

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES COMMITTEE

4
5 Omni Houston

Houston, Texas

6
7 June 24, 2024

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

- 10 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 15 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 16 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 17 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 18 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 19 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 20 Andy Strelcheck.....NOAA
- 21 Troy Williamson.....Texas

22
23 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 24 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 25 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 26 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 27 Lt. Carl Fuhs.....USCG
- 28 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 29 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 30 Ed Walker.....Florida

31
32 **STAFF**

- 33 Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
- 34 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 35 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 36 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 37 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 38 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 41 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 44 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 45 Verena Wang.....Fishery Biologist

46
47 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 48 Tim Griner.....SAFMC
- 49 Frank Helies.....NOAA

1 Anna Kersting.....NOAA
2 Dominique Lazarre.....NOAA
3 Jack McGovern.....NOAA
4 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
5 Jim Nance.....GMFMC SSC
6 John Walter.....SEFSC

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PAGE 10: Motion to recommend that the council request that NOAA Fisheries recommend that the National Academies of Sciences follow up on "Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a second consensus study report that, as noted in the current report, "would build on this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative fisheries using the information available. The motion carried on page 12.

PAGE 17: Motion to direct staff to write a letter to ask for an extension to the EBFM Roadmap request comment deadline of July 31, 2024, to allow the ETC to meet and provide their input prior to submission. The motion carried on page 19.

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1 The Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the Gulf of Mexico
2 Fishery Management Council convened at The Omni Houston in
3 Houston, Texas on Monday afternoon, June 24, 2024, and was
4 called to order by Chairman C.J. Sweetman.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN C.J. SWEETMAN:** We are going to bring the Sustainable
11 Fisheries Committee to order. I will first highlight the
12 committee members. It's myself, as chair, Mr. Diaz as vice
13 chair, Dr. Banks, Ms. Boggs, Mr. Broussard, Dr. Frazer, Mr.
14 Gill, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Montegut and Mr. Schieble, Dr. Overton,
15 Mr. Strelcheck and Frank Helies, and Mr. Williamson.

16
17 The first item that we have is to approve the agenda, but I will
18 look around to the committee, to see if there are any changes to
19 the agenda. Yes, Mr. Gill.

20
21 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to add an
22 item, under Other Business, of EBFM Roadmap.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Just making a note of that. Okay,
25 and so we've got Other Business on the agenda here. We will go
26 ahead -- Unless I'm seeing any additional changes to the agenda,
27 we'll go ahead and adopt that one. Okay. Not seeing any
28 changes besides Mr. Gill's, and so the agenda is adopted.

29
30 The next action that we have is to approve the minutes from our
31 last meeting, which was in January of 2024, when the Sustainable
32 Fisheries Committee met. Can I get a motion to approve the
33 meeting minutes?

34
35 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** So moved.

36
37 **MR. GILL:** Second.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. It's moved by Mr. Broussard, and
40 seconded by Mr. Gill. All right, and so the minutes have been
41 approved, and then we'll kind of walk right into the Action
42 Guide and Next Steps, and I believe Ryan is going to be covering
43 that for us. Mr. Rindone.

44
45 **SSC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MAY 2024 MEETING**
46

47 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll start off with
48 Item IV, the SSC recommendations from its May 2024 meeting, and

1 Dr. Nance is here with us today, and he can come on up to the
2 podium, and he's going to provide a summary of discussions and
3 recommendations from that meeting, which was held via webinar.
4

5 The SSC reviewed, and approved, the terms of reference for the
6 upcoming SEDAR 98 stock assessment for red snapper, the
7 independent management strategy evaluation exercise by the
8 Science Center, and they evaluated the study by the National
9 Academies of Sciences on equity in fisheries management
10 benefits, and they also evaluated the NMFS Southeastern U.S.
11 Region's Equity and Environmental Justice Plan. They discussed
12 modifications to the SEDAR process and alternative assessment
13 methods for Gulf stocks, reviewed the council's planned
14 restructuring of the SSC, and heard public comment on both days.
15 The committee should review the information presented, ask
16 questions, and make recommendations, as appropriate.
17

18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ryan. Okay, and so this
19 presentation was Tab E, Number 4(a), for those that are
20 following along, and I will turn it over to Dr. Nance.
21

22 **DR. JIM NANCE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will -- I have four
23 different items, and so I guess I'll stop between each one, and
24 we can do that, if that's okay.
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sounds great.
27

