

GULF COUNCIL

SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Battle House Renaissance Mobile, Alabama & Virtual

April 7, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 11 Kevin Anson.....Alabama
- 12 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 13 Mike Allen.....Florida
- 14 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 15 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 16 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 17 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 18 Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- 19 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 20 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 21 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 22 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 25 Brenda Ballard.....Texas
- 26 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 27 Johnny Marquez.....Mississippi
- 28 Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG
- 29 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 30 Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

- 33 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 34 Matt Freeman.....Economic Analyst
- 35 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 36 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 39 Jessica Matos....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
- 40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 41 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
- 42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 44 Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 47 Leann Bosarge.....MS
- 48 Carissa Gervasi.....NOAA

1 Dewey Hemilright.....SAFMC
2 Jennifer Lee.....NOAA
3 Christopher Liese.....NOAA
4 Alan Lowther.....NOAA
5 Trevor Moncrief.....SSC
6 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
7 John Walter.....SEFSC
8
9 - - -
10

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PAGE 13: Motion to direct staff to develop a document that updates status determination criteria and considers modifying the permit threshold of penaeid shrimp. The motion carried on page 14.

PAGE 22: Motion to request that NMFS continue with the Texas federal closure in the coming year in conjunction with the State of Texas closure in 2026. The motion carried on page 22.

PAGE 32: Motion 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. The motion carried on page 35.

PAGE 39: Motion 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 ten years; 3)cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program. The motion carried on page 40.

PAGE 58: Motion 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. The motion carried on page 63.

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1 The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 The Battle House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday morning,
3 April 7, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Chris Schieble.
4

5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 2025 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** At this time, I would like to call the
10 Shrimp Management Committee to order. The members of the committee
11 are myself as the chair, Dr. Overton as the vice chair, Dr. Allen,
12 Mr. Anson, Dr. Banks, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Frady, Mr.
13 Osborne, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, General Spraggins, and Mr.
14 Strelcheck. All committee members are present today.
15

16 The first item is Adoption of the Agenda, which is Tab B, Number
17 1. We have one item that's been added under Other Business on the
18 agenda, and that's a presentation for the Early Adopter Program.
19 I'll point that out. Does anyone else --
20

21 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Sorry. The update on the Early Adopter Program
22 was already on the agenda. The item under Other Business would be
23 the update on the Shrimp Futures initiative.
24

25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I'm sorry. I misspoke. The update on the
26 Shrimp Futures funding. Dr. Walter, do you want to speak on that?
27 Okay, and so does anybody else have any other business to add to
28 the agenda besides that? Mr. Strelcheck.
29

30 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Chris. I just want to give a brief
31 update on the status of the ELB rulemaking, as well as the
32 moratorium amendment.
33

34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we'll add that under Other
35 Business as well, Matt, and, with that, can I get a motion to adopt
36 the agenda, with those additions under other business, please?
37

38 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Donaldson. A second. Mr. Anson. Thank
41 you. All right. The next item on the agenda is Approval of the
42 November 2025 Meeting Minutes. Does anybody have any edits or
43 corrections to those minutes from the November meeting? I had one
44 item to point out on page 4, line 13. They have Mr. Anson's name
45 spelled as Mr. Hanson, and so if we could remove the "H" from that
46 on line 13, page 4. That's all I had for that. With that addition,

1 or edit, I guess, can I get a motion to adopt the minutes as
2 written?

3

4 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** So moved.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Allen. Second by Mr. Donaldson. All
7 right. Next is the Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab D, Number 3,
8 and we'll go over to Dr. Freeman to run us through that real quick.

9

10 **REVIEW OF SEDAR 87 GULF PENAID SHRIMP STOCK ASSESSMENTS AND SSC**
11 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

12

13 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so, for the Agenda Item IV, Review of
14 SEDAR 87 Gulf Penaeid Shrimp Stock Assessments and SSC
15 Recommendations, the SSC chair will present a summary of the SEDAR
16 87 review that the SSC received at its February 2026 meeting, along
17 with the SSC recommendations. The committee should ask questions
18 and determine if the SSC's recommendations on Gulf shrimp status
19 determination criteria should be considered for management and, if
20 so, direct staff to begin work on the document, and so have the
21 SSC chair available for that presentation.

22

23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Moncrief, please.

24

25 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** All right. Good morning, everyone, and so
26 we've got a presentation for you today on the SSC reviewed the
27 penaeid shrimp stock assessments. All right, and so what we've
28 presented essentially represents new attempts at the assessment of
29 Gulf penaeid shrimp species, which encompass brown, white, and
30 pink shrimp.

31

32 It was conducted within a SEDAR process, and so there was a lot of
33 meetings and discussions and stakeholder involvement throughout
34 the entire process. They tested multiple novel methods for the
35 Gulf, with the overall goal to improve the evaluation and
36 subsequent management advice for the Gulf shrimp fishery.

37

38 So, obviously, most folks here are familiar with the overall
39 fishery trends. There was a lot of this discussion at the SSC,
40 just to give everybody a perspective of what the shrimp fishery
41 has experienced over the last few decades, and so, obviously, we've
42 had a decrease in the fleet size consolidation post-2000s.

43

44 There's been a decrease in effort over time. These are more
45 economic impacts that are impacting the fishery rather than
46 availability or biomass of shrimp, and then there's been a shift

1 in the targeting for the fleet over to white shrimp more, as the
2 economics are generally just better for that species, and there's
3 been a shift to larger shrimp along with that switch to white
4 shrimp.

5
6 We were provided three different models that were evaluated, and
7 so the first was JABBA biomass estimation, and, essentially, it
8 works with population dynamic assumptions to project biomass over
9 time, and, if I mess up any of these, we've got folks at the
10 Science Center that can probably provide a little bit of clarity,
11 but in general, right, these are assuming that there's some stock
12 of population dynamics that you can look at, but, really, this
13 fishery isn't experiencing that. It's more outside influences in
14 regards to economics.

15
16 Then they had the VAST spatial and temporal model, which relied
17 more heavily on the fishery-independent survey, and then you had
18 the EDM, or empirical dynamic model, that was provided to us, and
19 it essentially relies on past observations from the fishery and
20 then projects the overall patterns in the stock with different
21 variables, and so each model was tested and evaluated for each
22 species.

23
24 Here were the overall results, and so, for brown shrimp, the EDM
25 model performed best and was recommended. The historical peak at
26 harvest was around 105 million pounds of tails. The estimated MSY
27 that came out was 215 million pounds of tails. The current biomass
28 is far above target, and the stock is considered healthy, and,
29 obviously, as you can see over time, brown shrimp landings have
30 decreased, especially in the last decade, and so, with that decline
31 in harvest and effort, obviously, there's not a lot here in the
32 stock to look at, but everything looks to be in good shape.

33
34 White shrimp, once again, the EDM model performed best and was
35 recommended. Peak harvest for the fishery was eighty-five million
36 pounds of tails in 2006. The estimated MSY was eighty-eight
37 million pounds of tails, and the biomass was, once again, above
38 target.

