

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES COMMITTEE

Gold Nugget Hotel and Casino & Virtual Biloxi, Mississippi

August 19, 2024

VOTING MEMBERS

- C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
- Kesley Banks.....Texas
- Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- Tom Frazer.....Florida
- Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- Troy Frady.....Alabama
- Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- LT Jackson Morton.....USCG
- Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- John Sanchez.....Florida
- Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

- Assane Diagne.....Economist
- Matt Freeman.....Economist
- John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- Heather Graf.....Accounting and Human Resources Assistant
- Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
- Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- Kathy Pereira.....Meeting Planner & Travel Coordinator
- Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- Verena Wang.....Fishery Biologist

1 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

2 Gary Borland.....SAFMC
3 Frank Helies.....NOAA
4 Paul Mickle.....SSC
5 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

6
7
8

- - -

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Motions..... 4
4
5 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of June 2024 Minutes..... 5
6
7 Action Guide and Next Steps..... 5
8
9 Research and Monitoring Priorities for 2025-2028 Including SSC
10 Recommendations..... 5
11
12 SSC Recommendations on Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control
13 Rule..... 13
14
15 Adjournment 20
16
17 - - -
18

TABLE OF MOTIONS

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

PAGE 19: Motion that the council send a letter to the SEFSC to proceed with the MSE analysis proposed to assess management impacts of different ABC control rules for Tier 1 stocks. The motion carried on page 20.

- - -

1 The Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino
3 in Biloxi, Mississippi on Monday afternoon, August 19, 2024, and
4 was called to order by Chairman C.J. Sweetman.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF JUNE 2024 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN C.J. SWEETMAN:** I will call the Sustainable Fisheries
10 Committee to order. The members consist of myself as chair, Dr.
11 Banks, Mr. Broussard, Dr. Frazer, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Schieble, Dr.
12 Overton, Mr. Strelcheck, and Mr. Williamson.

13
14 The first item on the agenda here is Adoption of the Agenda. Are
15 there any changes or modifications? Seeing none, can I get a
16 motion to approve the agenda? Can I get a second? All right.
17 The agenda has been adopted.

18
19 Moving on to the second action item, Approval of the June 2024
20 Meeting Minutes, are there any modifications to the June 2024
21 meeting minutes? If not, can I get a motion to approve them? I
22 have one from Dr. Banks, and a second from Mr. Broussard. Thank
23 you. We will consider the June 2024 minutes approved. The next
24 item is to move into the Action Guide and Next Steps, and I will
25 pass this over to Dr. Froeschke.

26
27 **RESEARCH AND MONITORING PRIORITIES FOR 2025-2028 INCLUDING SSC**
28 **RECOMMENDATIONS**
29

30 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Okay, and so we have a couple of items, and
31 I will just go through them one at a time, and so Item IV is the
32 Research and Monitoring Priorities for the 2025-2028, including
33 the SSC recommendations.

34
35 For those of you that aren't aware, the council has always
36 maintained a list of research priorities. We post them to our
37 website, and other funding entities can use them, at their
38 discretion, for funding priorities for research and other
39 activities, and so we've always maintained those. At the beginning
40 of every new grant cycle, we go through a process to revise and
41 update those, as appropriate, and so that's kind of what we're
42 engaging in now, in anticipation of our new four-year grant
43 beginning in 2025.

44
45 The plan now is a little bit different. Originally, what I was
46 intending is to go through these in some detail, and then ask for
47 your approval. We did, however -- We provided these to the SSC,
48 and they requested some additional time and opportunity to review

1 these, and to provide more feedback at the next SSC meeting, and
2 so it seems to make sense to do that before we go too in-depth
3 here, and so we'll bring those back at a subsequent council
4 meeting.

5
6 I do think it would be worth bringing up the document, just to
7 kind of scroll through it, and we can highlight some of the things
8 that the SSC wanted raised, you know, either questions or points
9 of concern, and so we can get any feedback you might have, and we
10 can make sure that we're on the same path going forward, and so if
11 you want to bring that up.

