



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
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**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE (SSC)
NOVEMBER 28, 2023
VIA ZOOM**

SUMMARY MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:13 a.m. (AST) by the Chairman, Dr. Vance Vicente certifying a quorum of six (6) members of the SSC present one (1) late SSC member, and three (3) excused SSC members.

SSC Members present: Dr. Vance Vicente, Dr. Todd Gedamke, Dr. Jorge García, Dr. Walter Keithly, Dr. Juan Cruz, Dr. Erik Williams, Dr. Jason Cope.

SSC Members excused: Dr. Richard Appeldoorn, Dr. Michelle Schärer and Dr. Tarsila Seara.

The agenda was modified and was approved unanimously, without objections or abstentions.

Link Federal Register: [Federal Register Notice SSC Meeting November 28, 2023](#)

The Verbatim Transcriptions of the SSC Meeting September 27, 2023 were sent via email the day before the meeting, the SSC Members didn't have enough time to read it and make edits. It was decided to leave it for the next SSC Meeting, to give additional time to make any changes and send corrections/ suggestions via email to Graciela.

A. Other Business.

- Eight National SCS Workshop (2024) August 26-28 at Boston.

Link: [Eighth National SCS Workshop \(2024\)](#)

The topic of the National SCS is Applying Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Control Rules in Changing Environment. The SSC will recommend to the CFMC that the following SSC members attend the National Meeting: Jason Cope, Vance Vicente, and Todd Gedamke. It was suggested to ask Tarsila Seara if she wants to attend.

Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay, Division Director, Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), indicates that the SEFSC could put together a brief presentation for the benefit of the SSC Members for the next SSC meeting in the spring to introduce the topic and some of the work being done by the SEFSC. This topic will be added to the agenda for the next meeting. It was decided that this is going to be added to the agenda.

- B. SSC Participation for SEDAR 84 (yellowtail snapper for Puerto Rico and St. Thomas/St. John and spotlight parrotfish for St. Croix).

[Link: SEDAR 84 Caribbean Yellowtail Snapper and Stoplight Parrotfish – SEDAR – SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review \(sedarweb.org\)](#)

The SEDAR 84 Life History Data Webinar will be held on Friday, December 1, 2023, at 9:00 am Eastern time. It will include the review of the summary statistics for the age and reproduction information, and discuss additional analysis that may be needed.

To Register: [Register for SEDAR 84 US Caribbean Yellowtail Snapper and Stoplight Parrotfish Life History Data Webinar](#)

SSC Members to participate in the SEDAR 84: **Data Workshop (January 23-25 at Verdanza Hotel in SJ, PR) are, as appointed by the CFMC:** Juan Cruz, Michelle Schärer, and Jorge García; for the **Assessment Workshop:** Walter Keithly, Richard Appeldoorn and Juan Cruz; and for the **Review Workshop:** Vance Vicente, Jason Cope, and Erik Williams.

- C. [SEDAR 80 USVI Queen Triggerfish](#) – Adyan Ríos, SEFSC Caribbean Fisheries Branch, and Kyle Shertzler, SEFSC Atlantic Fisheries Branch.

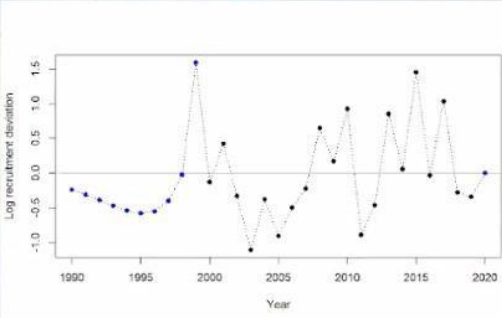
The stock assessment supports the observation that catches are market-driven, that there could be more fish caught, and that the queen triggerfish in St. Thomas is not undergoing overfishing. The numbers are low because it is limited to what the fishers can sell, and for a variety of other reasons. The fact that the index of abundance is increasing shows that the stock is growing. Julian Magras – *“The reason for the lower catch numbers is due to the market-driven. The sales have dropped. A lot of the local people are struggling with the prices, so they are spending out less on the fish market than what normally is spent because their bills (electricity, water, food, etc.) have gone up. The people have to pick and choose what they buy, and this is also observed on the sale’s restaurant, in which people are not coming to eat. Even though the island receives a lot of tourism, is the local people what actually drives the fish market.”*

Kyle Shertzler – *“One result for this assessment that we think is robust is that overfishing is not occurring and that is a consequence that in all the model runs the biomass is increasing tracking the index of abundance. The model has a more difficult time providing a value of what the catch level should be – biomass, the current level of landings is fine, is not causing overfishing. Trying to convert the assessment to provide a specific catch level, to get an SSC input on whether this model should be used for that and if so, how best to do that.”*


Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay, SFSC, suggested consideration to the SSC Members of how this type of assessment model could be used to inform management or to set catch limits: *Use Tier 3 to develop short-term catch advice (eg. 2024-2026). The spawner-recruit relationship is not known, therefore use a Fmsy proxy (eg. FSPR 40) and assume that recruitment in the future will be at the average of a recent period (eg. The last ten years).*

The SSC Members discussed that the proposal is a reasonable one of where the Committee should be headed but is not a definitive answer of how the SSC is going to establish the ABC, which is exactly what is asked from the Committee. The SSC Members need to determine the ABC. The SSC still has to further discuss how to characterize uncertainty. Instructions to the analysts include the following:

- Years of recruitment
 - (2000-2019)
 - Projecting with steepness of 1 (test)
- F SPR Proxy (initially 40%)
 - levels of F proxy for computing catch levels; e.g., 100% FSPR, 75% FSPR
- Decision table to characterize uncertainty
 - Reference model
 - Flexible Variations (high and low values)
 - M; initial catch (initial f); steepness
 - Low M, High F, low steepness
 - High M, Low F, high steepness
 - Set RO (high and low); see how wide the parameter estimates



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It is expected that the SSC will receive the final assessment for both St. Thomas and St. Croix at the next SSC meeting, tentatively scheduled for late February-March 2024.

A St. Croix overview was given, it has the same approach model. The data is fitting the commercial data but not fitting the RVC (survey) data.

Kevin McCarthy, Branch Chief, Sustainable Fisheries Divisions, SEFSC, shared a link to the NOAA Office of Science and Technology for the available Reports. [Link: cie-review-2021 \(noaa.gov\)](#)

D. Finalize SCC Recommendations to CFMC on SEDAR 80.

The SEFSC Staff will work with the SSC Chair Vance Vicente to advance on the presentation that will be presented to the CFMC and have a summary report of what was discussed at the SSC Meetings.

The SSC Chair, Vance Vicente, will be giving a report and [presentation at the 183th CFMC Meeting.](#)

The SSC Members decided to finalize and complete SEDAR 80 at the next SSC Meeting (possibly in early March). The review of this assessment has taken longer than it was expected because it sets a precedent on methods and tools that can be used for future assessments of species in the US Caribbean. The

analysts are making pioneering work - good solid decisions and establishing good scientific ground for those decisions with the mission to make future assessments a lot quicker and easier.

E. Next Meeting.

A tentative calendar will be sent via email to all the SSC Members, to set up a date for the spring meeting.

The SSC Meeting was adjourned by Jorge García's motion and seconded by Walter Keithly, without any opposition at approximately 2:53 pm (AST), September 28, 2023.