39
40 The stock is not considered overfished, but just pay attention to
41 the differing trajectory here, what we talked about with increased
42 targeting of white shrimp becoming more viable, and a little bit
43 more targeted by the fishery overall, and so you've seen some
44 general increase over the long period of time. It has some
45 stability over the last decade in its harvest, and so this one is
46 just a little bit closer than brown shrimp was.

1
2 Then next is pink shrimp, and so no model showed adequate
3 performance for consideration, and this is really because you had
4 a shorter time series for the index for this species, and
5 relatively inconsistent landings over time, with a lot of the
6 landings occurring earlier in the time series, the higher landings
7 at least, and so there's no reliable stock model that we can lean
8 on, and the historical catch was recommended.

9
10 I know it does seem a little bit abstract, but the third-highest
11 catch was selected. This was provided via precedent and literature
12 and documentation from the Science Center.

13
14 The SSC also belabored over this point a little bit, in which we
15 looked at varying averages across time that were, you know, as
16 equally arbitrary, you could say, and ended up being around the
17 same MSY proxy every single time, and so we ended up going with
18 the third-highest catch, as it was recommended, and nineteen
19 million pounds tails, and, obviously, if you can look there in the
20 figure on the right, the recent catch is well below that assigned
21 level.

22
23 Recommendations that came through, and so, overall, the group
24 expressed positive sentiment for the effort undertaken in the
25 evaluation of these stocks. I mean, obviously, it's a high-value
26 fishery in the Gulf, and I think everyone recognized that this
27 effort was absolutely worth it.

28
29 When it came down to it, EDM was accepted for the white and brown
30 shrimp fishery. The historical landings were used as a proxy for
31 pink shrimp, as we just discussed. ABC was set equal to MSY,
32 because this is an annual crop, and we talked about reviewing
33 landings periodically, and this was one where we had had a -- I
34 put forward a motion and took it back, and so it really falls
35 within you all's realm a little bit.

36
37 If you look at the trajectory of both those fisheries, especially
38 brown and white shrimp, I think there's a good case here to have
39 some control, or some evaluation, rule set in place of, if landings
40 get within 90 percent of the projected MSY, if the index drops,
41 that's when you need to trigger, and a reevaluation, but, until
42 then, you can likely let these stocks continue on as they are,
43 given the current trajectory of them, the decrease in effort, and
44 how it's viewed. We had a lot of discussions around that, but
45 that was one of the things we had discussed a little bit on the
46 review, when it comes to the landings.

1
2 Next, we had some motions that came out of this one, and so the
3 first one is set the EDM model approach for brown and white shrimp
4 and then put forward the benchmark estimates for the MSYs.

5
6 Motion 2 was using the third-highest catch of pink shrimp, 19.3
7 million pounds of tails, and, obviously, most of these carried
8 without much opposition, and sometimes no opposition, and then the
9 next ones were more of the housekeeping items that came up after
10 we had done the first two, and so this is where ABC was set equal
11 to MSY for the three, and then this is where the overfishing
12 threshold, and the maximum fishing mortality, and this was, once
13 again, more what was done in the previous time, and carrying over
14 to the current, and so to make sure those numbers match.

15
16 Then this was the same thing here, and it's further down the
17 minimum stock size threshold, and so, once again, this was just
18 carryover from the previous time, to make sure that we had similar
19 metrics and motions that were passed to match what was in the
20 documentation prior. Is that it? All right, and so six motions,
21 and I'll take any questions you all might have on the subject.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Moncrief. Do we have
24 any questions on the presentation of the SSC? Mr. Anson.

25
26 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Trevor, thanks for the presentation. You give,
27 in the presentation, a short description of each of the models
28 that were tested. The empirical dynamic model was chosen for the
29 white shrimp, or at least it was the best, and selected, but I
30 see, in the description of it, that it doesn't appear to take any
31 biological or environmental parameters in that model. Is that
32 correct?

33
34 **MR. MONCRIEF:** Yes, and this is a question that came up from the
35 SSC directly of the incorporation of economic and environmental
36 variables into the model, and I know we have folks from the Science
37 Center that may likely weigh-in a little bit on this, but,
38 essentially, what we had gotten back was one defining -- Or finding
39 an environmental variable that showed some level of ability to
40 predict recruitment, or anything else, and then the other was just
41 that the noise that encompassed them, and I think that didn't make
42 them readily available, but there was -- I remember Jim Tolan
43 expressed, you know, his sentiment throughout the process of trying
44 to incorporate those things, and it just wasn't able to -- It
45 wasn't able to work on the Science Center side, from what I
46 understood.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Go ahead.

3
4 **MR. ANSON:** I guess another question, and maybe to the Science
5 Center. Relative to the request, or comment, made by SSC on
6 periodic review, I'm wondering what the frequency of these models
7 -- If this is a relatively heavy lift for staff, Science Center
8 staff, or if this is an easy thing to do that, you know, yearly,
9 or every couple of years, to run the models, just to see. I'm
10 just curious, Dr. Porch, as to, you know, what the frequency of
11 running these models we can expect, or what your expectations are.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Porch.

14
15 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you for the questions. I want to start out
16 by saying what a sea change this is, because we went from a system
17 where we tried to incorporate all these pieces of data in this
18 elaborate Stock Synthesis model, that was difficult to implement,
19 to something that's really brilliant in its simplicity, and it's
20 actually our first major foray into an artificial intelligence
21 application, because the empirical dynamic modeling is in fact a
22 form of artificial intelligence machine learning.

23
24 To answer your question, we can, at this point, implement an update
25 to assessment using EDM almost as fast as we can update the indices
26 that feed it, because it is relatively simple to implement. You
27 just input the data stream, and it spits out the answer very
28 quickly, and so key data streams are catch history and the SEAMAP
29 index of abundance, which in this case goes back fairly far.

30
31 That's why it works for brown shrimp and white shrimp, and pink
32 shrimp is not long enough, and so this won't be the answer to
33 everything, but it's a game changer for shrimp, and, as the SSC
34 rightly pointed out, it seems to perform better than any of our
35 conventional stock assessment models, which, as John has said many
36 times, by the time that model is complete, all the shrimp that
37 were in the data are dead, and so, with the EDM, we can do things
38 much faster.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and just wanted to add to what Clay responded
43 to with Kevin, and so we'll be briefly talking about the risk-
44 value matrix at this meeting, and then the deeper dive at the June
45 meeting, and I think that also plays into this conversation.

1 Obviously, we know the shrimp fishery is of immense value, right,
2 and the question is how frequent, how complex science and
3 management advice do you need, and, you know, how often is that
4 going to be provided.

5
6 We expect the risk right now, given everything that's happening
7 with the fishery dynamics, is pretty low, right, and so that will
8 also shape, I think, how often you may need to get information and
9 feedback back around this table for management advice.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Anson.

