

GULF COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

The Lodge

Gulf Shores, Alabama

April 7, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 13 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 14 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 17 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 18 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 19 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 20 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 21 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 22 LT Jason Morton.....USCG
- 23 Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- 24 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 25 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 26 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 27 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 28 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 29 Ed Walker.....Florida
- 30 Troy Williamson.....Texas

STAFF

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

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 46 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 47 Charlie Phillips.....SAFMC
- 48 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

1 The SEDAR Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The Lodge in
2 Gulf Shores, Alabama on Monday morning, April 7, 2025, and was
3 called to order by Chairman J.D. Dugas
4

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

9 **CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** We're going to move on to the Gulf SEDAR
10 Committee. The committee is myself, Dr. Banks, Dr. Frazer, Mr.
11 Schieble, and Mr. Geeslin. First up is the Adoption of the Agenda.
12 Can I get a motion to adopt?
13

14 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Motion to adopt.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer, and seconded by Mr. Geeslin. Next
17 up, we'll have the approval of the minutes. Can I get a motion?
18

19 **DR. FRAZER:** Motion to adopt.
20

21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer, and Mr. Geeslin seconds. Next up
22 would be Mr. Rindone with the Action Guide and Next Steps.
23

24 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so Dr. Simmons is
25 going to give you a brief overview of the main agenda items
26 discussed and the meeting outcomes and next steps that occurred
27 during the February 2025 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting that was
28 held in Charleston, and the committee should ask questions and
29 provide direction to council staff and the SSC, as appropriate.
30

31 **SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE SUMMARY REPORT FEBRUARY 2025**
32

33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** So, Bernie, can we please get
34 up Tab I, Number 4? I have a brief summary presentation of the
35 SEDAR Steering Committee that was held February 2025. The full
36 report just became available. It's on the website now for your
37 reading pleasure. Can we get the presentation up?
38

39 Okay. and so I think everybody else has the presentation, and so
40 we better get going due to time, and so just a quick overview.
41 The items we discussed during the SEDAR Steering Committee, and,
42 again, I will invite our chair and vice chair to provide any
43 additional comments that I might have missed.
44

45 We discussed the role of SEDAR in the assessment process, that
46 particular piece of the process, the assessment schedule review,
47 and then we did some other business items.
48

1 Some of the topics we discussed under the SEDAR process review was
2 the Science Center proposed to take on the responsibility for the
3 assessment component of the SEDAR process. That is the only piece
4 of the process they were proposing to take over. The data and the
5 review components would remain unchanged and be administered
6 through the SEDAR program.

7
8 You recall, like when we have these larger assessments, and
9 remember like we'll have these long, drawn-out assessment pieces,
10 where we're trying to get the SSC to participate maybe over a
11 series of months with many, many webinars, and so now, instead of
12 SEDAR doing that, the analysts at the Science Center would take
13 the administrative lead on that process, and so that's what they
14 were proposing there.

15
16 There was some discussion about transparency, but the data
17 workshops, and those webinars, are still going to have many public
18 opportunities, as well as at the review workshop stage, and then
19 we also talked about providing -- So, since in a public meeting,
20 the Science Center would provide updates to the SSC, and so the
21 public would be informed at that time as well what changes or
22 modifications or feedback was being provided to the analysts at
23 this public meeting.

24
25 In the Gulf, we were kind of fortunate, because we had two examples
26 where we had done this in the past, and that was with red grouper
27 and yellowedge grouper, and that worked pretty well for us. What
28 happened was SSC reviewed those decision points, and provided
29 feedback, and then the Science Center incorporated that, and that
30 was given again, at a following meeting, to the SSC.

31
32 What we learned from that is we needed close coordination with the
33 analysts, to make sure that we accomplished this, to get it on the
34 SSC agenda, and that we had plenty of time to get any feedback
35 from the appropriate fishermen and stakeholders, and so we do need
36 to figure out a mechanism, as far as when we need specific feedback
37 during the assessment phase from fishermen and stakeholders,
38 exactly how we're going to set that up.

