

**Shrimp Committee Report
April 7, 2026
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with the additions of Update on Shrimp Futures Initiative and Update on the Shrimp eELB and Shrimp Moratorium Documents under Other Business.¹ The Committee then approved the November 2025 meeting minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) with the correction of ‘Mr. Hanson’ to ‘Mr. Anson’ on page 4, line 13.

Review of SEDAR 87 Gulf Penaeid Shrimp Stock Assessments and SSC Recommendations (Tab D, Nos. 4a-e and Tab B, No. 10b)

Mr. Moncrief (SSC Chair) presented an overview of the information received by the SSC at its February 2026 meeting and the subsequent recommendations. He noted the SSC discussed the possibility of a trigger for reevaluating the status determination criteria when landings are within 90% of the maximum sustainable yield. A Committee member inquired if it would be feasible for Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) staff to rerun the models and provide a periodic review. Dr. Porch (SEFSC) stated that empirical dynamic modeling (EDM) could be re-run with updated indices (such as catch history and SEAMAP abundance) as needed.

The committee recommends, and I so **move, to direct staff to develop a document that updates status determination criteria and considers modifying the permit threshold of penaeid shrimp.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Review of the Texas Closure (Tab D, Nos. 5a-c)

Dr. Liese (SEFSC) presented on prices of Gulf shrimp by size, and then specifically for brown shrimp and white shrimp. He noted the price premium received for larger size shrimp. Dr. Lowther (SEFSC) presented a review of the 2025 Texas Closure. A Committee member asked for clarification that the Texas Closure was not a good idea. Dr. Lowther responded that the 2025 data alone did not make a compelling case, but that the biological justification remains valid. Council staff referred to Dr. Lowther’s presentation to the Shrimp AP in March 2025 and noted that it presented a clearer picture of the positive price effects of the Texas Closure. A Committee member suggested that future presentations on the Texas Closure include a 5-year timeframe of price information as well as total landings by size categories both before and after the Texas Closure. Another Committee member stated that the Texas Closure has been in place for a long period of time and inquired if the annual timeframe for the Closure should be examined to see if different dates may improve the economic benefits. A Committee member stated that the June 1 through July 15 season closure dates in Texas state waters are written into

¹ During Agenda Item VI, the Committee approved receiving the presentation under Agenda Item VIII (Update on Early Adopter Program) prior to Agenda Item VII.

state regulations, but earlier, later, or longer seasons can be provided, not to exceed 60 days. He added that an evaluation, with more recent sampling streams, to maximize the profitability from larger size shrimp would be useful for the shrimp industry.

Council staff reviewed the Shrimp AP's recommendation to continue the Texas Closure in federal waters in 2026. Ms. Bosarge (Shrimp AP Chair) commented that the Shrimp AP was generally in support of continuing the Texas Closure. She noted that AP members discussed the recent increase in fuel prices, which would make the price premium even more important for shrimpers.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move, to request that NMFS continue with the Texas Federal Closure in the coming year in conjunction with the state of Texas Closure in 2026.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Remaining Items from Summary of the March 9, 2026, Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting (Tab D, No. 5c)

Council staff noted that the Shrimp AP made two additional motions. He stated that the motion regarding FY26 \$850,000 appropriation was similar to a motion from the AP in 2024, which the Council passed at its April 2024 meeting.

Ms. Bosarge noted that, in the presentation received by the AP on the Early Adopter Program expenditures, it was projected that more than 800 cELB devices would be purchased and installed on vessels. She added that the AP was informed that cloud storage is sufficient for current data transmission from approximately 120 vessels, but additional storage would be needed as more devices are installed and additional data are transmitted. A Committee member then requested more information on data storage capacity. Another Committee member stated that the rulemaking for the Shrimp cELB Framework Action is underway and that data storage capacity would be ensured.

Council staff noted that Agenda Item VIII is an update on the Early Adopter Program, so the Committee may wish to delay further consideration of this motion from the Shrimp AP until that presentation. Dr. Walter (SEFSC) stated that the presentation in Agenda Item VIII would show that the third bullet from the AP's motion on covering the cost of units and cellular service through the Early Adopter Program should be accomplished. Regarding the second bullet from the AP's motion, he inquired if the Shrimp AP would disagree, should coverage greater than that of the last 10 years would be needed for a statistically robust design was needed. Ms. Bosarge expressed concern that the sampling design for the Early Adopter Program was not more fully considered at the onset but stated that the industry recognized that the mandate should be met.