12
13 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Andy, for that, and I look forward to those
14 discussions, the risk-value aspect, and I just, you know, ask these
15 questions just because, at least as it relates to the white shrimp,
16 you know, obviously, this is all related to harvest, and there are
17 economic factors that come into play, but, inasmuch as these
18 periods of time when we go through drought conditions, and those
19 might form, you know, better conditions for white shrimp
20 recruitment, and, if we do have a spike in effort for white shrimp,
21 we're relatively close, you know, to MSY.

22
23 You know, obviously we need guardrails, but maybe the conditions
24 have changed relative to twenty years ago, when there was also
25 high effort, but yet we can, you know, afford a larger MSY, and
26 I'm just curious as to the model to be able to capture that, rather
27 than just more of a historical perspective on those conditions
28 that were set up under those other periods of time when they had
29 those catches under those effort conditions.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Porch.

32
33 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, and I think it could capture it to a limited
34 extent. The way the algorithm works is it looks through the
35 history of the data, and then it looks at different time lags, and
36 it says, essentially, okay, this point now, when we look at what
37 the abundance of shrimp is, and what the catch is, it looks similar
38 to this point back in time, and what happened that at that point
39 in time, when the similar conditions existed, and that's
40 essentially how it works, much like, you know, we look at our
41 experience. You know, if A and B happened, what happened after
42 that, and so this algorithm looks like that, but it is relying on
43 historical data.

44
45 If you had a fundamental change in the environment, then, yes, it
46 would be ideal to also have an index that went back through the

1 whole time series of, you know, what are these environmental
2 drivers that could have caused that.

3
4 We are working on that, trying to incorporate something, but you
5 need something that's more than a fluffy smoking gun. You need
6 something that's more clear, because you can put in things that
7 seem like they have a correlation, and then they break down later,
8 and so, right now, we don't have something that is as clear as
9 that, but we are -- It is an area of active research, and are there
10 things we can leave the productivity of the stock to that are
11 fairly consistent through time, and so we are working on it, but
12 I don't think we quite have it yet.

13
14 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. Do we have any other
17 questions for Trevor on the SSC summary? Anything? Thank you,
18 Trevor. Appreciate it. Dr. Allen.

19
20 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you. I just want to make a comment. I thought
21 the analysts did a really nice job on this, and one of the neat
22 things about this approach is that they used multiple different
23 models here.

24
25 They used to have kind of a surplus production-type simple model
26 for brown and white shrimp, and, in both cases, the EDM approach
27 showed a similar result to the more simple model, or the more
28 traditional model, I should say, and so, in the SSC discussion, it
29 really -- I think it gave a lot of credence to the EDM results
30 that they were seeing the same patterns from, from two models,
31 particularly for the brown shrimp and the white shrimp, and so
32 excellent.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. Thank you, Trevor, and
35 so we've received the results of SEDAR 87, and we got the SSC
36 summary report on that. Going forward, then the next steps would
37 be to establish status determination criteria for brown, white and
38 pink shrimp based on these stock assessments, and so, Dr. Freeman,
39 we would need some action by the committee, correct, for
40 potentially drafting a document for this, right?

41
42 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir, and so, if that's the intent of the
43 committee, we would need direction for staff to begin work on a
44 document for that.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Well, so we could use a motion to direct

1 staff to develop a document to update the status determination
2 criteria of penaeid shrimp. Would anybody like to make that? Dr.
3 Allen.
4
5 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I'm happy to make that motion to direct staff
6 to develop a document for these recommendations.
7
8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay.
9
10 **DR. ALLEN:** I could use help for some wording, please.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** The motion, Dr. Allen, would to be the direct
13 staff to develop a document that updates status determination
14 criteria of penaeid shrimp. Can we get a second? Second from Mr.
15 Broussard. Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Strelcheck.
16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Remind me, and, with the permit threshold
18 analysis, we didn't direct staff to develop a document yet, and
19 that was just to begin looking at an analysis for that, and is
20 that correct?
21
22 **DR. FREEMAN:** I was going to try to find the motion real quick,
23 but that's my recollection, was that it was directing council staff
24 I believe to work with SERO and Science Center staff to examine
25 that threshold, and I believe that was the rough wording of that
26 motion.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So, looking at the minutes from the November
29 meeting, there's a motion that says to direct council staff, with
30 assistance from National Marine Fisheries Service staff, to review
31 and provide updated analysis for the minimum threshold number of
32 federal Gulf commercial permits from Shrimp Amendment 17B. Mr.
33 Strelcheck.
34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so the reason I asked that is because I
36 think there is value in trying to consider that within the same
37 action. There potentially is, obviously, some timing
38 considerations there, and then also the added challenge of not
39 having an MSY for pink shrimp that ultimately would provide, you
40 know, a global OY for the overall shrimp fishery, but I think we
41 maybe want to consider broadening this to allow for, you know,
42 incorporation of the threshold a the later date, if we decide to
43 choose to add it there.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so maybe offer a friendly amendment
46 to the motion?

1
2 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and I'm fine with that, Andy, if you want to
3 broaden that out as a friendly amendment.
4

5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The friendly amendment would be to develop a
6 document that updates that updates determination criteria and the
7 permit threshold for penaeid shrimp.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mara.
10

11 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Well, I mean, just a question, because, from what
12 I understand, you're first looking at whether the threshold needs
13 updating, and if we have the information to update it, and so I'm
14 not sure that this is really helpful, in terms of what would be in
15 the document.
16

17 You can start the document on status determination criteria, and,
18 if it gets to the point with the other action that there's
19 something you actually want to do, you could add it, but having
20 one document do all of this, when there's nothing to put in there
21 for the threshold, seems to just delay indefinitely the first part.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mara. Dr. Simmons.
24

25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Just a suggestion, based on what Ms.
26 Levy said, and maybe just say considers modifying the permit
27 threshold, or something like that, could perhaps -- So we are
28 looking at it, and we're determining if it needs to be modified,
29 and we're moving the status determination criteria forward, and
30 how about that?
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Are you good with that, Dr. Allen?
33

34 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes.
35

36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Who was our seconder? Billy. Are you good?
37 All right. Any further discussion on the motion on the board?
38 I'll read it, since we've changed it. **To direct staff to develop**
39 **a document that updates test determination criteria and considers**
40 **modifying the permit threshold of penaeid shrimp. Anyone opposed**
41 **to the motion on the board? Seeing no opposition, the motion**
42 **passes.**
43

44 All right. Moving to the next item on the agenda, it's the Review
45 of the Texas Closure. I'll go back to Matt for the action guide,
46 please.

1
2 **REVIEW OF THE TEXAS CLOSURE**
3

4 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so, for this item, the committee will
5 be presented with an update of the economics of the federally-
6 permitted Gulf shrimp fleet and a review of the 2025 Texas closure.
7 The Shrimp AP meeting summary and recommendation will be presented
8 to the committee, and the committee is requested to take action
9 and determine if the Texas closure should continue in 2026, and so
10 we have two members from the Science Center giving presentations
11 here, Dr. Liese and Dr. Lowther.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Liese, can you hear us? Okay.

