

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Golden Nugget Casino Hotel Biloxi, Mississippi

March 30, 2015

**VOTING MEMBERS**

- Kevin Anson.....Alabama
- Pamela Dana.....Florida
- John Greene.....Alabama
- Harlon Pearce.....Louisiana

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- Martha Bademan (designee for Nick Wiley).....Florida
- Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
- Doug Boyd.....Texas
- Jason Brand.....USCG
- Roy Crabtree.....NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida
- Dale Diaz (designee for Jamie Miller).....Mississippi
- Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- Campo Matens.....Louisiana
- Corky Perret.....Mississippi
- Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- John Sanchez.....Florida
- Greg Stunz.....Texas
- David Walker.....Alabama
- Roy Williams.....Florida

**STAFF**

- Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
- Assane Diagne.....Economist
- John Froeschke.....Fishery Biologist/Statistician
- Doug Gregory.....Executive Director
- Karen Hoak.....Administrative and Financial Assistant
- Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
- Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- Cathy Readinger.....Administrative Officer
- Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- Charlotte Schiaffo.....Research & Human Resource Librarian
- Bryan Schoonard.....GIS Analyst

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- Pam Anderson.....Panama City, FL

- 1 Randy Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL
- 2 Steve Branstetter.....NMFS
- 3 J.P. Brooker.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
- 4 Michael Drexler.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
- 5 Cynthia Fenyk.....NOAA
- 6 Martin Fisher.....FL
- 7 Chuck Guilford.....FL
- 8 Ken Haddad.....American Sportfishing Association, Lloyd, FL
- 9 Chad Hanson.....Pew Environmental Trusts
- 10 Betty Harder.....FL
- 11 Ben Hartig.....SAFMC
- 12 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA, FL
- 13 Kristin McConnell.....EDF, Austin, TX
- 14 Jack McGovern.....NMFS
- 15 George Niles.....Summerland Key, FL
- 16 Daniel Padron.....Key West, FL
- 17 Bonnie Ponwith.....SEFSC
- 18 Jenny Thompson.....Oceana, Lafayette, LA
- 19 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL

20  
 21 - - -  
 22

23 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
 24 Management Council convened at the Golden Nugget Casino Hotel,  
 25 Biloxi, Mississippi, Monday afternoon, March 30, 2015, and was  
 26 called to order at 1:35 p.m. by Chairman Kevin Anson.

27  
 28 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
 29 **APPROVAL MINUTES**  
 30 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
 31

32 **CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON:** Committee members are myself and Dr. Dana  
 33 is here and Harlon Pearce and Johnny Greene is here and so Item  
 34 Number I is Adoption of the Agenda. Any changes to the agenda?  
 35 Moving on to Item Number II, Approval of Minutes, does anyone  
 36 have any changes to the minutes?

37  
 38 **MR. HARLON PEARCE:** Motion that we approve.

39  
 40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a motion to approve the agenda as  
 41 written and it's seconded. Approval of Minutes, does anyone  
 42 have any comments on minutes? Does anybody want to adopt the  
 43 minutes?

44  
 45 **MR. PEARCE:** I will adopt the minute as written.

46  
 47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Is there a second?  
 48

1 **MR. GREENE:** Second.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any discussion? No. Action Guide and Next  
4 Steps is Tab I, Number 3. You see that in the briefing book.  
5 We are just going to be reviewing the current SEDAR schedule.  
6 Item Number IV, Tab I, Number 4, Mr. Rindone, do you want to  
7 take us through that?

8  
9 **SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW**

10  
11 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few edits  
12 to the schedule that I received early this morning from Julie  
13 Neer for the goliath and black grouper assessments that are  
14 going to be done by the State of Florida. I have those listed  
15 as beginning in the spring of 2015 and they are actually going  
16 to begin in the fall and they will be completed by the spring of  
17 2016.