39
40 We don't know if it's going to be like a standalone group or we
41 just -- We ask them to participate during the SSC meeting, or
42 before the SSC meeting, and so that's kind of a piece on our side
43 to be determined. I believe, in the South Atlantic, what they're
44 looking at is having a specific pool of people all the time readily
45 available.

46
47 I'm not really sure that's the approach I would like to take, and
48 so we do have a bit more work to do here on the Gulf side of the

1 house, but those are some of the things that we talked about, and
2 so to be continued here with that effort.

3
4 The Science Center leadership also gave us a lot of information on
5 the potential cuts to the budget and personnel that were getting
6 ready to happen, or were in the works, and we've discussed a lot
7 of budgets and staffing. If that's greatly reduced, the stock
8 assessment process, obviously, will have to be amended, and we'll
9 have to be flexible there here in the next year or so.

10
11 The Science Center staff revisited the process recommendations as
12 well. We focused on the key stocks concept and the cooperator-
13 specific long-term calendars.

14
15 Just a reminder again for folks, the key stocks were those high-
16 priority and/or highly-controversial species. The key stocks
17 concept helps the analysts by identifying those priorities. We
18 thought these key stocks would require age or stage-structured
19 assessments. The scheduling of key stocks assessments were really
20 -- The idea was you would have a set frequency of those, and then
21 you would have some type of maybe process in between, such as an
22 interim assessment, that you can get a pulse on what's happening
23 in the fishery more real-time.

24
25 The committee also discussed utilizing a simpler modeling approach
26 for some species that may not need this more complex age-structured
27 assessment process, and that idea was tossed around quite a bit.
28 How that's going to actually enter into the SEDAR process and into
29 the SSC process is still also ongoing with SEDAR and the Science
30 Center.

31
32 Just a reminder of where we are with our assessment schedule, and
33 this is just Gulf only, primarily, that I'll talk about, except
34 for the joint species we share with the South Atlantic Council,
35 and so red grouper was completed, and shrimp will be completed, in
36 2025. You'll receive the results of the red grouper assessment
37 here during the Reef Fish Committee at this meeting.

38
39 The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission completed two assessments
40 for us, the yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper assessments, and
41 those also will be given to the Reef Fish Committee at this
42 meeting. King mackerel, gray triggerfish, and Gulf hogfish will
43 begin in 2025, and then Florida FWC told us that the black grouper
44 management strategy evaluation that they had started in 2024 was
45 really on hold, due to some funding constraints.

46
47 Then we recommended, during the meeting, for 2026 a simpler
48 process, potentially, for the tilefish complex to get an

1 assessment, another assessment on gag grouper, and then greater
2 amberjack to begin in late 2026, as a start date, primarily based
3 on when the great greater amberjack count would be completed and
4 with all the other ongoing activities that we have on the schedule.

5
6 We briefly discussed three other business items of the Inflation
7 Reduction Act-funded Science Center projects, and Dr. Porch gave
8 us an update on that, the location for SEDAR Steering Committee
9 meetings, and we discussed the 2026 MRIP-FES pilot results and
10 next steps.

11
12 Dr. Porch told us, regarding the Inflation Reduction Act funding
13 received by the Science Center -- He said that the funding and
14 grants are on hold, due to several executive orders. I'll skip
15 down to the third bullet.

16
17 We discussed the 2026 MRIP-FES pilot results, and we suggested
18 that a group be assembled to discuss how the results of the pilot
19 study, the 2026 pilot study, will be incorporated into assessments,
20 which I think the Science Center staff analysts have a good idea
21 about how that will happen, but we also discussed those assessments
22 of stocks that are not on the schedule, and how will that pilot,
23 and the results of that pilot, impact those stocks, and so that's
24 why we want to put a group together to start thinking about how
25 we're going to handle that at a stock assessment level.

26
27 We also briefly discussed location for the SEDAR Steering
28 Committee, and they're going to bring back some information on
29 holding the meeting in other locations besides Charleston for us
30 to consider, and so, Mr. Chair, I tried to cover things quickly.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons, for that. Do we have any
33 questions for Dr. Simmons regarding this report? Dr. Sweetman.

