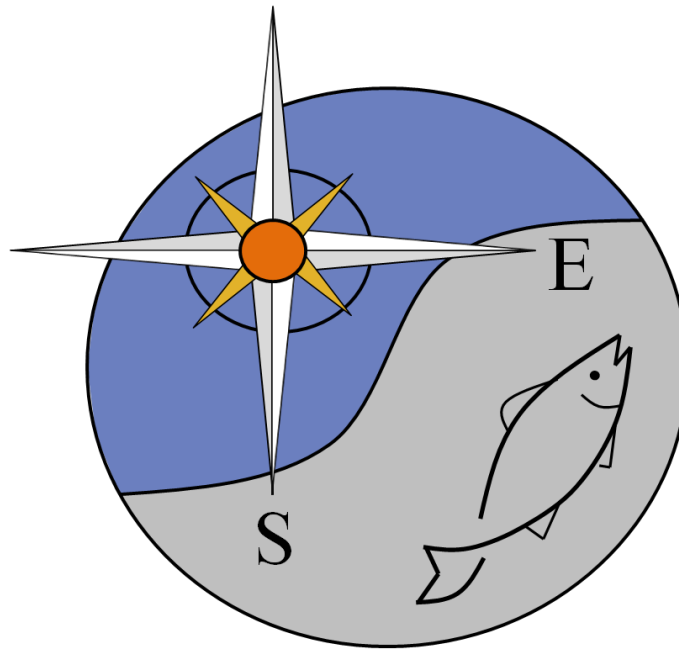


SEDAR



SEDAR Steering Committee

Meeting Brief

July 20, 2026

Meeting via Webinar

Report Content Note:

To provide context for recommendations and maintain the full record, this document combines the briefing summary provided to the Committee for consideration during the meeting as well as summary of Committee discussion points and recommendations.

Outcomes from the meeting are found under the section headers “Meeting Outcome” for each relevant section and are italicized throughout the report.

VERSION 2
August 13, 2026

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DOCUMENTS:

Attachment 1: February 2026 Draft Meeting Summary

Attachment 2: SEDAR Projects Update June 2026

Attachment 3: SEDAR SOPPs Appendices

Attachment 3a: Lessons Learned from SEFSC on SEDAR Process

Attachment 4: Peer Review Process Authorization FRN

Attachment 5: SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 6: Modifications to the Project Planning Grid from the February 2026 Steering Committee Summary

Attachment 7: Summer 2025 SEDAR Steering Committee Summary Report

Attachment 8: SEDAR Budget Summary

List of Participants

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Clay Porch, Chair, SEFSC

John Carmichael, SAFMC

Trish Murphey, SAFMC

Carrie Simmons, GFMC

JD Dugas, GFMC

Karyl Brewster-Geisz, HMS

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC

Pat Campfield, ASMFC

Andy Strelcheck, SERO

Carlos Farchette, CFMC

SEDAR STAFF

Julie A. Neer

Emily Ott

WEBINAR OBSERVERS

Aiman Raza, NOAA

Alena Figueroa, FWC

Ashley Pacicco, NOAA

Bridget Cermak, FWC

Cassidy Peterson, SEFSC

Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

Chloe Ramsay, FWC

Chris Schieble, LDWF

David Gloeckner, NOAA

Dustin Addis, FWC

Erik Williams, SEFSC

Francesca Forrestal, NOAA

Gary Decossas, FWC

Graciela Garcia Moliner, CFMC Staff

Heather Christiansen, FWC

John Froeschke, GFMC Staff

Julia Byrd, SAFMC Staff

Katie Siegfried, SEFSC

Kesley Banks, GFMC

Laura Thornton, NOAA

Matthew Nuttall, SEFSC

Michael Drexler, Ocean Conservancy

Mike Allen, GFMC

Molly Stevens, SEFSC

Rachael Silvas, SAFMC Staff

Ryan Nichols, NOAA

Sarina Atkinson, NOAA

Shepherd Grimes, NOAA

Skyler Sagarese, SEFSC

Steve Garner, Miami University

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC Staff

Ted Switzer, FWC

Vivian Matter, SEFSC

Walt Rogers, NOAA

Meeting Outcomes Summary

This Meeting Outcomes Summary highlights the major decisions of the Committee during the meeting. Additional details can be found under the heading “Meeting Outcome” for each relevant section and are italicized throughout the report.

