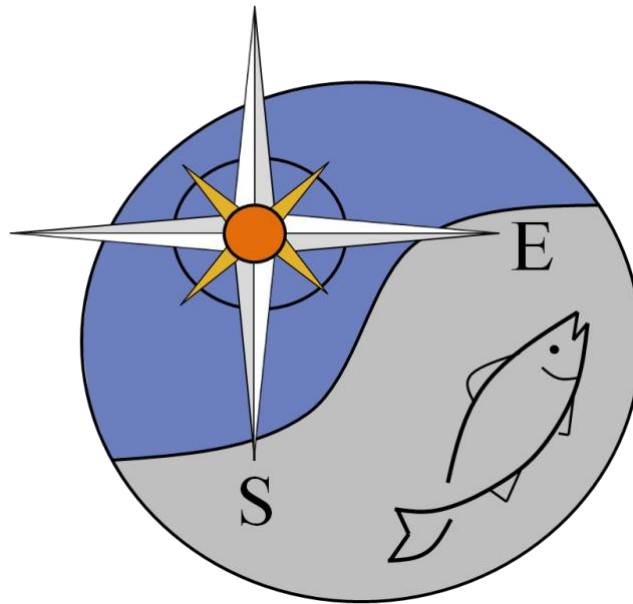


SEDAR



SEDAR Steering Committee

Meeting Summary

October 16, 2020

Meeting via Webinar

Report Content Note:

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

Outcomes from the meeting are found under the section headers “Meeting Outcome”.

Version: FINAL

5/13/2021

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DOCUMENTS

Attachment 1: May 2020 Draft Meeting Summary

Attachment 2: SEDAR Projects Update September 2020

Attachment 3: Topical Working Groups Discussion Document

Attachment 4: SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 5: SEFSC Proposal for Updated Assessment Schedule for Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic 2021-2023

Attachment 6: Procedural Workshop Proposal– Best Practices for Combining Index of Abundance Surveys

Attachment 7: Research Recommendations App How-To Document

Attendance

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Clay Porch, Chair, SEFSC

John Carmichael, SAFMC

Mel Bell, SAFMC

Carrie Simmons, GMFMC

Tom Frazer, GMFMC

Miguel Rolon, CFMC

Roy Crabtree, SERO

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC

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Ted Switzer, FWC

Laura Thornton, SEFSC

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Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

Erik Williams, SEFSC

Beth Wrege, SEFSC

John Walter, SEFSC

Meeting Outcomes Summary

This Meeting Outcomes Summary highlights the major decisions of the Committee during the meeting. Additional details can be found under Meeting Outcome for the relevant sections of this report and are italicized throughout the report.

SEDAR Process Review

The Committee discussed the SEFSC's new approach to Operational Assessments (OA), focusing on the use of Topical Working Groups (TWGs) in place of the existing Assessment Panels.

One of the main concerns raised by the Cooperators was the perceived lack of transparency and opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the redefined approach. The Committee discussed what is missing regarding transparency and how can this concern be addressed.

The Committee requested that SEDAR Staff continue to refine the details for OAs that were presented in Attachment 3 and passed the following motion:

"The SEDAR Steering Committee requests the SEFSC and SEDAR staff develop a guidance document for the Operational Assessment process including the use of Topical Working Groups 'TWG' to ensure the process will remain transparent while still meeting the needs of SEFSC to streamline the current process. The guidance document should be presented to the Committee at the Spring 2021 meeting."

Approved by consensus

SEDAR Project Priorities and Schedule Discussion

Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Assessment Process Update: The five Working Groups have all been established and are beginning their discussions.

Gulf of Mexico Great Red Snapper Count Update: The initial results of the study were recently reported to Congress, and indicated a much higher abundance estimate than the previous stock assessment.

SEDAR Schedule Modification Discussion

Chair Porch informed the Committee that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Center's ability to process data, particularly age data, for use in assessments. The SEFSC proposed the following changes to the assessment schedule (Attachment 5):

- 1) Move start of South Atlantic Spanish mackerel assessment to 2022*
- 2) Move start of Gulf of Mexico gray snapper assessment to 2022*
- 3) Move the terminal year for Blueline Tilefish from 2021 to a terminal year of 2020*
- 4) Start Caribbean Queen Trigger in early 2021, and completion within 2021*

South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel:

The South Atlantic Council and ASMFC Cooperators disagreed with the SEFSC's recommendation to delay Spanish mackerel.

