

**Advisory Panel and Public Comment Engagement Meeting Summary  
Executive Orders: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness and  
Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation**

The Gulf Council convened virtual Advisory Panel (AP) meetings and a public comment session to discuss Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness” and Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation” and to gather input from its Advisory Panels and the public. Dr. Kesley Banks served as the Council representative for all virtual sessions. The meeting schedule is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Virtual Advisory Panel Meetings and Public Comment Session July 21-23

	Mon July 21		Tue July 22		Wed July 23
	9:00 AM	1:00 PM	9:00 AM	6:00 PM	9:00 AM
Ad-Hoc Individual Fishing Quota AP					<b>X</b>
Costal Migratory Pelagics AP and Red Drum AP	<b>X</b>				
Reef Fish AP		<b>X</b>			
Shrimp AP and Spiny Lobster AP			<b>X</b>		
Public Comment Session				<b>X</b>	

The Council will consider the input gathered and develop a prioritized list of recommendations that will be sent to the Department of Commerce by September 30, 2025. Meeting notes including recommendations provided during each AP meeting or public comment session are included in Appendix A. For each executive order, this summary provides a list of the main recommendations gathered from the virtual meetings.

## **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

### **Domestic Seafood Competitiveness**

- Implement tariffs, quotas, and bans on imports from countries using forced labor or banned chemicals.
- Mandate country of origin labeling and authenticity testing for all seafood.
- Promote domestic seafood through national branding and marketing campaigns.
- Limit shrimp imports to support domestic recovery.

### **Council Representation**

- Balance representation across all sectors on the Gulf Council and Advisory Panels.
- Governors must appoint qualified representatives from all sectors.
- Preserve NOAA’s core functions such as stock assessments and permitting.

### **IFQ Programs**

- Improve IFQ loan program to reduce barriers for fishermen.
- Increase transparency in ownership and share caps.
- Require active participation and permits for IFQ holders.
- Create a quota bank/marketplace for allocation exchange.
- Oppose reallocations to recreational sector without accountability.
- Consider replacing IFQ with trip-based systems to improve competitiveness.

### **Labor Issues**

- Reform H2B visa program to increase availability, reduce cost, and improve timing.
- Expand visa options such as H2A or C1D for fisheries.
- Remove citizenship requirements for crews.
- Support training programs for young fishermen to address aging workforce.

### **Management Reform**

- Eliminate one-size-fits all management approaches.
- Apply sector specific discard rates independently.
- Streamline reporting and compliance through digital systems.
- Suspend ESA consultations for certain species until more data are available.
- Reevaluate sea turtle protections and gear requirements.

### **Economic Support**

- Support working waterfronts with investments in docks, drydock facilities, and fish markets.
- Distribute disaster relief funds to commercial fishers.
- Create federal insurance programs for fishers (like crop insurance).
- Secure funding for shrimp vessel tracking and data programs.
- Redirect Saltonstall-Kennedy funding directly to fishermen.

### **Species-specific Management**

- Open shark harvest, remove fin ban, and transfer management to Gulf Council.
- Some support for opening red drum to commercial fishing.
- Raise king mackerel trip limits and adjust season start.
- Increase red snapper commercial allocation and remove minimum size limits.

### **Enforcement & Monitoring**

- Reduce enforcement targeting of commercial vessels for minor issues.
- Use cameras instead of onboard observers to reduce costs.
- Streamline economic surveys and reduce burdens.

### **Research & Technology**

- Embrace existing tech for data monitoring and compliance.
- Ground test shrimp stock assessment models before use.
- Pursue cooperative research to reduce lag between science and management.

### **Environmental Concerns**

- Address wind farm impacts on shrimping grounds and ecosystems.
- Ensure long-term competitiveness and ocean health in regulatory decisions.

## **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

### **Regulatory Burden Reduction**

- Eliminate redundant reporting requirements including VMS, hail in/out, trip declarations, paper logbooks, and economic reports.
- Remove landing notification requirements and allow flexible unloading times.
- Remove 3% cost recovery fee from IFQ operators.
- Allow grace periods for quota IFQ overage.