This will be added once the main report is updated with Committee comments

Outcome Grid

1 Introduction

1.1 Documents

- Agenda
- Attachment 1. February 2026 Draft Meeting Summary

1.2 Action

- Introduction
- Review and Approve Agenda
- Approve Meeting Summary

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee adopted the agenda and approved the February 2026 Draft Meeting Summary.

2 SEDAR Projects Report

2.1 Documents

Attachment 2. SEDAR Projects Update June 2026

2.2 Summary

Attachment 2 provides a summary of recently completed, current, and upcoming SEDAR assessment projects.

Highlighted project developments:

SEDAR 99 Gulf of America King Mackerel

SEDAR Contact: Julie A. Neer

Summary: The Terms of Reference and Project Schedule for this assessment were approved October 2024. Initial Data scoping was held via email to the appointees and Interested Parties. There was a Data webinar in September 2025, and two assessment webinars held in May and June 2026. In June 2026, the Gulf Council received a presentation from the SEFSC regarding obtaining Mexican landings and length composition data, and their desire to include that information in the SEDAR 99 assessment. Additionally, the Council has requested that SEDAR conduct a Review Workshop to review the assessment once complete. A new project schedule is being produced, with a new completion date likely mid-2027.

2.3 Action

- Informational; none required

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee did not have any comments or recommendations about the June 2026 SEDAR Projects Update.

3 SEDAR Process Review and Discussion

3.1 Documents

Attachment 3: SEDAR SOPPs Appendices

Attachment 3a: Lessons Learned from SEFSC on SEDAR Process

Attachment 4: Peer Review Process Authorization FRN

3.2 Summary

Review of SEDAR SOPP Appendices

During the review and approval of the SEDAR SOPPs during the Winter 2026 meeting, the Committee identified several pieces of information that would serve as a compliment to the SOPPs and directed SEDAR staff to compile those items into several appendices for their consideration and review at the Summer 2026 meeting. Attachment 3 is provided for Committee review.

Discussion on the Independence of Cooperator Appointees for SEDAR Peer Review Process

The SEDAR review process was established as an acceptable peer review process in 2016, pursuant to Magnuson-Stevens and NS2 guidance (Attachment 4) to ensure that management measures be based on the best scientific information available. One of the stated guidelines NS2 guidelines is reviewer independence from the work being reviewed.

Recently, an individual was appointed to serve as a reviewer for the external peer review who also served as a member of the assessment panel. These appointments do not follow the NS2 guidance, nor the SEDAR-specific guidance that anyone who serves as a panelist during the data or assessment stages of the process is not eligible to serve as a reviewer. The appointment was made because of the lack of individuals willing to serve as a reviewer.

The Committee is asked to discuss the issue of independence of Cooperator appointed reviewers, considering the guidance on independent reviewers and SEDAR's status as an approved peer review process.

3.3 Action

The Committee should:

- Discuss any issues and provide recommendations if needed
- Approve the SOPPs appendices if appropriate
- Provide guidance on approach and timing to revise appendices if needed
- Review appointment guidance for Cooperator appointed reviewers and revise

recommendations if necessary

MEETING OUTCOME

Review of SEDAR SOPP Appendices

The Committee received four SOPPs Appendices to review (Attachment 3a). The comments below highlight the major discussions and recommendations.