The Center agreed to begin discussions with the States to determine if they could help with the processing of age samples and will also provide the SAFMC with a report of the status of the Spanish mackerel ageing work within a month.

It was recognized that if Spanish Mackerel is able to remain in 2021, other assessment schedule changes would be needed. The updated proposed project schedule for the South Atlantic included the following modifications:

- *2021: Spanish Mackerel and Black Sea Bass*
- *2022: Vermilion Snapper and Red Grouper*
- *2023: Blueline Tilefish*

South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Blueline Tilefish:

The Blueline Tilefish assessment will be postponed from 2022 to 2024, to allow for a terminal year of at least 2022.

Gulf of Mexico Gray Snapper:

The Gulf of Mexico Council Cooperator accepted the SEFSC recommendation to postpone the Gray Snapper assessment one year. The delay in Gray Snapper caused the Gray Triggerfish Research Track assessment to be pushed back to 2024.

Table 1 displays the updated Project Planning Grid documenting the Committee deliberations.

Other Business Topics

Procedural Workshop Proposal – Index Development Using Fishery Independent Survey Data that Varies Across Space and Time

The Committee felt the proposed workshop was valuable and supported conducting it. The following motion was offered:

“The SEDAR Steering Committee supports the indices procedural workshop proposed in Attachment 6.”

Approved by consensus

SEDAR Research Recommendation Search Tool

SEDAR Staff presented the new SEDAR Research Recommendation Search Tool to the Committee.

Next Meeting

The Committee discussed the timing and structure of the Spring 2021 meeting. It will be structured with an afternoon and morning session the week of May 10, 2021 via webinar or in person. A full second day may be needed once the topics are determined.

Table 1: SEDAR Project Planning Grid – Meeting Outcome: October 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee.

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects							Future Requests								
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING							2023 Proposed Projects								
YEAR	SA Team				Gulf/Caribbean Team					HMS Team		FL FWCC	ASMFC GSMFC	CMP Shrimp	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2				
2020	Scamp RT	Snowy Grouper U	Gag Grouper OA	Tilefish OA	Scamp RT	GAJ OA	Vermilion OA	Cobia U		Atlantic Blacktip Benchmark				King U	
2021		Red Snapper OA				Gag Grouper OA	Red Snapper RT	Red Snapper RT	Queen Trigger PR-STX- STT OA						
			Black Sea Bass OA	Spanish Mackerel OA	Scamp OA	Gray Snapper OA				Hammerheads RT	Mutton Bench	Gulf Menhaden OA			
2022	Scamp OA												ASFMC Menhaden OA	Gulf Spanish OA	
2023	Gray Triggerfish RT	Vermilion OA	Red Grouper OA		Yellowedge OA		Red Snapper OA	Red Snapper OA	Queen snap@PR, redtail parrot@STX	Hammerheads RT	Hogfish Bench		Gulf Shrimp		
2024		White Grunt RT		Blueline Tilefish OA	Lane Snapper OA?	Gray Triggerfish RT	Tilefish Complex OA?	Vermilion OA	Lane@PR,, YTS			Black Grouper Bench?	ASFMC Red Drum (RW)/ Gulf Menhaden OA		
2025					Snowy Grouper/ Tilefish						Caribbean Hogfish				
2026															

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.

1 Introduction

1.1 Documents

- Agenda
- Attachment 1. May 2020 Draft Meeting Summary

1.2 Action

- Introduction
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Meeting Summary

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee made no modifications to the agenda and approved the May 2020 Draft Meeting Summary v.5 (10/15/2020).

2 SEDAR Projects Report

2.1 Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Projects Update September 2020

2.2 Summary

The projects report (Attachment 2) provides a summary of current and recently completed SEDAR assessment projects.

Highlighted project developments:

