

SEDAR Steering Committee Minutes
January 26, 2004
SERO, St. Petersburg FL

{Approved April 7, 2004}

Steering Committee Members in Attendance:

Roy Crabtree, SERO RA
Nancy Thompson, SEFSC
Wayne Swingle, GMFMC
Gregg Waugh, SAFMC (for Bob Mahood)
David Cupka, SAFMC
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC
Lisa Kline, ASMFC (for Vince O'Shea) via conference call
Graciella Garcia-Moliner (for Miguel Rolon) via conference call

Other Attendees:

Ginny Fay, SERO
Monica Smit-Brunello, SERO
Shepherd Grimes, SERO
Jim Weaver, SERO
John Carmichael, SEDAR

1. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m.

2. The agenda was approved.

Appointment of Council Chairs was moved to the first item.
A discussion of CIE reports was added to Other Business.

The Committee approved a recommendation by Roy Crabtree to appoint Council Chairs to the Steering Committee. Commission chairs were extended an invitation to join the Steering Committee if the Commissions desired.

The Committee approved a recommendation by Roy Crabtree to recognize Dr. Nancy Thompson, SEFSC Director, as Chair of Steering Committee.

3. Minutes of the November 20, 2003 meeting were approved.

4. Review of SEDAR guidelines

Several editorial changes were suggested for the process guidelines. These will be incorporated and an updated draft provided to the Committee.

The GMFMC appointed an ad hoc Council Committee to address participation in SEDAR workshops involving the GMFMC.

The level of management advice provided by SEDAR Review Workshops, and the degree to which such advice is binding to the Councils was discussed. The RA reinforced that such advice should be treated similar to advice from other technical advisory committees, and that the ultimate

management actions should be supported by the entire record regarding the proposed action. Councils may request further clarification at future Council meetings.

Written comments to SEDAR Workshop panels is to be addressed according to Council guidelines for the submission of comments or supplementary information.

The Steering Committee supported increased Council involvement in distributing SEDAR Workshop materials and noticing workshops. SEDAR staff will notice each workshop in the Federal Register, and each individual council participating in a workshop series is expected to pursue any additional notification deemed appropriate.

The Steering Committee recommended that each Council involved in a SEDAR cycle review and approve the Terms of Reference for each workshop in the cycle. Generic Terms of Reference are provided in the process guidelines. Each Council is responsible for providing any additional Terms of Reference during the planning stages of each SEDAR cycle.

5. Workshop Panel Eligibility

Participation on the SEDAR Advisory Panel is governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The current legal advice is that the SEDAR Pool is binding and restrictive. All workshop participants appointed by a Council (panelists) must be included in the Councils SEDAR Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel must include names of all individual panel members. Simply listing a current council advisory panel is not adequate, each member of that panel must be listed on the SEDAR Advisory Panel.

Federal employees are exempt from FACA, and do not have to be included on the Councils SEDAR Advisory Panel. It was not clear whether employees of the interstate commissions are also exempt.

The meaning of 'NGO' in SEDAR documents was questioned. NGO is often taken to imply conservation organizations. However, this is not a binding definition, and NGO refers to a broad range of organizations, including trade and industry groups as well as conservation or environmental organizations.

The Committee agreed that Council Members are not eligible to serve as Workshop Panelists, due to the advisory nature of SEDAR products. Council Members are welcome to attend the Workshops and observe the proceedings.

The Committee agreed that eligibility of Council and Commission staff to serve as Workshop Panelists is left to the discretion of each individual Council and Commission. Staff members would be appointed by the Council just as all other panelists are appointed.

The SEDAR Steering Committee must be appointed as an official Council Advisory Panel by each Council. Steering Committee meetings must be noticed in the Federal Register.

The Steering Committee supported considering CIE participants for assessment and data workshops, especially for controversial and important SEDAR assessments.

The Steering Committee agreed that each Council or Commission making appointments to a SEDAR workshop panel should make the initial contact to determine availability, provide the initial letter of invitation to the individuals they appoint, provide correspondence regarding travel and travel orders, and provide a final list of appointments to the SEDAR Coordinator. The Coordinator will then follow-up with meeting materials.

6. Workshop Panel Composition

Participation on Review Workshops was discussed, including the pros and cons of large and small panels. Panels will include 2 CIE representatives, 1 SEFSC representative, and 1 other NOAA Fisheries Science Center representative. The Committee agreed that Review Panels should be composed of 6 to 12 Panelists. Panel appointments are made for the workshop, not individual assessments that may be reviewed by a workshop. Panelists are expected to participate in the entire workshop.

The working materials on participation will be included in the SEDAR guidelines. Recommended participant categories included in the guidelines for each workshop are for informational purposes, and are not binding to any of the parties involved in SEDAR.

Consul advised that each Council should adopt the SEDAR process generically in future FMPs and Amendments, much as is done for other Council process guidelines, so that as the SEDAR process changes and evolves the FMP language will not require modification.

7. SEDAR Workload

The Committee acknowledged the benefit of a regular SEDAR schedule in allocation resources, both within the Councils and NOAA Fisheries.