Appendix 1

- *SEDAR Staff clarified that this appendix documents the minimum SEDAR Coordinator responsibilities and does not include all communication with Cooperators.*

Appendix 2

- *This appendix provides additional component details that are included when certain data and assessment components are selected.*

Appendix 3

- *The Committee did not have any comments on this appendix other than a formatting issue that will be fixed.*

Appendix 4

- *Discussed concerns about including this appendix in the SOPPs as it is a Cooperator process and not a SEDAR process.*
- *The Committee agreed to remove this appendix from the SEDAR SOPPs appendices.*

SEFSC Lessons Learned from SEDAR Process

- *SEFSC provided the Committee with a presentation (Attachment 3b) on challenges that have been encountered by the SEFSC regarding the newly established SEDAR process.*
- *Clarified that the intent is not to revise the SEDAR SOPPs, but rather to provide greater clarity on the new assessment process. There remains general confusion regarding assessments conducted outside of the SEDAR process.*
- *Several Cooperators noted that many of the concerns raised appear to be communication issues rather than issues in the SEDAR process itself. Council staff will work collaboratively with Center staff to establish clear expectations and improve communication with stakeholders, data providers, and other participants.*
- *There was general agreement that Cooperator staff should take the lead in communicating and clarifying assessment processes, and setting expectations, to the public and stakeholders.*
- *Interactions with Cooperator technical bodies during the development of an assessment should be arranged between the Cooperator and the Lead Assessment Agency as needed.*
- *It was noted that SEDAR is a cooperative process that establishes overarching principles while allowing individual Cooperators the flexibility to implement procedures that best fit their needs.*
- *The Committee noted that terminology such as "extra-SEDAR" and "update-lites" can lead to confusion. SEDAR clarified the terms they are using on SEDAR documentation:*
 - *External to SEDAR – assessment projects conducted without any SEDAR involvement. Details are agreed to through discussions between the Cooperator and the Lead Assessment Agency, and process run through the SEFSC (in most cases).*
 - *SEDAR Project with an Internal Component – assessment projects where SEDAR*

manages certain components of the process (likely data and/or review), but other components (e.g. assessment development), are conducted by the Lead Assessment Agency without SEDAR involvement.

Guidance for Assessments Conducted External to SEDAR:

- The importance of documenting the process between Cooperators and the Center in a way that provides continuity given inevitable staff turnover was noted.*
- It was suggested that each Cooperator work with their Lead Assessment Agency to develop guidance outlining roles, responsibilities and expectations for assessment, especially for assessments conducted outside of the SEDAR process.*
- The Committee brought up concerns regarding housing of materials for assessments conducted outside the SEDAR process. SEDAR indicated that if products developed for assessments outside the SEDAR process were provided to SEDAR Staff, the materials would be hosted in the post-SEDAR documentation section of the webpage for the previous SEDAR assessment.*
- SEFSC offered to develop documentation describing how each Cooperator will handle assessments developed outside the SEDAR process. The Gulf branch agreed to take the lead in developing this documentation then will share it with other Cooperators. It was acknowledged that protocols may differ among cooperators.*
- SEFSC emphasized that consistent naming conventions are important because they serve as reference points for analyses. SSCs need to be able to readily identify the analyses used to inform OFL and ABC recommendations and track how those analyses evolve over time.*
- Several Cooperators noted that there are already mechanisms in place to document the analyses and discussions that lead to management advice and actions.*

Discussion on the Independence of Cooperator Appointees for SEDAR Peer Review Process

- The Federal Register Notice identifying the SEDAR program as an official peer review process (Attachment 4) was provided to the Committee.*
- It was noted the increasing difficulty cooperators are experiencing in recruiting volunteers to serve on review panels. Many qualified volunteers have already participated in earlier assessment stages, resulting in a limited pool of eligible reviewers.*
- SEDAR Staff expressed concern about maintaining the credibility and independence of the peer review process and requested guidance on the legal implications of appointing individuals to the Review workshop who have participated in earlier stages of the assessment development process.*
- It was noted that the review panel's role is to provide recommendations, while the Lead Assessment Agency retains responsibility for final assessment decisions.*
- NOAA General Counsel (GC) advised that National Standard 2 (NS2) guidance clearly states that individuals who participated in developing the scientific information under review should not serve as reviewers during the review stage.*
- NOAA GC noted that appointing overlapping participants introduces significant legal risk and could provide grounds for a court to overturn agency decisions, particularly for controversial stocks.*
- It was noted that if no eligible technical volunteer reviewers from the Cooperators are available, the review panel could consist solely of CIE reviewers.*
- Cooperators noted the value of having SSC members, data providers, and stakeholders who participated in the data and assessment stages attend the Review Workshop to provide*