- Remove quota overage payback rules and discard buffers from recreational sector.

### **Gear & Vessel**

- Eliminate hook limits on bottom longline vessels.
- Remove venting/descending tool requirements and sea turtle release gear mandates.
- Reevaluate gear bans and allow innovative studies such as naked net trials.
- Remove crew size limits and large vessel marking requirements.
- Rescind USCG boat building and load line regulations.

### **Species-specific Management**

- Remove shark fishery restrictions and shark fin ban.
- Address increasing shark interactions and gear damage.
- Reevaluate sea turtle gear mandates and lower penalties for violations.
- Eliminate shallow water grouper closures.
- Remove closed areas and increase live bait lobster limits.

### **Observers & Monitoring**

- Remove shrimp vessel observer program due to stagnant discard data.
- Fishermen should not bear observer costs.
- Allow Starlink for satellite phone and radio communication.
- Replace life raft requirements with survival float options.
- Extend inspection intervals from 1 to 5 years.

### **Environmental & Industry Protection**

- Mitigate adverse impacts of offshore wind and aquaculture industries on existing fisheries.
- Evaluate ecosystem risks such as gear damage and habitat disruption.
- Prioritize sale of wild-caught seafood and create domestic aquaculture quotas.

### **Market Issues**

- Address shrimp pricing issues and investigate potential price gouging.

### **Policy Suggestions**

- Support commonsense regulations as advocated by APs.
- Encourage new entrants by reconsidering shrimp permit moratorium.
- An AP member suggested abolishing recreational fishing to boost GDP.

**APPENDIX**  
**Advisory Panel and Public Engagement Session Meeting Notes**

## **Coastal Migratory Pelagic and Red Drum Advisory Panels July 21, 2025**

14 members of the APs attended.

### **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

- Balance the sector representation on the regional fishery Councils.
- It is difficult to compete with foreign labor from the imported seafood market.
  - Suggested consideration of tariffs on imported seafood.
- Managing regulatory discards needs to be better.
  - Suggested removing size limit for some species to increase retention.
- Some members suggested an exempted fishing permit (EFP) for commercial harvest of red drum in federal waters; however, others were concerned about removing those breeders for little management benefit.
- Address the IUU fishery in the Gulf specifically for red snapper.
- Change the one size fits all approach to management.
- Preserve the main objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).
- Reallocate unused quota for king mackerel from the recreational to the commercial sector.
- Suggested a cautionary approach to section 4ai of the EO to prevent over exploitation.
- Also suggested a cautionary approach to open ocean aquaculture in the Gulf.
- Raise the southern zone king mackerel daily trip limits for the handline fleet, as that limit is not cost effective for those trips.
- Suggested that the king mackerel gillnet season start earlier and recommended a start date of January 1.

### **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

- The APs supported mechanisms that would allow new entrants into the fisheries.
- Suggested abolishing the cost recovery fee for Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. (estimated savings of \$2 million)
- One AP member suggested abolishing recreational fishing to increase the country’s gross domestic product.
- The APs stated their support for unbiased and common-sense regulations.

## **Reef Fish Advisory Panel July 21, 2025**

8 members of the APs attended.

### **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

- Balanced Council representation
- Reduce recreational discard mortality.
- Open shark harvest
  - Reconsider timelines for rebuilding.
  - Consider putting sharks under Council management.
- Remove shark fin ban for legally harvested sharks.
- Consolidation of permits to reduce bycatch mortality & increase profitability/ Add more species to existing Reef Fish permits.
- Improve recreational accountability (effort and harvest)
- All sea turtle release gear requirements (for-hire and commercial)
- Retain federal management of the federal for-hire fleet.
- Fairness imports (labor practices, seafood safety requirements, etc.)
- Seafood labeling
- IUU fishing (enforcement of laws)
- Support creation and advancement of working waterfronts.

