GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Grand Hotel Marriott                        Point Clear, Alabama

January 28, 2015

VOTING MEMBERS
Kevin Anson............................................Alabama
Pamela Dana................................................Florida
Harlon Pearce...........................................Louisiana
Robin Riechers.........................................Texas

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The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Grand Hotel Marriott, Point Clear, Alabama, Wednesday morning, January 28, 2015, and was called to order at 11:19 a.m. by Chairman Kevin Anson.
ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON: We are going to go into the SEDAR Committee and so that’s Tab F, Number 1. The first item is the Adoption of the Agenda. First off, the committee members are myself, Dr. Dana, Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Riechers and everyone is here at the table. Do I have someone that would move to adopt the agenda?

DR. PAMELA DANA: Move to approve.

MR. ROBIN RIECHERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any objections with approving the agenda as written? Seeing none, we will move on to Item Number II, Approval of Minutes, Tab F, Number 2. Anybody have any edits to the minutes? Seeing none, can I get a motion to approve the minutes?

DR. DANA: Move to approve.

MR. RIECHERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: It’s moved and seconded and any objections? With no objections, Item Number III is Action Guide and Next Steps. You will see that and that’s basically to review the SEDAR schedule and discuss the arrangement of the assessment schedule and so that’s going to be helpful for our next item, which is Number IV. Number IV is Tab F, Number 4, Review of the SEDAR Schedule. Ryan, are you ready to do that?

SEDAR SCHEDULE REVIEW

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Yes, sir, and thank you, Mr. Chair. Obviously we’ve gone through 2014, which is at the top of that schedule, and that’s Tab F, Number 4. We are moving on into 2015 and we have the assessment workshop for red grouper, which is being done through a series of five webinars, and we have the review workshop, which will be completed July 14 through 16 in Miami.

We have a gray triggerfish standard assessment, which is going to have its data/assessment workshop meeting also in Miami April 21 through 23, and vermilion snapper will start later in the year, in November. I think it’s November 14 through 16 of this year and that will be also a standard assessment with a combined
data/assessment workshop.

We have some FWC assessments that are also going to be coming to us. The mutton snapper assessment should be coming to the SSC soon and we will have black grouper and goliath grouper standard assessments coming to the SSC this fall from FWC.

2016 and 2017 are years where we need to nail some things down. The council had decided to move red drum into a data poor consideration workshop for 2016 and the council might also consider some other species, with the help of the Science Center, for that data-poor effort. Then we also have proposed updates of gag and amberjack and, again, gag was determined by the SSC, through the assessment, to no longer be overfished or experiencing overfishing. Amberjack is quite the opposite.

For 2017, we have proposed benchmarks for gray snapper, which has never been assessed, and scamp, which has never been assessed in the Gulf, and standard assessments for yellowedge grouper and red snapper and for these proposed assessments, we can fiddle a little bit with terminal year, but when the assessment actually takes place is dictated by the terminal year.

If the assessment is in 2016 and you want to use 2015 data, then the assessment process itself can’t start until late August, at the extreme earliest, and so that results in the assessment concluding the following year and so that’s just something to bear in mind when you’re considering some of these things.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any comments from members of the committee?

DR. BONNIE PONWITH: Best laid plans. These are a -- It’s a good slate of assessments to have on the list and I think the wrinkle in this plan is a new development that’s come up since the October meeting of the Gulf Council and that was the discussion of the new methodology that’s being initiated in 2015 for the collection of effort data within MRIP.

As you all know, the effort data collection is done through the Coastal Household Telephone Survey and as part of the peer review that was done in 2006, one of the recommendations was to revisit that methodology and determine if it was indeed the most effective way to do that.

The results of that evaluation and of some pilot studies that were done in three different geographic regions showed that of
the different methodologies they chose to look at, using a mail
survey represented the strongest methodology for gathering that
effort and just as a refresher, the effort is collected
separately at the end of each of those waves.

The question is asked of how many times have you gone saltwater
fishing, how many trips have you made saltwater fishing in the
last two months? Then that represents the effort.

The landings information is through dockside intercepts and then
those landings are expanded to the total population that fished
by multiplying that catch per unit effort from the dockside
intercepts by the total effort estimate.