- SEDAR 70 – Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack: The SESFC informed the Gulf Council that the final SEDAR 70 assessment report would be delayed by one month. The original project schedule had the assessment completed by October 2020, but due to the need for additional time, the assessment will now be completed by November 2020. It should still go to the GMFMC SSC for review in January 2021, as originally scheduled.
- South Atlantic Snowy Grouper Update: The SESFC informed the South Atlantic Council that the final SEDAR 36 Snowy Grouper Update assessment report would be delayed by approximately one month. New age data became available which greatly extended the maximum age of snowy grouper. This change has required the analysts to do additional analysis to ensure the model still performs well. The original project schedule had the assessment completed by September 2020. The assessment will now be completed by October 2020.
- COVID-19 Impacts to ongoing projects:
 - SEDAR 68 Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Scamp: This assessment has been impacted by delays due to COVID-19. The Data Workshop was scheduled to be held March 16-20, 2020, but it was cancelled due to safety concerns regarding COVID-19. The process continued via a remote process, with individual working groups meeting to review the available data and come up with pre-decisional recommendations. Those pre-decisional recommendations were presented on

publicly-noticed Data Process Plenary Webinars held in April and May. The assessment was put on hold for three months due to time constraints with a variety of the data providers, with the final webinar being held in September. The Assessment Development Team made final recommendations for a variety of data recommendations. The data providers are currently writing the Data Workshop report drafts, and finalizing and submitting final data inputs.

2.3 Action

- Informational; none required

3 SEDAR Process Review and Discussion

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3. Topical Working Groups Discussion Document

3.2 Summary

Topical Working Group Discussions

During the May 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting, Chair Porch provided the Committee a brief review of the Science Center's intentions and expectations for the Research Track (RT) and Operational Assessment (OA) approaches. One of the main clarifications was as follows:

The SEFSC recommended eliminating "Assessment Panels" for all future Operational Assessments. Instead, OAs may have Topical Working Groups (TWG), which are ad-hoc working groups assembled to discuss specific topics identified in the SoW. Those topics should focus on potential variations from the previously-approved model structure and data.

Since the May meeting, SEDAR Staff have worked with SEFSC staff to work on the details of implementing this new approach for upcoming Operational Assessments. Additionally, SEDAR Staff provided presentations to the GMFMC and SAFMC SSCs to inform them of the new process, obtain feedback, and answer questions. One of the most common concerns was the loss of participation and transparency with the move to TWGs.

A summary of those discussions can be found in Attachment 3.

3.3 Action

- Discuss the use of Topical Working Groups in Operational Assessments

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee discussed the SEFSC's new approach to Operational Assessments (OA), with most of the discussion focusing on the use of Topical Working Groups (TWGs) in place of the existing Assessment Panels.

SEDAR Staff gave a brief overview of the discussions and progress that has been made on implementing this new approach since the last Steering Committee meeting.

- *Presentations were made to the Councils and SSCs describing the new process and to get feedback*
- *Several meetings with SEFSC Staff occurred to discuss details*
- *SEDAR Staff produced a summary document reviewing all the discussions and feedback (Attachment 3)*

The need for this change in approach was questioned by the some on the Committee. Chair Porch reiterated the Center's belief that this change will streamline the process and increase throughput overall.

- *Having TWGs focus on specific topics will eliminate Assessment Panels "re-reviewing" the entire assessment, which is not necessary given the OA is working from a previously-approved assessment.*
- *The change of name from Assessment Panel to Topical Working Group should help clarify the role of appointed participants within the assessment process, and was supported by the Committee.*
- *Chair Porch indicated that a TWG will need to review any new information being considered for an OA, so there will be an opportunity for public input in this process.*

The Committee expressed some concerns regarding how to handle issues that may arise after the SoWs and ToRs are approved, either before the assessment begins or after it is underway.

- *Chair Porch stated that this should be an infrequent problem, but highlighted the need for advance planning.*
- *There is a process to potentially incorporate additional data or assessment requests after the assessment is underway, but will require discussions between the Center and the Cooperator. This is similar to how this is handled in the existing process.*
- *It was also pointed out the option exists for the Center to discuss new issues with the Cooperators or SSCs during the assessment process if needed.*

One of the main concerns raised by the Cooperators was the perceived lack of transparency and opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the redefined approach. The Committee discussed what is missing regarding transparency and how this concern can be addressed.

- *It was noted that there is often some confusion and lack of understanding whenever a new process is implemented.*
- *Continued, and possibly expanded, education and outreach regarding the redefined approach is needed as the process is rolled out.*

It was noted that while there will be TWGs for some OAs, those groups may be focusing on technical issues which many stakeholders may not feel they can contribute to. Additionally, some OAs will not have any TWGs and it was not clear how stakeholder input would be gathered. The Committee discussed a possible option for more stakeholder-friendly opportunities for input.