12
13 This is the document that we provided to the SSC, and it's arranged
14 in four categories, and I will give you a little bit, and, in one
15 of these, the main -- The first category is research and monitoring
16 priorities, and so it includes priorities -- If you'll scroll down,
17 Bernie, you'll see things in there about fishery-independent
18 sampling, and fishery-dependent sampling, monitoring, research,
19 and so the SSC -- Many of them are academics, and, rightly so,
20 they distinguished between what they would consider research
21 versus monitoring activities, and they did express some thoughts,
22 perhaps, that those could be differentiated, and maybe this should
23 even focus more on research, rather than monitoring.

24
25 At least I think maybe I expressed something that, in the purpose
26 of the council needs and data, these monitoring activities are
27 critical inputs for what we do.

28
29 The other thing that we talked about, and, if you have a question,
30 please just interrupt me, but, on many of these, you will see, at
31 the beginning of them, there's a priority code, an A, B, or C, and
32 you will see these here, and, if you scroll through the document,
33 you will see that there are many As through this, and so they
34 suggested that we might benefit from taking a hard look at those
35 and trying to figure out what could be downgraded, perhaps, if you
36 will, such that, you know, having everything in an A is not any
37 different than having everything as a B or a C.

38
39 We will give that some thought, and the second category of this
40 you will see is the focus on individual species priorities, rather
41 than these larger programs, and so we have -- I think you can keep
42 going, but this is the section of the research priorities that
43 focus on what we perceive as data needs for individual stocks,
44 whether it be red snapper or gray triggerfish or whatever, and the
45 idea is that, when we go through these, ideally, we can cross
46 things off, because that means that they've been completed, or
47 adequately updated, in the last five years.

48

1 Sometimes they remain, and so, when we went through these, we got
2 feedback from the staff and tried to do that, and so if you can
3 scroll down, but, again, we have the priority codes, and the
4 species in here won't surprise you, the snappers and amberjack and
5 those kinds of things, and so I won't -- Yes, sir.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Just a question for you, and so, Bernie, if
8 you scroll down just to the next one here, we've got Gulf gray
9 triggerfish, and so the categories are -- So, for A, it's species
10 that are overfished, or undergoing overfishing, or in need,
11 critical need, of a stock assessment, and is that what we're saying
12 for the gray triggerfish component? I'm wondering why that over
13 something like Gulf gag, or something along those lines, is
14 considered a priority species.

15
16 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I actually don't recall the rubric for what was an
17 A in this case. I could look that up and get back to you, and
18 what you're suggesting seems reasonable.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, just reading it through, and it's on
21 page 4, and stocks designated as overfished and undergoing
22 overfishing or in critical need of assessment, and so I'm guessing
23 it's that latter part for gray triggers.

24
25 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and that might be something -- We could update
26 that, and that would be one of those opportunities. Thank you.
27 I'll make a note of it.

28
29 Okay. If you scroll down, the next category is the economic and
30 social recommendations. We did -- I think, in previous iterations,
31 it was just socioeconomic, but, based on some of our previous
32 discussions, with SEFHIER and things, we just divided that up.
33 This was one of the areas that we did get quite a bit of feedback,
34 and I think we were receptive to that, or appreciative of it, at
35 the council staff, and we have some new economists and things on
36 the SSC, and so they were interested in this, but I don't think
37 the amount of time that we had was adequate.

38
39 That was one of the requests at the upcoming SSC, is to provide
40 more time and rationale and things, so they could better understand
41 this, and so it seemed reasonable to me, especially as an
42 economist, if you were coming into our process, and there's a lot
43 of things happening, and so we will provide more time and
44 opportunity for them to provide review and feedback, and so we'll
45 go through that in the next SSC meeting, and hopefully have
46 something back for you all in November.

47
48 Then the last category is the ecosystem components, and, you know,

1 this is a little bit of a discussion here. This does include some
2 of our lower priorities, and it's a little bit awkward of a
3 conversation, because it doesn't necessarily always reflect the
4 importance of the item or things, and it's, from a council
5 perspective, how closely they are to operationalizing some of these
6 things, and what are the today needs, versus the longer-term, and
7 so I think that's another opportunity for discussion as well.

8
9 In general, this is the framework that we've had historically, and
10 this is kind of what we have now, and I don't know if the SSC will
11 provide sufficient recommendations that it might look different,
12 and I'm not sure, but we'll just have to see. If not, what I would
13 do is suggest we turn it over to Dr. Mickle, and he can go through
14 some of the SSC recommendations on this.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Dr. Mickle.