14
15 **DR. CHRISTOPHER LIESE:** Can you hear me now?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir. We can hear you. Are you ready?

18
19 **DR. LIESE:** Yes, I am ready.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We're getting it. Here comes the presentation
22 on our end.

23
24 **DR. LIESE:** So I'm just going to give a very brief -- I gave a
25 little bit longer presentation to the AP, and this is just going
26 to be a very quick update on the Gulf shrimp prices by size.

27
28 All of these prices have been inflation adjusted to 2025 prices.
29 The landings data for 2025 should be considered preliminary, and
30 it's not necessarily complete, but, for like prices, you can --
31 You know, it's probably 80 percent complete, or more, and so the
32 prices are probably a good indicator of where they are in 2025,
33 and so I decided to put those in there, but with a disclaimer,
34 again, that they're not the final ones, and I generally followed
35 sort of SEDAR 89 conventions in cleaning the data and getting to
36 this point.

37
38 Overall, there's very little difference by species, but the next
39 two slides will break it out by species, but, you know, as always,
40 the prices do increase a lot by the count. As the count goes down,
41 roughly each category adds 20 percent to the price. Overall, 2023
42 was the lowest, in terms of price for this fishery, pretty much
43 across all categories. 2024 saw a very small improvement in the
44 price, and I think it was something like 15 percent or something
45 like that.

1 Landings deteriorated further in 2024, and so, while 2023 was the
2 lowest price on record, especially in inflation-adjusted terms,
3 2024 probably had the lowest landings in the fishery ever, or at
4 least in recorded times, and then, in 2025, the price has increased
5 a bit. I looked at it also in terms of months, and it does seem
6 that it increased more towards the end of the year, and so the
7 tariffs probably had an effect.

8
9 They're off -- On average, they're off something like 59 percent
10 off their low from 2023, but, you know, in the historic
11 perspective, as you can see in the lowest line, they're still, you
12 know, pretty low, like maybe the third-lowest or something like
13 that, and so it's not like 2025 had great prices.

14
15 The next slide, it's just broken out, and this is more for the
16 record for -- I think we just skipped white shrimp. You know,
17 there's not much difference between the white shrimp prices and
18 the next slide is the brown shrimp prices, and so that they're in
19 the record. There's really not much, I think in recent -- The
20 most recent years, actually brown shrimp seems to exceed the price
21 of white shrimp by a little bit, but I'm not sure that would be
22 statistically significant.

23
24 So in, in summary, and I think I said most of this, and so there
25 is still a large and increasing premium for larger shrimp sizes,
26 and so that was one thing you can see, is that, in percentage
27 terms, it's probably, you know, 15 to 25 percent for each step,
28 but, in dollar terms, for the big shrimp, you get eighty-cents
29 more per pound, or \$1.50 more per pound, and, like I said, brown
30 shrimp gets a slight premium on white shrimp. That's it. Thanks.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Questions from anyone? Seeing none, I guess
33 our next presentation is Dr. Lowther, correct? Dr. Lowther, can
34 you hear us? You may be muted.

35
36 **DR. ALAN LOWTHER:** Okay. Now I've been unmuted. Can you hear me?

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir. Now we can hear you.

39
40 **DR. LOWTHER:** Okay. All right, and so I just have a brief
41 presentation here too, if we can get that up on the screen.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We should be good to go whenever you are.

44
45 **DR. LOWTHER:** Okay. There we go. Thank you. Good morning,
46 everybody. So this is, as you said, a review of the 2025 Texas

1 closure. This is a presentation that's traditionally been
2 presented to the Shrimp AP in their March meeting, and, you know,
3 we're always looking for ways to make the information a little
4 more relevant, and so, if you have any suggestions, feel free to
5 bring those to me now, or when we conclude, or, I mean, after the
6 meeting, too.

7
8 The Texas closure was first implemented in 1981 for the offshore
9 fishery, and with the goal to increase the yield of brown shrimp
10 from offshore Texas waters, allowing the juvenile shrimp to grow
11 to a more marketable size. Traditionally, this has been from mid-
12 May to mid-July, and then, since 1930, the nearshore area has also
13 been closed at the same time.

14
15 Here, this graph just shows the catch of Texas offshore brown
16 shrimp for the months of July and August for the last decade, and,
17 again, the July catch, which is, you know, probably not a full
18 month, is quite a bit below the August catch, but the July doesn't
19 really show -- It's hard to tell if there's a downward trend or
20 not. It is perhaps a little bit, but it does look like -- The
21 offshore catch of brown shrimp in August does seem to show a
22 declining trend, at least, you know, if you look back to 2019, or
23 2020, and there was one spike in 2021, but it seems to be kind of
24 -- It's up and down, but it does seem to be overall declining.

25
26 Then the next slide is just -- It's the same graph for white
27 shrimp, and you can see that the difference between July and August
28 isn't quite as much, but, again, it's kind of hard to discern
29 exactly what's going on here, especially with -- You know, there
30 was a big spike in 2022, for August, you know, but there does seem
31 to be a little bit of a rebound in 2024 and 2025, in August, for
32 the white shrimp, and so the overall decline.

33
34 At the AP, I showed sort of the total catch for these species, and
35 you could see quite a large decline overall in the Gulf for the
36 brown shrimp, and not as dramatic of a decline for the white
37 shrimp, and I think that's borne out here too for the Texas
38 pattern.

39
40 This just shows pattern of offshore shrimp for July and August,
41 with the brown on the top two graphs and the white shrimp on the
42 bottom two graphs for July and August. You know, the goal of the
43 closure is to make it so that the larger size categories are caught
44 more frequently after the closure, and so we would like to see the
45 -- I don't think you can see me pointing at things, but the larger
46 size categories, like the zero to fifteen and the sixteen to

1 twenty, we would like those to be quite a bit -- You know, to
2 increase that, and to have fewer of the fifty-one to sixty-seven
3 and sixty-eight plus.

4
5 You know, it does look like we're seeing that in the white shrimp.
6 In the brown shrimp, it's -- I would say it's hard to tell from
7 this graph, and this is one thing where it would be nice to -- You
8 know, like I said, this is sort of the graph that's been
9 traditionally shown, but maybe, if we can think of a better way to
10 show that, that would be good, but, again, the idea is to catch
11 the larger shrimp later in the year.

12
13 Again, with -- This is with the showing the prices again for brown
14 and white, and by month of the year, and so, early in the season,
15 the prices are high, and then you see the gap for the closure.
16 You see the gap during the period of the Texas closure, and then,
17 if we're catching more larger shrimp later in the year, we would
18 expect to see a price increase, and you do see that, to some
19 degree, with the brown shrimp.

20
21 I think the other thing to keep in mind here, which doesn't really
22 show, is that the early season prices are based on smaller
23 quantities caught, while the large -- The later in the season,
24 prices are based on larger quantities, but, again, there's a lot
25 of fluctuation, especially if you look at the white shrimp, and it
26 kind of is all over the place.