The Committee agreed to establish 2 SEDAR cycles per year. Cycles will not be assigned to particular laboratories within the SEFSC; instead the Director will decide which laboratory is the lead based on the species composition of the particular cycle. SEDAR cycles will run on approximately on a calendar year, from January to June and July to December. Workshop scheduling will be in accordance with scheduled Council meetings, with a long term intent to maintain reasonable consistency from year to year regarding the particular weeks for which workshops are scheduled. This is in accordance with the Council's desires to establish consistent meeting weeks from year to year.

8. Number of species assessed and mixing jurisdictions

The Committee discussed the number of assessments to complete in a SEDAR cycle. Assessments scientists involved in past SEDAR cycles recommend that at most 2 species or stocks can be assessed through benchmark assessments in a given cycle, and that the stocks or species should be related in some way to reduce confusion. The Committee agreed with this recommendation.

The Committee discussed assessments conducted by organizations other than the SEFSC. It was agreed that regardless of the lead agency or organization, assessments for the Councils should be conducted through the entire SEDAR process, including all 3 workshops. It was acknowledged that even if a state agency took the lead in developing the assessment models, all the other participants from the Council SEDAR Advisory Panels will be included, so there are no real

manpower savings when an agency other than the SEFSC has lead. State agency benchmark assessments that may lead to Council management actions must be at least reviewed by a SEDAR review panel.

The Committee discussed mixing of jurisdictions (or Councils) within a given SEDAR cycle. Those involved in SEDAR4, the ongoing assessment of deepwater snapper-grouper in the Atlantic and Caribbean, commented that the fishery, monitoring, and life history differences between the Caribbean and Atlantic were so great that no benefit was gained by combining both jurisdictions in a single cycle. The Committee accepted the proposal to limit mixing of jurisdictions to only those instances where management of a unit stock is joint, such as with king and Spanish Mackerel. However, in some cases unit stocks are not well defined, and it may be necessary to conduct a data workshop and define the stocks before jurisdictional boundaries can be clearly established. The Committee agreed that the determining factor must be the unit stock. If a data workshop develops datasets for more stocks than can be assessed during an assessment workshop, the selection of stocks to assess will be made by the appropriate Council if only one is involved in the particular SEDAR cycle, and by the Steering Committee if multiple Councils are involved in the SEDAR cycle.

The Committee discussed ways of increasing productivity given that SEDAR can only assess 2 to 4 stocks per year. A hierarchical description of stock assessment was considered: 1) benchmark assessments, referring to those that are initial attempts at assessing a stock or that include major changes in input datasets or modeling techniques; and 2) update assessments, those that involve updating input datasets, but no additions or deletions of datasets or changes in model framework. Such assessments are typically called 'turn of the crank' assessments. The Committee recommended devoting SEDAR cycles to benchmark assessments. Update assessments can be completed more frequently than feasible under the SEDAR workload, and may be reviewed by standing Council Committee's such as the SSC or its assessment subcommittees. It is expected that the SEFSC can conduct at most 4 update assessments per year, and state agencies may be used to further increase productivity.

9. Prioritization for coming SEDAR cycles

The Committee recommended that each Council reconsider assessment priorities in light of the approved SEDAR schedule and workload restrictions. SEDAR 8 is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2005 and to assess Atlantic and Gulf shallow water snapper-grouper. The Committee will make a final determination of species to assess through SEDAR 8 when it meets in April 2005. Current priorities include: GMFMC, vermillion snapper and greater amberjack; SAFMC, red grouper, red snapper, and gag grouper; CFMC, yellowtail snapper.

10. Reporting Standards

The Committee reviewed the proposed assessment outline and review workshop report outlines. The Committee supported using an Advisory Report format similar to that used by the NEFSC's SAW/SARC process to summarize assessment results. The Committee supported the proposed guidelines for the Review Panel's Consensus Summary.

11. Document Series

The Committee reviewed the SEDAR document series, and supported the SEDAR document series as a method of organizing working papers and assessment reports. All SEDAR reports and papers will become part of the SEDAR administrative record maintained by the SEDAR staff.

12. Follow-ups

- A. CIE reports. Copies of CIE reports from past SEDAR review workshops are available. They will be distributed to members of the steering committee. Council staff are encouraged to forward these reports to full Council.
- B. Queen Conch and Spiny Lobster: SEFSC pursuing assessments.
- C. Coordinator attendance at Council Meetings. The RA recommended that the SEDAR coordinator attend the coming March meetings of all 3 Councils to address any questions that may be raised regarding the SEDAR process and workshop participation. Councils are responsible for providing travel information and agendas and stating when SEDAR issues will be addressed, if they would like the coordinator to attend these meetings.
- D. Updated assessment of red porgy. An update of the red porgy assessment was scheduled for 2005. A benchmark assessment of red porgy was conducted through SEDAR in 2002, and it is recommended that an assessment update be prepared and reviewed by the SAFMC SSC or the biological assessment subcommittee.

13. Other Business

- A. Completed.
- B. The website should be ready in mid-March for the red snapper data workshop, starting April 19th
- C. SEDAR datasets will be warehoused by the SEFSC.
- D. Next Meeting. The next Steering Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of April 5-9, at the SEFSC in Miami. The meeting will likely convene on April 6.
- E. The Committee agreed to move the SEDAR 4 Data Workshop ahead one week, to the second week of June 2004.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.