

Recreational Initiative Communications Recommendations



December 2025: Outreach and Education Technical Committee
Gulf Council

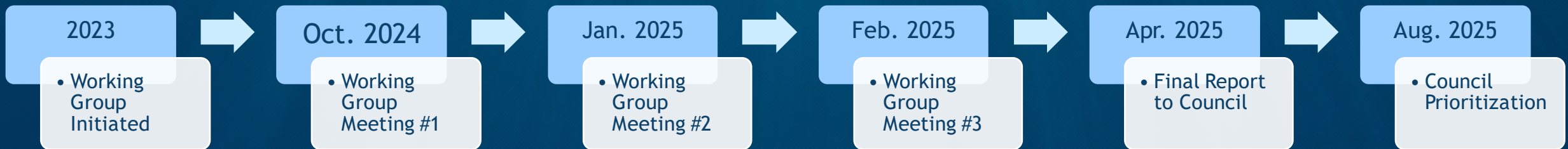
What is the Recreational Initiative?



An effort to engage the recreational community to:

1. Review and evaluate past and current management strategies
2. Explore potential innovative management strategies that could be applied in the future

12 Working Group Members from Gulf States

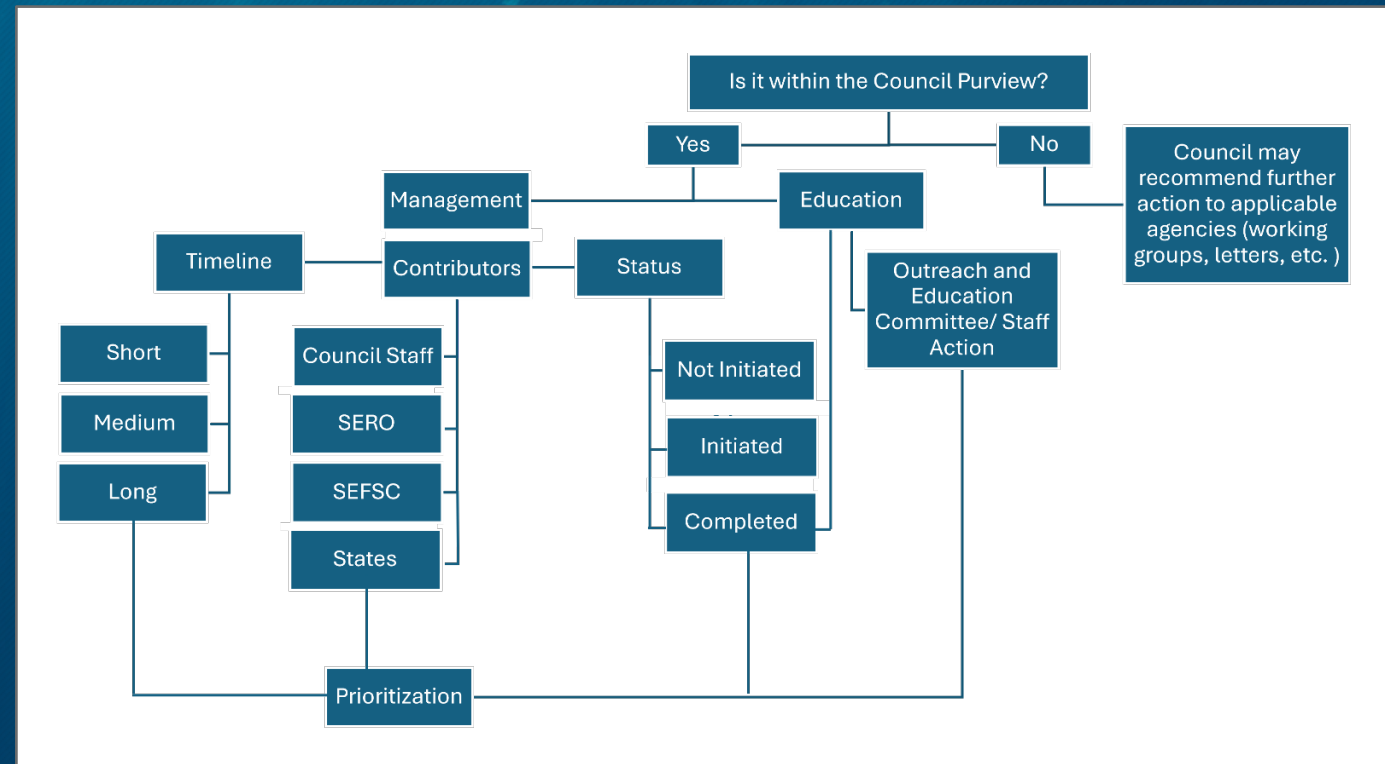


Working Group Recommendation Prioritization



19 Consensus Statements, 6 Goals

- Trusted Data
- Establish trust with the recreational community
- Develop predictable and reliable recreational access
- Allow for regional flexibility in management
- Increase recreational community engagement in the management process
- Maximize angler satisfaction and accommodate growth



8 Education Recommendations; 13 Management Recommendations

Consensus Recommendations



19 Consensus Recommendations



8 Education Recommendations; 13 Management Recommendations



August 2025 Council Prioritized



6 Priority Management Recommendations;
5 Priority Education Recommendations

Communication Recommendations



5 Recommendations : 3 Communications Goals

**Establish Trust with
the Recreational
Community**

**Increase Recreational
Community
Engagement in the
Management Process**

**Maximize Angler
Satisfaction and
Accommodate Growth**

O&E Communication Recommendation Prioritization



The Council should work with the recreational community, including the for-hire and private angler sectors, to develop seasons that maximize overlap in focal species to enable harvest of multiple species on a given trip and reduce discards. Maximizing overlap with the season for red snapper, the primary target for reef fish anglers Gulf-wide, should be a key priority. At the same time, the Council should recognize the for-hire and tackle industry's need to have a focal species available for harvest at all times.



