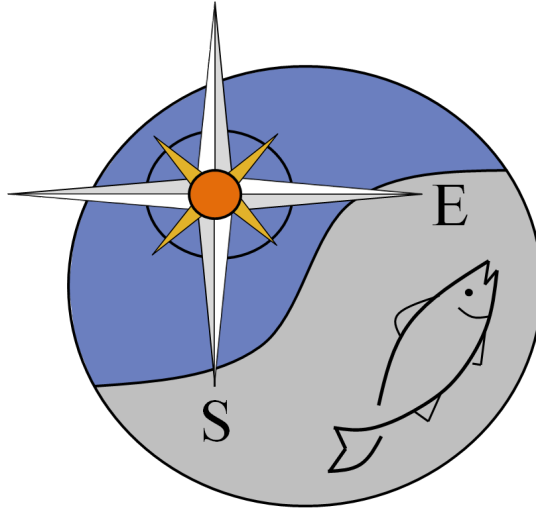


SEDAR



**SEDAR Steering Committee
Check-In Meeting Summary
May 30, 2024**

Meeting held via webinar

Version: Final

7/29/2024

Overview:

Given the potential changes to the process discussed during the Spring 2024 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, and the amount of work needed by the Cooperators to move the process forward, the Committee agreed to hold a brief check-in webinar in May 2024 to review the summary report and provide updates on their work regarding the proposed process changes. Below you will find a summary of that meeting.

Note: No detailed agenda or Briefing Book materials were produced for this webinar.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Clay Porch, Chair, SEFSC
John Carmichael, SAFMC
Trish Murphy, SAFMC
Carrie Simmons, GMFMC
Kevin Anson, GMFMC
Carlos Farchette, CFMC

Karyl Brewster-Geisz, HMS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC
Pat Campfield ASMFC
Andy Strelcheck, SERO
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Katie Siegfried, SEFSC
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC
John Walter, SEFSC
Erik Williams, SEFSC

The Committee reviewed the draft Summary Report from the Spring 2024 meeting, suggested modifications, and approved the report.

The Committee recommended using the term “Project Components” when discussing what the assessment process should look like, as opposed to “add-ons”. Which Project Components to include should be agreed to between the Cooperator and the lead agency during the planning stages for a project (i.e. workshops vs webinars). The term “add-ons” refers to project modifications that may be necessary to address an unforeseen issue that arises while an

assessment is underway. Adding in additional complexity to an assessment (either in modelling or process) may come with a cost.

While removing the nomenclature of assessment categories to avoid the appearance of the differing qualities of assessments was supported by the Committee, it was noted it also adds in uncertainty regarding what process components will be included for a given assessment.

- With the current categories, stakeholders know what the process will look like (webinars, data or review in-person workshops, external peer review).
- There was concern that by calling everything an assessment, without set process definitions, it might be more difficult to get the components that some (Cooperator or technical body) may feel are necessary.
- It was restated that the lead analytic agency (i.e., SEFSC or FWC) will make the decision on the final structure for a given project, as they are the ones who must implement the assessment.
- It will be very important to hold discussions regarding the structure of a given assessment project early on, and that all parties agree to the recommended process before it begins.
- It was noted that these discussions happen at the Cooperator/Analytic Agency level. The Steering Committee should not be involved in the individual project discussions.

Goal of the SEFSC in proposing the suggested process modifications has been to increase the throughput of fisheries management advice.

- Throughput may be increased by reducing assessment complexity, but that will only be done if it is scientifically justified.
- An increase in throughput may also be achieved by modifying the process (e.g. fewer webinars, decreased transparency in some stages of the process)
- Processes could be developed that allow for catch level recommendations to be modified based on the most recent information, which can be provided between full stock assessments.
- The choice of how to increase fisheries management advice may be Cooperator specific.

The Center would like to identify the next steps for each Cooperator, as it may differ. They feel there is a good understanding of those next steps for Headquarters, HMS, and Caribbean. It was acknowledged that the Gulf and South Atlantic Cooperators may be in different places and require different products to move the discussions along.

It was noted that to ensure data are properly compiled and vetted by those who collect it and increase the amount of management advice that can be provided by the SEFSC, re-instating the multi-species data workshops, or other data review approaches, may be needed.

- Especially important if some of the processes will not be going through a formal SEDAR.
- Need to ensure that those collecting the data have good communication with those using the data.

The Committee supported organizing some working groups to begin discussions as the process moves forward.

- It was suggested having a group of SSC representatives might be helpful to get some insight in what they see their roles as, and how to engage in the process.

The question of “How many stocks can be done?” was discussed. The South Atlantic Cooperator indicated that it will be very difficult to have a discussion with the Council about key stocks without some understanding of that fundamental question. Streamlining the process, and less complex models, can aid in increasing throughput but the data providers can only do so much. How much is that?

Members of the Committee expressed frustration at the slow pace at which the process is developing and requested the Center put together a cohesive plan that outlines everything that has been discussed. This document can be provided to the Cooperators and SSCs for discussion and comment. This master plan should provide details on the following:

- Include information on what is the Center going to do with the Key Stocks list?
- Contain guidance on the clear roles of each player at each step.
- Details on the timing and order of the process.
- What is the transition plan for the stocks which currently have age-based assessments but do not end up being identified as key stocks. How does the SSC resolve the fact that a stock which previously had an age-based assessment no longer does?
- What does “lesser information” look like? How does it translate to management advice?
- The role of less-complex models (where are they appropriate and will they be accepted?).
- As the workload is reduced under SEDAR, how is that redirected to benefit the Cooperators and getting them the information that is needed to manage under Magnuson?

It was noted the suggested changes to the process will likely impact what the Cooperators receive, how much they receive, and what those products look like. It will take some adjusting to accept those changes.

The Center indicated that they need to know which stocks the Cooperators need updated advice for most frequently, and what frequency is required. With that information, the Center can then design a strategy to provide that advice framework.

- Need to work together to produce a proposal.
- To ensure that a proposal will work, the Center is interested in testing, via MSEs, options. An example for a given species might be full assessment every 8 years, with interim analyses every three years.
- A full assessment may not be needed to provide adaptive management information to be responsive to changes on the water.

The Committee discussed if the Agency will stand by a less-complex approach (such as an index method), when a more complex assessment could have been produced.

- Chair Porch indicated that they would support less-complex approaches, where appropriate, for updating catch advice.
- It is important all understand that this approach is using a management procedure designed to create efficiencies using the most recent and best data to update catch advice.

- It was noted that more frequent though perhaps less rigorous management advice is an improvement over no management advice or infrequent advice.

The Center indicated that they have produced some tools which will help the Cooperators to visualize possible calendar scenarios, but those tools require explanation and decision points to make them useful.

- Conversations between the Center and the Cooperators will be needed to work through proposals.
- Does the Committee wish to invest in research to determine if simple approaches perform as well as complicated stock assessments? If so, then that will require “white space” in the calendar.
- It was suggested that the Center consider discussing ideas/drafts with the Cooperators to help everyone understand the concerns and provide suggestions. These modifications may take several iterations before something is ready to be shared outside of the Committee.

Other Business:

The Committee had a brief discussion about SEDAR 98 Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper which is scheduled to begin December 2024. There is some concern about moving forward given the uncertainty regarding the recreational landings information with both MRIP and the State surveys. It was noted that this issue may impact more than just the red snapper assessment in 2024 but other assessments in 2025. The Center and the Gulf Cooperator will need to have further discussions to address these issues.