18  
19 For the greater amberjack and gag updates, both of those are  
20 going to start in the summer of 2016 and be available in early  
21 2017 and that is using 2015 data and so it's the same principle  
22 as with the last red snapper update assessment and try and start  
23 them in early September and have them completed by January and  
24 no later than March, so that the council can take action on any  
25 changes and implement them before the fishing season ends.

26  
27 Then for the data-limited stock assessment, the data workshop  
28 for that is going to be in May and there are going to be  
29 assessment webinars held June through August, using the same  
30 style that we're currently using for red grouper, which is where  
31 the assessment team can converse with SSC members and AP members  
32 and other pertinent individuals behind the scenes, but all  
33 decision making happens during plenary webinars, of which there  
34 are usually no more than three or four, but it allows the public  
35 to still be able to see what's going on.

36  
37 Then the review workshop for that data-limited effort will be in  
38 November of 2016 and so it should get to us in either the end of  
39 November or probably our January meeting and the terminal year  
40 of data for those species that are going to be looked at in the  
41 data-poor effort would be 2014.

42  
43 Outside of that, one of the outstanding issues that we have on  
44 the schedule is in 2017, where the SSC had recommended that a  
45 standard assessment of red snapper be done and the council still  
46 needs to make a determination on whether that's an appropriate  
47 spot to place that assessment or if it should happen sooner or  
48 later than that time.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any discussion on that particular item or any  
3 other items on the schedule?  
4

5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUGLAS GREGORY:** I think at the last meeting  
6 you said that we were supposed to get some species selections  
7 for the data poor and have we gotten those?  
8

9 **MR. RINDONE:** We have not received anything as yet from the  
10 Science Center. We were told at the last meeting that they  
11 would be giving us some insight on species that they thought  
12 would be good candidates at this meeting and so I don't know if  
13 Bonnie wants to weigh in on that.  
14

15 **DR. BONNIE PONWITH:** Yes and thank you. We have done an  
16 analysis based on data availability and ranked a suite of  
17 species based on how strong a candidate they are for assessment  
18 and what I have gotten from the analysts are about five  
19 categories of data availability and suitability for a first  
20 round of a data-poor stock composite.  
21

22 Again, the notion is that we do a stock assessment, we typically  
23 do an assessment focused on one stock and for this, we would be  
24 applying modeling approaches that are less complex and because  
25 of that, we are able to do more than one stock and so the stocks  
26 that bubbled up as having the highest data quality are scamp and  
27 gray snapper and you will note that they are also proposed on  
28 the list for 2017 benchmark stock assessments and so that  
29 comports that they have got adequate amounts of data to be  
30 either put in that data-poor group or to be done as a benchmark.  
31

32 In addition to that, we've got, in Category 1, lane snapper, the  
33 red drum that's already listed, and wenchman. Category 2 are  
34 the ones that are sort of next in terms of their data  
35 availability and that's almaco jack, the lesser amberjack,  
36 yellowmouth grouper, snowy grouper, and speckled hind. The  
37 notion is that we could at least do the Category 1 and could  
38 also include some of the Category 2 as we look at the data-poor  
39 stocks in 2016. I can provide that list to you in written form  
40 if that helps.  
41

42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, if you could forward that list, that would  
43 be great, Bonnie.  
44

45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** What were some the broad  
46 characteristics of these species for the different categories?  
47 I assume abundance or prevalence in the catch or catch levels  
48 was one of the issues.

1  
2 **DR. PONWITH:** For the list that I am going to give you, we have  
3 categorized them 1 through 5 and this is based solely on data  
4 availability and by data availability, it's a combination of the  
5 quality and quantity of fishery-dependent data, biological data,  
6 and fishery-independent data.

7  
8 By the time we get down to Category 4, the data are so sparse  
9 that it's likely we wouldn't have enough information for  
10 anything more than a catch-only-based method, like using  
11 something like annual landings.

