

Inflation Reduction Act Project Updates



Ecosystem Technical Committee Meeting
March 3, 2026

Efforts to increase responsiveness in Gulf fisheries management



Project: Management Integration and Response

- Regulatory streamlining report

Project: Develop Gulf Fishery Ecosystem Plan

- Social science-driven FEP stakeholder engagements

Regulatory streamlining report



**Review of U.S. Fishery Management
Councils' Regulatory Processes:
Final Report and Recommendations**

Submitted to:

Gulf Fishery Management Council

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December 2025

Funded under federal award #NA24NMF441C0003

Jul 2025	Review Initiated
Oct 2025	Preliminary findings presented to SSC
Nov 2025	Draft report and recommendations presented to Council
Dec 2025	<u>Final report</u> submitted
Jan 2026	Work plan presented to Council

Regulatory streamlining report



Aim: Identify approaches employed by other regional fishery management councils that could improve efficiency and throughput in Gulf fisheries management

15 Recommendations, 3 Categories:

1. Procedural Mechanisms
2. Innovative Regulatory Approaches
3. Collaboration, Coordination, and Communication Best Practices

*See Final Report, Table 11

1. Procedural Mechanisms



Recommendation	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Contributors
1.1 Evaluate whether typical FMP adjustments in the Gulf could qualify for Categorical Exclusions	Increased use of CEs could reduce time/resources needed for minor/routine adjustments	Short	Council, SERO
1.2 Identify potential opportunities to use automatic or conditional (“if/then”) management measures that allow direct rulemaking and explore how SIRs could work in the Gulf	Automatically triggered management responses could allow for rapid (potentially in-season) adjustments	Long	Council, SERO, SEFSC
1.3 Consider potential establishment of an Ad-Hoc Regulatory Review Group (ARRG)	Council-NMFS ARRG could streamline communications and planning around more responsive rulemaking approaches	Short	Council, SERO, SEFSC

2. Innovative Regulatory Approaches



Recommendation	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Contributors
2.1 Evaluate whether certain species in the Gulf should be designated as Ecosystem Component Species	ECS designation would free up resources for management of other species while preventing premature development of new directed fisheries	Medium	Council, SERO
2.2 Assess whether a generic/omnibus amendment could efficiently update all Gulf FMPs with provisions to enhance responsiveness	Would facilitate more rapid document development and/or use of efficiency tools for future actions	Medium	Council, SERO
2.3 Evaluate potential opportunities and feasibility for in-season management	Evaluate whether existing infrastructure could support in-season management before further action	Long	Council, SERO, SEFSC
2.4 Explore ways the Council can play a more active role in the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) process	Leverage EFPs to address key research/management needs and inform future Council actions	Medium	Council, SERO

3. Collaboration, Coordination and Communication Best Practices



Recommendation	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Contributors
3.1 Consider updating Regional Operating Agreement with NMFS to define roles and streamline document preparation process	Can streamline the document preparation/review process prior to and after Council action	Medium	Council, SERO
3.2 Consider implementing annual coordination/strategy meetings between Gulf Council and NMFS (SERO, SEFSC, and potentially General Counsel) staff	Provide a platform for high-level discussions to enhance working relationships and efficiency	Medium	Council, SERO, SEFSC
3.3 Explore strategies to grant Gulf Council staff access to federal databases	Facilitate rapid Gulf Council staff analysis; mitigate need for iterative data requests	Medium	Council, SERO, SEFSC
3.4 Discuss provision of annual data updates by SEFSC to the Gulf Council in off-assessment years	Enable rapid interannual data comparisons between stock assessments	Medium	Council, SEFSC

3. Collaboration, Coordination and Communication Best Practices



Recommendation	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Contributors
3.5 Consider development of Fishery Performance Reports for priority species	Provide standardized on-the-water snapshot for consideration by SSC and Council staff and members	Short	Council
3.6 Consider expanded use of SSC subgroups to dive deep into high priority issues	Accelerate process of developing SSC recommendations to the Council	Short	Council
3.7 Evaluate strategies to expand AP interaction with SSC/Gulf Council	Facilitate consideration of on-the-water observations by SSC/Council	Short	Council
3.8 Explore “incorporation by reference” to living online references in analytical documents	Reduce document preparation review time while improving readability	Medium	Council, SERO