17
18 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** Good afternoon. It's good to see everybody.
19 It's been a while. I used to be on that side of the table, and I
20 was pretty hard on the SSC actually, and so it's coming back
21 around, and feel free.

22
23 I'm going to go ahead and go through and give the SSC's perspective
24 of this specific agenda item, which is the research priorities
25 stuff. Every four years, this has been what we've returned to,
26 and the SSC gives its perspective, and the reason I'm bringing
27 this up is that the SSC has managing scientists, that are managers
28 as well as academics, and I want to make that clear, and so we
29 provide what's important from, you know, the research needs, as
30 the SSC sees it, as we go through our peer review process, and so,
31 again, it's a different perspective from what you all's perspective
32 is toward this document, but, again, it's important, and, when
33 both are giving the perspectives in that way, in my opinion, it
34 can become a very useful document.

35
36 The purpose is to guide efforts to resolve knowledge gaps and
37 expand datasets. The priorities cover the 2025 through 2028 grant
38 cycle. The review process, like I said before, the SSC and the
39 council review, and then it's posted on the council website. It's
40 sent to NMFS and relevant agencies for funding consideration, and
41 it aims to enhance the management of federal species, and so that
42 just kind of encapsulates what this document is, I guess, supposed
43 to do. John really did go into a good background on this.

44
45 There were concerns raised by the SSC members, and we did have
46 some new members, that it was our first meeting, and so, when a
47 document like this is one of the last agenda items, and, again, we
48 got the materials beforehand, but we're going to review it again,

1 and provide some direction, but there were quite a few comments
2 of, with short notice, there was difficulty in reviewing the
3 extensive priority list.

4
5 There were concerns over too many items marked as Priority A. When
6 over 80 percent, or 90 percent, of the items, as you can see on
7 the document itself, are listed as Priority A, the prioritization
8 process kind of loses its weight, so to speak, in the SSC's
9 opinion.

10
11 A suggestion is to streamline and categorize the priorities more
12 selectively and then increase the focus on the utility for funding
13 agencies, and so try to provide more focus in the actual document
14 itself, so the funding agencies can identify and maybe start
15 crafting RFPs, or the requests for proposals, in more of a way
16 that caters to what this body really needs, because we do have
17 some research gaps that would fit really well into some stock
18 assessments, when we start approaching those ecosystem-based
19 assessments in the future.

20
21 All right, and so the proposal is to break down the priorities
22 further, with specific codes, and so give a little bit more
23 characterization and bins for kind of the priorities there. We
24 could improve the document clarity and effectiveness. Like I said,
25 these funding agencies, both state and local and federal, if
26 they're clear enough, and pointed enough, and there's a few
27 priorities, instead of a bunch, then people get excited about them,
28 and they start crafting RFPs, and, the next thing you know, we're
29 seeing some research, some very pointed research, heading towards
30 us.

31
32 The emphasis is strategic thinking in identifying high-impact
33 priorities. We all like to do research, but it has to be of high
34 impact, and I think this group has been very good at that.

35
36 All right, and so the evaluation for future next steps is to assess
37 how often priorities secure funding, to consider if time spent on
38 this list is justified by its impact, and so, you know, have some
39 accountability and see, if we put out this list, how many actually
40 work their way into RFPs, right, and how many actually got funded,
41 and that would be a really good metric to actually look at and
42 consider, right, as we craft future lists.

43
44 The value is consider if the time spent on this and the impact,
45 and so do these research priorities actually end up moving forward
46 and being somewhat of an impact, or some ecological drivers, some
47 quantitative data impact in a stock assessment itself in a SEDAR
48 process, and then next steps are explore practical importance at

1 a future meeting, and we're shooting for our next meeting in
2 October, I think.

3
4 The timeline is to refine and finalize the list for our October
5 meeting, you all's November meeting. I think that's it for that,
6 but I would like to answer any questions, and, like I said, we're
7 looking at a list that was from prior, and so this is the perfect
8 time to add to it and to refine and to do some of the things that
9 the SSC brought up, and maybe we want to increase efficiencies and
10 impacts with the priorities list, and things like that, but thank
11 you very much.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Mickle. We appreciate that,
14 and so, obviously, there is a lot in this document here. You know,
15 trying to understand the research priorities for the next four
16 years is a substantial task, when we already have a lot on our
17 plate here, and so it looks like the SSC is looking for some
18 recommendations from this committee, and ultimately the council,
19 to streamline this document, potentially, or at least consider
20 reprioritizing what is currently in there, because I completely
21 agree that, if you have 90 percent of the document as a Priority
22 A, you're not really prioritizing things. I'm going to look around
23 the table, to see if there's any thoughts here. Dr. Frazer.