- *Hold a focused webinar for stakeholders during an assessment where the Center could provide a presentation with little jargon and specific, focused questions to promote discussion.*
- *A similar approach could to be applied for OAs with no TWGs.*
- *Cooperator assistance will be required to get the word out if these approaches are implemented.*

- *SEDAR Staff will work with Center and Cooperator Staff to work out the details for this proposed option.*

The Committee requested that SEDAR Staff continue to refine the details for OAs that were presented in Attachment 3 and passed the following motion:

“The SEDAR Steering Committee requests the SEFSC and SEDAR staff develop a guidance document for the Operational Assessment process including the use of Topical Working Groups ‘TWG’ to ensure the process will remain transparent while still meeting the needs of SEFSC to streamline the current process. The guidance document should be presented to the Committee at the Spring 2021 meeting.”

Approved by consensus

4 Assessment Schedule Review

4.1 Documents

Attachment 4. SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 5. SEFSC Proposal for Updated Assessment Schedule for Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic 2021-2023

4.2 Summary

- ASMFC Schedule Update: ASFMC has informed SEDAR that it will conduct the Operational Assessment of Atlantic menhaden in 2022 entirely in-house. SEDAR will not be required to organize the Review process.
- GSMFC Schedule Update: GSMFC has informed SEDAR that it will conduct the Operational Assessment of update of Gulf menhaden in 2021 entirely in-house. SEDAR will not be required to organize the Review process.
- The SEFSC will provide an update to the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Assessment Process discussed during the last SEDAR Steering Committee meeting.
- The SEFSC will provide an update on the status of the Great Red Snapper Count.
- SEDAR and the SEFSC were not able to move forward with scheduling the 2022 assessment projects that were approved during the May 2020 Steering Committee Meeting, because of the impacts COVID-19 has had on current and future assessment projects. The SEFSC will provide an update on these impacts to the stock assessment enterprise (timing, process, meetings). (See Attachment 5)
- The SEFSC requested that each cooperator provide a Statement of Work for the 2023 operational assessments by October 15, 2020. The SEFSC will review the SoWs and will provide feedback to the Cooperators no later than February 1, 2021. These projects will be considered for approval at the Spring 2021 meeting. (Appendix 1)

- SAFMC: Tilefish, Snowy Grouper
- GMFMC: No OAs not associated with a Research Track will begin in 2023; red snapper OA timing dependent on 2021 Research Track schedule
- The Committee is asked to review the project schedule for 2023 and provide priorities for 2024 and beyond.

4.3 Action

- Consider any needed modifications to the 2021 and 2022 Projects
- Review 2023 Priorities
- Consider long-term priorities (2024/2025)

MEETING OUTCOME

Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Assessment Process Update

The Committee received an update on the progress of the first stage of the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Assessment Process. The five Working Groups have all been established and are beginning their discussions.

Gulf of Mexico Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC) Update

Chair Porch provided the Committee with an update on the GRSC. The initial results of the study were recently reported to Congress, and indicated a much higher abundance estimate than the previous stock assessment.

- *It was pointed out the GRSC utilized multiple technologies to get estimates over low relief habitat which typically has low densities of fish.*
- *Once the report is final (target is November), the SEFSC will conduct an interim assessment with a target completion date at the end of March 2021.*
- *Continued communication between the GRSC scientists, SEFSC personnel, and Cooperators will be important as the GoM interim assessment process progresses.*

An RFP for a similar, but much smaller, red snapper project in the South Atlantic region will be released in the fall of 2020. There is a hope to gather additional funds for the South Atlantic project in the future.

SEDAR Project Priorities and Schedule Discussion

Chair Porch informed the Committee that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Center's ability to process data, particularly age data, for use in assessments. Dr. Porch indicated that his staff was operating at ~70% efficiency.

Given the impact of the ongoing pandemic, the SEFSC proposed the following changes to the assessment schedule (Attachment 5):

- 1) Move start of South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel assessment to 2022*
- 2) Move start of GOM Gray Snapper assessment to 2022*
- 3) Move the terminal year for Blueline Tilefish from 2021 to a terminal year of 2020*
- 4) Start Caribbean Queen Triggerfish in early 2021, and completion within 2021*

South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel:

There was much discussion regarding the SEFSC's recommendation to postpone the 2021 OA of Spanish Mackerel. The South Atlantic Council Cooperator disagreed with the SEFSC's recommendation to delay Spanish Mackerel for the following reasons:

- *This species has the greatest need of those on the South Atlantic schedule*
- *Previous assessment had a terminal year of 2011*
- *This assessment has been postponed several times in the recent past*
- *The SA Council has a pending amendment which is stalled waiting for the assessment*
- *Accountability measures have recently been triggered so the Council needs to take action*

The ASMFC Cooperator also noted that they were waiting on an updated Spanish Mackerel assessment as well, stating that this species is a top priority for them.