34
35 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so not entirely a
36 question, and maybe more so a concern, and maybe not necessarily
37 directed at you, Dr. Simmons, but you had a bullet in there about
38 loss of Science Center staff, loss of assessment staff, and things
39 along those lines that we might need to reassess this process.

40
41 I'm just curious if there's going to be any update provided from
42 our federal colleagues along those lines. I know, at the South
43 Atlantic, you kind of presented a detailed presentation about
44 specifically, you know, in the South Atlantic, you lost one of
45 your three stock assessment scientists that were working on some
46 of that stuff. I'm just wondering how -- If you're going to give
47 an update along those lines, or how this factors into kind of the
48 SEDAR process, from an efficiency standpoint, right, because,

1 obviously, I'm fully supportive of using assessments that don't
2 have data -- When we're acting on assessments which have data that
3 are five years old.

4
5 Obviously, we need to improve upon that process, and I'm fully
6 supportive of doing whatever mechanism we can to get there. I'm
7 just wondering if there's any updates, based on what's going on at
8 the federal level there, as it relates to efficiency and the stock
9 assessment process.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I guess, at the time we
14 developed this agenda, we didn't really have time to invite other
15 speakers, but that's certainly a good point, and we could work
16 with Dr. Porch and his staff, or somebody at the South Atlantic
17 Council. Is that what you were suggesting? You mentioned South
18 Atlantic stocks. I'm not sure who gave that presentation. I
19 apologize.

20
21 **DR. SWEETMAN:** It was just an update from what was going on. I
22 think Andy and Clay both gave an update relative to what is going
23 on at the staffing level in that respective region.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

26
27 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I gave that, I think, during Full
28 Council at the South Atlantic, and so there's a number of things
29 that we can provide updates on, in terms of staffing changes and
30 impacts that we're going through, later in the meeting.

31
32 You know, in terms of the actual stock assessment enterprise,
33 right, and so, in terms of the biologists, I think the only
34 employee -- Well, I won't say that. Clay can talk to this, but I
35 think we've lost two employees, at least, in the stock assessment
36 group since January 20, right, and so, obviously, as we lose
37 employees, and can't backfill those positions, it's going to be
38 harder to complete stock assessments.

39
40 Obviously, with funding uncertainty as well, losses in some of the
41 data collection, and data collection streams, that could
42 ultimately affect what types of assessments we can conduct and how
43 timely those assessments will be. I don't think we're at a stage
44 where we can fully talk about, obviously, that yet, but we
45 certainly are prepared to continue those conversations and those
46 impact assessments.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Any other questions

1 for Dr. Simmons' report? Mr. Sanchez.

2
3 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I just had a question, something that
4 occurred to me. Some of our assessments, we have some outside
5 experts, CIE folks, come and provide some, you know, outside
6 oversight impact, to take a look at things for us, and I've always
7 liked that, because I think it allows us to not only look at the
8 outcomes, but also to assess the modeling that we're doing, and I
9 think gives us that objective group of people looking at it. Is
10 that, our continued ability to use these outside CIE guys, folks,
11 and is that also in jeopardy, obviously, you know, with budget
12 crises and stuff?

13
14 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I can only speak to near-term.
15 I think the most -- The next assessment we have that I recall in
16 the CIE, I believe, is the penaeid shrimp, the SEDAR 87 assessment,
17 and I did talk to Mr. Carmichael right before this meeting, and he
18 said they did have funding, and they were going forward with at
19 least two CIE reviewers for that in June.

20
21 I haven't gotten beyond that with him, as far as funding goes,
22 because most councils and commissions, as far as I know, have only
23 received about 40 percent of their funding in 2025, and so things
24 are going to get tight pretty quickly, and SEDAR money is given to
25 the South Atlantic Council, but it's administered through them,
26 through their program, and so that money for 2025 is tied up in
27 there as well, once we figure that out for the rest of the year,
28 and so just keep that in mind.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Dr. Porch has his hand raised.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Andy. Dr. Porch.

