

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Ecosystem Technical Committee
Meeting Summary
August 9, 2024
Webinar**

The Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ecosystem Technical Committee (ETC) was convened at 1:00 pm EDT on August 9, 2024. The agenda for this meeting and the summary from the September 21, 2023, meeting were approved as written.

Discussion of the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Road Map Update

The ETC chair gave an overview of the 2024 NOAA Fisheries Draft Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Road Map (EBFM Road Map) update and provided insights into the Road Map development process. ETC members discussed the Road Map's overarching guidelines, goals, and action items in conjunction with the Council's draft letter to NOAA in response to the Road Map. The ETC expressed appreciation for the ambition of the Road Map and its demonstration of NOAA Fisheries' commitment to EBFM and climate resilience. ETC members requested clarification on the linkages between the updated EBFM Road Map and other documents like the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy, Climate Science Regional Action Plans, and existing Regional EBFM Implementation Plans, and inquired whether it was also the role of the ETC to review those other guidance documents.

ETC members questioned how NOAA plans to prioritize the breadth of EBFM actions outlined in the Road Map given staff limitations. Much of the EBFM work detailed in the Road Map requires long-term effort, and ETC members wondered whether EBFM momentum can be sustained beyond the current pulse of short-term climate and ecosystem funding support from the Climate, Ecosystems, and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). An ETC member mentioned that academic partnerships were not explicitly discussed in the Road Map, and such partnerships could be leveraged to assist the agency in achieving research-intensive EBFM objectives. Another ETC member suggested that ecosystem level data collection capacity and stakeholder investment in EBFM could be built through citizen science initiatives, particularly fishermen that are on the water and observe changes firsthand.

The ETC discussed the current state of fisheries science and management in the Gulf and thought that the Road Map areas focused on multidisciplinary data collection, updating ecosystem indicators, and understanding ecosystem processes (Guideline 2) might be the most important steps for advancing EBFM in the region. Given the data limitations in the Gulf, an ETC member suggested that the Road Map could provide more guidance on how to develop management measures that will be robust to uncertainties in both data and future climate variability. Broadly, the ETC thought that the Road Map lacked clear direction for managers to implement products developed from EBFM efforts including climate vulnerability and risk assessments. While recognizing that flexibility is required to allow for differences among

regions, ETC members suggested that a general framework for identifying management on-ramps for ecosystem information could help the Council bridge the conceptual gap from single species management to implementing ecosystem approaches.

ETC members expressed support for the Road Map's recognition of social and economic factors as important components of the ecosystem. Understanding fishing industry response to ecosystem-based drivers is key to equitable fisheries management in a changing environment, and ETC members suggested that better integration between the Road Map and NOAA's Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy may be necessary. Given the ubiquity of social science across EBFM initiatives, ETC members thought that the Road Map did not provide a clear description of how these social science actions would be accomplished. They requested that the Road Map clarify whether there would be social science staff dedicated specifically to EBFM goals, including those to improve data collection, assess climate vulnerabilities, and evaluate trade-offs.

Motion: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Technical Committee (ETC) reviewed the Draft Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Road Map. The ETC appreciated the road map's increased emphasis on social and economic information, particularly to better understand the impacts of ecosystem change and management on fishing stakeholders and fishing communities. The ETC encourages a clearer integration of NOAA's Social Science teams in the continued design and implementation of the Goals and planned Actions.

Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None received.

Other Business

No other business came before the ETC.

Meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm EDT.

Participants

Ecosystem Technical Committee

Mandy Karnauskas, Chair

Eric Brazer

Jennifer Cudney

Michael Drexler

Nick Farmer

Matt McPherson

Jim Nance

Dan Petrolia

Steven Saul

Steven Scyphers

Council Representative

Kesley Banks

Council Staff

John Froeschke

Lisa Hollensead

Camilla Shireman

Carrie Simmons

Verena Wang