Chair Porch indicated that the major issue for Spanish Mackerel is the backlog of age samples than need to be processed and aged. He noted that access to the building has been restricted and his staff has not been able to get in since March. The Committee discussed possible ways to keep Spanish Mackerel on the schedule for 2021.

- *Would the States be able to aid in the ageing and otolith processing to meet the deadline?*
- *Do ageing protocols exist for Spanish Mackerel between labs (GSMFC ageing manual is available)*
- *What is the current status of the age samples? How many to process? How many to age?*

The Center agreed to begin discussions with the States to determine if they could help with the process of ageing samples. It will also provide the SAFMC with a report of the status of the Spanish Mackerel ageing work within a month. This feedback will be needed to determine if the Spanish Mackerel OA could remain on the 2021 assessment schedule.

It was recognized that if Spanish Mackerel is able to remain in 2021, other assessment schedule changes would be needed to alleviate the work overload identified by the SEFSC. The updated proposed project schedule for the South Atlantic included the following modifications:

- *2021: Spanish mackerel and Black Sea Bass*
- *2022: Vermilion Snapper and Red Grouper*
- *2023: Blueline Tilefish*

South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Blueline Tilefish:

The South Atlantic Cooperator questioned whether switching the terminal year from 2021 to 2020 was going to produce a useful assessment, especially given the concerns regarding how representative the 2020 data will be. It was suggested that the resources assigned to the 2022 assessment of Blueline Tilefish be re-directed to other assessment tasks.

The Committee also heard from a member of the staff from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), as this species is jointly managed with the that Council.

- *The Mid-Atlantic Council recently implemented a new reporting requirement for private recreational fisherman (began in 2020)*
- *Wanted to ensure that the next assessment goes through the entire coast*
- *MAFMC only has fishery management specifications set through 2021*
- *The Mid-Atlantic Council would likely support a delay of the assessment to allow for more discussion regarding the next assessment process*

After much discussion, it was decided that the Blueline Tilefish assessment will be postponed from 2022 to 2024, to allow for a terminal year of at least 2022.

Gulf of Mexico Gray Snapper:

The Gulf of Mexico Council Cooperator accepted the SEFSC recommendation to postpone the Gray Snapper assessment one year, so that it will now be completed by the end of 2022. Additionally, this modification to the gray snapper schedule caused the gray triggerfish Research Track assessment to be pushed back to 2024.

Table 1 displays the updated Project Planning Grid documenting the Committee deliberations

5 Other Business

- Procedural Workshop Proposal – Index Development Using Fishery Independent Survey Data that Varies Across Space and Time

Workshop Objective: To improve the quality of fishery-independent data inputs and streamline future stock assessments by defining best practices for generating indices of relative abundance and size composition that incorporate data from multiple surveys and/or account for survey changes through time.

The proposal containing details for the indices procedural workshop is available for your review in Attachment 6.

Attachment 6: Proposal summary

- Research Recommendations App

Stock assessments conducted through the SEDAR process usually contain a list of Research Recommendations. These are produced by the appointed Panels and analysts for a given assessment, with the purpose of these recommendations being to inform researchers of data gaps or modeling approaches that could potentially strengthen the next assessment. SEDAR staff produce a Consolidated Research Recommendations PDF that combines all assessments' research recommendations together in one document for ease of reference. While this document provides a comprehensive accounting of the research recommendations for all SEDAR assessments, it has can be cumbersome to navigate at times. To improve the usability of the Consolidated Research Recommendations document, SEDAR staff created the "SEDAR Research Recommendation Search Tool."

Attachment 7: Research Recommendations App How-To Document

5.1 Action

- Recommendations regarding Indices Procedural Workshop

MEETING OUTCOME

Procedural Workshop Proposal – Index Development Using Fishery Independent Survey Data that Varies Across Space and Time

The Committee felt the proposed workshop was valuable and supported conducting it. The following motion was offered:

“The SEDAR Steering Committee supports the indices procedural workshop proposed in Attachment 6.”

Approved by consensus

SEDAR Research Recommendation Search Tool

SEDAR Staff presented a demonstration of the new SEDAR Research Recommendation Search Tool to the Committee. The Committee was very pleased with the new tool and thanked Staff for putting this together.