35
36 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you. Just to respond quickly to the
37 potential impacts, Andy is right. We lost two people in the
38 earlier rounds of resignations and the probationary staff that
39 were fired, two assessment folks. We also lost all our support
40 crew for the Climate and Ecosystem Fisheries Initiative. We also
41 were not able to hire people that, because of the hiring freeze,
42 people that we were just about poised to hire, including that stock
43 assessment analyst for the South Atlantic.

44
45 It's a little premature to report on full impacts, because we're
46 just going through the round of VERA/VSIP early retirement, and my
47 early indications are that we'll lose about twenty more staff, and
48 at least one of those is a stock assessment scientist, and I don't

1 know the full extent yet, because the full reporting isn't in, but
2 it will be a pretty substantial hit in many areas, and so, probably
3 by the next council meeting, I'll have a better idea of the full
4 impact.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. We have a question from
7 Dr. Sweetman.

8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and not a question, but I just appreciate the
10 update, Clay, on that. That stinks, but, yes, I appreciate that,
11 and I fully recognize that you can't really answer these questions
12 right now. It's kind of an ever-evolving process, and so I
13 appreciate any updates you could provide to us in the future.
14 That's helpful.

15
16 **DR. PORCH:** Absolutely.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Porch and Dr. Sweetman.
19 Any other questions? Not seeing any movement, on to Mr. Rindone
20 for Review and Discussion of the Gulf of Mexico SEDAR Schedule.

21
22 **REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF GULF OF MEXICO SEDAR SCHEDULE**

23
24 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, sir, and so I'll walk you guys through the
25 results of the planning that came out of the SEDAR Steering
26 Committee meeting and what we have on the calendar for 2027 and
27 beyond, and so, Bernie, if you can bring up Tab I, Number 5.

28
29 So, for 2025 and 2026, for the purposes of the steering committee,
30 you're considered to be final. For the rest of this year, we'll
31 be continuing to work on the red snapper benchmark assessment, and
32 we'll be starting the gray triggerfish benchmark assessment, and
33 the king mackerel operational assessment, and then we'll be
34 finishing up Gulf shrimp, and we also expect hogfish to start up,
35 and that one will be done by FWC's group.

36
37 In 2026, we look to finish the red snapper assessment, along with
38 gray triggerfish and king mackerel, and then start the gag grouper
39 operational assessment, the tilefish data triage, which will be
40 looking at the data available to do an updated assessment on
41 tilefish, and then starting greater amberjack later in 2026. The
42 start date for greater amberjack is to be able to include data
43 through this year, through 2025, and then, also, we would --
44 Towards the end of 2026, we would see that hogfish assessment wrap
45 up.

46
47 Moving into 2027, amberjack continues, and then we start vermilion
48 and yellowedge and mangos, or gray snapper. Vermilion is expected

1 to be almost like an update, and the same with yellowedge, and
2 same with gray snapper.

3
4 There's not much in the way of, you know, teardowns required for
5 any of those, and then we have on there a question-mark for
6 updating mutton snapper, which has a terminal year of 2023, and so
7 this would allow a few more years of data to be added for mutton
8 snapper.

9
10 The same kind of thinking in 2028, with then updating yellowtail
11 snapper, which also has a terminal year of 2023, and also finishing
12 up greater amberjack in 2028, doing an update on scamp, and then
13 doing a data-limited approach for cobia, lane, and Spanish
14 mackerel, and so there might be some opportunities there for a
15 more streamlined modeling approach.

16
17 Then we would finish up that data-limited exploration in 2029, and
18 that's as much as we have on the calendar at the moment, and so we
19 continually try to evaluate assessment ages, as the Executive
20 Director and the Chair are considering things to bring forward to
21 the SEDAR Steering Committee, you know, trying not to let any of
22 these assessments get too dusty.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for that report, Mr. Rindone. We have
25 a question from Mr. Schieble.

