to enable further work on Gulf menhaden.

The SAFMC did not indicate an additional stock to drop to support gulf menhaden in 2013.

4) Atlantic Menhaden

There were additional developments regarding Atlantic menhaden during the ASFMC meeting that followed the June SAFMC meeting. The Menhaden Management Board and ASMFC Policy Board requested technical guidance from ASMFC technical bodies on the feasibility and consequences of accelerating the planned 2015 Atlantic menhaden benchmark to 2013. As the SEFSC Beaufort lab has traditionally conducted menhaden assessments, any requests for Atlantic menhaden assessment work in 2013 will add to the difficulties already created by the preceding items.

Summary of Data Availability for South Atlantic Stocks in 2013.

Stock	Type	Data year	Age comps	Len Comps	LH Update	Survey (Existing)	Survey New
Snowy grouper	standard	2012	07/13	07/13	??	07/13	Possibly*
Black sea bass	Update?	2012	Unlikely given current funding	04/13	Unlikely given current funding	04/13	No*
Gag (if BSB is no-go)	standard	2012	07/13	07/13	??	07/13	Possibly*
Gray trigger	bench	2011	03/13	03/13	03/13	03/13	NO**
Blueline tilefish	bench	2011	03/13	03/13	03/13	03/13	NA
Red Snapper***	special	2012	??	??	??	??	Likely***

* If BSB is done as an update, the new survey will not be included. It will need to be done as a standard to allow inclusion of a new survey. In addition, for both snowy and BSB/gag, per SEDAR guidelines any such new survey should have some level of review before inclusion in a standard – either through a benchmark of a similar species using the same data source, or some other type of external review.

** Based on prior planning discussions, will not have video index for gray triggerfish by 03/13.

*** If red snapper is addressed through an evaluation of available data sources, then information from the SEFIS can be included.

2.3. ACTIONS

- Modify the 2013 assessment schedule

The Steering Committee changed the 2013 assessment schedule as follows:

- 1) The red snapper preliminary analysis was deleted from the work plan for 2013 and the benchmark scheduled for 2014 was made a priority.
- 2) Black sea bass was identified as a priority update in 2013. The Committee would like the update completed and made available to the South Atlantic Council by the June 2013 meeting if issues related to age structure analysis can be resolved. The Science center will work with the MARMAP program to determine the magnitude of ageing work required, and also with other state ageing labs in the region to develop a plan to complete the age work as needed for an update assessment. A report on the ageing situation will be provided to the Steering Committee at its next meeting. At that time the Committee will establish a completion date for the black sea bass assessment update.
- 3) A Gulf menhaden benchmark will be conducted in 2013.
- 4) Updates of South Atlantic gag and red grouper, originally scheduled for 2013, will not be conducted. The Committee will consider future scheduling of these stocks at the next meeting.

Summary of 2013 Atlantic Group Assessment Projects:

- 1) blueline tilefish benchmark
- 2) gray triggerfish benchmark
- 3) Gulf menhaden benchmark
- 4) snowy grouper standard
- 5) black sea bass update

3. Other Business

The Committee discussed timing of the Gulf data poor stocks evaluation, currently scheduled for 2015. The Gulf Council prefers that this project be conducted in 2014. The Committee will discuss 2014 projects at the next meeting. At that time the Gulf Council will provide further details regarding the process, expected outcomes, and stocks to be considered through this effort.

4. Next Meetings

The Committee tentatively scheduled the next meeting as a webinar to be held October 3, 2013.

5. Adjourn