28 **DR. NANCE:** Okay. Perfect. This is, as Ryan pointed out, a
29 summary of recommendations from our May 2024 webinar that we had
30 for the SSC. The first item is that the Southeast Fisheries
31 Science Center provided an overview of an independent desk
32 management strategy evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation
33 was to explore catch limit modifications in Gulf fisheries.
34

35 During this examination, it examined the impact of recreational
36 landings data, the accuracy and adjustments. The assumptions
37 that were made during this evaluation were that there were no
38 sector allocations, a single fishing fleet, and landings were
39 known without error.
40

41 As we discussed this evaluation, one of the primary concerns was
42 the assumptions were really not valid for most of the stocks
43 that we look at in the Gulf of Mexico, and so we provided some
44 recommendations. The first was to address assumptions to be
45 realistic for management. The second was to explore non-linear
46 relationships between spawning stock biomass and indices of
47 relative abundance.
48

1 The next steps, as outlined, were to continue the development of
2 this evaluation. It was a great first step, and we look forward
3 to seeing that, and so continued development, and a plan of
4 holding a workshop to gather stakeholder input, and that, Mr.
5 Chair, ends that first item.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Nance. Any questions
8 there? Yes, sir, Mr. Gill.

9

10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Nance.
11 Given the assumptions that they made, what was the purpose of
12 the effort, because they don't fit anything, and why not proceed
13 on what some consider reasonable, and maybe simplified, but to
14 get some useful information out of it, as opposed to a desktop
15 exercise.

16

17 **DR. NANCE:** Well, the desktop exercise I think was -- This was a
18 first step, to start the process, and the assumptions they made
19 during this process were the ones that I have outlined. I don't
20 think the purpose was to give us information about things, but
21 to start the process. We pointed out what the assumptions
22 should be, and I think, as they go forward with that, I think it
23 will provide a useful evaluation, and I think it was an
24 interchange that we had with the center on that process, and I
25 think, as we go forward, I think it will provide a great
26 evaluation.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I am not seeing anything else. Dr.
29 Nance, back to you.

30

31 **DR. NANCE:** Okay. Thank you. I think the next slide is -- This
32 was we had a presentation on assessing equity in the
33 distribution of fishery management benefits, and it was a
34 National Academies of Sciences study. Dr. Steven Scyphers, who
35 is a member of the SSC, was a member of the Academies of
36 Sciences team that did the evaluation, and he presented this to
37 us.

38

39 The purpose, as outlined in their study, was to determine
40 primary benefit distribution in fishery management. The focus
41 was distribution and holistic equity approaches. The study is a
42 two-step process. Expectation for equity evaluation in specific
43 fisheries, and so those are the outlines that they're looking
44 for. Access to decision-making bodies is critical, and crucial,
45 to this endeavor.

46

47 The study recommendations, as outlined in their document, was to
48 implement contextual, participatory equity approaches in

1 fisheries, to expand equity work, through data summaries and
2 dashboards, develop guidance documents for equity definitions
3 and measurements, assess social science capacity needs for
4 equitable management, commit to regular collection and analysis
5 of social and economic data, develop indicators for fishing
6 engagement, dependence, and reliance. Data limitations hinder
7 equity goals, as was pointed out in the study, and use of
8 indicators to evaluate benefit distribution at the community
9 level.

10
11 In looking at that, the SSC made this motion, the members of the
12 SSC, and the Gulf SSC recommends that NOAA Fisheries request the
13 National Academies of Sciences to follow up on "Assessing Equity
14 in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a
15 second consensus report, that, as noted in the current report,
16 "would build on this contribution by evaluating equity in
17 select, illustrative fisheries using the information available".
18 That motion passed without opposition.

19
20 This was a recommendation in the study, but we felt like, as an
21 SSC, that we wanted to point out that out, that we felt strongly
22 that this would be a valuable input in the future. That, Mr.
23 Chair, ends that presentation.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Nance. I listened into this
26 discussion, and certainly I appreciated the discussion around
27 the table that you guys had there, and honestly, this is a
28 timely discussion point, because what we were just discussing in
29 Data Collection, relative to the importance of some economic
30 information, and social information, in there, and so any
31 questions from the committee, or comments, to Dr. Nance about
32 this study here and their motion that they passed forward? Mr.
33 Gill.