27
28 Let's see. Then on the next slide is the final graph that's
29 traditionally been included in this, and this is just showing the
30 proportion of the Texas shrimp landings by region, and so the upper
31 Gulf coast, middle Gulf coast, and then lower Gulf coast.

32
33 There's not a -- There may be a little bit of a pattern, but it's
34 not that dramatic, in that, the last couple of years, the upper
35 Texas share of the catch has decreased a bit, and the middle Texas
36 has gone up a bit, but I don't see anything too shocking here,
37 but, like I said, this is the information that's provided.

38
39 I think, traditionally, the AP has -- You know, they believe in
40 the efficacy of the Texas closure, and so I don't know that you
41 would look at these graphs and say it's overwhelming evidence that
42 it's a great thing, but, because, you know, that the goal is there
43 of allowing the shrimp to make it to larger sizes, the AP has
44 traditionally made a motion to continue with the Texas closure,
45 you know, over as many years as I've been here, but, again, I would
46 -- I guess we can go to the next slide, which is just the final

1 slide, but, again, I would be happy, if people have suggestions,
2 either now or after the meeting, for the types of information that
3 would make -- You know, things that would make it better to see,
4 and I think that I would be happy to entertain those, and I know
5 that I've kind of had some preliminary conversations with
6 Christopher about how we could do that, and so that is something
7 we would like to do, but that concludes my presentation. Thank
8 you.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Lowther. I appreciate
11 the presentation. Do we have questions for Dr. Lowther? Mr.
12 Geeslin.

13
14 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Maybe I didn't hear that right, and I'm hoping
15 that didn't, and can you clarify a little more, if I heard you say
16 that the Texas closure is not a great idea.

17
18 **DR. LOWTHER:** No, and I didn't say that at all. I apologize if I
19 gave you that impression. No, and what I was saying was that I
20 just -- If all you had to go on were these types of pictures in
21 this presentation, I would say that I'm not sure that it makes the
22 most compelling case, and, no, I think the closure is a good idea,
23 and it biologically makes great sense. What I was trying to get
24 at was that I would like to come up with ways to demonstrate that
25 better, and so I hope that helps. I'm not sure that that these
26 graphs in this presentation convey that, but I do think that
27 biologically it makes complete sense, and so I would just -- I'm
28 trying to brainstorm ways to make that case better.

29
30 **MR. GEESLIN:** Okay. Thanks for the clarification. I clearly
31 misheard.

32
33 **DR. LOWTHER:** That's an important clarification, and so I'm glad
34 you asked that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman.

37
38 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and so, before we go to the AP recommendations
39 and there as well may be other questions from the committee, one
40 thing is if I could ask admin staff to pull up the presentation
41 from the March 2025 Shrimp AP, and if you all could go to slide 6.

42
43 So I was going to say that I can work with Dr. Lowther, and that
44 was a suggestion, but one thing that may be helpful going forward,
45 both for the AP and for the Shrimp Committee, is to show the price
46 increases for the last couple of years, because I think the last

1 year made a very compelling case.

2
3 I think last year's data perhaps was a little more muddled, but,
4 in previous years, I think there's been a very clear picture of
5 the effects of the Texas closure, both for brown and white, seeing
6 that price increase following it, and so I just wanted to refer to
7 last year's presentation, again as a reference, before -- If
8 there's any other questions and before we get to the AP motion.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Freeman. I think, you know,
11 looking at the table Dr. Lowther had at the beginning of his
12 presentation, it shows the change in price annually, but it doesn't
13 show that difference on a monthly basis during the closure compared
14 to different years, like you just pointed out here, and I think
15 the Shrimp AP made this point, requesting that, when they get this
16 presentation next year, that it shows, you know, the difference
17 over the past few years, and so maybe like a five-year time span
18 or something like that would be good, Dr. Lowther, going forward,
19 if you could.

20
21 Ms. Bosarge may touch on this, but in case not, also, the AP
22 requested that, in the future presentations for the Texas closure,
23 that the total landings are illustrated in larger size categories
24 before and after the closure, to see the difference, and so maybe
25 you can include that for next year for the AP meeting, Dr. Lowther.

26
27 **DR. LOWTHER:** Yes, and I have both of those suggestions in my
28 notes, and will plan on doing that. Thank you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Perfect. Thank you, Dr. Lowther. Do
31 we have any other questions on the Texas closure review
32 presentation? Mr. Strelcheck.

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know who to direct this to, and so I liked
35 the idea of first having some comparative graphics and the size
36 distribution pre and post-closure. I think that would be
37 beneficial.

38
39 For white shrimp, it looks like we're, you know, certainly
40 achieving what we're trying to accomplish with the closure. I
41 guess my question is the closure has been in place for a long
42 period of time, and, you know, we're trying to, obviously, increase
43 sizes and recruitment of the fishery for brown shrimp, right, and
44 is this kind of the desirable size range for the shrimp industry?

45
46 Then my other question would be, given the closure has been in

1 place for a long period of time, has there been any look at whether
2 or not that timeframe needs to be shifted at all, in terms of when
3 we close to optimize the size in which, you know, shrimp are
4 harvested post-closure?

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Good question. Mr. Geeslin.

7
8 **MR. GEESLIN:** No, and Andy was -- I was going to mention this. I
9 think, you know, statutorily, we're bound by, at least in the
10 state, state laws that are governing Parks and Wildlife, and we're
11 bound by the June 1 to the July 15 closed season, but we can
12 provide for earlier, later, or longer seasons, not to exceed sixty
13 days.

14
15 It is based on, you know, we're out there sampling Gulf trawls,
16 looking at the size of the shrimp, and those will come in now, and
17 trickling into the end of April, and then I make that request to
18 Mr. Helies here, but, Andy, I'm all for that. If we can -- If we
19 can evaluate that in a way -- Even using these more recent sampling
20 data streams to maximize -- Really to capitalize on the biology,
21 but really maximizing the profitability of those larger-size
22 shrimp out in the Gulf, I think we -- That is a very valid point,
23 and an exercise we should be doing to slide that.

24
25 Just because we've done the May 15 to July 15 for so long, it
26 doesn't mean -- It doesn't mean we've got to stick with that. As
27 conditions and seasons change, the shrimp fishery has changed as
28 well, and so we're completely open to that. I'm glad you mentioned
29 that, Mr. Strelcheck.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Any other
32 comments on the presentation, or suggestions? None? Next on the
33 agenda, we have the Shrimp AP summary report, right, Dr. Freeman?

34
35 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so I will provide the motion from the
36 AP, and then we have the Shrimp AP chair present as well, and so,
37 if there's additional questions about that conversation, you know,
38 I would encourage her to come up and share that with the committee.

