

**Gulf Council**  
**Scientific and Statistical Committee**  
**Scope of Work**  
**October 8, 2025**  
**Webinar**

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**Agenda Item 4:** Election of Chair and Vice Chair

**Action:** Nominations and voting

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will request nominations for a chair and vice chair of the Standing SSC. The chair, and in their absence the vice chair, is responsible for working with Council staff to draft the SSC meeting agendas, review the meeting summaries, and represent the recommendations of the SSC to the Council. SSC members will nominate candidates from its membership, and Council staff will coordinate voting, if necessary.

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**Agenda Item 5:** Preliminary Results of Regional Fishery Management Council Regulatory Process Review

**Action:** Informational Presentation

**Committee input and next steps:** Dr. Willy Goldsmith (Pelagic Strategies) and Ms. Deirdre Boelke (Fisheries Insight Network) will present preliminary outcomes of work contracted by the Council to conduct a regulatory process review of the other regional fishery management councils. The Council funded this work as part of its ongoing climate readiness and regulatory streamlining efforts, with the aim of identifying approaches used by other regions to improve the timeliness and throughput of incorporating updated scientific information into the management process and otherwise increase efficiency. The contractors will present their final results to the Council at its November meeting. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, consider the applicability of the approaches and data sources identified in other regions for consideration in Gulf fisheries management, as well as make any recommendations to the contractors and Council staff as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item 6:** Review: Gulf SSC Projections Considerations

**Action:** Document, discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will review a summary of considerations for the SSC when it is reviewing projections from stock assessments. These considerations have a direct effect on the outcome of the stock assessment, and on the catch limits that will ultimately be recommended to the Council. This document is meant to serve as a guidance document for the SSC. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and make recommendations to Council staff as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item 7:** Review: Science Coordination Subcommittee Materials

**Action:** Presentations, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** Council staff will provide a brief presentation summarizing the 8<sup>th</sup> Scientific Coordination Subcommittee meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, which was held in August 2024 (National SSC Meeting). Council staff will also review the proposed theme for the 8<sup>th</sup> Scientific Coordination Subcommittee meeting, which was accepted by the Council Coordinating Committee and will be hosted by the Gulf Council in 2027. The SSC should evaluate the information presented, ask questions of Council staff and SSC representatives who attended the meeting in Boston, and make recommendations as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item 8:** Review: Gag Grouper Operational Assessment Terms of Reference

**Action:** Document, discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** SEFSC and Council staff will review the terms of reference for the upcoming stock assessment of Gulf gag grouper. The last stock assessment (SEDAR 72) estimated gag grouper to be overfished and was undergoing overfishing as of 2019, and a rebuilding plan for the stock was implemented in June 2024. Overfishing is not estimated to have occurred since 2022. The Council and SEFSC currently anticipates that a topical working group will be needed to review updated life history information, particularly on natural mortality, and on episodic mortality from red tide. The SSC should evaluate the terms of reference and make edits as appropriate. SSC members should volunteer to participate in the topical working group, which will meet via webinar in 2026.

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**Agenda Item 9:** Discussion: Joint Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs Working Group

**Action:** Discussion and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** During their February 2025 meeting, the Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs made a motion stating a clear need to collectively address the required precision to estimate steepness (and thus estimate MSY) for management advice, as well as a discussion of SPR proxy values given a range of life history values among fish species (e.g., longevity, age at maturity, growth characteristics, vulnerability to environmental perturbations, etc.). The SSCs requested a follow up meeting to address these topics, deemed essential to the consistent application of an agreed decision-making paradigm for present and future stock assessments. Both Councils agreed and have directed staff to work with the SSCs to form a workgroup to this end. Council staffs will review direction for this working group, and interested SSC members should volunteer to participate. The working group is expected to meet about three times via webinar, and recommendations will be presented to both SSCs and Councils.

**Agenda Item 10:** Review: Essential Fish Habitat Mapping for Gulf Shrimp, Reef Fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Spiny Lobster, and Red Drum FMPs

**Action:** Presentations, discussions, and recommendations

**Committee input and next steps:** The Council is developing a generic amendment for the 2025 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) 5-year review, as required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Act. A large component of this review is to revise the EFH text and map descriptions for managed finfish, spiny lobster and shrimp species. Staff will provide a presentation summarizing the methods and results produced for the EFH text and map descriptions. The SSC should evaluate the information presented and provide recommendation on staff-suggested changes.

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**Agenda Item 11:** Public Comment

**Action:** Information

**Committee input and next steps:** Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

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**Agenda Item 12:** Other Business

**Action:** Discussion

**Committee Input and Next Steps:** Additional items may be brought up for discussion by SSC members, time permitting. If the SSC wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future SSC meeting.