The new methodology is being used right now and the use of that
is underway and the notion is to collect those data using the
mail survey at exactly the same time as the MRIP Coastal
Household Telephone Survey continues and, of course, this gets
back to the importance of calibrating them against one another,
so we understand the relationship of the results of one survey
to the other to give it context going forward.

The pilot studies have indicated that the numbers that we’re
getting from the mail survey are different than what we’re
seeing in the method that is currently used, which really puts a
high level of importance on calibration. We can’t simply stop
one and then start the other.

When we’ve gathered enough data to study the results of those
side-by-side, the next step is to undergo a calibration study
not dissimilar from the one that we just completed for the new
methodology we put in place for the dockside intercepts and so,
again, the steps are initiate side-by-side surveys, using the
two methodologies. The second step is to calibrate those, so we
understand the relationship of those, and once we’re comfortable
with the relationship of those two surveys, ultimately let the
Coastal Household Telephone Survey lapse and then rely, going
forward, on this mail survey.

Because that calibration will result in numbers that are in
essentially you could say different units, it’s going to be a
different set of numbers and we’re going to have to apply those
calibrations going back into the historic record so that, again,
your ACLs map to the same methodology that your data collection
is.

Again, that one we, based on the pilot studies, anticipate that
those numbers could be different enough that it will require
going back into the stock assessments that we generated using those effort estimates and then ultimately that influence the landings estimates, to be able to update those assessments.

That’s kind of a long explanation for where we stand right now in the MRIP Program and its potential influence and confluence with our SEDAR schedule, because right now, with the initiation of the mail survey, come the end of 2015, we will have a year’s worth of data under our belt.

That represents probably the earliest that we could do those comparisons to be able to build that calibration and make the update assessments of those stock assessments possible. If the data are unstable and we need more time to be able to evaluate the relationship of those two surveys, we would continue and collect two years’ worth of data, running into 2017, or 2015 and 2016, and then do those calibrations and the updates in 2017.

At this point, I would just look at Andy Strelcheck and ask him if he has heard anything that needs to be supplemented or -- That’s kind of the overview. That puts us in an odd situation, where that last assessment that we wanted to do in 2016 was proposed to focus on red drum and a subset of unassessed stocks, where we could apply data-poor techniques.

The wild-card here is that, I think, remains a very good plan, but, alternatively, if we do have the data in hand and they are stable enough to support doing a calibration in 2016, that would likely trump that and, in fact, that calibration would be -- We would want to prioritize our stocks based on how influential the recreational landings are in the total landings for the Gulf and do those updates in that order.

It’s even a potential -- There is a potential that that effort could subsume our ability to do some of those other stock assessments as well. In other words, it would take potentially all the hands we have to do those update assessments. I will stop there and see if there are questions.

MR. RIECHERS: Bonnie, the bottom line of what you’re saying is you’re suggesting, at least based on your last comments, that the same people that will be doing the assessments are also going to be doing the calibrations regarding the comparison between the mail survey and the phone survey and do I understand that correctly? What I think I heard you say was we may not be able to do Number 3 or one of the assessments in 2016 because of the recalibration effort.
DR. PONWITH: The sequence of events are we would have to do a calibration and the earliest that could happen is 2016. There would be heavy participation in that calibration from the MRIP team, but it could not be done without our stock assessment scientists. Our stock assessment scientists have to be a part of that, because they understand those data and the relationship of how those data are used in the stock assessments better than really anybody and so yes.

The answer to your question is yes, they would be involved in the recalibration and then once the recalibration is done, they would be heavily involved in leading the charge on those update stock assessments, to make sure the assessments are in the correct terms with respect to recreational landings.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thanks for the update, Bonnie. I participate in the MRIP Transition Team and that’s populated primarily by Science Center staff throughout the country and Regional Office staff throughout the country and MRIP survey folks and then state folks are also on there to talk about transition and transition as we go through different methodologies.

The main topic has been the mail survey and the results of the mail survey and the calibration efforts that would go along with that in comparison to the prior estimates.

One of those topics related to the calibration effort is number of years to do the side-by-side and then the corresponding calibration efforts that would be needed, whether you go with a single year in a calibration or multiple years with either a follow-up, a final, or a single calibration at the end of the side-by-side pilot or study period or having multiple calibration efforts, where you put a lot of resources maybe on the front end, to get all the process down and the formulae and everything done with one year’s worth of data and then just add additional data.