39
40 I will note that specifically there was at least one AP member
41 again that expressed his support of the Texas closure, knowing,
42 you know, with current economic conditions, that shrimpers need to
43 harvest larger shrimp to remain competitive, and so the motion
44 from the Shrimp AP was to recommend that the council request NMFS
45 to continue the federal Texas closure in conjunction with the State
46 of Texas closure in 2026, and that motion carried unanimously, and

1 so, at this point, I'll defer to the Shrimp AP chair if there's
2 anything additional, or if there's any questions for myself or Ms.
3 Bosarge.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Ms. Bosarge, could you please come up
6 to the podium and give us just a brief summary of the AP comments?
7

8 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the AP was
9 generally in support of the Texas closure, of continuing that, as
10 we have been for many years now, and we had a little conversation
11 around the table, which we always try and lean heavily on our Texas
12 members of the AP to give us some feedback on that.

13
14 The conversation around the table -- When we had our meeting, fuel
15 prices had already spiked, right, and so we were already seeing a
16 higher fuel price, and so there was some conversation there about
17 the potential that boats further to the east, you know,
18 Mississippi, Alabama, and potentially Florida, may not make that
19 long run to Texas, because of the fuel price.

20
21 However, that Texas closure was going to be even more important,
22 and more valuable, for the huge State of Texas, and all the shrimp
23 fishermen there, for them to be able to take advantage of that and
24 harvest those larger sizes of shrimp, and so we were definitely in
25 support of it, and felt that it was something that we would hope
26 the council would continue.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the
29 discussion on the Shrimp AP summary and the motion. So, going
30 forward, the AP suggested a motion to recommend that the council
31 request National Marine Fisheries Service to continue the federal
32 Texas closure in conjunction with the State of Texas closure in
33 2026. Mr. Sanchez.

34
35 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would make that motion, that we
36 continue this closure and have it run concurrent with the Texas
37 closure.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. We have a motion on the board, and a
40 second by Mr. Broussard. The motion is to recommend that the
41 council request NMFS to continue the federal Texas closure in
42 conjunction with the State Texas closure in 2026. Any discussion
43 regarding the motion? **Seeing no discussion, anyone opposed to the**
44 **motion as written on the board? No opposition, and the motion**
45 **passes.**

1 Moving to Item VI on the agenda, which is the Remaining Items from
2 the Summary of the March 9, 2026 Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting,
3 Tab D, Number 4c, and Dr. Freeman.

4
5 **REMAINING ITEMS FROM SUMMARY OF THE MARCH 9, 2026 SHRIMP**
6 **ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**
7

8 **DR. FREEMAN:** I'll give staff a moment to pull open the AP summary,
9 and so there were two additional motions, and so I'll present on
10 those, and then, again, I would encourage the Shrimp AP chair to
11 expand on that conversation and other items that should be conveyed
12 to the Shrimp Committee.

13
14 If we go to page 4 of the document, one of the agenda items was a
15 review of congressional funding of data collection. I know the
16 Shrimp Committee and council heard before in terms of expenditures
17 related to the Early Adopter Program related to the transition
18 from the SD cards being mailed in to the cellular electronic
19 logbooks being put on vessels in the Gulf.

20
21 Following that presentation, the AP made the motion on the screen,
22 which was the Shrimp AP recommends that the council requests NMFS
23 to adopt the following priorities for utilizing the Fiscal Year 26
24 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development and implementation, and
25 then there were the sub-bullets. I can read through them, if you
26 all prefer. Otherwise, they're on the screen.

27
28 I will note a few things. One, the motion maker did acknowledge
29 that there was a similar motion from the AP back in 2024 that the
30 committee, as well as Full Council, also passed, and so there was
31 a letter at that point, in April 2024, sent from the council to
32 the Science Center regarding very similar priorities.

33
34 The one main difference here was that, with Item Number 2, where,
35 as you can see in front of you, it says to develop a statistically-
36 robust design for distributing units to a representative portion
37 of the fleet that would be comparable to the last ten years.

38
39 The previous version referenced that we would sample the shrimp
40 fleet at levels equal to or greater than the last ten years, and
41 so I think it was slightly different language there, but,
42 otherwise, I will pause and see if there's any questions, or
43 discussions, about that motion before I go to the next one, and,
44 as well, if there's any questions too for this particular item for
45 the Shrimp AP chair. Again, she's available, and I'll add too
46 that she may have some additional things to add to this

1 conversation, if you all would like to entertain that.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I think it would probably be good, at
4 this time, for Madam Chair to come up and just give us some
5 background information on the motion itself, please.

6
7 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and so thanks for allowing me to speak again,
8 and so we did spend a good bit of time on this particular item at
9 the AP. We were very excited. We actually got a more in-depth
10 presentation, and so the Science Center went through kind of how
11 they had spent the money thus far, and how they intended to spend
12 the rest of it, hopefully, and how many boxes we would end up with
13 on boats.

14
15 They are putting a larger percentage of the annual \$850,000, for
16 a total of \$3.4 million at this point, towards putting more boxes
17 on boats, and that really does defray the cost for the fishermen,
18 and so we were very excited about that.

19
20 The one thing that we did have a slight concern on, and you'll see
21 it listed in our Bullet Number 1 priority there, is we were asking
22 about -- So the Science Center has set up their cloud-based server
23 to receive our data from the boats, and it's being transmitted,
24 and going straight to the Science Center. It's very exciting.

25
26 Right now, we have about 120 boxes out on boats. We look for that
27 to ramp up fairly quickly. Hopefully, by the end of this year,
28 we'll have closer to 350 out there, 350 boats with boxes, and the
29 Science Center actually now projects that they may get up to like
30 over 800 boxes on boats, with the money that we've managed to
31 allocate from Congress for them.

32
33 Having said that, we wanted to make sure that the Science Center's
34 cloud-based server, their API, has the capacity to handle this
35 ramped-up, you know, fully-complemented fleet of vessels. They
36 told us that right now they don't, that right now they can handle
37 the data they have coming in, but they will have to secure excess
38 storage capacity in the cloud for the full complement, but they
39 said, you know, that seems to be fairly easy to do. It's not super
40 expensive, and it's just something that we have to do.

41
42 We wanted to go ahead and pass this motion once again to reiterate
43 the fact that we want to make sure that's in place before we get
44 to that point. We have the money in-hand right now to pay for it.
45 We want to see it done, and on the books, and ready to go. We
46 don't want to have an issue later on, and so that was really the

1 impetus behind passing this motion once again, was to drive home
2 that message that we really want to make sure that API can handle
3 all 800 boats when they come online, and we want to do it now, and
4 not later. We might not have the money later. It will be spent
5 by then, right?

6
7 Do you -- Mr. Chairman, did you want me to go through the one other
8 agenda item that I was going to highlight, or do you want to just
9 wait?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Maybe let's discuss and vote on potentially a
12 motion here, if the council makes it similar to this one, and then
13 we may call you back up again.

14
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir. No problem.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman.

