

Tab Q, No. 4(b)

Ecosystem Technical Committee Recommendations on Fishery Ecosystem Plan



**GULF
COUNCIL**

June 2025

Acronyms



EBFM	Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management
ETC	Ecosystem Technical Committee
FEI	Fishery Ecosystem Issue
FEP	Fishery Ecosystem Plan
O&E	Outreach and Education Technical Committee

Inflation Reduction Act Projects: Climate Ready Fisheries Management



Project: Management Integration and Response

- Improve timeliness of integrating updated scientific information into management decisions
- Program review consultant: Conduct regulatory review across RMCs
- Process streamlining consultant: Work with staff to prioritize and develop mechanisms to implement viable regulatory processes identified in program review

Inflation Reduction Act Projects: Climate Ready Fisheries Management



Project: Develop Gulf Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP)

- Climate-focused FEIs
- Pilot Red Tide FEI
- Social science consultant: develop and conduct stakeholder engagements for Gulf FEP

FEP Timeline



Oct 2018: Council motion to begin FEP development and establish ETC

Feb 2021: LGL Ecological Research Associates contracted to develop FEP

Apr 2022: Council approves final LGL FEP as a framework for Gulf FEP

Oct 2023: Council approves red tide as a pilot FEI

Mar 2020: Inaugural ETC meeting

Sep/Dec 2021: ETC receives updates and provides feedback on LGL FEP

Apr/Sep 2023: ETC discusses modifications to FEP/FEI structure, FEI prioritization, recommends FEIs

Aug 2024: Council receives Inflation Reduction Act funding to support FEP completion

Draft FEP Outline



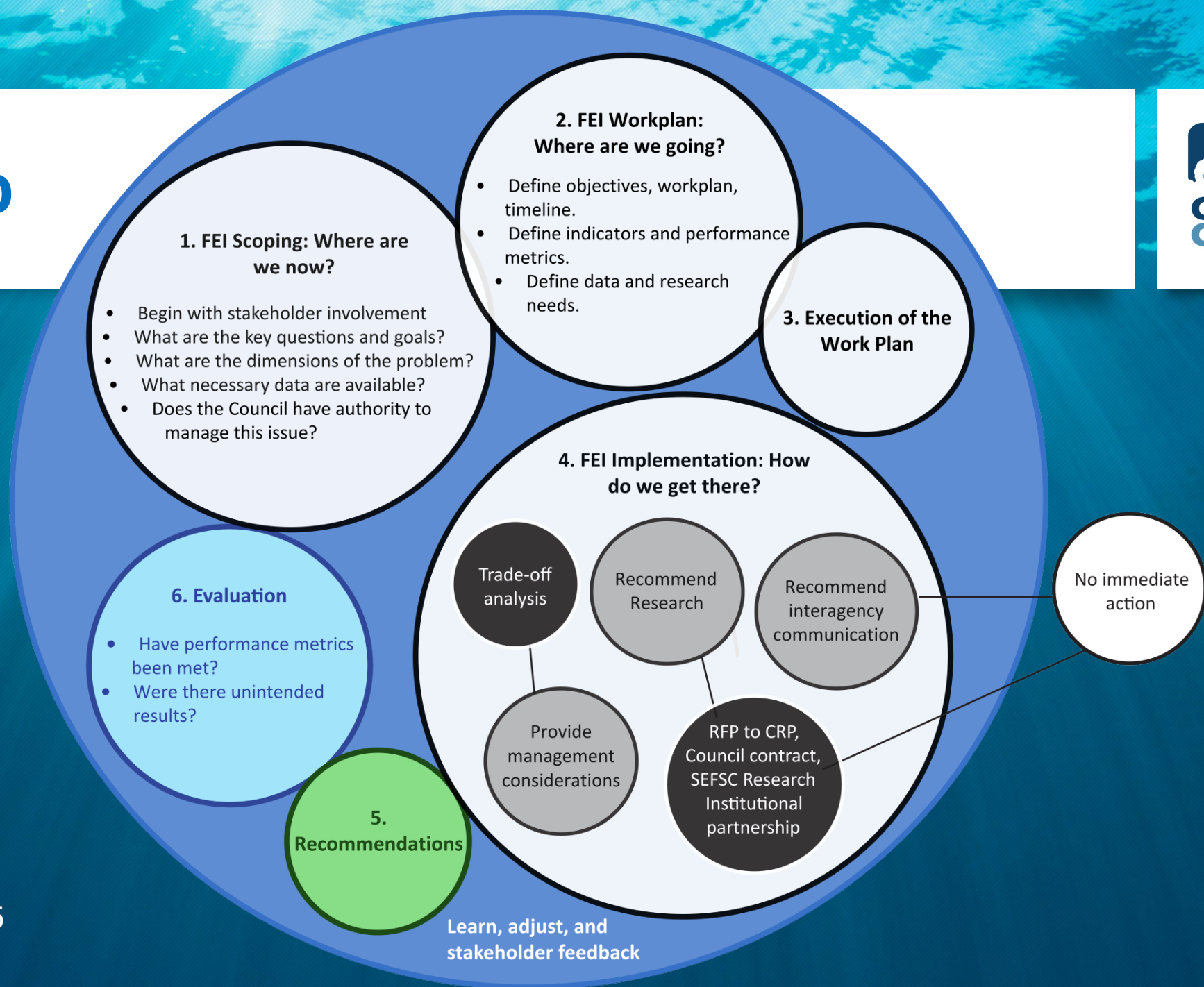
Fishery Ecosystem Issue (FEI)