I am concerned or I expressed concern on these phone calls relative to a one-year horizon of the side-by-side and I realize that the agency is forced a little bit by budget and the constraints that multiple years for this particular methodology change, because it is quite expensive to maintain the phone call aspect of data collection on the effort side with running the mail survey, although the mail survey, as I understand it, is supposed to be cheaper, but you still have to pay both bills in the same year.

In terms of the risk, I guess, of using one year’s worth of
data, I am just wondering if you have a sense -- You mentioned whether or not they seem comparable or can compare with one another, but we have talked on the phone calls that there is the chance that your data may be different from year to year and that if you took just a snapshot of one year’s worth of data in a side-by-side, that may look totally different than maybe a snapshot of one year’s worth of data at some point in the future.

From the perspective of having a better understanding using multiple years of side-by-side and having those two datasets to do the comparison, it would be wiser -- I would argue that it would be wiser, albeit in the face of increased budget needs, to do the multiple years of side-by-side and then the calibration that’s required would just be done one time.

I was just wondering if you have a sense as to what your thoughts are on that and whether or not you’ve talked to your staff about that.

DR. PONWITH: I hate to make a statement in a vacuum on this, because I know that that Transition Team -- This has been a very, very important long and carefully deliberated discussion and so I think you hit the nail on the head, Mr. Chairman, that there are tradeoffs and having more years of side-by-side certainly gives you a higher level of confidence in the stability of those relationships between those two surveys.

The cost is that the decision to go to the mail survey was also a carefully weighed decision and the reason that we’ve opted to do that is that the mail survey dramatically outperforms the Coastal Household Telephone Survey in its ability to estimate recreational effort around the coast.

There is a tradeoff of waiting to see the stability of these two surveys side-by-side versus making that transition to what has been shown through the pilot studies and through the simulations to be the superior methodology and making that transition as quickly as is technically prudent.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Just a follow-up on that. As it relates to everything that we deal with, at least from our concerns on the schedule and, again, trying to look at the resources and just trying to look at the most efficient way that we would have the best available data.

Granted, as a stand-alone, the mail survey, as you pointed out, through the pilot studies has shown to be the more efficient
means of getting at that portion of the survey, but the calibration component and the impact, as you stated, to adjusting prior year estimates, based on the new methodology, concerns me and that, I think, needs to be a focus within the agency and certainly through the Transition Team we can talk about that, but it’s just something that the council should be aware of, too.

We will be dealing with these things and we could be dealing with a couple of instances where you have a preliminary calibration and then you can have a follow-up calibration that might influence those numbers even more a different way and so that’s all I wanted to do, is just to talk about that. Robin, do you have a comment?

MR. RIECHERS: I am just trying to -- I certainly understand the notion that we’re going to have the calibration and it may change after year one and it may also change if we get into a second year of side-by-side and a different calibration is made.

I guess I’m kind of a bottom-line person and what I think I hear Bonnie telling me is we don’t get one of our stock assessments and I’m trying to figure out if that’s really what we’re saying here or if we need to delay this discussion until we really know whether we’re going to get that or not. I am trying to figure out what our purpose regarding bringing the MRIP question into this SEDAR stock assessment schedule is.

DR. PONWITH: That’s a good question and so for clarity’s sake, the issue -- The Transition Team is grappling with the very issues that I have raised and that our Chairman has raised and has experience with, being on the Transition Team.

Those discussions continue and they are difficult to have in a vacuum, because there is a difference between running three pilot studies and getting those results versus running the survey at an operational level, which is what they’re going to do starting this year.

They are trying to make decisions and have contingency plans based on what they see when those data start coming in. That puts us in a position of really having to make our discussions about our SEDAR schedule in a way that’s mindful. I don’t want to wait until we have a year’s worth of data and then spring this on the council.

I want to raise it to you now so you’re aware that this is happening in the background and understand what its potential
implications are to your 2016 stock assessment schedule, which 
would then, of course, have an influence on 2017.

At this stage, I am not saying that your schedule is going to 
change. What I’m saying is there’s a potential that if they opt 
to calibrate in 2016 that we’ll be ready to do those update 
assessments in 2016 and that could change, at least from our 
perspective, the priority for those stock assessments.