### **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

- 20 fathom closure for recreational shallow water grouper
- All sea turtle release gear requirements (for-hire and commercial)
- Eliminate hail in/out notification requirements for vessels with VMS requirements
- Eliminate turtle mitigation gear requirements; lower fine/penalty violation levels
- Eliminate summer 35 fathom boundary closure for longline harvest
- Eliminate venting tool requirement on commercial vessels
- Eliminate the limitation of hooks/gear onboard longline vessels
- Eliminate the crew limit requirement for dually permitted vessels
- Eliminate the large vessel marking requirements
- Evaluate mechanisms for reducing depredation from goliath grouper and dolphin

## **Shrimp and Spiny Lobster Advisory Panels July 22, 2025**

9 members of the APs attended.

### **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

- Import competition with domestic product
  - Tariffs to combat forced labor, chemical/food safety
  - Stop funding through international financial institutions
  - Testing of seafood in restaurants to determine if seafood portrayed as local/domestic is an imported product. (NOAA OLE)
  - Improve enforcement of existing labeling laws.
  - Seafood labeling and transparency/country of origin (USDA) on a national scale
  - Develop an import quota to limit the amount of imports coming in and/or require domestic product sale to be prioritized.
  - Prioritize species with domestic markets
  - Support enforcement and management outside US
  - Prohibit seafood imports from countries that have proven to produce seafood contaminated with banned chemicals and through the use of slave labor. (Sec 301 action)
- Alleviate labor issues in the industry
  - Support legislation that provides relief from over burdensome H2B visa caps and rules for both seafood processors and fishing vessel owners– increase labor force (h2b visa program) – Improve application programs/sponsorship opportunities. Allow them to work while they’re here waiting for permits.
    - Timing of program needs to be increased from 9 month and flexibility in timing should be improved.
  - Remove Citizenship requirements for crews (75/25 rule – Jones Act)- 100% requirement for captains should be rescinded.
  - Promoting young fishermen training programs – recruit the next generation of commercial fishermen. Department of agriculture
- Equal commercial industry representation on APs and Council
- Rationalization of bycatch regulations (BRDs & TEDs, etc.)
  - Delisting sea turtles in ESA
    - Lobster trap line entanglements (fishing practices have not changed in 50 years and trap numbers have declined but, turtle entanglements are increased due to increased numbers of turtles)
    - TEDs on shrimp nets

- Suspend ESA section 7 consultation and any ensuing regulations regarding smalltooth sawfish and giant manta rays for at least 5-years until more scientific information is available.
- Support implementing America first seafood strategy
- Allow for leniency in the amount of bait (sub-legal lobster) that can be brought onboard.
- National marketing program/campaign for domestic seafood
  - MAHA - Benefits on brain health, maternal health, heart health, etc.
  - Create a demand for domestic live lobster sale
  - Discrimination against domestic products on Seafood Watch List
- Limiting recreational expansion in the fishery.
  - Limiting entry/participation
  - Regulatory efforts focused on the commercial industry because it's accountable. That focus should shift to the recreational sector.
- Return to the origins of the Agency (NMFS) and focus on enhancing and promoting commercial fisheries.
  - NOAA needs to help the industry in lieu of just regulating them.
- Ground test new shrimp stock assessment model before it's used for management. It should produce a forecast for next year's CPUE before the research vessel leaves port to collect the data.
- Create NOAA programs that support fishermen.
  - Department of Agriculture is a model for supporting industry. Consider grouping commercial fishing or managing commercial fisheries under Department of Agriculture.
  - Support current fishermen in the industry with a federal insurance program (like crop insurance provided to farmers).
  - NOAA needs fund programs mandated for fishers.
  - MOU between the two agencies to utilize the infrastructure of USDA.
  - USDA should establish a position that is responsible for providing support for domestically harvested and processed seafood.
  - Provide protection from environmental agencies to ensure the industry survives.
- Support working waterfronts.
  - Cost prohibitive for commercial operations
  - Drydock costs
  - Provide public docks for commercial fishing vessels
- Support disaster relief fund distribution to commercial fishers.
- Remove the shark fin ban and allow commercial harvest of sharks.
  - Increase Gulf Council and SSC involvement in shark management. Improve transparency in shark management to improve fisherman involvement.
  - Council representative on HMS panels should reflect fishing industry sentiment.