34
35 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I might direct this to
36 whomever, and so, as I see it, the request the SSC made was
37 looking for an actionable outcome of the first study, at least
38 modest, if you will, a first step, and is that a fair
39 interpretation?

40
41 **DR. NANCE:** Yes, it is, and, as was outlined in the first study,
42 this is scheduled to happen. They outlined that in the first
43 study, that this would be a second study that would be used, and
44 so we wanted just to emphasize that we felt like that was
45 important and not to let it not happen.

46
47 There's a lot of times when recommendations are there, and it
48 never follows-up, and so what we were trying to do, and social

1 scientists on this SSC really wanted to have this happen, so
2 that this was just a point where we felt strongly that we would
3 like, as an SSC, to have that happen.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Boggs.

6

7 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Nance. I appreciate this
8 information, and so the motion that was made -- It says it would
9 build on this contribution, by evaluating equity -- But the
10 study provided some recommendations, and so what you're all
11 asking for -- Who has to implement these recommendations, and
12 the one that I'm most curious about is to develop guidance
13 documents for equity definitions and measurement, and so is that
14 something that you would be looking forward to being included in
15 that report or who, in effect, makes this happen?

16

17 **DR. NANCE:** I think, like most national science reports, these
18 are recommendations. Who implements them, and those types of
19 things, I think is, from a council standpoint, from other
20 bodies, is these are recommendations from this committee, and
21 how would we like to implement these in the future, and some of
22 these we don't feel like we can implement, and some of them are
23 very important, and so we need to move forward on that. I think
24 as a council, as an agency, those types of things, I think they
25 can move forward on some of these as a recommendation.

26

27 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I guess I would just say, to this body, that I
28 think we need to look at some of these, because, like I said, in
29 sitting here thinking about that one item, I think there's some
30 ways that it might -- In some of the issues that the council is
31 currently looking at, and I will just be open and upfront. With
32 the commercial fisheries, you know, when I think about equity,
33 and I think about this, and we talk about new entrants and
34 various things, and is this something that could be applied in
35 that respect, and that's why that question came to my mind.
36 Thank you.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Rindone and then Mr. Gill.

39

40 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regard to the
41 discussion about this part of what the SSC's agenda included,
42 and, like Dr. Nance had stated, the main purpose here was, in
43 part, to compel the council to consider making a recommendation
44 about moving this forward as well, and, as Dr. Nance stated, you
45 know, oftentimes, these NAS reports will have long lists of
46 different recommendations of things that would like to be
47 realized, and just like we put at the end of stock assessments
48 on our research recommendations and things that we would like to

1 see happen.

2
3 This is, you know, a little bit more than a gentle nudge to,
4 hey, let's not let this fall through the cracks, and, you know,
5 let's make a recommendation that this work continue, and so that
6 was one of the main points behind the SSC's motion here, and so,
7 if it's something that the committee would agree with, then
8 perhaps it's something the committee could recommend the council
9 do, by way of letter or something like that.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I appreciate that, Mr. Rindone. A note to
12 the committee that we will address this in a little bit here,
13 and see if anyone wants to make a motion along those lines, but,
14 first, Mr. Gill.

15
16 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and that was my question.
17 One was would you like a motion, and the second is, if the
18 answer is yes, then would this be the appropriate time to do it,
19 or after the presentation by Dr. Nance?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So this presentation is certainly split up
22 into several different components there, and I think it's
23 totally appropriate to make it now, if you would like to, or,
24 Mr. Gill, if you wanted to hold off until the end of the
25 presentation, we can certainly do that too.

26
27 **MR. GILL:** I'm not sure that I can remember to do it that far
28 down the road, Dr. Sweetman, and so I'll make a stab at it.
29 Bernie, if you would copy the motion that the SSC made, and
30 modify the front portion of that. **The modification would be**
31 **that, prior to the word "request", it's replaced by "recommend**
32 **that the council request".**

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Bob, does that look good to you?

35
36 **MR. GILL:** We should delete "NOAA Fisheries".

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion. Do we have a
39 second? It's seconded by Dr. Frazer. Okay. **The motion reads**
40 **to recommend that the council request the National Academies of**
41 **Sciences to follow up on "Assessing Equity in the Distribution**
42 **of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a second consensus study**
43 **report that, as noted in the current report, "would build on**
44 **this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative**
45 **fisheries using the information available". Do have any**
46 **objections to this motion? Mr. Gill.**

47
48 **MR. GILL:** Sorry, Mr. Chairman, and so it was suggested to me,

1 by Dr. Diagne, that since the study was requested by NOAA
2 Fisheries, that we should include that in this motion and so we
3 should amend it to read that "the council requests NOAA
4 Fisheries to request". My apologies.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Quite all right. Is the seconder okay with
7 that? The seconder is okay, and then a question from Dr.
8 Frazer.