24
25 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thanks, Paul, for the summary, and, you know, I
26 thought that the discussion in the SSC was a pretty healthy one,
27 I think, to put a little more pointy end on things, and so, you
28 know, so the list is -- You know, it's a requirement of the council,
29 right, and so what wasn't clear, in that meeting, is, you know, if
30 it's a requirement, is this simply a box-checking exercise, or do
31 we know how the agency might use this really in an RFP development,
32 and so maybe that's a question for the agency at this point, is
33 how do they actually use it, because that does affect how much
34 time you put into it and think about, you know, the prioritization
35 process. Maybe I can direct that to Andy.

36
37 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I mean, thanks for that, Tom, and so I guess
38 there's a couple of responses I have. One is, you know, we have
39 a Southeast Geographic Strategic Plan now, right, and so, to me,
40 ensuring that there is full alignment, or at least close alignment,
41 between these is important, and, where they're not aligned,
42 obviously, being able to advise the council back, with regard to
43 maybe what's a priority for the council that may not be viewed as
44 a priority for the agency, or vice versa.

45
46 The second component is what Paul mentioned, which resonates with
47 me, which is kind of the thought that, when we have this long list
48 of priorities, everything is a priority, but then nothing is a

1 priority, right, and it's like it's too much information, and we
2 know we're not going to accomplish everything, and we really need
3 to do a triage, to ultimately determine what can be funded, and so
4 we've been going through this exercise a little bit, for example,
5 with our MARFIN grant process, right, because we -- I don't know,
6 and I will say thirty priorities are listed in that, but we only
7 have a few million dollars in funding to pay for thirty priorities,
8 right, and it's just not going to happen.

9
10 I think aligning, obviously, that with the highest-priority needs
11 is helpful, and then I would let Clay kind of speak to then how
12 does that integrate into the science and the assessments, from his
13 vantage point.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Porch.

16
17 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you for the question, and so we use this in
18 a couple of ways, one, as Andy mentioned, when we're developing
19 our geographic strategic plan and our center-specific strategic
20 plan. We look at all the priorities from the different councils
21 and try and, to the extent possible, have our strategic plan align
22 with it.

23
24 Now, granted, we don't have much in the way of resources to
25 dedicate to many of these things, but some of them, like fishery-
26 independent sampling, the GFISHER program, that is a priority of
27 ours, and, in this case, we're doing it anyway, and so we're in
28 perfect alignment there. Other things, we're not ourselves going
29 to have the resources to invest in, and we've had that conversation
30 with the council before, and so I see this as strategic guidance
31 for us and all of our partners in the region, things that would be
32 useful for the council.

33
34 The only other thing that I would add is that Congress has set up
35 a grant program for the Gulf states, and it would be run through
36 the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and I think we could
37 use this as guidance for the terms of reference for that program.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Mickle.

40
41 **DR. MICKLE:** This is a good time to take it on, and, if we're going
42 to retool a little bit, or reformat, this is a perfect time for
43 that, and so that's a good point, but, again, this has had
44 successes in the past.

45
46 If you remember, years ago, the triggerfish stock assessment came
47 out, and we all knew the recruitment side of the model had massive
48 uncertainties, and so we're trying to understand that sargassum

1 interaction with settlement. If there's more sargassum one year,
2 versus another, maybe there's recruitment bump, but, again, that
3 was identified by the SSC, and prioritized, and made it onto this
4 list, and I think NOAA RESTORE actually ended up funding such an
5 effort, and I think NMFS has been working on it for a while, while
6 Frank Hernandez, and others, and so this has had successes. We
7 just need to identify it, and maybe make it more efficient, so the
8 impacts and the stories like that one are more numerous.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Carrie.