18
19 **DR. FREEMAN:** So one other thing I did want to note is that still
20 on the agenda, Agenda Item Number VIII, is an update on the Early
21 Adopter Program, and so, while there is a motion from the AP
22 currently in front of you all, it's also within the committee's
23 purview perhaps to wait until that presentation to further consider
24 the AP's, and so I just wanted to note that.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I guess we should have probably modified the
27 agenda at the beginning, to move that up, but I didn't notice the
28 difference at the time. I think Dr. Walter had his hand up, and
29 I missed it earlier.

30
31 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Yes, and I was going to say, when we get that
32 presentation, I think it will certainly cover Number 3 very well,
33 because it will show that we can, with that money, cover almost
34 the entirety of the active fleet right now under the EAP, which
35 would be, I think, really good news, and well-received.

36
37 We're also working on the statistically-robust design though, and
38 that probably does require some conversation here, because I think
39 that the reasonable and prudent measure requires that effort be
40 equal to or greater than a certain time period, and so simply being
41 comparable would be equal, and then it would also be challenging
42 for comparable to be statistically robust.

43
44 Those are -- Right now, comparable to what we've got now is not
45 statistically robust, because we've lost vessels, and not at
46 random, and so we're not covering the entire spatial domain of the

1 fleet, and so what we would do is develop a design that would
2 ensure that we cover all the spatial temporal cells, and that would
3 be potentially equal to, but it might actually be greater, to be
4 able to ensure that we cover them with a statistically-robust
5 design.

6
7 Now, if that's a concern for the AP, that there might be greater
8 numbers of vessels covered, so that we have that full spatial
9 temporal extent covered, I think we should have that conversation,
10 noting that, in terms of the vessels' concerns about having to pay
11 for units, it should be largely addressed by the Early Adopter
12 Program.

13
14 I guess I would ask the chair, and is there a problem with greater
15 coverage than what is currently in the last ten years, if that's
16 what's needed to be statistically robust?

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Madam Chair, do you want to come back to the
19 podium, please?

20
21 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I'll sort of answer your question with a
22 question, and so this is a motion that actually the AP has passed
23 on multiple occasions, for multiple years now, and we really felt
24 that this statistically-robust design for distributing the units
25 was important prior to distributing the units, which is why we
26 asked the Science Center to do it a couple years of ago, before we
27 started putting units on boats, and so why did we wait until we
28 already had 120 units on there, and we hope to ramp up to 350 this
29 year, to go maybe we should look at this, and it might mean that
30 more people have to have boxes on the boats, and more than what we
31 had before, and we had hoped to do this on the frontend, rather
32 than have to put out a fire on the backend.

33
34 If that's what we have to do, then that's what we have to do, but
35 understand that that will be an ongoing cost for that fisherman
36 moving forward, into eternity essentially, because he's going to
37 eventually have to pay for the service on that box, and the
38 maintenance and upkeep on that box, and, when you decertify, and
39 you want something different, we're going to have to buy a new
40 box, and so I just wish that this was something that we would have
41 taken seriously a couple years ago, and come up with a design to
42 distribute these units in such a way that it would be
43 representative, without having to overshoot the mark now, but we
44 will do whatever we need to do, because we certainly want to meet
45 that mandate.

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Any other
2 questions regarding that Shrimp AP motion that we have listed
3 there? I'm thinking that maybe we will sort of hold this on the
4 side, and go through the Early Adopter Program update, and then
5 come back to this, but you have one more motion, Mr. Sanchez?

6
7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** No, and I have a question. I did not hear, I think,
8 adequate discussion on whether we anticipate having enough server
9 capacity as this ramps up. I would like to hear a little update
10 on that, if we're going to be in shape to when this is fully
11 implemented, and they're on eight-hundred-ish boats, that we're
12 going to have the capacity to store this data.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So we are working on the proposed rule, and what
17 was recommended by the council at this point, right, and we,
18 obviously, are not at the point where we've published that proposed
19 rule, but we are looking at, obviously, the servers and information
20 we have available to us, in terms of using it for this purpose,
21 and we will have that capacity at this point, and so, in terms of
22 the actual server, where it goes, how it's implemented, obviously,
23 that's still to be determined, based on, you know, your
24 recommendations from the previous action.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. I guess
27 back to Dr. Freeman, and we have one more Shrimp AP motion to
28 discuss before coming back to the one you just showed us later.

29
30 **DR. FREEMAN:** All right. A little bit of a maze, and so I'll try
31 to guide you all through it. The other motion came up under Other
32 Business, and so the AP had added an item, which was discussion of
33 funding for the Section 609 sea turtle program.

34
35 The motion there was to recommend that the council requests that
36 NMFS fully utilize the Fiscal Year 2026 \$600,000 appropriation for
37 implementation and enforcement of the Section 609 program to ensure
38 foreign fisheries are maintaining the same standard for sea turtle
39 conservation as our domestic fisheries are required to uphold, and
40 then to recommend that the council requests that NMFS provide a
41 presentation at a future Shrimp AP meeting on how the Fiscal Year
42 2026 \$600,000 will be spent to carry out the implementation
43 enforcement of the Section 609 TED program, and that motion carried
44 unanimously.

45
46 Just, again, to provide a little context about this, that Section

1 609 deals with the potential for shrimp that is harvested with
2 commercial fishing technology from other nations being imported
3 into the U.S., that that is not adversely affecting sea turtles,
4 and, if there's additional legalese questions, I'm going to look
5 down the table to General Counsel for that, and so only if there's
6 additional questions. I'm not going to just put her directly on
7 the spot.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Maybe -- Ms.
10 Bosarge, would you want to speak to this motion, very briefly too,
11 just to give us kind of a summary of what the AP discussed as they
12 came up with this?

13
14 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and I think really the impetus here was that
15 there were some specific funds laid out for this, and we feel like,
16 as an industry here domestically, we've worked very hard, right,
17 to reduce our footprint on the environment, right, bycatch-related
18 footprint, and, luckily, we have people in Congress that passed
19 laws that said, all right, our fishermen are doing the right thing,
20 and they're trying hard, and they're sustainable. If you want to
21 bring wild-caught shrimp into this country, you're going to do the
22 same thing in your wild-capture fisheries. We tried to level that
23 playing field for wild-capture fisheries, right?

24
25 The biggest piece of that now is enforcement, to make sure that
26 any fishery that's harvesting wild shrimp overseas is in fact
27 making sure that they are conserving sea turtles to the same
28 standard that we do here, and so we saw this money coming through,
29 and we said, you know, we never really ask about this, and it's
30 there, and we would like to see what you all do with it, and here's
31 our ideas.

32
33 We have some ideas on what you could do to make sure that these
34 people live up to the same standards that we do, so that we have
35 fair competition, and we would like to see maybe a presentation on
36 it at a future meeting. Tell us what you did do. It's nice, every
37 once in a while, to hear how you're getting on somebody else,
38 instead of us, right, to help us, and I think, really, that was a
39 big -- I was going to bring this up in my comments, and that was
40 one of the things that's been coming up throughout our last several
41 AP meetings for shrimp, is this general sentiment that we're ready
42 for kind of a paradigm shift in the way that our government manages
43 us.