9
10 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I wasn't able to attend the meeting, Jim, but I
11 was just curious, and I like this motion, right, and how you
12 might consider equity, but, given some earlier discussions that
13 we had about managing, or trying to optimize, fisheries, right,
14 was there any discussion in the meeting about how to weight the
15 equity issues, right, so that you could actually implement them?

16
17 **DR. NANCE:** The first part of the presentation went into that
18 the National Academies had a difficult time evaluating what
19 equity is, and so they spent a lot of time on that, and they had
20 a definition in that report on their -- On what equity is and
21 how to utilize that in fisheries, and so they spent a lot of
22 time in talking about that, because, depending on who you ask,
23 there are different ways to slice up this thing and provide
24 equity that -- So they have, and I can't remember the
25 definition, and I'm sorry, and I didn't write it down, but they
26 have a definition in the report, so that, during reading this
27 report, you know what they mean by "equity".

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** So maybe this -- If I could follow-up with Andy,
30 and, you know, oftentimes, the agency will issue some type of a
31 policy directive, right, that gives some guidance, and one of
32 the things that I always struggle with, when these make you
33 these types of allocation -- Or not these types, but one example
34 is an allocation decision, but it's how to weight things like
35 equity or economic output. Is there -- Do you see the agency
36 ever, or not ever, but considering developing some type of a
37 policy directive that would help us in that regard?

38
39 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Gee, thanks for asking a loaded question
40 after lunch. I think the answer is maybe, right, and I don't
41 know for certain. You know, certainly we have a regional
42 management council process, and they want to, obviously, give
43 flexibility, and discretion, where it can be employed, and
44 making, obviously, decisions where you're weighing a number of
45 different factors, obviously, is critical to this process, but,
46 to the extent that our EEJ implementation plans are going to be
47 released soon, and that evolves over time, as we learn more and
48 execute on those implementation plans, yes, certainly future

1 policy guidance could be something that is made.
2
3 I will comment, and we're confirming right now, with our Office
4 of Sustainable Fisheries, that this might actually be already
5 done the path of something the Fisheries Service is going to
6 pursue regardless, and Kelly Denit would be the one that would
7 receive the letter, if you're going to send a letter to the
8 Fisheries Service.
9
10 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. I didn't really mean to put you on
11 the spot, but it's just I know that sometimes we struggle with
12 just looking forward, you know, or finding a path forward.
13 Thanks.
14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Some good discussion on the motion
16 that's on the table here. Is there any further discussion?
17 **Seeing none, okay, and are there any objections to the motion on**
18 **the table? Seeing none, the motion carries unanimously.** Dr.
19 Nance, back to the EEJ regional plan.
20
21 **DR. NANCE:** Thank you.
22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** Dr. Sweetman, if I could interrupt real quick,
24 and, in the note-taking and whatnot, I made some grammatical
25 adjustments to how the motion was put in there, so that the
26 actual motion language -- So it was to recommend that the
27 council request that NOAA Fisheries recommend that the National
28 Academies of Sciences, et cetera, and so there was just some
29 extra -- I will send it to Bernie, but I believe it to be
30 entirely in keeping with the committee's intent though.
31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that's okay. I mean, it seems like
33 just recommends and requests, and we had a lot of those in that
34 first sentence there, and it's just trying to clarify.
35
36 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, there was a lot of tell them to tell them to
37 tell them.
38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Recommend to request to recommend. Yes, I
40 hear what you're saying. Okay. I think that's okay. All
41 right. Dr. Nance.
42
43 **DR. NANCE:** Thank you. Thank you, Ryan. Let's go ahead to the
44 next slide, Slide Number 7. Perfect. We had a presentation
45 from the Southeast Regional Office on the equity and
46 environmental justice regional plan. What they've done is
47 they're integrating the national EEJ strategy into a regional
48 plan.

1
2 This regional plan emphasizes equitable benefit distribution and
3 community engagement, addresses the action items that are in the
4 national EEJ strategy, and the council is update research and
5 monitoring priorities and update EEJ-related items.