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
13 I had a question regarding us trying to align these with the
14 strategic plan, and, I mean, as long as I've been working for the
15 council, we've been doing these, and we write the letters, as Dr.
16 Mickle said, and we ask the various federal, you know, grant
17 offices to consider these changes, but I don't really know how
18 that directly impacts MARFIN, or like S-K, and I guess, if we're
19 going to try to align this with the regional strategic plan, is
20 that a big differential from what's been done in the past, and so
21 that's one question. The other question is are the other regional
22 councils doing the same thing, in the other regions? Thanks.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

25
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I guess I don't know the answer to your
27 second question. In terms of aligning with the Geographic
28 Strategic Plan, I think we're talking about two levels of probably
29 detail here, right, that are very different, and so this is going
30 to be much more specific than our Geographic Strategic Plan, but
31 I would encourage, you know, the council, and working with us, to
32 kind of take a look at that, just to see how well does this fit
33 within that broader Geographic Strategic Plan for the Southeast.

34
35 It doesn't mean that it has to be one-to-one alignment, right, but
36 that could also then mean that it's a lower priority for the
37 Science Center, or the Regional Office, just because of how we've
38 laid out the priorities within our Geographic Strategic Plan.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Are there any further thoughts on this?
41 I am not seeing any major reprioritization here, which I think is
42 kind of what the SSC is kind of hoping for. I know that they're
43 going to look at this again, and I think they would like some
44 council input, and maybe, if we don't do it today at the committee
45 level, I would ask for folks to potentially think about that for
46 Full Council, if need be, and maybe we can make some
47 recommendations there, because I realize that there's a lot in
48 this document too, and so I will just put that out there for the

1 committee's consideration.

2
3 I'm not really seeing any objections or anything there, and so I
4 think that's a decent plan. A little homework for everyone is to
5 read this document, and see if there's any way that you can figure
6 out how to reprioritize it, from your own perspective, and we can
7 have that discussion at Full Council. Thank you, Dr. Mickle, but
8 I don't think you're going too far, and so back to you, Dr.
9 Froeschke.

10
11 **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACCEPTABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH (ABC) CONTROL**
12 **RULE**
13

14 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay. We're going to move on to Item V, the SSC
15 recommendations on the ABC, or acceptable biological catch,
16 control rule. I have the action guide in here, but I want to give
17 you just a little bit of background, especially for those that may
18 not be as well-versed in what the control rule is, and what it
19 does, and so this was created in 2011, what we called the Generic
20 ACL/AM Amendment, where that was annual catch limits and
21 accountability measures for everything that we didn't already have
22 one.

23
24 In that document, we created this control rule, and what this does
25 is it tries to incorporate or how to estimate the scientific
26 uncertainty and make use of that to establish appropriate catch
27 levels, and so, for example, in a stock assessment, you might have
28 -- You will have an estimate of the overfishing limit, which
29 corresponds oftentimes to the maximum sustainable yield.

30
31 We know, from eons of fisheries, that that's often not sustainable
32 in practice, and so, through trying to understand the scientific
33 uncertainty, that gives us an estimate of what an appropriate
34 reduction is from the overfishing limit to the acceptable
35 biological catch that can be used to inform the annual catch limits
36 and annual catch targets and all of that.

37
38 So we came up with a spreadsheet approach, and it's the briefing
39 book, if you want to look through that, and, essentially, it's a
40 rule that has a series of criteria to review, and, the more things
41 that you are uncertain about in your science, the larger that
42 buffer would be in your -- Between the catch advice provided for
43 the overfishing limit and the ABC, the OFL and the ABC.

44
45 In practice, it didn't really work that well. A couple of things
46 that seemed to happen were, one, you got very small buffers, and,
47 two, the less you know, you tended to get smaller buffers, and so,
48 if you do more science -- The more you look at it, the more

1 variables you -- You actually get more uncertainty, and so, if you
2 were to investigate a stock with a simple approach and a
3 complicated approach, you might get a smaller buffer with the
4 simple approach than you did with the complex approach, which
5 doesn't always intuitively match up.

6
7 The Science Center has been working, in the background for some
8 time, on ways to find better approaches, and, in practice, just so
9 you know, the SSC -- The control rule, they can use it, and, in
10 practice, they often have not been using it, for precisely this
11 reason, that it didn't give them catch advice that they felt
12 confident in, and so they were using accepted, and widely
13 understood, approaches to create what they thought were reasonable
14 buffers, and I think that's okay, but they did ask for this
15 process.