It would be a matter of making sure we understand how those 
numbers and the changes in those numbers influence the status of 
all of our key stocks in that first year and then move going 
forward.

There is still the possibility that the team will opt to wait 
and get more data. I think what I’m hearing is that that 
decision has not been absolutely finalized at this point and so 
what seems smart to me right now is to talk about 2016 and talk 
about 2017, bearing that potential in mind, so that we 
understand what our priorities are in the absence of this 
development and what our priorities would be in the event that 
we were positioned to do some of these update assessments with 
the calibrated MRIP numbers in 2016.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Bonnie, assuming there is no potential for an 
MRIP calibration in 2016, would the list that’s currently up 
there of the three species, would that be what the Science 
Center capabilities would be or would we be able to add one? I 
know there’s an issue with new Science Center staff, stock 
assessment staff. They’ve been hired and so they have this OJT 
period that they’re going through, a journeyman type of thing. 
Is that also imputed? I mean if the MRIP calibration went away, 
could we look at four, maybe, species?

DR. PONWITH: If calibration were not an issue in 2016, this 
slate would be what the Center could handle, because we would be 
doing updates on gag and updates on greater amberjack and then 
doing a data-poor approach on red drum, including some 
additional species.

I will tell you right now that we had talked about what those 
other species would potentially be and my plan was to come to 
you with a list of those.

The people who run that analysis are also the people who are 
doing the red snapper stock assessment and getting those 
projections ready for this meeting and so we are behind on that 
analysis and for that, I apologize to the council, but what we
would like to do is add a cluster of stocks that have not been assessed that we believe have inadequate data to really lend themselves to a traditional stock assessment approach, but have adequate data to lend themselves to this data-poor approach and group them in with red drum and run a collection. It could be one or it could be two more or more stocks that we include with red drum in that data-poor category.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So I understand about the data-poor stocks and trying to develop the list and that would certainly inform us in our approval and deliberations for the future, but I am just wondering if it’s decided and I don’t know -- Andy, you might -- You’re with the agency and as a team member, I am just kind of supposed to be on the sidelines, I guess. Do you happen to have an idea as to when the team is going to submit their recommendations and it goes up the chain and it gets accepted, if you will, as the best policy going forward to addressing the calibration within the recreational landings methodologies?

MR. ANDY STRELCHECK: I don’t have the sense of timing. You’ve been involved in the process like I have and we’ve been meeting on a weekly basis now for well over a month. It seems to me, and correct me if I’m wrong, but we’re wrapping up our work at this point and I would expect our recommendation will be forthcoming very shortly. Now, how long it takes at that point for our recommendation to be considered and finalized, I don’t know.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you and I was just trying to get a sense of that timeline and see if a decision were to be made and it were to be accepted as the policy relative to the calibration, it would help us inform when the calibration schedule would be in relationship to the SEDAR Steering Committee that we have twice a year as to whether or not, again, the timing of those two things, whether or not that would be able to inform us of the direction of 2016 and seeing that you need to get a six-month to a year out window to inform folks to start looking at gathering up and processing otoliths and all that stuff and gathering data and do you have any ideas on that, Bonnie?

DR. PONWITH: Correct and ideally, under normal circumstances, this would be the meeting where we would have a definitive idea, a definitive answer, as to what our final word is for 2016 and that 2017 would have gelled enough that we could give the biological sample process folks the heads-up that these are the stocks that are next in the queue, so we can get those otoliths cut and those data ready and also so that the SEDAR staff are equipped to be able to work on the schedule, because that does
take a great deal of lead time.

The implications of this uncertainty in the decision making here in the Gulf Council is that we would, under the best of circumstances, if we finalized this as the final plan or we were capable of doing that, the SEDAR Steering Committee could meet in May and pretty much look at the proposed from each of the councils and then land on a final decision and get that schedule put out, so everybody knew what the dates were and knew when the data due dates were.

By not having a definitive answer, it creates the potential for having to have an interim call and the reason for that is the SEDAR Steering Committee has a protocol that they’ve written into their terms of reference and that is that if a council is going to make a change in their schedule, but that change has no influence over any of the other councils’ schedule, and that would include influencing SEDAR staff and those commitments, that could be done via a meeting that’s not face-to-face and via a telephone call or to get confirmation via email, because that decision doesn’t have an influence over the other councils.