- Reconsider onboard observers – bycatch is the same as it’s always been.
- Enforcement targeting commercial vessels for minor issues.
- Economic surveys are burdensome.
- Restore access to the commercial rock shrimp fishermen from the Gulf and South Atlantic to the valuable fishing grounds taken away under SA Coral Amendment 8. Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp 12 preferred alternative 2 would restore that access.
- All fishery regulatory activities of the NMS transferred to NMFS authority.
  - Rescinding proposed shrimp access regulations/barriers in FKNMS- don’t remove historical shrimping access.
- For NOAA to provide Secretarial approval of the Framework Action: *“Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery”* on which the Gulf Council took Final Action on April 10, 2025.
- Secure the release of the \$850,000 appropriated by Congress in FY 2024 to fund the priorities identified by the Shrimp AP at its March 2024 meeting as follows:
  - Sufficient funding to ensure the SEFSC server has sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel position data.
  - Develop a statistically robust design for distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that would be comparable to the last 10 years.
  - Cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.
- SK funding (tariff funds) intended to help fishermen, docks, and processors in the form of grants for projects to modernize equipment should go to the fishermen directly rather than to NMFS for basic agency budget items. – congressional issue/ \$400 million)

### **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

- USCG boat building regulations relative to class and load line need to be rescinded.
- Inflatable life raft should not be required on commercial fishing vessels in the Gulf. Annual renewal requirements are also burdensome. Life float/survival raft requirements at specific temp should be allowed.
- USCG/FCC Radio communication requirements for commercial vessels should allow Starlink as a capable device.
- Shrimp permit moratorium should be reconsidered to allow unrenewed permits go into a pool at a defined threshold. Promote participation in the industry.
- Remove spiny lobster closed areas in the FKNMS (eg. Western sambos) that aren’t on the reef.
- Remove live bait lobster requirements and allow ¾ gallon for each short.

- Prevent adverse impacts of offshore wind industry on existing commercial fisheries.
- Prevent adverse impacts of offshore aquaculture industry on existing commercial fisheries.
  - Prioritize sale of wild-caught product.
  - Create domestic AQ quotas to limit competition.
- Reevaluate gear restrictions in commercial fisheries to allow innovative ways to harvest. (e.g. trap bans).
- Allow naked net studies for shrimp trawls.

### **Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper IFQ Advisory Panel July 23, 2025**

12 members of the AP attended.

#### **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

- Applying sector specific discard rates to each sector independently.
- Continue LAPP and include the rest of the reef fish species in the program. They reduce costs and increase the profitability of the business. The programs have given operational flexibility and are efficient. - pays for its own management. Implement a full reef fish IFQ. Successful, helped rebuild stocks.
- Need more product on the table for the commercial fishery. Allocations and catch limits should increase in the commercial fishery.
- Country of origin labels should be required on all imported seafood.
- Eliminate the minimum size limits for hook and line caught fish for both sectors. Will help reduce discards. Size limits have no value to rebuilding the stock under ACLs. Don't throw back little fish that are going to die anyhow.
- IFQ loan program is a major barrier to the fishermen – it's difficult to qualify and comply with the program to procure a loan. Fishermen rely on this loan to lease allocation but its too difficult to get the loan, even with good credit. Improve this program, it's a major barrier to commercial fishermen.
- Reallocation of quota away from the commercial sector to account for recreational discards should not occur. Creating inefficiencies in the IFQ system and is based on a desire to keep recreational season open, not on science. We shouldn't give more allocation to a sector with poor accountability. No increases in allocation should be given to sectors w/o accountability.