16
17 The Science Center, at the most recent SSC meeting, gave a
18 presentation, based on some work that they had done, and they made
19 a recommendation to evaluate some of their preliminary
20 information, through a management strategy evaluation, which the
21 SSC has been supportive of, and I will turn it to Dr. Mickle.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Froeschke, and I'll turn it
24 back over to you, Dr. Mickle.

25
26 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. John wrapped it up, Dr.
27 Froeschke wrapped it up, perfectly, and so understanding, I guess,
28 the tribulations from the SSC's perspective is my job here today,
29 and so understanding that we don't like P*. We want to get away
30 from it, and the Science Center has recommended that as well,
31 because it is somewhat flawed, and what John was saying, and it
32 really -- It takes -- The best way I can -- I guess I'm trying to
33 break this down to where we were always very insecure, because of
34 the uncertainties, and understanding that, and, moving forward,
35 when -- You all need some direction here on the control rule, and
36 we're trying to provide a quantitative, opinionated, scientific
37 recommendation, which is very difficult to do in this situation,
38 because of the uncertainty.

39
40 When you're calculating ABC and OFL, and you're using a probability
41 distribution function to do so, which is what P* really does, like
42 John said, the more uncertainty you have, the smaller the buffer
43 gets, and it needs to be the opposite way.

44
45 I'm going to go through this presentation, and I'm trying to break
46 it down real simply, because this is quite a quantitatively
47 complicated topic, but my old days of being a professor -- Maybe
48 I can break this down, and we can have a discussion here, because

1 the SSC -- We've kicked the can on this, and I will own up to it
2 with everybody, but we did make a motion on this, at our meeting,
3 and I will conclude with that motion, with a good direction, at
4 least in the SSC's opinion, as it was unanimous.

5
6 All right, and so the purpose was to review alternative approaches
7 to the ABC control rule, which is what we're talking about here
8 today, and it's been in place since 2011, mostly because of a
9 manuscript by Restrepo et al., and it provided some direction using
10 P^* and a quantitative approach to an ABC control rule, looking at
11 buffers, and so the key issue is the current buffer between OFL
12 and ABC often misaligns with stock assessment uncertainty, and
13 that's what makes the SSC nervous, and I'm assuming the Southeast
14 Fisheries Science Center, and so the Science Center suggests
15 modifying the rule to better reflect stock status.

16
17 BCRIT is a biomass-critical term and so a BCRIT introduction is,
18 just very simple, assign critical biomass level to halt fishing
19 below a certain stock size, and so adding a BCRIT, or a biomass-
20 critical point, allows you to not have those very abrupt long
21 rebuilding plans. It initiates something before that happens, so
22 the slope of the rebuilding plan isn't quite as difficult on user
23 groups or fisheries aspects of a species.

24
25 When you think about -- If we could separate P and σ , or not
26 σ , but θ , and address P^* , we can certainly understand the
27 scientific uncertainty individually, and, again, that's the whole
28 goal here, is separating P^* from everything else, because that
29 allows the buffers to increase with uncertainty, which is what I
30 think we all would agree is a good approach, from a management and
31 a scientific perspective.

32
33 I'm going to talk about the MSE, very quickly, and then go -- I
34 want to make sure we all understand what the management strategy
35 evaluation is, and so this is a modeling approach, and we're all
36 very comfortable, or not comfortable, but we're all very -- We
37 hear the Stock Synthesis stock assessment modeling efforts that
38 goes on within SEDAR, and this is somewhat new, and other councils
39 have used it for a while, and it's a well-established way of taking
40 management strategy evaluation modeling efforts and trying to
41 understand, when you make those changes, what the impacts are,
42 from a biological standpoint as well as a management standpoint,
43 and it's a very valuable tool, if it's used correctly, in my
44 opinion, and the SSC's. The motion is up there, but I will come
45 back to it.