My sense is as long as the decisions that we’re making are contained within the scope of our work, the decisions that are made here are going to be informative in helping the SEDAR Steering Committee line out what the schedule is going to be for the next two years. The uncertainty really makes that challenging.

MR. RIECHERS: When is you all’s SEDAR Steering Committee meeting coming up?

DR. PONWITH: We will make a decision on -- We will certainly meet in May and depending upon how this discussion goes, we may have to have an interim meeting, which would be scheduled for probably early March.

MR. RIECHERS: I guess if you were meeting in May, I am not certain your interim would be then. I would have thought your interim would have to have been after your May meeting, before your next fall meeting. At least that’s as I was thinking about it.

I was thinking about, given what Kevin has said and you have said about the information coming out of MRIP and Andy has suggested, it seems like we may need to defer this discussion or -- I mean it’s a good discussion and it informs us all of what may be coming, but to make the decisions, we may not have the
information we need to make those decisions today, because if we’re being told we have to cut one off of our list, we may choose the way the priority ranking is now or we may want to change that, which is what I think you’re asking us to at least think about.

If we don’t really know the information about what the MRIP timetable is going to be and so forth, I am not certain we’re in a place to do that.

I would suggest that the terms of reference for SEDAR, since it was made up by the councils and the people that that process is serving -- If we need to somehow have a different way to do that via a phone call or a special meeting or some sort of other exception, we need to find a way to do that, because that body is supposed to be serving these councils and not dictating a procedure that we’re wedded to about meeting twice a year and so forth. That’s just my two-cents worth. I am kind of at a loss to see where we go, other than maybe defer until March and get a little more info.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes and so I have the same feeling, Robin, and I thought an interim call or meeting would be held after the May meeting and certainly by the May meeting we will have a little bit better direction of the other things that are going to be impacting the schedule as it is right now and what you’ve proposed.

That reminds me that you mentioned about the resources when you’re talking about particularly in your Science Center staff that have to deal with several councils and demands for assessments, but at one time, and I think it was at the last SEDAR Steering Committee or SEDAR meeting, you were going to kind of develop a resource kind of -- How many assessment scientists you have and what their output is by year and kind of overlay that with the benchmark, standard, and update assessment, as far as needs, and that would kind of produce an output of X number of assessments per year and how that’s dolled and such, but was that going to be included in your June -- I might be jumping ahead, Bonnie, and is that part of a future discussion that you’re going to be bringing?

DR. PONWITH: We can talk about that. The SEDAR process is something that we’re going to talk about in full council after and it is going -- A proposal that we have for when the councils are together for their joint meeting in June, to have kind of a SEDAR 101 to refresh everybody’s memory on what those terms of reference look like.
They are designed to serve the councils and give the councils the maximum flexibility to make decisions without encroaching in another council’s share of the pie, but yes, what it takes to get a stock assessment done is certainly something that can be brought into that discussion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Just to follow up on one of Robin’s points he made this last time he spoke was he mentioned dropping an assessment from the schedule and I look at it from the other point of view, is adding. Again, depending upon the calibration and timeline.

We don’t know when that’s going to occur as to the policy as to how they’re going to go, but that could occur after our May meeting and it sounds like, since May is kind of scheduled and that’s typically when the assignments are given and the word would go out to the various parts of the machine here as to, hey, you need to be looking out for this species at this timeline, we could even talk about it again in April and there might even be some updated information maybe that comes out of MRIP at that time and we could still probably address this issue and provide final guidance or direction.

DR. PONWITH: One thing that I think would be helpful and really give us a leg up on this discussion and frame this discussion a little bit better is if this MRIP issue didn’t exist or if it did, but it was scheduled to bubble up later in the process, looking at the 2016 schedule, is that still your priority ranking for 2016? Knowing that much is extremely helpful in building those contingencies.

MR. RINDONE: Just to give a bit of a recap as to the priority and why it is where it is, gag was left as the number one priority for 2016 because of the red tide event that had happened in 2014 and so it would give the council the ability to see what impacts had resulted or not resulted from that environmental event.