26
27 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's not really a
28 question, and it's more like a comment. I'll get on my amberjack
29 soapbox here just for a minute. Back on June 3 of 2022, our June
30 3 council meeting, we got this same update on the schedule, and
31 amberjack -- The end of the stock assessment date, or the end date,
32 was supposed to be Quarter 4 of 2026, and so Quarter 4 of 2026,
33 back in 2022.

34
35 Then, if you go to March 26 of last year, and so the equivalent
36 time period as now, it was supposed to be Quarter 4 of 2027, and
37 now it's moved to Quarter 2 of 2028 on the most recent SEDAR
38 schedule. Now, keep in mind the first schedule was a research
39 track assessment, and now it's switched to a benchmark, and so
40 there's some, you know, leeway with that, but the original
41 amberjack count project started in 2020, and here we are at 2025,
42 and we're going to continue with data through this year, but we've
43 asked, or at least I've asked, for updates on the schedule for the
44 great amberjack count, and we haven't gotten those yet.

45
46 I'm not looking for any preliminary data. I'm just trying to
47 figure out what the timeline is here. We keep protracting this
48 out, even though it started five years ago, and what's happening?

1 It would be nice if we could get just a what's happening, and where
2 are we going, and, you know, obviously, Ryan just said that it's
3 going to include this year's data. That's great, but, last year,
4 we didn't really know that it was going to do that, and so is it
5 going to include next year's data? I mean, where's the end point,
6 and where are we going with this, from a stock assessment schedule?
7

8 Also, if that is the case, if this is the final destination for
9 the amberjack assessment, I would like to figure out how, in the
10 streamlining process that Dr. Simmons just outlined, if we can
11 move it to the top of that streamlining process.
12

13 You listed tilefish and amberjack at the bottom of that
14 presentation there, and it was last on the order. I don't know if
15 that order is sequential, or if that's just the way it was listed,
16 but, if we can move it to the top, and whatever that would take to
17 do that, I would be in favor of it.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Dr. Simmons.
20

21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I'll
22 start with why the greater amberjack count is not on the council's
23 agenda for this meeting. We were in contact with Dr. Sean Powers,
24 and we were notified that it was still a preliminary report, and
25 that it was under review, and they were really not comfortable
26 providing that information publicly yet, and so we decided that
27 June was a better meeting, and so that's one question I believe
28 you had.
29

30 I think the other thing that has happened, and Ryan can help me
31 fill in the gaps here, as well as Dr. Porch, is recall we had a
32 research track for red snapper, the most important species in the
33 Gulf of Mexico, right, and that was not successful, and so we had
34 to go back again and consider a benchmark assessment, and so I
35 think that did delay some of the things on the schedule, but we do
36 have a lot of assessments that the council is going to have to act
37 on after this meeting, but, Ryan, you can help me fill in some of
38 the other things that got moved around.
39

40 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and I was just going to add that -- I mean Dr.
41 Simmons hit it all on the head, but I'm just going to add that
42 it's not so much that, you know, greater amberjack is the seventh
43 on the dance card. It's just there are some things going on, and
44 I can try to think about, you know, should I list these
45 chronologically, or in some other way, and, if you guys have a
46 preference, and I don't want you to assume that I have an
47 overwhelming preference for one method or another.
48

1 I don't really care and, whichever way you want it presented to
2 you, I'm happy to do that for you, and so it is -- The 2026
3 assessments are finalized though, and so like the center knows
4 that these things are going to happen. The data providers know
5 that these things are going to happen, and so, you know, ageing
6 needs to be getting spooled up in late 2025, or early 2026.

7
8 People need to start doing a lot of reading and getting ready for
9 that, working on my compositions and all that, and like all the
10 data providers will know, and like it will be on their schedules,
11 their individual schedules, that like I need to prepare for this,
12 because this thing is going to start in, you know, maybe September-
13 ish of 2026, but the reason for starting it then, like I said, is
14 so that we can include 2025.

