

**Gulf SEDAR Committee Report  
August 25, 2025  
Mr. JD Dugas – Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab I, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab I, No. 2**) of the April 2024 meeting as written.

*SEDAR Steering Committee Summary Report August 2025 (Tab I, No. 4)*

Council staff reviewed discussions and decisions made by the SEDAR Steering Committee at its August 2025 webinar meeting. A Committee member was concerned about the effort and effects anticipated with incorporating updated MRIP effort calibrations in 2026. A Council member thought having scheduled check-in opportunities for the assessment technical teams would be useful for ensuring better participation by technical team members.

*Update on Southeast Fisheries Science Center Resources (Tab I, No. 5)*

The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) discussed the effects from the recent reduction in force experienced by NOAA Fisheries over the last several months. SEFSC has experienced a staffing reduction of over 30%, which has impacted its ability to provide services to Councils, Commissions, and the public. SEFSC is working to find all efficiencies it can, including using novel technologies to replace lost manpower, and will look for support from state partners wherever possible and appropriate, especially for port sampling. SEFSC noted that assessment staffing team losses in the Gulf were minimal, but those remaining staff may need to be occasionally tasked to assessments in other regions. A Committee member asked for a prioritized list from SEFSC for partnership needs to better address anticipated shortcomings. Another Council member noted that the current data environment might require the SSCs to be more amendable to making management recommendations based on fewer indices at times, especially between stock assessments (e.g., interim analyses). The Committee member asked about the anticipated effects to the timeliness of data availability. SEFSC replied that it thought index-based management procedures, like interim analyses, may need to be used more often than they are at present, and those would be expected to be timelier than a full stock assessment. A Committee member thought the Council would ultimately need to discuss the expected process changes and the Council's risk tolerance associated with catch advice. Getting the data as close to real-time as possible should be a priority.

*Review and Discussion of Gulf SEDAR Schedule (Tab I, No. 6)*

A Committee member asked what reductions in assessment throughput have been experienced by the Gulf Council. Council staff replied that to date, reductions have been minimal; however, more negative impacts are expected for future assessments due to reductions in staff and resources in particular the collection of robust data streams. Another Committee member recommended removing assessments for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper, and replacing them with gag grouper in 2026, and red grouper in 2028. The Committee member said these two

species could be assessed by the University of South Florida's Center for Environmental Analysis, Synthesis, and Application (CEASA). A Committee member thought it best to discuss changing the responsible analytical agency with the SEDAR Steering Committee before moving forward with such a change. Council staff noted that the Council's SSC will review interim analyses for gag and red grouper in February 2026, with the tilefish data triage for 2026 also conducted outside the SEDAR process. A Committee member thought that moving gag and red grouper to the CEASA was a good start, but said the process was slow for throughput before, and is expected to be slower in the future, with staff and resource reductions. The Committee member also lamented the delays with starting the greater amberjack stock assessment. The SEFSC replied that for greater amberjack, waiting for the data from the *Great Amberjack Count* was seen as essential due to the scope of that study. SEFSC reiterated the need to focus on key indices and not trying to always look at all available data, especially when the comparable results may be very similar. The Committee discussed conducting an interim analysis for greater amberjack before 2028, when the stock assessment is expected to be completed. SEFSC will investigate the G-FISHER composite video index for appropriateness for such an analysis and report back at full Council. If this index can be considered for greater amberjack via an interim analysis, the Council should consider passing a motion requesting that staff write a letter to SEFSC requesting this work. A Committee member asked if it were possible to move responsibility of International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and/or Atlantic Highly Migratory Species assessments to another Atlantic science center, to alleviate the burdens to SEFSC. SEFSC said such considerations are being discussed, with some past services being transferred to other partners, including ICCAT. Further, SEFSC's ability to assess sharks is expected to be measurably diminished.

### *Other Business*

There was no other business discussed.

This concludes my report.