12  
13 Again, the idea of the data-poor approach is right now, to meet  
14 those ACL requirements that we had with the reauthorization of  
15 Magnuson, we were required to have ACLs. For stocks that  
16 weren't assessed, we used sort of an average landings approach  
17 with a buffer applied and the notion is that for some of those  
18 stocks we actually have enough data that we could include more  
19 sophisticated analysis than just using annual landings. In  
20 other words, we want to capitalize on what we have, even if it's  
21 enough for a traditional stock assessment.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Bonnie. Ryan, do you have any other  
24 comments?

25  
26 **MR. RINDONE:** It's good to have a list to go off of. Dr.  
27 Ponwith, how many species do you think it's reasonable for the  
28 council to want to include for consideration in the data-poor  
29 effort?

30  
31 **DR. PONWITH:** I think that we can, at a minimum, include the  
32 ones that we have that are Category 1, which amounts to five  
33 stocks. The Category 2 amounts to five additional stocks and so  
34 what I would say is let's look at those Category 1 stocks and  
35 then of the Category 2 stocks, let's rank them in order of the  
36 council's view of their importance from a management standpoint.

37  
38 Then what we can do is as we get to that saturation point where  
39 we think that's enough, but bordering on too many, if we can't  
40 do all of the Category 2, at least they are prioritized.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Bonnie, what were those in Category 2 again?  
43 They were almaco jack, lesser amberjack, snowy, speckled hind,  
44 and what was the fifth one?

45  
46 **DR. PONWITH:** It was almaco, lesser amberjack, yellowmouth  
47 grouper, snowy grouper, and speckled hind.

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Is there, as far as grouping them together -- I  
2 don't know how intense the workgroups would be or whether or not  
3 there would be anybody that has any particular expertise with  
4 jacks versus groupers, but is that a consideration? Should you  
5 lump all the groupers together versus the jacks or can you pick  
6 almaco and then yellowmouth and then lesser, in case it comes  
7 down to picking three of the five or just a couple of the five?  
8 Is there any consideration for that we need to be wary of?

9  
10 **DR. PONWITH:** That's a reasonable question and what I would say  
11 at this point is we have ranked these according to simply  
12 whether they have got the data to support these data-poor  
13 approaches and I think as you're ranking them in terms of your  
14 perspectives from a management standpoint, I think that  
15 annotating the ranking list just based on which ones you think  
16 are the most important.

17  
18 In other words, we often hear in public testimony that I am  
19 really worried about this stock because or we've been seeing  
20 lots of these because. That kind of information is valuable to  
21 help us. That anecdotal information is really valuable in  
22 helping us set these priorities.

23  
24 Then we can tier those priorities against the logistics issues  
25 and the science concerns, because sometimes the management and  
26 science concerns are identical and sometimes there is some  
27 departures. That would give us the information I think we need  
28 to actually interleave that.

29  
30 **MR. PEARCE:** Bonnie, all things being equal and if we had the  
31 data necessary to do all ten stocks, how many is too many? I  
32 mean I think ten is too many, of course, but what is your upper  
33 number of how many fish you can do?

34  
35 **DR. PONWITH:** I think we can do at least five and anything more  
36 than ten is going to be too many and the sweet spot is somewhere  
37 between five and ten.

38  
39 **MR. PEARCE:** So we could do seven or eight then is what you're  
40 saying and that's good.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Does the committee want to offer any guidance  
43 or any species that they want to rank for the Category 2 fish?  
44 Certainly I can recall quite a few folks that have testified for  
45 speckled hind and snowy. Those tend to probably be a little bit  
46 more of a target species, I think, if you will, relative to the  
47 other fish in the reef fish complex.

48

1 I mean my druthers would be to concentrate on the yellowmouth,  
2 snowy, and speckled hind and then almaco and lesser would be  
3 where I would pick.

4  
5 **MR. PEARCE:** I will make that motion, because I agree with you  
6 that we concentrate on those three grouper types of yellowmouth,  
7 speckled hind, and the other one, snowy.