6
7 During that presentation, we had a discussion from the SSC about
8 managing community expectations, and, in other words, what is
9 the community expecting from this regional plan, the feasibility
10 concerns, potential extension of Sea Grant programs, and those
11 of the universities, involvement in EEJ focus groups, and use of
12 external contractors to fulfill plan goals. Mr. Chair, that
13 ends that presentation on that part.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Nance. Any questions, or
16 comments, about the SSC discussions on the EEJ regional plan?
17 Seeing none, back to you, Dr. Nance.

18
19 **DR. NANCE:** Okay. The last topic is we had a good discussion on
20 SEDAR changes and alternative assessment methods for Gulf
21 stocks. The SEDAR proposed changes are for a full
22 implementation plan for 2026.

23
24 The research track is gone, and will no longer be processed in
25 that regard. They proposed eliminating assessment nomenclature,
26 and so we hear terms like benchmark, operational, things like
27 that, and those -- It's proposed that that assessment
28 nomenclature no longer be used.

29
30 Focus on key stocks for scheduling, and the council identified
31 these in their April 2024 meeting, and so there was a list of
32 key stocks that the council thought was important to be able to
33 focus on. We're looking to strive for efficiency gains and use
34 models paired to data available for species and species
35 complexes and leave some room for emergencies, in case those
36 arise.

37
38 Continued data automation work, which I think is critical, to be
39 able to get that data out quicker, so that assessments can occur
40 in a more timely fashion. Age data, and shrimp bycatch data,
41 remain time-consuming, as reported by the Southeast Fisheries
42 Science Center, and working with council reps on the SEDAR
43 Steering Committee on process changes. Mr. Chair, that ends
44 that presentation.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you very much, Dr. Nance. Any
47 questions on SEDAR changes to the alternative assessment methods
48 for Gulf stocks? We've had some pretty substantial about this

1 over the last couple of council meetings, but I'm curious if
2 there's any discussion points. I am not seeing any. Thank you
3 very much for your time, Dr. Nance, and your leadership, as
4 always.

5
6 **DR. NANCE:** You're welcome, and I appreciate being here. Thank
7 you.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We're going to move on to the next
10 action item, and I will pass it over to Ryan to go through the
11 action guide.

12
13 **MAY 2024 SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

14
15 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Number V, for the May 2024
16 SEDAR Steering Committee report, council staff will summarize
17 the proceedings from the webinar that the SEDAR Steering
18 Committee had on May 30. The SEDAR cooperators decided that it
19 would be useful to hold this meeting as a check, after the March
20 2024 meeting in Charleston. The March 2024 meeting report, and
21 the council's letter to the Science Center on key stocks and
22 next steps are included in the background information under this
23 agenda item.

24
25 The steering committee is currently working through a
26 restructuring of the stock assessment process, as Dr. Nance
27 alluded to, in the southeastern U.S. to improve timeliness and
28 throughput, also on issues involving recreational data and its
29 use in stock assessments, meeting coordination, and other
30 issues, and you guys should consider the information presented,
31 ask questions, and make any recommendations, as appropriate.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Were we planning to
34 walk through the background documents, or is this just a verbal
35 update that would be given about the steering committee report?

36
37 **MR. RINDONE:** Just those are the background documents, and Dr.
38 Simmons is going to talk about the materials.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Excellent. Dr. Simmons.

41
42 **MR. RINDONE:** I guess, just as a refresher, for the committee
43 and for the council, the council's executive director and the
44 council's chair are its representatives on the SEDAR Steering
45 Committee, and so Mr. Anson and Dr. Simmons.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
48 it's a fairly short report, and it was only a two-hour webinar.

1 We went through the March SEDAR Steering Committee report in
2 more detail, and we made a few changes here and there. We got a
3 verbal update from the Science Center on the next steps, as far
4 as the reimagining the process.

5
6 I think there was quite a bit of feedback that we really wanted
7 to see this process move up in priority with the center for the
8 Southeast, and I think they've heard that pretty loud and clear.
9 We mentioned, you know, the key stocks, again, that that wasn't
10 an easy process, and we've tried to take the first steps, and we
11 understand there is a lot more changes that we'll need to work
12 through, with the council, with the SSC, with our technical
13 partners, and we're standing by to help.