Council staff then reviewed the last motion. He added that Section 609 of U.S. Public Law 101-162 addresses that shrimp harvested with commercial fishing technology should not be imported

into the U.S. if that harvest is adversely affecting sea turtles.² Ms. Bosarge noted industry efforts to reduce the bycatch footprint. She reported that the Shrimp AP has concerns about imported shrimp and enforcement that ensures that those nations are conserving sea turtles similarly to what is required in the U.S. Dr. Walter stated that a presentation at a future Shrimp AP meeting on the Section 609 program's FY26 appropriation could be accomplished. A Committee member noted that the appropriation monies are up to \$600,000, and not necessarily \$600,000, so the actual FY26 budget may be less. A Committee member inquired how the monies are used to verify how shrimp vessels are meeting sea turtle bycatch standards. Dr. Walter responded that individuals inspect shrimp vessels in other countries, and the State Department utilizes that information to allow imports.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move, to request that NMFS fully utilize up to the FY26 \$600,000 appropriation for implementation and enforcement of the Section 609 program to ensure foreign fisheries are maintaining the same standard for sea turtle conservation as our domestic fisheries are required to uphold. To request that NMFS provide a presentation, at a future Shrimp AP meeting, on how the funding will be spent to carry out the implementation and enforcement of the Section 609 TED program.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Lastly, Ms. Bosarge referred to the AP's discussion of the SSC's review of SEDAR 87. She requested that alternatives beyond status quo and the SSC's recommendations be considered in a shrimp status determination criteria document.

Update on Early Adopter Program (Tab D, No. 8)

Dr. Lowther presented an update on the Early Adopter Program. The Committee then revisited the Shrimp AP's motion on use of the FY26 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development and implementation.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move, to request that NMFS adopts the following priorities for utilizing the FY26 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development and implementation:**

- 1) Ensure the NMFS server has sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel position data.**
- 2) Develop a statistically robust design for distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that would be equal to or greater than the last 10 years.**
- 3) Cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.**

² <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/endangered-species-conservation/shrimp-import-legislation-sea-turtle-conservation#:~:text=Section%20609%20of%20Public%20Law%20101%2D162%2C%20enacted,with%20NOAA%20Fisheries%20serving%20as%20technical%20advisor>

Motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Update on Working Group for Shrimp Bycatch Methodology for Finfish Species (Tab D, No. 7)

Council staff presented background information on the Working Group for Shrimp Bycatch Methodology for Finfish Species and an update on its March 2026 meeting. A Committee member inquired why lane snapper was used as a proxy for gray triggerfish with shrimp bycatch methodology. Council staff responded that the issue is that observer data did not characterize gray triggerfish in bycatch, so a proxy species had to be used. She noted that the Working Group has requested more information on that approach. Final recommendations from the Working Group will go to the SSC and to the Council.

Dr. Walter recommended prioritization of inputs for ongoing finfish stock assessments that the Working Group wants to address. He acknowledged that the prioritization may mean some of the Working Group's current recommendations will be addressed later. NOAA General Counsel provided a reminder that the Working Group is essentially an AP, so meetings must be noticed and open to the public. A Committee member expressed concern on a timeline for the Protected Resources Working Group. Another Committee member noted a previous presentation on Endangered Species Act (ESA) Reinitiation and stated that NMFS is nearing completion of that work; he added that there are no specific deadlines but that the Shrimp BiOp may need to be reinitiated if too much time passes. Council staff emphasized the importance of understanding issues with finfish bycatch, such as species-specific effort, prior to addressing protected resources. A Committee member inquired if the South Atlantic Council addressed finfish bycatch prior to protected resources bycatch. Council staff noted that the data and monitoring programs for the shrimp fleet in the South Atlantic and Gulf are very different. A Committee member requested Ms. Bosarge, as a member of the Working Group, provide additional insight. She emphasized how the shrimp bycatch methodology would affect various finfish stock assessments and how various agencies needed to prioritize this Working Group.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, to request that SEFSC staff and contractors make the Shrimp Bycatch of Finfish Working Group's recommendations and requests from its March 2026 meeting a priority for the next meeting of the Working Group. The recommendations for finfish bycatch will need to be completed prior to and presented at the July 2026 SSC meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Update on Shrimp Futures Initiative (Tab D, No. 9a)

Dr. Gervasi (SEFSC) presented an update on the Shrimp Futures Initiative, concluding with anticipated deliverables and the timeline.

Update on the Shrimp cELB and Shrimp Moratorium Documents

Mr. Helies (SERO) informed the Committee that the rulemaking package is being prepared for the Shrimp cELB Framework Action and that the agency is working to get Shrimp Amendment 19 implemented before the October 26, 2026, permit moratorium expiration.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.