

Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report
August 25, 2025
Dr. Kesley Banks, Chair

The Committee re-ordered the agenda (**Tab E, No.1**), adopted the modified agenda, and approved the minutes (**Tab E, No.2**) of the November 2024 meeting.

Summary of Advisory Panel (AP) Recommendations on Executive Orders 14276 and 14192 (Tab E, No.4)

Staff summarized Executive Orders 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness” and 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation” and discussed the recommendations provided during a series of AP meetings and a public engagement session organized to gather input on the executive orders. Staff highlighted recommendations that fall under the Council’s purview.

Organization and Prioritization of Recommendations on Executive Orders 14276 and 14192

Staff noted that, in 2020, the Council provided a list of items in response to Executive Order 13921 “Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth.” Staff discussed NOAA’s directive letter to the Councils to implement Executive Order 14276 and noted that the Council’s response letter must be submitted by September 30, 2025. The Council’s letter should include a progress report on the Council actions proposed in its 2020 letter, an updated list of proposed Council actions with a workplan and a schedule for implementation, and if applicable, a list of recommendations outside of the Council purview. A second letter listing the Council’s recommendations relative to Executive Order 14192 will also be sent.

For each executive order, the Committee discussed recommendations under the Council’s purview item by item and selected the recommendations that were appropriate for inclusion. The Committee repeated the exercise for recommendations outside the Council’s purview. Recommendations selected by the Committee are listed below.

Executive Order 14276 “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness”

Under the Council’s Purview

- Work towards achieving balanced representation across all sectors on Gulf Council Advisory Panels.
- Explore requirements for active participation and permits for Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) holders.
- Explore creating a quota bank for allocation exchange in the IFQ program.
- Explore streamlining reporting and compliance through digital systems (electronic reporting?)

- Reevaluate individual sea turtle gear requirements for commercial and for-hire fishermen.
- Consider replacing the provisions of the DESCEND Act.
- Consider removing low priority species from fishery management units (e.g., cubera snapper, species in the jacks complex other than greater amberjack, species in the midwater snapper complex other than queen snapper, and spiny lobster)
- Evaluate the use of multi-year ACLs and accountability measures
- Consider carryover options for unharvested quota
- Consider eliminating or reducing crew size limits on dual permitted vessels
- Consider eliminating did not fish reports
- Consider allowing the Gulf states to move pounds of their individual recreational red snapper ACL between states while maintaining the total recreational private angling component annual catch limit
- Explore expanding regional/state management to other species/complexes
- Explore expanding sector separation to other species/complexes
- Consider mechanisms for allowing fish that experience depredation to be retained

Outside the Council's Purview

Domestic Seafood Competitiveness

- Suggest the implementation of tariffs, quotas, and bans on seafood imports from countries that use forced labor or banned chemicals. Tariffs collected should be distributed to NOAA Fisheries to support fisheries management.
- Suggest mandating country of origin labeling and authenticity testing for all seafood.
- Support the promotion of domestic seafood consumption through national branding and marketing campaigns that use tactics including storytelling and highlighting local fishing families and communities.
- Consider allowing better utilization of bycatch by allowing retention for pet food, fish oil, and/or fertilizer products.

IFQ Programs

- Suggest improving accessibility to IFQ loan programs by reducing barriers for fishermen.
- Support increasing transparency in IFQ ownership by networking associated accounts to ensure that share caps are not exceeded.

Labor Issues

- Suggest reforming H2B visa program to increase availability, reduce cost, and improve timing.
- Suggest expanding visa options applicable to fisheries such as H2A or C1D visas.
- Suggest modifications to citizenship requirements for crews that require 75% of workers to be citizens and 25% to be non-citizens. New requirements should account for fisheries with small crew sizes.
- Support training programs for young fishermen to address aging workforce.

Economic Support

- Support working waterfronts with investments in docks, drydock facilities, and fish markets
- Support improved timeliness of the distribution of disaster relief funds to charter for-hire and commercial fishers
- Suggest the creation of a federal insurance programs for fishers that mirrors the current federal crop insurance program
- Promote the procurement of funding for shrimp vessel tracking and data programs
- Suggest promoting more utilization of US seafood in schools, military, and food assistance programs

Species-specific Management

- Support expanding shark harvest and removing the shark fin ban
- Support the transfer of shark management to the fishery management Councils
- Support the development and acceptance of marine mammal deterrents

Executive Order 14192 “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation”

- Review and eliminate redundant reporting requirements where appropriate
- Remove sea turtle release gear mandates
- Remove crew size limits
- Remove large vessel marking requirements
- Remove shark fishery restrictions
- Remove the shark fin ban
- Eliminate shallow water grouper closures

Update on the Status of State Regulations for Wahoo (Tab E, No.6)

Mr. Dakus Geeslin of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department indicated that the state of Texas does not plan on adopting management measures for wahoo.

Mr. Chris Schieble of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries gave a presentation on Louisiana wahoo recreational bag limit regulations and discussed the state of Louisiana’s request to extend wahoo regulations into federal waters. Mr. Schieble noted NOAA’s favorable response to the request indicating that Louisiana may regulate those vessels that are registered with the state and are fishing for wahoo in federal waters.

U.S. Coast Guard Safety Requirements to Carry Observers (Tab E, No.7)

Lieutenant Jackson Morton of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) gave a presentation on radio telecommunication safety requirements for commercial fishing vessels. Lt. Morton discussed NOAA safety requirements for carrying observers and noted that vessels will have different requirements based on several criteria, including vessel characteristics and operating area. Lt. Morton discussed radio telecommunications requirements and indicated that based on current

regulations, Starlink is not an approved emergency radio telecommunication method. Committee members discussed their experience using Starlink and noted that it provided effective service based on their on-the-water experience. The Committee approved the following motion:

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, to recommend the Council write a letter to the USCG requesting they certify Starlink as an acceptable satellite communication device as soon as possible.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.