- Cameras onboard commercial vessels could increase compliance and reduce cost of observers.
- Council membership should be balanced. Commercial fishermen are not appropriately represented. Should include harvesters (IFQ owner, lease only participant, and dually permitted). Should include dock/dealer ‘first buyer,’ and wholesale/retail sales participant, and IFQ investor. Red snapper commercial fisherman should be on.
- Increase production and increase access by eliminating the IFQ program. (restricting/removing may go against EO)
- Vessel cap of 200,000 pounds of snapper per boat per year. (may limit access and work against EO)
- IFQ program participation should require a permit.
- Active participation requirement of catching 75% of the fish.
- Raise the allocation of red snapper 3-4 million pounds. - lease price and cost of fish will go down.
- Increase transparency so people know who owns the fish and how many they own.
- Clarify share caps on organizations.
- Sharks – open season regardless of species.
- Remove the shark fin ban, there is a market for them, and shark depredation is an issue.
- Data monitorization- embrace existing technology by implementing them.
- Import price competition. More monitoring of seafood imports.
- Increase access to new boats and more modern fish markets and fish processing plants.
- More access to working waterfront – we’ve not invested in the infrastructure supporting the fishing community. If we want to MA-Fishing-Great-A we need to support our industry- many other countries around the world supply their fishermen with subsidies.
- Streamline reporting and compliance – eliminate duplication and transition to digital reporting
- Phase in quota increases aligned with stock recovery.
- Expand use of EFPs (shark harvest)
- Keep federal regulation of reef fish in the Council/NOAA jurisdiction rather than to the states.
- Create a quota bank / marketplace for the IFQ program to allow fishermen to exchange allocation of different species to increase access.
- H2B visas are hard to get and they only come out twice a year. They're expensive. Most of the landscapers and hotels get them on the first pass – in December the second drop, you don’t get them in time and then you miss some of the time. We need to move to using agriculture visas instead (H2A visa or C1D visa- Tuna has an exemption in place for the crew issue already and should be expanded nationally to other fisheries).

- Eastern Gulf stocks are being depleted. West side is also in decline.
- Give shark management to the Gulf Council. Its more in touch with shark and fishermen populations in the Gulf.

### **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

- Remove VMS, hail-in/out requirements, fish reports, economic reports.
- Sat phone requirements should allow for Starlink.
- Annual inspections and associated costs for life rafts should be extended to 5 years.
- Eliminate paper logbook reporting. Outdated and redundant.
- Eliminate descending/venting tool possession requirements – unenforceable and of little conservation value.
- Eliminate sea turtle release gear requirements – few encounters.
- Eliminate quota overage payback rules- unfairly penalizes both sectors instead of applying sector specific accountability.
- Eliminate redundant trip declarations.
- Eliminate recreational driven discard buffers applied to commercial ACLs.
- Eliminate the 3-man crew size limit for dually permitted vessels.
- Giving estimated value/pounds during Hail in must be in IFQ accounts or linked accounts and reliance on fish houses – allow exemption of shares being in the fish house where the catch is being landed). - grace period where fishermen can seek the quota they need to cover their overages (instead of being punished with a fine). In TX there is a restocking fee on top of the fine.
- 10% buffer in estimating pounds during hail-in should be more lenient. The actual weight is accounted for upon landing – should not be punitive.
- Remove the 3% cost recovery fee from the IFQ operators.
- Remove the shark fin ban.
- Open up closed areas. Move boxes –buffers around them. HAPC box around the boundary line. Mcgrail bank example.
- Make the 50-fathom line to 35-fathoms off LA, the same as Florida for bottom longliners.
- Move the 35-fathom line off FL to 50-fathoms for bottom longliners.

### **Public Engagement (Comment Session) July 22, 2025**

16 members of the public attended.

### **Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”**

- The shrimp permit moratorium should not automatically allow permits to expire upon death. Consider attaching the permit to the vessel or letting it be passed to heirs along with the boat. The family should be given the opportunity to keep the permit to ensure future participation in the fishery.