14
15 We've had a call, recently, with the Science Center staff, and
16 it seems like they're on track to be ready for the July steering
17 committee, and the subsequent SSC meeting, to give us a more
18 detailed overview of how they're reimagining this process, and
19 so very short, Mr. Chair.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you very much, Dr. Simmons. Any
22 questions about the SEDAR Steering Committee report? That's the
23 little verbal update that we got here, and we've worked quite a
24 bit on this, if you recall, highlighting the key stocks that we
25 discussed at the last meeting, and there was certainly some
26 substantial discussion around there, kind of the process, and it
27 sounds like we're going to get an update from the Science
28 Center, at some point, for how that process might actually be
29 operationalized. Any questions from the table?

30
31 I guess one question I had, for Clay, and maybe this will come
32 down the line, as you guys are kind of figuring out how to
33 operationalize this, but, obviously, a key point for this is
34 trying to, in some capacity, reduce staff capacity, to be able
35 to increase the output that we're having from these various
36 assessments here, and so I'm just wondering, and this process,
37 probably just from your perspective of how we're outlining these
38 key stocks, looking at the information that we actually have
39 available, figuring out what the appropriate way to do this is,
40 and, to me, this partly seems like we could -- I don't want to
41 say increase the number of species that we're actually looking
42 at, but potentially, if we're more efficient in this process
43 here, and so, just from a capacity perspective, because I
44 understand that's been a big concern at the Science Center, and
45 I'm just wondering how this meshes with your overall vision
46 there, Clay.

47
48 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** So thank you for that question. What we're

1 looking at now is how we can accommodate the council request for
2 the key stocks, and I think we agree that, you know, assessing
3 all of them at least every three years is desirable, and then
4 having interim analyses, where we can, in between.

5
6 Then figuring out what do we do with the rest of the space,
7 because, obviously, we can do more than five species, you know,
8 once every three years, and that's where I think we have to
9 balance several competing objectives. Yes, there's a lot of
10 unassessed stocks, and there's some that we rarely have
11 assessed, that we would like to assess more frequently, but we
12 can't do the super-complicated assessments that we've been
13 doing.

14
15 One of the benefits, and challenges, of the SEDAR process is
16 that you have a lot of people at the table, and they all have
17 pieces of data they would like to see incorporated in the
18 assessment. It doesn't necessarily make the assessment more
19 informative, to chase more and more pieces of data, and so I
20 think what we have to do is be a little more circumspect, if we
21 want to get more throughput, and so let's look at the species
22 where we need the complex models, and those would probably be
23 most of the key stocks, and we're looking at whether there's
24 some others where we have enough information that warrants doing
25 some of the more complex models, but, for the rest, look at
26 simpler procedures.

27
28 That's where it gets a little tricky, to figure how we're going
29 to balance our slate of assessments, and it really is going to
30 depend on how many complicated assessments we put out there
31 relative to simpler procedures, and even -- You know, we talked
32 a little bit earlier about MSE, and looking at alternative
33 approaches that aren't strictly assessment-based, but just rely
34 on some of your most informative data, like our fishery-
35 independent surveys, and adjust catches up and down based on
36 that.

37
38 Part of what we need then too is a little white space between
39 assessments, so that we can vet those kind of alternative
40 approaches, and so it's this complex mix of things that we're
41 trying to accommodate, and we'll roll that out -- Hopefully we
42 can have a pretty clear plan in July.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Great. I'm very much looking forward to
45 hearing that. Any -- Dr. Frazer.

46
47 **DR. FRAZER:** So, Clay, can I just follow-up, real quick? On the
48 five key stocks, if the plan is to move forward with an analysis

1 every three years, and kind of have an interim analysis, I
2 guess, and so that -- I just want to make sure I'm clear where
3 we are on the interim analysis, and their role, right, and so
4 they're just essentially health checks, and they're not going to
5 be used for any type of like management advice? I don't know,
6 and I'm asking where the SEDAR group landed on that.

7
8 **DR. PORCH:** I mean, the interim analyses can be used to adjust
9 catch advice, and, in fact, they should be, in many cases,
10 provided we have a good index of abundance that really
11 represents fishable biomass, and so, for things like red snapper
12 and red grouper, obviously, we could do that. For some other
13 species, it's yet to be determined whether we have a good enough
14 index to use that type of approach, or whether we need to use
15 some combination of information, but the intent would be to use
16 interim analyses, where they're applicable.