6 Next Meeting

The Committee is asked to make a scheduling recommendation and suggest topics for the next meeting. Based on past practices, this meeting would be a webinar-based meeting in May 2021. Given the need to conduct the current (October 2020) meeting via webinar, the Committee could consider an in-person meeting in Charleston, SC for the May 2021 meeting.

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee discussed the timing and structure of the Spring 2021 meeting. It was recommended that the meeting be structured with an afternoon session, followed by a morning session the next day. A full day may be needed for the second day, once the topics are determined. The meeting may be either via webinar or in person, depending on the status of the pandemic once the meeting gets closer. The Committee recommended the week of May 10, 2021.

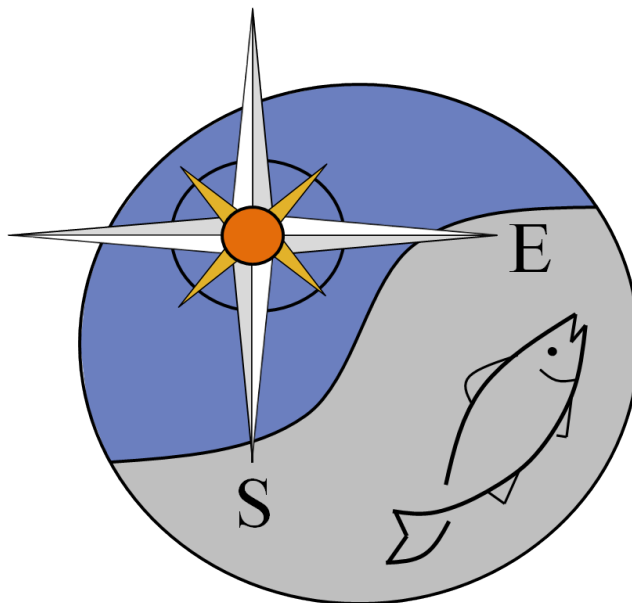
Table 1: SEDAR Project Planning Grid – October 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee Discussion Draft

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects					FUTURE Requests									
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING														
YEAR	SA Team				Gulf/Caribbean Team					HMS Team		FL FWCC	ASMFC GSMFC	CMP
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2			
2020	Scamp RT	Snowy Grouper U	Gag Grouper OA	Tilefish OA	Scamp RT	GAJ OA	Vermilion OA	Cobia U		Atlantic Blacktip Benchmark				King U
2021		Red Snapper OA											Gag Grouper OA	
			Black Sea Bass OA	Spanish Mackerel OA		Red Snapper RT	Gray Snapper OA	Red Snapper RT	Queen Trigger PR-STX-STT OA	Hammerheads RT	Mutton Bench	Gulf Menhaden OA		
2022	Scamp OA				Scamp OA									
		Red Grouper OA											ASFMC Menhaden OA	Gulf Spanish OA
2023	Gray Triggerfish RT		Vermilion OA	Blueline Tilefish OA	Yellowedge OA				Queen snap@PR, redtail parrot@STX					
		Snowy Grouper/ Tilefish	White Grunt RT			Red Snapper OA	Gray Triggerfish RT	Red Snapper OA				Hogfish Bench		
2024					Lane Snapper OA?	Tilefish Complex OA?			Vermilion OA	Lane@PR,, YTS				Black Grouper Bench?
2025														
2026														

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.

SEDAR



**SEDAR Steering Committee
Meeting Follow-up
October 23, 2020**

Background:

During the October 16th Steering Committee Meeting, Chair Porch informed the Committee that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Center's ability to process data, particularly age data, for use in assessments. Dr. Porch indicated that his staff was operating at ~70% efficiency.

Given the impact of the ongoing pandemic, the SEFSC proposed several changes to the assessment schedule, including postponing start of South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel assessment to 2022.

There was much discussion regarding the SEFSC's recommendation to postpone the 2021 OA of Spanish Mackerel. The South Atlantic Council Cooperator disagreed with the SEFSC's recommendation to delay Spanish Mackerel for several reasons, as outlined in the October 2020 Steering Committee Meeting Summary Report.

The ASMFC Cooperator noted that they were waiting on an updated Spanish Mackerel assessment as well, stating that this species is a top priority for them.