- Turtle Excluder Devices should only be required within 3-miles of shore. They're dangerous and heavy when they're onboard and they make the fishery inefficient. Turtles are rarely ever encountered offshore, so they're not necessary.
- The protected status of sea turtles should be reevaluated.
- Import testing should emulate the European system where 50% of containers are tested and destroyed if contaminated. If a container in shipment is contaminated, then every container should be tested.
  - HR512- Imported Seafood Safety Standards Act would provide a funds for this testing to improve seafood safety.
  - HR2715 Destruction of Hazardous Imports Act 2025
- Remove exemptions on trade laws for a minimum of 10-years to eliminate forced labor from imports.
- Implement limitations on the amount of shrimp that can be imported so the domestic industry can recover.
- Commercial sector allocations don't reflect the number of participations or consumers and should be modified in favor of the commercial sector.
- Stock assessments should better incorporate fisherman observed data to inform catch limits. Sampling areas should be broadened.
- Increase quotas across the board.
- The commercial IFQ program should require active fishing participation.
- Annual vessel caps of 150,000 pounds per year should be considered on commercial reef fish vessels.
- Shark populations are a problem. Remove Convention of International Trade in Endangers Species (CITIES) requirements from the shark fishery to allow for commercial harvest of sharks.
- The federal fishery loan program should be modified to make the terms more favorable for fishers, processors, and working waterfronts.
- The IFQ program does not allow for competition with imports. The program needs to be removed to allow for competition. A trip-based system is the only way to allow operators to make money.
- Sharks are an issue. Shark regulations are so restrictive that it's not feasible to fish for them commercially.
- Any NOAA mandated tracking systems or burdens should be paid for by NOAA.
- The three-hour hail-in required under the commercial IFQ program is burdensome. It holds operator's hostage.
- National branding/labeling of wild American caught seafood should be mandated and authenticity testing should be associated.
- Treat the industry as a method of protein production on a national scale. Inshore industry and freshwater industries should be promoted. Fisheries could become massive export industries.
- Representation of all sectors on the Gulf Council should be balanced. Governors should have to seek the appropriate people to fill the slots.

- The core functions of NOAA should be preserved because they play important role in keeping fishermen on the water (stock assessments, permits).
- Opportunities for more cooperative research and technology should be pursued to shorten the time lag between science and management advice.
- Creating or maintaining long-term grants for fisherman training programs to solve the ‘graying of the fleet’ issue and pass on information and knowledge to younger generations.
- Reevaluate how allocations are considered. Market competition is an issue making it harder for fishermen to make long-term business plans.
- Catch limits don’t need to be increased.
- Wind farms are restricting historical shrimping grounds and are causing ecosystem issues impacting habitat, birds, and whales. Chemicals and materials used in the turbines are harmful and they dissolve in the water. Turbines are not removed for hurricanes and create huge debris and chemical risks.
- Consider long-term competitiveness of the industry and the overall health of the ocean. Ensure that regulations removed still allow statute to be effective. Don't compromise short term gains for long-term goal.
- It is not a good idea to open the red drum fishery to commercial fishing

#### **Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”**

- The hook limit on bottom longline vessels should be removed. Shark interactions are increasing, and gear limits are an issue.
- Reevaluate the bottom longline closure for sea turtle conservation at the 85 fathom break from June – August.
- Disband the IFQ program.
- The observer program on shrimp vessels should be removed and fishermen should not be responsible for observer cost. Discards have not changed significantly over the years so, the data is no longer necessary.
- Shark regulations should be reconsidered. In the last 5-years they’ve gotten bad. They're coming closer inshore than they have historically and they’re destroying shrimp gear. Remove shark fishery restrictions.
- The price of shrimp is too high and imports aren’t even cheap. Fishermen are getting price gouged somewhere in-between.
- Remove reef fish venting/descending tool requirements. They only improve survival by 50% and depredation is still an issue
- Remove landing notification requirements for the IFQ program.
- Restrictions on unloading time doesn’t allow dayboat commercial trips to fish two days in a row. Boat should be able to be unloaded outside of banking hours.