46
47 Discussions, there were some concerns by SSC members about
48 revisiting the control rule amid ongoing assessments. We always,

1 or you all, always hit this problem, and so, when we make changes,
2 both from a management and scientific standpoint, data stream,
3 what goes on with the stock assessments that are in the mid-throes,
4 and so those are things that the SSC immediately brought up, and
5 I assume that you all are interested in as well.
6

7 Also, the Science Center proposes testing new rule in scenarios
8 above and below MSY and using MSST, and so really understanding
9 the minimum stock size threshold is important to identify, if it
10 can really be separated out, and it starts following that buffer
11 that we're really looking for from a quantitative standpoint. As
12 far as buffer sensitivity, the SSC to assess rule sensitivity to
13 decisions like BCRT and FMSY proxies, and so it's really important
14 that the SSC really weighs into that and really understands how
15 BCRT influences that, because, obviously, I think BCRT is
16 probably the most useful quantitative aspect of the MSE that
17 hopefully will go forward in understanding these control rules in
18 the future, potential alternatives.
19

20 High-level council goals, obviously, we all know this, the emphasis
21 on avoiding fishery closures and maintaining catch limit
22 stability, and I barely have to say that, as this is a top priority
23 for this group here.
24

25 As far as the management strategy workload, the Science Center is
26 building capacity. We were given a very good presentation at the
27 last meeting. The SSC took to it very well, and the work is
28 expected to take about two years. The SSC recommendation is to
29 continue using Restrepo et al. currently, in our current
30 approaches, until a new rule is fully evaluated, and the way that
31 the SSC got excited about MSE is its usability in other councils
32 and regions in our country, and I'm optimistic the SSC will
33 identify the quantitative usability of MSEs and really identify -
34 - We'll have those numbers to lean on, and so the reason that I
35 think we've been kicking the can on this control rule, and P*, is
36 that we quantitatively can't lean on any number to provide advice,
37 and that's where scientists get really nervous, and we start
38 kicking cans.
39

40 This, in our minds, will give us some quantitative justifications
41 to lean on our recommendations, and that's why I think the group
42 is somewhat optimistic about moving forward with an MSE strategy.
43

44 Stakeholder engagement, of course, emphasize council and the SSC
45 involvement in the MSE work, and then the council could provide
46 additional guidance at the August 2024 meeting, as far as maybe
47 some direction, as you all get more educated on the MSE, as well
48 as the SSC, and I think there are very few folks on the SSC that

1 have had much experience with MSEs, but the literature is there,
2 and it's quantitatively very worth getting excited about.

3
4 This is the motion, and I think it's the last slide on this agenda
5 item from the SSC, and the actual motion itself was the SSC
6 recommends that the Science Center proceed with the MSE analysis
7 proposed to assess the management impacts of different ABC control
8 rules for Tier 1 stocks.

9
10 Remember we have data-limited, data-poor stocks that, again -- I
11 think MSE would be valuable toward that too, potentially, but we're
12 confining it to Tier 1, because that's where the most data is, and
13 that's where I think we'll be most confident in our
14 recommendations, and, again, that motion was carried without
15 opposition, but, like I said, it's a fairly complicated topic. It
16 gets in the weeds quickly, but, again, it's important that we have
17 quantitative justifications for scientific recommendation, and
18 that's what the SSC's focus is, and, when we stray from it, we
19 have good members that bring us back to that, and so I would answer
20 any questions you have.

21
22 Again, I'm immersed in this somewhat, and we have staff here that
23 are immersed in this topic much more than I, and we can give -- I
24 can give the SSC perspectives, and the quantitative
25 justifications, but, again, folks that deal with this on a daily
26 basis -- They know this very well, and they can provide any answers
27 you have. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Mickle. I appreciate that.
30 This is an important subject matter here. The ABC control rule is
31 very important in the way that we manage our fisheries here. I
32 certainly am supportive of this approach. The SSC, and the
33 Southeast Fisheries Science Center, seem to be as well.

34
35 I'm familiar with the fact that we haven't really used management
36 strategy evaluations on the Gulf Council all that much, and we did
37 get some presentations about this in the past, and the South
38 Atlantic Council is currently endeavoring in a couple of different
39 things, but those aren't completed.