Chair Porch indicated that the major issue for Spanish Mackerel is the backlog of age samples than need to be processed and aged. He noted that access to the building has been restricted and his staff has not been able to get in since March 2020. The Committee then discussed possible ways to keep Spanish Mackerel on the schedule for 2021.

The Center agreed to begin discussions with the States to determine if they could help with the process of ageing samples. The Center will also provide the SAFMC with a report of the status of the Spanish Mackerel ageing work within a month. This feedback will be needed to determine if the Spanish Mackerel OA could remain on the 2021 assessment schedule.

Update:

On 23 October 2020, the SEFSC provided a memo to the SEDAR Steering Committee documenting their discussions and plans for moving forward with the SEDAR 78 South Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Operational Assessment as scheduled in 2021.

The SEFSC memo also recommended that the assessment for South Atlantic Black Sea Bass will need to be postponed until 2022, to allow for Spanish Mackerel to remain in 2021.

A copy of the SEFSC memo, and an updated SEDAR Project Planning Grid reflecting these recommendations, are included below.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, Florida 33149 U.S.A.
(305) 361-4200 Fax: (305) 361-4499

October 23, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEDAR Steering Committee

FROM: John F. Walter, III, Deputy Director for Science and Council Services
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center

SUBJECT: Outstanding questions from October Steering Committee meeting

Dear Members of the SEDAR Steering Committee,

On behalf of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, I want to thank the SEDAR Steering Committee members for their careful consideration of our proposal for navigating workload during these trying times. I also want to our state partners willingness to explore a Plan B for getting the Spanish mackerel ages completed.

After further consultation with our staff in Panama City, it appears that further steps would be needed to develop and distribute a reference collection to ensure the agreed protocols are applied consistently across the various aging labs. Over the next few months, we will begin working in this direction, but we do not expect it can be done in time to provide much relief for the current backlog. However, we are happy to report that we have gotten permission to begin opening up our facilities on a limited basis and have made other changes that, barring future setbacks, will enable us to complete the aging of Spanish mackerel in time to complete the South Atlantic SEDAR 78 as scheduled.

However, after further consultation, we realized that delaying the red grouper assessment would do little to relieve the COVID19-related challenges for data provision and processing in 2021 (as it was not scheduled to begin until 2022 anyway). Therefore, we would like the Steering Committee to consider a 1 year delay for SEDAR 76 (Black seabass) to begin in mid-2022. This delay would also result in a more meaningful assessment, as it would allow us to incorporate information from the 2021 trap/video survey (the survey was not conducted in 2020). SEFSC considers that we can continue with the original schedule for Red grouper to begin in 2022, but it may also benefit from a later start to be able to incorporate 2021 trap/video data.

Sincerely,

John F. Walter, III
Deputy Director for Science and Council Services
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Miami
NOAA Fisheries - Southeast Fisheries Science Center
Miami, FL 33149

Cc:

Table 1: SEDAR Project Planning Grid – Meeting Outcome: October 2020 SEDAR Steering Committee. UPDATED (based on SEFSC memo): 23 October 2020

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects							Future Requests								
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING							2023 Proposed Projects								
YEAR	SA Team				Gulf/Caribbean Team					HMS Team		FL FWCC	ASMFC GSMFC	CMP Shrimp	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2				
2020	Scamp RT	Snowy Grouper U	Gag Grouper OA	Tilefish OA	Scamp RT	GAJ OA	Vermilion OA	Cobia U		Atlantic Blacktip Benchmark				King U	
2021		Red Snapper OA				Gag Grouper OA									
				Spanish Mackerel OA			Red Snapper RT	Red Snapper RT	Queen Trigger PR-STX- STT OA	Hammerheads RT			Gulf Menhaden OA		
2022	Scamp OA				Scamp OA	Gray Snapper OA							Mutton Bench		ASFMC Menhaden OA
			Black Sea Bass OA												
2023	Gray Triggerfish RT	Vermilion OA		Red Grouper OA	Yellowedge OA		Red Snapper OA	Red Snapper OA	Queen snap@PR, redtail parrot@STX			Hogfish Bench		Gulf Shrimp	
2024		White Grunt RT		Blueline Tilefish OA	Lane Snapper OA?	Gray Triggerfish RT	Tilefish Complex OA?	Vermilion OA	Lane@PR,, YTS			Black Grouper Bench?	ASFMC Red Drum (RW)/ Gulf Menhaden OA		
2025					Snowy Grouper/ Tilefish						Caribbean Hogfish				
2026															

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.