8  
9 **MR. RINDONE:** Mr. Chairman, I have, in order for priority for  
10 Category 2, Number 1 is speckled hind and Number 2 is snowy  
11 grouper and Number 3 is yellowmouth grouper and Number 4 is  
12 almaco jack and Number 5 is lesser amberjack, just in the order  
13 that you put them out.

14  
15 **MR. PEARCE:** Do we need a motion?

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I don't --

18  
19 **MR. RINDONE:** It's already done.

20  
21 **MR. PEARCE:** It's already done? Okay.

22  
23 **MR. RINDONE:** So I guess the last thing on the list, in terms of  
24 what you guys need to weigh in on, is if we can get the schedule  
25 back up there. 2016 is proposed and so we will put the  
26 council's priorities along with Dr. Ponwith's list for the  
27 Category 1 species and our prioritized list for Category 2 for  
28 the data-poor.

29  
30 I will update the schedule to reflect the changes from Julie  
31 that I told you guys about, but in 2017, we will have -- We have  
32 a benchmark assessment for both gray snapper and scamp and so  
33 with consensus, I will go ahead and I will remove those, since  
34 those are going to be part of the data-poor effort, and that  
35 will move yellowedge grouper up to the number one spot and red  
36 snapper as a standard assessment, if that's where you guys want  
37 that to be, to the number two spot for 2017. Do you guys have  
38 any edits on that?

39  
40 **DR. PONWITH:** 2017 is going to be that challenging year. As you  
41 know, we are in the process of implementing the new effort mail  
42 survey for the MRIP program and we are going to be collecting  
43 those data side-by-side with the Coastal Household Telephone  
44 Survey.

45  
46 After we have accumulated a couple of years' worth of data, it  
47 is then time to go ahead and evaluate how those two interacted  
48 together, the behavior of the mail survey against the more

1 traditional survey that we're doing.

2  
3 2017 is the year where we would build the calibration approach  
4 and peer review that calibration approach and update the past  
5 assessments so that we could get those assessment results in  
6 terms of the calibrated effort.

7  
8 My recommendation at this point is even if we do move the gray  
9 snapper and scamp into those data-poor assessed stocks in 2016  
10 that we don't plug anything additional into that year, because  
11 that is going to be a very, very heavy year to do those updates.

12  
13 **MR. RINDONE:** Dr. Ponwith, when you say don't plug anything  
14 else, do you mean anything on top of yellowedge and red snapper  
15 or anything on top of yellowedge?

16  
17 **DR. PONWITH:** What I would say at this point is anything on top  
18 of those and what I could -- At this stage, for 2017, you have  
19 got red snapper there as a standard and certainly red snapper  
20 would be a very high-priority stock to build into that  
21 calibration. The calibrations are going to be conducted by  
22 substituting these new calibrated data into the results of the  
23 past assessment.

24  
25 For red snapper, what you can do is by leaving that on the  
26 schedule for 2017, look at, instead of doing that substitute, do  
27 a more robust standard assessment.

28  
29 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Dr. Ponwith. For the council, you guys  
30 would just need to finalize it that yes, you do want to do red  
31 snapper in 2017 and that's all we would need for that.

32  
33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** When we say 2017, is this something  
34 we could do like we did with the update and have the result in  
35 say January of 2017 or would we get the result at the end of  
36 2017? If we could get it at the beginning of the year, since  
37 that's two years away, that would be preferable.

38  
39 **DR. PONWITH:** Let me get some clarity. You are asking for the  
40 results of the red snapper assessment to be ready by the  
41 beginning of 2017? That basically means doing it in 2016,  
42 right?

43  
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Right and I was just asking if  
45 that's possible. I mean what's the timeline here, because that  
46 is two years away.