40
41 From my understanding, there's really only been one MSE, and I
42 think it was bluefin tuna, maybe, that actually has been completed.
43 I do have a little concern with the reliance of MSEs along these
44 lines there too, but I think actually, for this perspective, when
45 you're looking at the ABC Control Rule -- I think it could be a
46 very valuable tool here, and so I'll just leave it at that, and I
47 will look around the table for any comments from committee members.
48 We do have an SSC recommendation moving forward here, and so, at

1 the end of the day, I would like some perspective on what the
2 committee feels about this motion, to give some guidance there.
3 Have you got something, Dr. Froeschke?
4

5 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and just, if the committee is supportive of
6 it, you might request a motion to -- That council staff write a
7 letter to the Science Center, making this request to complete this
8 work.
9

10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Any comments
11 around the table on the ABC control rule and the SSC
12 recommendations here? I am not seeing any. Mr. Strelcheck.
13

14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just a comment, and so thanks, Paul, Dr. Mickle,
15 for your presentation. You know, my only concern, right, is that
16 I've long felt like we need to move away from P*, right, but MSE,
17 at least in my experience, can be very time consuming, right, and
18 so it's kind of that balance of what we're going to achieve with
19 the MSE, over time, and making sure that we have a streamlined
20 process to get this advice in a timely manner.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Go ahead, Dr. Mickle.
23

24 **DR. MICKLE:** I think that was one of -- It was the first or second
25 question that one of the members asked, and, from what I think was
26 shared, it was that it is a somewhat automated process, and it's
27 coding, and so the models are fairly -- They're adaptable, right,
28 and they're compartmental, and they're species-dependent, of
29 course, but, again, from what I understood, the timelines were
30 realistic and discussed.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Porch.
33

34 **DR. PORCH:** I just wanted to clarify, and so you mentioned bluefin
35 tuna, or, C.J., I think you did, but that's a totally different
36 type of MSE, where you're integrating a lot of different management
37 objectives, and not necessarily hinging it on a stock assessment,
38 and so it's actually an extremely involved process, that did take
39 many years, and this is not that. This is more what we call a
40 desk-type MSE, and so, yes, it's just something to evaluate how
41 well this ABC control rule would typically work, and so I don't
42 see that as taking many years to complete. It should be a more
43 manageable timeline, as Dr. Mickle alluded to.
44

45 **DR. MICKLE:** Just one thing to add to Dr. Porch's addition was
46 that, from what my understanding was, it has no impact on SEDAR at
47 all, and it's a completely separate process, and the staff that
48 does this is separate from the analytical side of the stock

1 assessments, from my understanding.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, that's my understanding, too. Okay. Any
4 further questions for Dr. Mickle here, or comments in general? If
5 not, does any committee member potentially want to make a motion
6 here?

7
8 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** The motion would be the council send a letter
9 to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to proceed with the MSE
10 analysis proposed to assess management impacts of different ABC
11 control rules for Tier 1 stocks.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Broussard. Do I have
14 a second? Second from Dr. Banks. Any further discussion on the
15 motion? We'll wait until we get it on the board, actually.

16
17 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Motion that the council send a letter to the
18 Southeast Fisheries Science Center to proceed with the MSE analysis
19 proposed to assess management impacts of different ABC control
20 rules for Tier 1 stocks.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Is that looking good to you, Billy?

23
24 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Okay. We have a motion on the board to recommend
25 the council send a letter to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center
26 to proceed with the MSE analysis to access management of different
27 ABC control rules for Tier 1 stocks, and that was seconded by Dr.
28 Banks. Any further discussion? Mr. Schieble.

29
30 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think it's "assess", right, and not "access". Is
31 that what you said?

32
33 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Assess, yes.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Good call. You're agreeable, the first and
36 second there? Okay. Assess management of different ABC control
37 rules?

38
39 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Management impacts.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Management impacts.

42
43 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Or you could just pull up the SSC motion and add
44 to send a letter.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Dr. Frazer.

47
48 **DR. FRAZER:** I mean, I'm okay with the motion, but I just have a

1 question for Dr. Mickle, right, and so, right now, there's
2 currently one ABC control rule for Tier 1 stocks, and so, I mean,
3 we don't currently, or the SSC doesn't currently, have an
4 alternative suite of ABC control rules, and these are yet to be
5 developed, right?
6

7 **DR. MICKLE:** Yes, that is correct.
8

9 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay.
10

11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. The motion is on the table. Any further
12 discussion? **Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion on**
13 **the table? Seeing none, the motion carries.**
14

15 All right. We're operating about ten minutes ahead of schedule
16 here, and we did not have any other business. Thank you very much,
17 Dr. Mickle, for your presentations. I really appreciate your time
18 and effort. One last call for other business here. Otherwise, I
19 will pass it back to our esteemed chair.
20

21 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 19, 2024.)
22
23

- - -