Greater amberjack, of course, is still in a rebuilding plan and so keeping a good eye on how that stock is recovering or what further action needs to be taken to aid its recovery, that made it the second priority. Then the data-poor assessments fell into that third slot and that was, of course, under the presumption of being able to do three assessments.

DR. PONWITH: What would be helpful is just discussion on that as the priority and that was what was lined out in the last time
around and understanding whether this remains as your priority of those three would certainly be helpful in a situation where the MRIP calibration needs were postponed to a later year.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I guess, Bonnie, looking at 2016 and 2017, and I am just throwing out a hypothetical here, but let’s say that the calibration workshops and all of that discussion won’t be made in 2016, based on the 2015 side-by-side.

Is there an opportunity to move up let’s say gray snapper, so that we can at least get that done? Is that a possibility? I know it might have a play as to what group or groups of data-poor stocks that you do, but your analysis might show that there’s lots of stocks that could be done or there may only be a handful and that might allow some room in 2016 and is that a possibility, to move up gray snapper into 2016?

DR. PONWITH: I would say at this point moving a benchmark stock assessment in 2016 would be very, very difficult. I don’t think that would be feasible in addition to the data-poor. One thing that I can say is that our analysis of those data-poor -- The laundry list of candidates for a data-poor assessment, it’s conceivable that we would have that analysis done and ready to share with the council at the same time as your interim meeting is being scheduled.

My sense is that something that could probably be dispatched fairly quickly if the council is amendable to that. We could have that list ready and include that as a second small agenda item on that call. This is just a possibility and then you would have an opportunity to take a look at those stocks and know what was coming in for those.

Then in terms of the interim SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, of course the SEDAR Steering Committee exists to manage the fact that there are multiple councils using that same process. It’s designed to serve the councils and if a decision comes up that requires the Steering Committee to meet, an interim call can be scheduled.

Our expectation is that once we have absolute clarity on the timing of this calibration, that would probably trigger a need for a SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, because it’s not just going to be this council that’s impacted by that timing. It will be the South Atlantic as well.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I don’t know and I would like to hear from other committee members. I am just trying to look at if the
chips fall that the calibration is not -- If staff time is not
required for doing a calibration in the 2016 time slot and that
would free up staff time to do an assessment and it would help
us in trying to provide some recommendations or guidance as to
what species we would like, that’s what I was kind of looking at
and just seeing if that were a potential.

MR. HARLON PEARCE: Kevin, I know where you’re coming from, but
I also know where Robin is coming from. I don’t think we’ve got
that ability to make that decision today and I think that Bonnie
has heard you very clearly that what you want to do is moving
something up and so we’ve got to wait for the answers from her
to allow us to do that and so I don’t think there’s much that we
can do in this committee today, but I think that we’ve put
Bonnie on notice that we really want to know, for the next
council meeting, that, hey, we want to move something up and
we’re not looking to take something off, but we’re hoping that
the calibration or whatever she’s doing is going to help us do
that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: That’s the comment I was looking for, Harlon,
and I appreciate it. I wanted to get some further comments and
direction to make sure I wasn’t going off the deep end. I just
want to ask Doug if that would be something we could include on
the webinar and if, Bonnie, you’re saying you can get some
information available and together that we could include and is
that the meeting you were talking about or you were wanting to
wait until the March/April regular meeting?

DR. PONWITH: Let me just ask for clarification. What you are
asking is can you move something from 2017 into 2016?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, that’s what I was looking at, if there was
the potential. Again, with the information that you would be
able to provide on the analysis of the data and such of these
data-poor stocks and giving some idea as to whether or not --
Again, there may not be data applicable to do data-poor methods
for, but just one or two species and that would require less
staff time, but there may be indications that you can do them on
twelve species and that might fill up that time and that’s all
I’m trying to do.

DR. PONWITH: I hear what you’re saying now and what I would say
is that my prognosis for coming up with additional data-poor
stocks that are good candidates for that is good. I think we
are going to be able to do that.

I think there are going to be some stocks that will lend
themselves to that assessment and even if we weren’t swapping a
data-poor assessment, an assessment on a data-poor species or
stock, for a benchmark, it’s just not a fair trade. It’s not an
equivalent trade.