Regulatory streamlining report



15 Recommendations, 3 Categories:

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| [| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Procedural Mechanisms2. Innovative Regulatory Approaches3. Collaboration, Coordination, and Communication Best Practices |] | <p>Focus on mechanisms to streamline minor/routine adjustments (1.1, 1.2, 2.2)</p> |
|---|---|---|--|

*See Final Report, Table 11

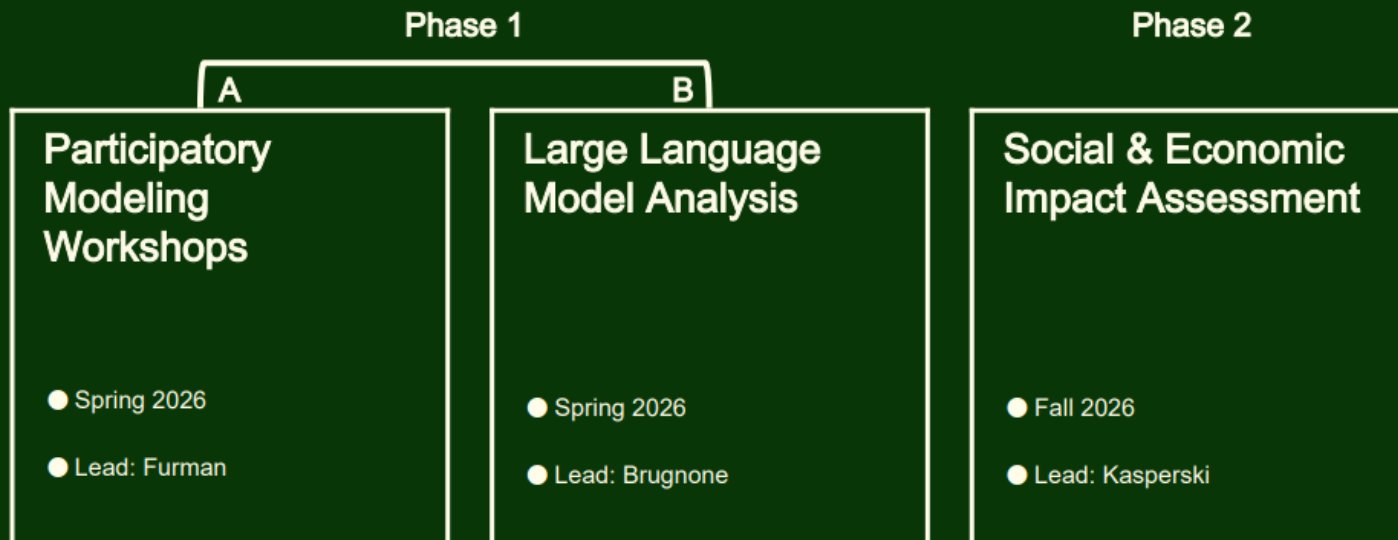
Next steps

- Work with SERO to co-develop approaches to streamline routine management actions
- RFP for IRA-supported consultant to operationalize approaches

Social-science driven FEP stakeholder engagements



Project Outline



Dec 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project initiated<u>Stakeholder engagement plan</u> presented to O&E
Mar-Apr 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stakeholder workshops

Social-science driven FEP stakeholder engagements



Phase 1: Fishery Ecosystem Issue (FEIs) identification

- Stakeholder mapping
- Participatory modeling workshops
- Large language model (LLM) analysis to build conceptual models from publicly available data

Phase 2: Impact assessment for prioritized FEIs

- Build FEI-specific web pages to document data available to understand linkages in FEI conceptual models
- Identify key questions that map to stakeholder-derived objectives
- Catalog knowledge gaps

Social-science driven FEP stakeholder engagements



- Stakeholder workshops scheduled for Spring 2026
 - 3/23 - Gulfport, MS
 - 3/25 - Houma, LA
 - 3/27 - Gulf Shores, AL
 - 4/13 - Fort Myers, FL
 - 4/17 - Galveston, TX
- Workshop findings presented to Council in Summer 2026
- Engage with ETC in Fall 2026 to refine Phase 2 work