- context and assist the assessment team in explaining regional data.*
- *Individuals who participated in earlier assessment stages are welcome to attend Review Workshops and provide input but should not serve as appointed reviewers.*
 - *These individuals could instead participate as appointed observers or regular attendees.*
 - *NOAA GC emphasized the need for Cooperators to follow NS2 guidance and the Committee agreed that participants should not serve as reviewers at the review workshop if they were active participants of the data and/or assessment stages.*
 - *One Cooperator noted that potential conflicts could extend beyond direct participation in the data or assessment stages.*
 - *For example, a technical body member employed by a program such as MARMAP could present a perceived conflict when reviewing an assessment that uses MARMAP data, even if they were not participants in the data and assessment stages.*
 - *NOAA GC agreed with this NS2 interpretation but noted that this does not pose as great of a risk as a participant serving as reviewer that was directly involved with the data and assessment stages.*
 - *It was requested that the Committee discuss at the next Steering Committee meeting whether participants at the Data Stage be considered to serve as reviewers.*
 - *The Committee confirmed that appointment decisions ultimately remain the responsibility of the Cooperator.*
 - *SEDAR strives to follow NS2 guidance as closely as possible.*
 - *SEDAR will still identify potential overlapping conflicts but will honor the Cooperator's appointments.*

4. Assessment Schedule Review

4.1 Documents

Attachment 5. SEDAR Projects List

Attachment 6. Modifications to the Project Planning Grid from the August 2025 Steering Committee Summary

Attachment 7: Summer 2025 SEDAR Steering Committee Summary Report

4.2 Summary

The SEFSC will provide an update on the timing of final report on the MRIP-FES revised estimates and any potential delays in integrating the results into assessments. The Committee should discuss the potential approaches for updating assessments to include the new estimates that were presented by the SEFSC at the Summer 2025 Steering Committee meeting (Attachment 7) and provide recommendations as appropriate. The 2027 assessment priorities and timing need to be finalized so SEDAR staff may begin work on those projects, and the Committee should provide guidance on future projects (2028-2029) as possible.

4.3 Action

- Consider any needed modifications to the 2027 Projects
- Provide approach recommendations for incorporating new MRIP-FES estimates
- Discuss Future Project Requests (2028-2029)

MEETING OUTCOME

Timing of final report on the MRIP-FES pilot project:

- SEFSC shared that FES revisions are still on track to be available in August 2026.
- SEFSC provided an update on the three MRIP update options and their guidance on assessments for which each option is most appropriate.
- The three MRIP options and the proposed assessments are as follows:
 - Option 1: most timely- just use average adjustment factor for monitoring (no assessment runs)
 - No assessments are proposed to go through this option yet
 - Option 2: Re-run model with only updated FES data
 - Sandbar shark, Atlantic cobia, Gulf gag grouper, and Gulf tilefish
 - Option 3: Full update, update lite model re-run with update to other data sources (based on availability)
 - South Atlantic red snapper, Gulf red snapper, Gulf triggerfish, Gulf king mackerel

Project Schedule Discussions:

For all Cooperators, SEFSC will prioritize confirming data deadlines for assessments that have in-person components (Gulf Greater Amberjack, SA Red Grouper)