A benchmark stock assessment, which I see two of the top two
candidates in 2017 are benchmark stock assessments, and that is
a very laborious process, because it’s a stock that hasn’t been
assessed before and would have to go through the full data
workshop to be able to determine what data are available. I
would say at this point, with reasonable assuredness, it would
not be possible to move one of those benchmarks into 2016.

MR. PEARCE: Bonnie, I kind of understand where you’re coming
from, but I think it would be prudent on the Science Center’s
part to listen to all the cries we’re getting out of Congress
that we need better stock assessments and I think the harder you
can push and get some things done, the better it’s going to be
for all of us and so I think that whatever you can allow
yourself to do, I think you do more and I think you need to push
harder and I think we’re coming under constant attack by our
congressional delegation that we aren’t doing our stock
assessments timely enough and so the more you can do, the more
heat you’re taking off of yourself and us as well.

DR. DANA: I have to agree with Harlon that it’s frustrating to
always hear that no, we can’t do some of these stock assessments
or get them done and I appreciate that it’s probably a staffing
issue and money issue, but we do hear the cries from the
community or the industry and then congressional leadership to
have them done and it’s just frustrating.

DR. PONWITH: To that end, Mr. Pearce said two words that are
operative in the math here and one is “better” and “better” is
really important. We had a couple of presentations today of
really exceptional stock assessments that were laborious and
yielded some results that the SSC endorsed as being best
available science for you to make management decisions on.

We certainly agree that we want better and the other thing that
Mr. Pearce said was “more” and more and better are hard to do at
the same time and so what we’re doing is constantly trying to do
this balancing act of giving more stock assessments, because we
certainly recognize you can’t manage in a black box and you need
to know the status of those stocks and I agree with you.

The notion of putting those data-poor stocks in there is grab
some stocks for which we do have a lower understanding of the
status of those stocks, because they haven’t bubbled up into the
top seven list over the last several years, and get some
awareness of them by going in and looking for the data and
applying some of these new techniques that we worked very, very
hard to develop and I think that in that scenario you’ve been
asking for a very long time for an assessment on red drum and
we’re over that hump and we’re ready to say yes. We are saying
yes.

We want to add some additional stocks to that list and get a
collection of assessments done in that third slot. I am viewing
this as a good move in answering the mail to more and then
continue to be attentive to the better as well.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Unless there is any specific motion or
direction from the other committee members, I guess we’ll just
leave it at that. You have said that you’ve heard us loud and
clear and certainly if there’s an opportunity, Bonnie, to look
at reevaluating that schedule and, again, the resources that you
have available to do more, we would certainly appreciate it and
look for every opportunity that you might -- If you’re looking
for guidance, to come to council and ask our opinions on
directions as to where we might want to put those available
resources when they come available, but unless anyone else has
any other comments on that issue and if there isn’t, we will go
ahead and move on to Other Business.

DR. PONWITH: Just to reiterate the question. If we were able
to complete an analysis and give you that short list of stocks
we think would lend themselves to that data poor collection, in
addition to red drum, is that something you would be willing to
hear in your interim meeting or is that something you would
prefer to defer to the April meeting?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think if it doesn’t affect your timeline for
getting notice out to the various bodies that are involved in
the assessments, then I would just as soon wait until the April
meeting and then you will have your May meeting and you will
have direction at that time from the April meeting, but, again,
any other -- If anyone thinks different --

MR. RIECHERS: No, I would concur with that, at least from my
perspective. If it can wait, it should wait, because we’ve
taken thirty-something minutes here and on a call, that’s going
to be, given a call that we already have pretty full, I don’t
know that we want to devote the kind of time to that discussion
if it can wait.
CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you.

DR. DANA: I have something under Other Business and so is it appropriate? Okay. On the agenda, I am just looking at the members of this committee and who is on this committee, because I am looking at the committee assignments versus this committee agenda and --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: At the bottom of my agenda, Tab F, Number 1, I have myself, you, Mr. Pearce, and Mr. Riechers that are on the Gulf SEDAR Committee.

DR. DANA: So Johnny wouldn’t be on it?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: According to this list, he is not and we will have staff check into that to see if it might be a typo, but --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: Yes, that’s an old list.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I am sorry.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY: My apologies. We will update it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other business? With that, the SEDAR Committee is adjourned. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m., January 28, 2015.)