Gulf Council

The Council should work with partners to develop scaled-down modules of the Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) to share with a wider audience—possibly including short videos on specific components of the fisheries science and management process.



Gulf Council

The Council should better communicate the conservation implications of different fishing activities based on individual species' biology and life-history (e.g., depth/location and months of spawning, etc.), empowering anglers to make better decisions based on their conservation ethic.



Gulf Council

The Council should promote opportunities for anglers to report catch information and on-the-water observations of fish abundance and presence (e.g., through the Council's Fisherman Feedback Tool).

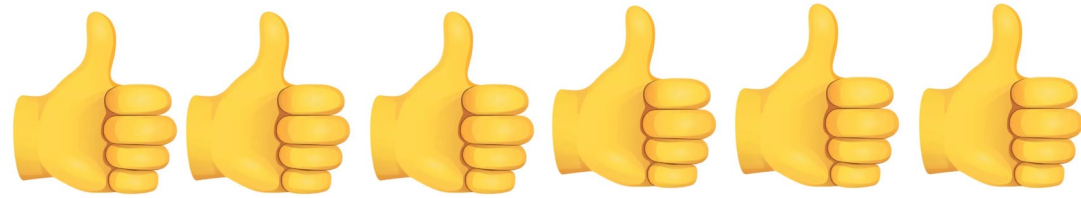
Gulf Council

The Council should seek opportunities to partner with recreational fishing community leaders to educate and engage anglers to be more active participants in the Gulf Council's management process—potentially through a leadership program sponsored by the Gulf Council, where participants are invited to attend council meetings, review outreach materials, and providing public comment.



Gulf Council

O&E 1st Priority:



(5.2) The Council should work with partners to develop scaled-down modules of the Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) to share with a wider audience—possibly including short videos on specific components of the fisheries science and management process.

- Not a substitute for MREP

Video Series

- Efficient
- May have lower production barrier
- No formal evaluation for comprehension

OR

Online Module

- Active learning & comprehension
- Structured progression
- Higher technology barrier

O&E 2nd Priority



(2.2) The Council should better communicate the conservation implications of different fishing activities based on individual species' biology and life-history (e.g., depth/location and months of spawning, etc.), empowering anglers to make better decisions based on their conservation ethic.

- Infographics/Fact Sheets
- Straightforward social media messaging
- Videos
- Enhancing rational in news releases, public hearing materials, etc.
- Blog articles
- Species profiles

O&E 3rd Priority



(5.1) The Council should seek opportunities to partner with recreational fishing community leaders to educate and engage anglers to be more active participants in the Gulf Council’s management process—potentially through a leadership program sponsored by the Gulf Council, where participants are invited to attend Council meetings, review outreach materials, and provide public comment.

- Use of Council funds is tricky
 - Could modify roles of AP members
 - Could partner with external organizations (Sea Grant)
 - Could consider developing a ‘Friends Foundation’ (FWC and Sanctuary)
- Develop materials in support of external efforts
- Expand in-person outreach (bring Council to the recreational fishing community)

O&E 3rd Priority



(6.2) The Council should work with the recreational community, including the for-hire and private angler sectors, to develop seasons that maximize overlap in focal species to enable harvest of multiple species on a given trip and reduce discards. Maximizing overlap with the season for red snapper, the primary target for reef fish anglers Gulf-wide, should be a key priority. At the same time, the Council should recognize the for-hire and tackle industry's need to have a focal species available for harvest at all times.

- Maximizing overlap may conflict with maximizing season length
- Desire for overlap may vary by
 - Location
 - Fleet
- Could consider deploying a tool to gauge the real desire for this
 - Limited flexibility w/o PRA clearance

Council Guidance



1. Should we focus on a video series or learning module to broadly communicate science and management?
2. How should we communicate conservation implications of different fishing actives based on species characteristics?
 - Infographics/Fact Sheets
 - Straightforward social media messaging
 - Videos
 - Enhancing rational in news releases, public hearing materials, etc.
 - Blog articles
 - Species profiles
3. How should we proceed with work on third priority items?
 - Partnering with recreational community leaders
 - Season overlap

Appendix: Communications Recommendations not prioritized by the O&E



(5.3) The Council should promote opportunities for anglers to report catch information and on-the-water observations of fish abundance and presence (e.g., through the Council's Fisherman Feedback Tool).

Appendix: Communications Recommendations not prioritized by the Council



1.2: To promote transparency in recreational data and improve catch and effort estimates, electronic self-reporting by anglers should continue to play a role in estimating recreational Gulf reef fish catch, including both mandatory programs (such as the Mississippi Tails and Scales/Alabama Snapper Check apps) and voluntary programs.

2.1: The Council should improve messaging regarding the potential on-the-water impact that management actions could have on the recreational fishery by projecting outcomes that can be interpreted by non-specialists (e.g., what increase in catch limits anglers could expect to result from a decrease in discard mortality and/or from rebuilding a stock).

2.3: The Council should improve awareness of the tremendous volume of outreach and educational material already available through the Council and its partners.