A specific fishery management issue or problem that occurs within the Gulf, or a subregion of the Gulf, that may be addressed or solved through Gulf Council action. FEIs provide a structured process to address ecosystem issues that may not otherwise be considered within the single stock management paradigm.

-LGL draft FEP

	Content
Ch 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to national guidance to implement Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Efforts into the Council process• Gulf Council's EBFM efforts• Overarching Goals and Objectives
Ch 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to FEP• Introduction to FEIs• Protocol for prioritizing FEIs• Protocol for addressing extra jurisdictional issues
Ch 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro to FEI Loop• Specifications of what information would come out of each step within the loop
Ch 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communications Plan
Separate Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each FEI would have its own hyperlink or document outlining the issue and outcomes from each step of the FEI Loop. This would live within the Council's Ecosystem webpage

FEI Loop



Recommended FEIs*



- Apr 2022: Council tasked ETC with developing goals and objectives for up to 4 FEIs
 - Apr 2023: ETC recommends 6 FEIs
 - Red tide
 - Reducing discards
 - Finfish depredation
 - Impacts of climate change on fish and fishing communities
 - Chasing optimum yield
 - Offshore wind energy
- Jun 2023: Removed from FEI list by Council

*Not formally prioritized; no stakeholder input

Social Science Consultant for FEP Stakeholder Engagement



- Develop a structured process to identify stakeholder-driven FEIs (e.g., focus groups, participatory modeling)
- Develop a communications plan to identify and engage with relevant stakeholder groups across the Gulf
 - Engage groups that do not typically participate in the Council process
- Evaluate social and economic impacts of select FEIs on fishing communities
- Finalize Chapter 3 - FEP Communications Plan

Social Science Consultant for FEP Stakeholder Engagement



ETC recommendations:

- Engage consultant with experience communicating with fishermen
- Develop focused social or economic objectives of FEI impact analyses prior to soliciting consultant
- Evaluate trade-offs between survey and non-survey based approaches
 - Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) restrictions

Next Steps



- Social science consultant for FEP
 - RFP - June 2025
 - O&E, ETC, Council review stakeholder engagement plan developed by consultant - Fall 2025
 - Stakeholder engagements - begin Winter 2025
- Develop draft FEP document
 - ETC and Council review - Fall 2025