15
16 You know, we expect the greater amberjack count to undergo its
17 peer review, and we want to be able to start the assessment as
18 soon as we can up against that review, but, if the review finds
19 something, and let's say it that requires, you know, another couple
20 months of fiddling about, we don't want to have started the
21 assessment process like knife-edge right up against when we thought
22 the review was going to be done, and the product available, and
23 then have to then wait again, because they had a little bit of
24 whatever it is that they had to do to get done, and so providing
25 a little bit of buffer there to allow that work to be final final,
26 if you take my meaning.

27
28 I understand the frustration with seeing that completion date get
29 moved back, but we're locked in at this point, and so it's not out
30 on -- You know, further out on the schedule, like say scamp or the
31 data-limited approach or any of that are, and, you know, those
32 things might still move about a little bit, and like it's going to
33 happen there.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Mr. Schieble.

36
37 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** As a follow-up to that, and so I understand.
38 Obviously, we can't go back in time, in the DeLorean, and move
39 this back to 2026, but my point was that we've lost two years, and
40 where did it go, and so, with regards to the amberjack count update
41 in June, all I'm looking for is a timeline update, really. I don't
42 need preliminary data. That really hasn't been what I've requested
43 in the past. It's just where are we at with this in the schedule?

44
45 You know, things have obviously got moved, and things happen, I
46 get it. You know, I understand science and research quite well,
47 and delays, but, also, with regards to the streamlining assessment
48 process, how do we get amberjack to the top of that list, I guess

1 is what I'm getting at. If there's a new streamlining assessment
2 process within SEDAR, I would like to make it the first candidate.
3 Does that require a motion, or is that just something that happens?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Rindone.
6

7 **MR. RINDONE:** So amberjack is a key stock, but it's not necessarily
8 one that we've thought about for an assessment streamlining
9 approach necessarily, because of -- You know, we don't really know
10 what to expect yet from the results of the greater amberjack count,
11 and so --
12

13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** (Mr. Schieble's comment is not audible on the
14 recording.)
15

16 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Bernie, can you pull up the presentation? What
17 slide, Chris?
18

19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** The second-to-last.
20

21 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** The second-to-last slide on the presentation.
22

23 **MR. RINDONE:** That's not a recommendation for streamlining. Those
24 are recommended assessments that the Chair and Executive Director
25 had put forward for starting in 2026, and so on slide 7, yes, and
26 so it wasn't that those would be subject to streamlining.
27

28 Tilefish, the purpose for that is to do that data triage and find
29 out a better idea of like, in the present day, what do we have to
30 work with? Gag grouper is an age-based assessment, and so walking
31 back from there would be a reduction in the rugosity of that
32 assessment, and amberjack, again, you know, like I said, we're
33 waiting on the greater amberjack count, to have an idea of, you
34 know, what we can expect out of that project.
35

36 Plus, compared to the last assessment, we now have the G-FISHER
37 composite video index, which covers most of the eastern Gulf of
38 Mexico, which will be important to consider for incorporation this
39 time, and so we wouldn't, at least on surface, consider walking
40 back greater amberjack at this point. We need to see what we have
41 first, and so what are the questions that you have on that?
42

43 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, if the start date is late 2026, and it shows
44 the end date on the schedule here of Quarter 2 of 2028, is the
45 streamlining process, the idea behind it, to truncate or shorten
46 that time span between the start and the end date, or is it just
47 to streamline the overall process? I'm not sure where that's
48 supposed to go.

1
2 **MR. RINDONE:** The purpose is to look at species that -- You know,
3 maybe there's only like one or two really key indices of abundance
4 that are driving the bus, so to speak, and so like if -- When we
5 think about cobia, the main independent index for cobia is the
6 headboat catch per unit effort index, and, well, you know, that's
7 not great, and we have a lot of length data for cobia, and so maybe
8 there's something else that we could do besides relying on that
9 one index.

10
11 For lane snapper, lanes do show up in the G-FISHER composite video
12 survey, and we have been using the headboat CPUE data for lane
13 snapper in the past, but maybe we could take a look at doing
14 something instead with G-FISHER, or maybe it's not an "either/or"
15 thing, and maybe it's an "and" thing, and figure out what to do
16 there.

