

Scientific and Statistical Committees

Scope of Work

July 7 – 8, 2022

Tampa, Florida

Agenda Item IV: Selection of SSC representative for the August 22 – 25, 2022 Gulf Council Meeting, to be held in Corpus Christi, TX

Action: Information Only

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Nance will provide a summary to Council Committees, answer questions and provide insight into the SSC deliberations from this SSC meeting.

Agenda Item V: Review: Alternative Model Run for SEDAR 72 Base Model using Florida's State Reef Fish Survey

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Lisa Ailloud (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]) will present the results of the SEDAR 72 Gulf of Mexico gag grouper operational assessment using the Florida State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) private angling landings in place of those from the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey. The Council requested this additional model run in October 2021, with diagnostics, to see how the SRFS data performed for gag. The SRFS historical calibration to MRIP was approved for use in stock assessments by the MRIP Transition Team on May 2022.

Dr. Ailloud will present updated model results and diagnostics, including comparisons with the SEDAR 33U assessment as well as the previously approved SEDAR 72 base model (SEDAR 2021), and revised management benchmarks, stock status estimates and projections for Gulf gag grouper. The SSC should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate. If the SSC find the SRFS run to be consistent with the best scientific information available, it can recommend it as such, and provide revised catch recommendations (overfishing limit [OFL] and acceptable biological catch [ABC]). The SSC may also consider redefining the proxy for the fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}). Background research is provided for this discussion. Previously, for the SEDAR 72 base model using MRIP-FES, the SSC recommended revising the F_{MSY} proxy from F_{MAX} to $F_{30\%SPR}$ (30% spawning potential ratio), considerate of the sexes-combined modeling approach, low recent recruitment, and gag grouper's susceptibility to episodic mortality from red tide. The SSC determined in November 2021 that F_{MAX} was not consistent with the biology of the stock, or the conservation measures necessary to rebuild the stock from its current depleted condition. Consistent with current management, a model run using F_{MAX} is provided for reference.

Agenda Item VI: Review of Discards Data for Gulf Gag, Red Grouper, Greater Amberjack, and Red Snapper

Action: Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr Katie Siegfried (SEFSC) will present the data available on discards from gag grouper, red grouper, greater amberjack, and red snapper, derived from the most recent stock assessments (completed and ongoing) for each species. The Council requested that these data be presented annually by species and directed fleet (e.g., commercial vertical line, commercial longline, charter for-hire, private vessels) and fishing sector (i.e., commercial, for-hire recreational, private recreational), and should be presented in the current survey data currency (i.e., MRIP Coastal Household Telephone Survey or FES, as applicable). The Council's purpose in having the SSC review these data is to improve its understanding about the magnitude of these discards and differences between directed fleets, to assist the Council in its consideration of measures to reduce future discards for these species. Further, greater amberjack and gag grouper are currently overfished and undergoing overfishing, and these data may help the Council to rebuild those stocks while continuing to allow fishery access. The SSC should review the data presented and make recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: Presentation: A Decision-support Tool for Evaluating the Impacts of Short- and Long-term Management Decisions on the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Resource

Action: Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Yuying Zhang (Florida International University) will present a decision support tool to the SSC for evaluating management decisions for Gulf red snapper. The tool employs a management strategy evaluation, conducted through computer simulation, to evaluate the effects of management decisions and their effects on the stock and its stakeholders. The purpose of this model is to improve the evaluation of management decisions, with the goal of making progressively better decisions over time. The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item VIII: Public Comment

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this webinar meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item IX: Review of ABC Control Rule: Tier 1

Action: Presentations, discussions, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The SSC will review presentations given previously by the SEFSC on an alternative approach to the current Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rule, used by the SSC for determining the scientific uncertainty between the overfishing limit (OFL) and the ABC. This information was originally presented to the SSC in May of 2021 and May of 2022. The current ABC Control Rule has been in place since 2011; however, SSC members have regularly expressed a desire to revisit the control rule. This stems from the propensity for the buffer determined by the P* approach generally resulting in a difference between the OFL and ABC that is not representative of the uncertainty identified in the stock assessment. The SSC will review its discussions of these presentations and the background materials provided, and should focus its efforts on the May 2022 SSC meeting (i.e., how to revise Tier 1 of the ABC Control Rule using a Ralston-style approach; any modifications from contemporary research using Gulf stocks to inform the multipliers). The SSC should make revisions and recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item X: Presentation and Discussion: Wenchman Data Evaluation and Consideration of Stock-specific Catch Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay (SEFSC) will review known life history, distribution, directed landings, fishery-independent surveys, and past catch limits for wenchman, which are included in the Council's mid-water snappers complex with queen snapper, blackfin snapper, and silk snapper. Wenchman landings have increased dramatically (10x) in the last few years in the northern Gulf butterfly trawl fishery, and are acting as a choke species to the prosecution of that fishery. Participating fishermen will provide testimony to the SSC and answer questions about the way in which they fish for butterfly, and also catch wenchman. The SSC should examine the data and results of the analysis, ask questions, and make any recommendations as appropriate. The SSC should consider whether to recommend that the Council break wenchman out of the mid-water snapper complex, and if so, consider catch limit recommendations (OFL, ABC) using the Council's ABC Control rule, or other method.

Agenda Item XI: Public Comment

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this webinar meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item XII: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by SSC members, time permitting. If the SSC wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future SSC meeting.