47  
48 **DR. PONWITH:** Right now, if red snapper, a standard assessment,



1 is on the schedule for 2017, the notion would be that that  
2 assessment would begin in 2017. I would have to actually take a  
3 look at the timelines to be able to match them up and see, but  
4 the idea of having results of a stock assessment early in 2017  
5 isn't a 2017 assessment. That would be a 2016.

6  
7 If I am hearing you right, the question is can we do a red  
8 snapper standard assessment in 2016 and so the answer to that is  
9 complicated by this calibration. If you did an assessment in  
10 2016, the results would essentially be confounded by the fact  
11 that you are not able to do it with the information that we're  
12 going to be gaining for the calibration.

13  
14 My advice would be to not do a red snapper standard assessment  
15 in 2016, because you absolutely want that calibration built into  
16 that assessment. My advice would be to advise against doing it  
17 in 2016.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Bonnie, outside of the calibration and outside  
20 of everything that a standard would -- I mean you could do an  
21 update though of red snapper in 2016 without the calibration  
22 numbers, correct? I understand it's a little extra work if you  
23 do 2016 and then maybe wait until 2017 to come back, but is an  
24 update snapper -- I mean would that be able to fit in and still  
25 do some data-poor stocks?

26  
27 **DR. PONWITH:** You are right that an update -- An update is  
28 significantly different in terms of its scope than a standard  
29 would be. What I have to find out is how far out you can do an  
30 additional update and still be comfortable that -- It's a  
31 complicated answer and it's because when you do an update, you  
32 basically update the landings information and update the  
33 indices. Let me -- Rather than speculate, let me double check  
34 and find out what the analysts' comfort level would be with a  
35 second update in 2016.

36  
37 I will say that an update in 2016 couldn't be wedged into the  
38 existing schedule and that something would have to give to be  
39 able to accommodate that.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes and that would be with 2015 data and so  
42 sometime in the summer and we would have it either in December  
43 or the early part of 2017 and have that information available  
44 for setting 2017 ACLs and everything. That's what I am trying  
45 to get to and so maybe that summer -- Is it three months for an  
46 update red snapper? Would it be a three-month process?

47  
48 **DR. PONWITH:** It basically is a two-analyst process and it's

1 about a three-month process to be able to get that done and the  
2 assessment this year, this most recent assessment, the timing of  
3 the start was based on the intercept calibration. We had to  
4 wait for that to be done and be peer reviewed before we were  
5 able to have those numbers to include in the update.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you.

8  
9 **MR. PEARCE:** Mr. Chairman, just to clarify, what you're getting  
10 at is doing an update on snapper in 2016 and follow up with a  
11 standard in 2017, right?

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes and essentially, the schedule would still  
14 remain the same as far as what's proposed in 2017, but I am just  
15 looking at the time period between the last assessment we just  
16 had and then not getting any results until summer of 2018, which  
17 then would affect the 2019 season. There is quite a few years  
18 there and our recent results of update assessments have shown  
19 that we've still been able to increase the quota and so just  
20 with that in mind, what the hope is, it's that we would still be  
21 able to realize an additional bump in quota and we would get a  
22 bump in quota for a couple of years.

23  
24 **MR. PEARCE:** Would Dr. Ponwith be able to bring this to full  
25 council, the idea of whether she could do it or not? Could you  
26 get that for full council, so we could, at that time, try to add  
27 all this together? Right now, you want us to discuss the  
28 standard in 2017, because that's not written in stone yet, is  
29 it, and it's to be determined?

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes and I don't necessarily think we need to  
32 get that set in stone. It's just going to be out there and  
33 proposed, but with the anticipation that it's a realistic agenda  
34 or schedule to keep it included in 2017, yes, but then some  
35 impacts relative to maybe Category 2 species being assessed in  
36 2016 and they may fall off to accommodate red snapper. Any  
37 other discussion? Ryan, do you have anything else?

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** No, Mr. Chairman, and thank you.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. That concludes the SEDAR Committee,  
42 if there is no other business.

43  
44 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m., March 30, 2015.)

45  
46 - - -  
47