17
18 Spanish mackerel, we have a lot of length and age data for Spanish
19 mackerel, but, you know, maybe there's something simpler that we
20 can do there, and so, from a streamlining standpoint, thinking
21 about some of these things that they really only have like maybe
22 one or two really key pieces of information, seeing if we can take
23 a simpler modeling approach.

24
25 There are other things that would be really difficult to do that,
26 and like king mackerel kind of relies on the combination of
27 everything that's available to just, by fingertips, hold it all
28 together, and so taking anything out from the king mackerel
29 assessment gives that model a little bit of trouble, or at least
30 it has in the past.

31
32 I know the center has some things that they want to try to resolve
33 the modeling environment a little bit, and simplify some things
34 there, and those will be discussed during that assessment process.

35
36 Gray triggerfish, you know, we're frame-off restoration on gray
37 triggerfish, and so Dr. Patterson did the updated ageing study
38 that the council funded, and so that was successful in being able
39 to fix that problem, and, you know, the data issues that existed
40 before are not thought to exist anymore, and so gray triggerfish
41 could potentially go through a full age-based assessment, and so
42 I could go through the rest of them, but --

43
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I guess, to summarize my thick-headedness, you're
45 telling me amberjack is not a good candidate for the streamlining
46 process then, right?

47
48 **MR. RINDONE:** Not right now, no, because we have two new large

1 pieces of data that are coming in, with a greater amberjack count
2 and the consideration of G-FISHER, and so we wouldn't want to chop
3 away at chunks of the process and not include those data. We
4 specifically want to consider those data.

5
6 Expediting it -- I mean, as far as like it taking until mid-2026
7 to do, I mean, that's an estimation, and so, if it turns out that
8 the assessment process doesn't need to take as long, because it's
9 going to be run through the Science Center, and hopefully be able
10 to do it a little bit more efficiently that way, then, you know,
11 maybe it's able to be completed a little bit sooner, and so if the
12 main concern is like when it's going to be done.

13
14 I mean, the amount of time in the oven will be what it will be to
15 make sure it's done correctly, but it doesn't necessarily mean
16 it's going to be a two-full-year project, like it's currently
17 listed, and so we try to be conservative when we're estimating
18 these things.

19
20 You know, I don't want to tell you guys like, oh, yeah, it's going
21 to take nine months, and no problem, and then it takes a year-and-
22 a-half, and then you're looking at me with the inverse concern of
23 like what's going on.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** But I think the concept, Ryan, with
26 the key stocks approach, was, after we get them through this more
27 complex age structured assessment, that the council wanted to get
28 catch advice more regularly, through an update or through an index,
29 a fishery-independent index, and that was the idea with the key
30 stocks, and amberjack was one of those key stocks, but, until we
31 get all this new information through a more complex assessment, we
32 don't think we can operationalize that streamlined approach, but
33 the Science Center or others can correct me, but that was my
34 understanding of how we discussed that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

37
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, just for reference, Ryan, the terminal year of
39 the most recent assessment we're using is 2017 for amberjack,
40 correct, and so it would be over a decade old.

41
42 **MR. RINDONE:** The same as red snapper.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Is there any other comments? Dr. Sweetman.

45
46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** That was a good discussion. I will make mine quick,
47 because I realize we're almost at lunchbreak here, but, just
48 commenting on kind of the question-marks that you had put on there

1 for FWC assessments for mutton and yellowtail, I think question-
2 marks is appropriate at the time being.

3
4 Maybe there's some other -- We, obviously, are going to receive
5 that stock assessment report at this meeting here, and so it might
6 not be needed, just within a one or two-year timeframe, to redo
7 this, but I'll certainly coordinate with our leadership at FWRI to
8 try and figure out what might be the best, and I'll coordinate
9 with you guys on that.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Anything else?
12 Any other business to come before the SEDAR committee? Not seeing
13 any, the SEDAR committee is adjourned, and we will break for lunch,
14 and let's reconvene at 1:45. Thank you.

15
16 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 7, 2025.)

17
18 - - -