South Atlantic

- 2027 Species prioritization is as follows: 1. King mackerel, 2. Spanish mackerel, 3. Gag grouper 4. Red Grouper
 - Spanish mackerel - natural mortality and northern catch topical working groups
 - Red Grouper - Stock ID process and DW
 - Gag Grouper - reproduction TWG
 - King mackerel – external to SEDAR

Gulf

- 2027 Species prioritization is as follows: 1. Greater amberjack, 2. Scamp, 3. Gray snapper, 4. Vermillion snapper, 5. Yellowedge grouper
 - Scamp - Currently no need for TWG but Council may request data webinars after MRIP FES numbers are released
 - Gray snapper and Vermillion snapper – external to SEDAR
 - Greater amberjack – Data Workshop
- S105 Gag - Will need ~6 weeks once MRIP data is released to update SRFS data so this will result an assessment delay; a joint memo between FWC and the Center will be submitted to notify SEDAR of this delay

Caribbean

- No changes

FWC

- *No changes*

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

- *No changes*

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

- *GSMFC Menhaden review will be conducted external to SEDAR, block changed to purple*

HMS

- *No changes*

The SEFSC will present a proposal for a future scheduling procedure at the Winter 2027 Steering Committee meeting.

5 Other Business

5.1 Documents

Attachment 8: SEDAR Budget Summary

5.2 Summary

CIE Review Prioritization Process:

The SEFSC is asked to provide information on the process the Center for Independent Experts uses to determine which requests for reviewers are funded.

SEDAR Grant Status Review:

SEDAR Staff will provide a status update on the current SEDAR grant.

Timing of Review Workshop Presentation Availability:

The introductory presentations prepared prior to the review workshop and presented during the first day provide an excellent way for the lead assessment team to summarize the work completed and direct the Review Panel to components of the assessment that elicit feedback. Recently several reviewers have asked if the presentations could be provided in advance of the meeting to help them focus their preparation efforts. The Committee is requested to discuss this possibility.

Management History Working Group Update:

During the Winter 2026 Steering Committee meeting, the Committee recommended that a working group be convened with representatives from each Cooperator and SEDAR to discuss the content and process for developing the management history for the assessments. The group would be convened after the SEFSC rolled out their management history tool. It was noted that the group would also discuss a process for using the database to develop the needed management histories for SEDAR assessments, including if there is any additional information that needs to be included that is not in the SEFSC management history tool.

As of this Overview release, the Center management history tool has not been released, so the

working group has not been convened.

5.3 Action

- The Committee should discuss any issues and provide recommendations if needed.

MEETING OUTCOME

CIE Review Prioritization Process:

- *CIE reviews are administered by NOAA's Office of Science and Technology (S&T), which coordinates review requests across all Science Centers, Regional Offices, and Headquarters.*
 - *Historically, available funding has supported nearly all CIE review requests, with only one instance in recent years where funding constraints prevented accommodating all requests.*
 - *The Department of Commerce now reviews CIE contracting requests and encourages programs to carefully scope requests.*
- *CIE reviews are intended for high-priority assessments, such as those involving new modeling approaches, novel data sources, first-time assessments, specialized technical issues, controversial assessments, conflicting data sources, or assessments with significant management implications.*
 - *S&T relies on regional programs, including SEDAR, to determine which assessments meet the criteria for a CIE review and expects requests to be well justified.*
- *There is currently no competition among regions for CIE funding; however, if requests exceed available funding in the future, programs may be asked to further justify or reduce the number of requested reviews.*
- *Discussion clarified that the confusion around the Hogfish CIE contract was a result of miscommunication about new contracting procedures rather than a reduction in available funding.*
- *All reviews involving CIE will require federal sponsorship and attendance of a federal employee to fulfill contract oversight responsibilities and monitor review proceedings.*

SEDAR Grant Status Review:

- *The South Atlantic and Gulf Councils walked the Committee through their 2025 and 2026 YTD SEDAR budgets.*

Timing of Review Workshop Presentation Availability:

- *SEDAR Staff requested that workshop presentations be provided to reviewers in advance whenever possible. While a two-week lead is not necessary, receiving presentations one to two days before the Review Workshop would provide reviewers with additional preparation time.*
- *The Committee had no objection to sharing presentations in advance but emphasized that reviewers should focus primarily on the assessment report rather than presentation materials. SEFSC noted that presentations are generally distributed prior to the workshop whenever feasible, and that same-day presentation updates are typically the result of workload constraints.*
- *It was noted that an informal meeting is typically held between the Lead Assessment Agency and reviewers during the week prior to the Review Workshop. Presentation revisions are often made following this discussion, which can limit how far in advance final presentation materials are available.*
- *There was a question whether CIE reviewers with regional familiarity could be requested to reduce the amount of workshop time spent introducing reviewers to fishery dynamics and*

regional context.

- *It was explained that desired technical expertise is specified in the CIE Performance Work Statement (PWS) and that regional familiarity could also be included as a preferred qualification.*
- *SEDAR Staff questioned whether regional knowledge should take precedence over selecting reviewers with the technical expertise.*
- *The Committee confirmed that technical expertise should remain the priority when selecting CIE reviewers.*
- *SEFSC added that the CIE PWS could request that at least one reviewer possess regional expertise, but requiring all reviewers to have regional knowledge would likely be impractical and unnecessarily limit the reviewer pool.*

Management History Working Group Update:

- *SEDAR noted that the management history working group has not been convened yet and will be convened once the SEFSC management history database is live.*

SEDAR Website Update:

- *The Gulf Council had requested some updates to the SEDAR website such as a search function on upcoming events, automatically populated events to respective webpages, and a color-coded calendar on the upcoming events page.*
- *SEDAR Staff was able to implement the search bar for upcoming events but could not accommodate the other requests without additional help from the website developer. The would require additional funding.*

6 Next Meeting

The Committee is asked to make scheduling recommendations and suggest topics for the next meeting. SEDAR Staff would suggest the following:

- In-person 1 - 1.5-day Meeting – Options include week of February 8, 15, 22

MEETING OUTCOME

The Committee provided feedback to refine potential meeting dates: the week of February 8 and 15. SEDAR Staff will send out a doodle poll to determine Committee availability.

Table 1: SEDAR Project Grid - July 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee Discussion Grid

Table Color Legend:

Steering Committee Approved and SEFSC Scheduled Projects	FUTURE Requests
Steering Committee Approved, PENDING SEFSC SCHEDULING	Conducted External to SEDAR

SEDAR SCHEDULE OVERVIEW- July 2026 SEDAR Steering Committee DISCUSSION

	South Atlantic Branch				Gulf Branch						Caribbean Branch		HMS Branch		Florida FWC		Commission RW only
Year	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	1	2	1	2	
2026	S90 Red Snapper Benchmark				S99 King Mackerel	S100 Gray Triggerfish	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S98 Red Snapper Benchmark	S105 Gag Grouper	S101 SandbarHMS Sharks	S103 Application of Alternate Assessment Methods		S101 HMS Sandbar Sharks	S770A Hammerhead Sharks	S94 Hogfish	S105 Gag Grouper	
		S108 BSB															
		S104 Dolphin MSE RW															
2027	Spanish Mack (TWG)	S106 Gag Grouper					Tilefish Complex	SATL- King Mackerel									S107 ASMFC Cobia RW
	Red Grouper (DW/Stock ID)																GSMFC Menhaden RW
			Vermilion														
				Snowy (TWG)													
2028	Red Porgy (TWG)	GAJ (TWG)			Cobia, Lane, Spanish Data Limited Workshop (PW/DW)	Yellowedge		Red Grouper	Red Snapper				Bull Sharks		Gulf Red Grouper		ASMFC Menhaden
2029	Tilefishes	Scamp															
2030																	
2031																	
2032																	

Timing of projects shown in this table is approximate and is intended for SEDAR Steering Committee workload planning purposes only. Please consult individual project schedules for specific start and end dates.