17
18 **DR. FRAZER:** That's good. I just wanted to make sure, because I
19 knew that we had been throwing back and forth, in previous
20 meetings, whether or not we're going to use the analysis as just
21 a health check, for a particular stock, you know, but, I mean, I
22 didn't want to just generalize it and say it's always going to
23 be just a health check, right, and we can't use them, and so
24 that's what I was trying to get at.

25
26 **DR. PORCH:** A lot is going to depend on whether the SSC is
27 comfortable adjusting the ABC advice based on it, and sometimes
28 there may be additional information that comes into play, and
29 maybe the interim analysis says the catch could be adjusted up,
30 but then we find out there's additional information that says
31 recruitment, in the next few years, is going to be low, and then
32 maybe the SSC will elect to be more circumspect, but that's --
33 You know, it's hard to predict.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Porch. Any other
36 questions, or comments, about the SEDAR Steering Committee
37 report? I am not seeing any, and that will take us to Other
38 Business, and the one item for Other Business that we had was
39 EBFM Roadmap, and I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Gill.

40
41 **OTHER BUSINESS**
42 **EBFM ROADMAP**
43

44 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so, about a week-and-a-
45 half ago, we received a request for comment, which is going out
46 nationally, to address the EBFM Roadmap, and they set a deadline
47 of the 31st of July, and so clearly the council would like to
48 respond to this, and, in my view, it's also important that we

1 get the input of the ETC. This is their bag, and that input
2 would be valuable, in addition to that which is provided by
3 staff and council leadership.

4
5 There is no practical way, that I know of, to do this, short of
6 requesting an extension, and I think it's important enough that
7 we try to get the ETC input on this comment, so that our
8 response is as complete as we can make it, and, with that
9 regard, Bernie, I provided you a motion, if you would put that
10 up. I would like to offer this motion to provide enough time so
11 that we can integrate the ETC in consideration of the comments
12 on the roadmap. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a committee motion on the
15 table here. Do we have a second? Dr. Simmons, a question?

16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Not a question, Mr. Chair, but I
18 just was just going to tell the committee that other regional
19 management councils have asked for an extension, or are thinking
20 about asking for an extension, just because of the timeline
21 that's been given for this particular issue, and I think it was
22 -- They tried to put it on the CCC agenda, but it missed the
23 Federal Register notice, and I think other councils are thinking
24 it's important enough, as it meshes with the climate resilience
25 and the Inflation Reduction Act work of other regional
26 management councils, and not just ours, and that we would like
27 to take a close look at this.

28
29 We did dig up the letter, and I think it was from December of
30 2015, when this roadmap was originally rolled out, and we did
31 write a letter, and the council did receive a presentation on
32 it, and so it was much more formal to the council when this was
33 first rolled out, and so I just wanted to provide that
34 information as background. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I appreciate that, Dr. Simmons, and,
37 obviously, EBFM is incredibly complex, and we need the
38 appropriate amount of time to be able to evaluate this, from the
39 council perspective, and so I'm not sure we got a second on the
40 table. We have a second from Dr. Frazer. Okay.

41
42 **The motion is to direct staff to ask for an extension to the**
43 **EBFM Roadmap request for comment deadline of July 31, 2024, to**
44 **allow the ETC to meet and provide their input prior to**
45 **submission.** Any further discussion on the motion? Dr. Simmons.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just
48 say that we would draft a letter for the chair to sign, on

1 behalf of the council, if the committee agrees.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and so maybe just a slight tweak there,
4 **Mr. Gill, about direct staff to write a letter requesting an**
5 **extension.** That's just a friendly amendment from the chair
6 here.

7
8 **MR. GILL:** Well done, Mr. Chairman.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Does the seconder concur?

11
12 **DR. FRAZER:** Yes.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so the new motion is direct staff
15 to write a letter requesting an extension to the EBFM Roadmap
16 request for comment -- We've got "request" again several times
17 in the same sentence. I think it's fine though. **To allow the**
18 **ETC to meet and provide their input prior to submission. Any**
19 **opposition to the motion on the table? Seeing none, the motion**
20 **carries unanimously.**

21
22 With that, that concludes Other Business, unless there is other
23 that no one highlighted earlier. Not seeing any, this concludes
24 the Sustainable Fisheries Committee, Mr. Chair, and I'm going to
25 yield fifteen minutes back to you.

26
27 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 24, 2024.)

28
29 - - -