

Remaining items from the January SSC meeting

Discussion of Sea Grant/NMFS Greater Amberjack Research Program

- The US Congress has allocated ten million dollars for the study. Objectives are similar to the Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC): An independent estimate of greater amberjack (GAJ) abundance through their US continental range.
- During a visioning phase, stakeholder interviews and informational webinars helped draft research priorities. Knowledge gaps associated with GAJ abundance, distribution, and movement.
- GAJ research presents some unique challenges: Species identification, behavioral response to survey equipment, and vertical movements in the water column can make counting individuals difficult.
- Paucity of basic life history information along with a lack of understanding about stock structure creates uncertainty in the stock assessment.
- Having SSC members comment on the development of survey and experimental designs would be beneficial to research outcomes.

Review of Council Proposed Interim Analysis Schedule

- Mr. Ryan Rindone (GMFMC Staff) reviewed a proposal for scheduling interim analyses for Gulf species.
- The proposed schedule considered factors such as: fishing seasons; representative indices of abundance and when their data become available; the current SEDAR schedule; pending management actions; and other factors.
- The SSC was encouraged to review this proposed schedule often, as changes to some factors, such as the best index to use, may necessitate changes to terminal year and delivery date for a species.
- 2020 was an atypical year for fishery-independent data collection in the Gulf as a result of the COVID pandemic, and may require special consideration.

Review: Testing Assumptions about Sex Change and Spatial Management in the Protogynous Gag Grouper

- Dr. Sue Lowerre-Barbieri (FWRI&UF) gave a presentation on testing assumptions about sex change and spatial management in gag grouper.
- There are concerns about low male sex ratios and sperm limitations. The SEDAR 33 gag assessment illustrated the differences in results of stock status when using female-only compared to combined sexes
- A new sex change conceptual model details complexities of gag mating strategies and sex change drivers.
- Dr. Lowerre-Barbieri emphasized the importance of integrating males into the measure of reproductive potential and suggested a future workshop to determine the best measure of reproductive potential for future assessments.