44
45 NMFS generally manages us, right, and a lot of the management, due
46 to the scientific basis of the Magnuson Act, which is wonderful,

1 has been focused on getting us sustainable, right, regulating us,
2 make sure we reduce our bycatch, make sure that the stock is
3 sustainable, and all these things, and we've done that. We have
4 succeeded. You around this table has succeeded in that, and NMFS
5 has succeeded in that.

6
7 As a fishery, the shrimp out there, and the bycatch, we are
8 sustainable. Where we're not sustainable is on the human side, as
9 an industry at this point, and, if you look at the way USDA manages
10 people that feed this country, they make sure that they're being
11 sustainable to the environment, but, at the same time, they try
12 and lift up that industry and support it in any way that they can.

13
14 That next generation of farmers is just as hard to come by as
15 fishermen are, the next generation of fishermen, and we're ready
16 to see some impetus in that direction, in a positive light, right,
17 and what can you do to help sustain our industry, okay, whether
18 that's enforcement, testing imports that are being labeled as
19 domestic, whether that's a marketing program, which I understand
20 you have to collaborate with other parts of the government, and
21 lots of different ideas that we have, but we're ready for that
22 paradigm shift.

23
24 You're going to see your Shrimp Futures project presented to you
25 later, and it paints a very dire picture for my industry. It's
26 time to shift and find some positive things that we can do with
27 this industry, and help this industry, and we don't want to be
28 regulated purely out of business, and so that was the general
29 sentiment. I do have one comment on the shrimp stock assessment,
30 if you want me to go through that now, before you leave the report.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Sure, while you're here.

33
34 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay, and so to shift gears back to your SSC
35 presentation on the new shrimp stock assessment, it is very
36 exciting, and a lot of good work went into it, and I want to thank
37 staff and everybody for giving the SSC and others the time to
38 thoroughly review it.

39
40 We're excited about it. If you can imagine though, that excitement
41 goes in both directions, and so the scientists that created it are
42 excited, because it's a brand-new model. It's never been used to
43 manage any species, period, shrimp or finfish or anything. It has
44 not been used to give management advice for a council to manage
45 under.

1 As a fisherman though, that can be a little scary, okay, and we're
2 going to be the guinea pig. It looks fairly promising, but, if
3 something goes squirrely in that AI algorithm, we're going to be
4 the ones that potentially pay the price, and I say that because,
5 if you look at our fishery on the water, right, we're not in our
6 heyday.

7
8 Our heyday is in the past. That's when we had the highest effort,
9 highest landings, and, even during our heyday, we were never able
10 to crash that stock, from a biological standpoint, right, and so
11 I feel very confident that nothing that we do on the water is going
12 to damage the sustainability of the shrimp biomass.

13
14 However, we have a new stock assessment that is doing things a
15 little different, and so we are a little concerned there. I think
16 the only feedback I would give you from the AP is we had a lot of
17 questions, actually, very scientific, technical questions about
18 the assessment, and we're going to pass those along to the
19 scientists. I hope these things will also be passed along to the
20 scientists that are going to be on your IPT for that new amendment
21 for the status determination criteria.

22
23 Some of the metrics that were set, the AP wondered why they were
24 so overly conservative, given the fact that the working water,
25 from that perspective, the on-the-water perspective, we never
26 crashed the stock, and your effort is declining. We're an industry
27 that's on the decline, and why did we go so overly conservative
28 with some of these metrics?

29
30 For example, minimum stock size threshold was set equal to biomass
31 at MSY, whereas it could be set equal to some percentage of biomass
32 at MSY, and say 75 percent, or some things that we do for other
33 species that are longer lived, and this is an annual crop, and so,
34 by the time you get your assessment, that crop may very well be
35 dead, and you have a whole new biomass out there that's unrelated,
36 and so we wonder --

37
38 We hoped that the IPT, as they move forward, they'll see the SSC's
39 recommendations as the most conservative, essentially, and then
40 we'll have status quo, but we hope to have some additional
41 alternatives somewhere in between there, to at least spur some
42 discussion about is that plausible, or possible, and the same thing
43 goes for pink shrimp, with the MSY that was set at the third-
44 highest catch level.

45
46 The AP asked why not the highest catch level, and you may sit

1 around the table and go, well, that's not very conservative.
2 However, there's a whole layering on of things that that neither
3 really the SSC nor the council has seen as we have progressed
4 through this stock assessment. For example, during the stock
5 assessment process, we completely revamped the historical landings
6 time series, and they weren't small changes in some years.

7
8 We're seeing changes that are on the order of 30 percent lower
9 landings than what we have historically said they were, especially
10 for pink shrimp, and so, prior to this assessment, the highest
11 pink shrimp landings for any year were about thirty-five million,
12 and the SSC set our MSY at nineteen million, because they didn't
13 see that layering on effect. They didn't see that our historical
14 time series -- Now, the max landings has changed to about twenty-
15 one million, and they haven't seen a presentation on what drove
16 that, and why did we revamp them so much, and so do you see what
17 I'm saying?

18
19 There's a layering on effect here that has made some of the metrics
20 that were suggested seem overly conservative, from the fishermen's
21 standpoint, and so we hope that we'll just see some -- At least
22 some less conservative options in between status quo and the SSC
23 recommendations in that IPT document when it comes out, and that's
24 it. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Ms. Bosarge, and we
27 look forward to seeing the AP's -- I'm sorry. Dr. Walter.

28
29 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, and so, in the motion, I see the recommendation
30 for a presentation on the 609 activities to the AP, and I think
31 that's something we can certainly commit to, because we are very
32 active in enforcing those Section 609 regulations overseas, and so
33 I think that would be well received, and we can have staff work on
34 that and schedule that at one of the APs. Thanks.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Mr. Strelcheck.

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'll add that Clay and I have been having
39 some conversations with our management and budget office about the
40 intent of this congressional language, right, and I do want to
41 just emphasize a few things, because the language is nuanced, and
42 it says, within marine mammals, sea turtles, and other species,
43 and so that's essentially our program budget, the committee
44 provides up to \$600,000.

45
46 What's the question, you know, the conversation we've been having

1 is, is this new funding, or is this within the funds that we
2 already receive, and then the expectation is up to \$600,000, and
3 so I just wanted to kind of set some expectations here with regard
4 to we're still trying to figure out exactly what this total amount
5 is, how much the Southeast would receive, or utilize, for,
6 obviously, the 609 program, and I agree with John and, obviously,
7 Clay, and they're doing a lot of great work, and so we can come
8 and talk about this, but I don't expect that it's going to be
9 totaling \$600,000 worth of work in FY 26.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you for that rundown, and so,
12 going forward here, we got the summary from the AP chair, and also
13 her comments towards the stock assessment and the status
14 determination criteria going forward. We look forward to the AP
15 getting to review that, once that document is drafted, before we
16 get it at the council level, and so, on the table here, we have a
17 motion from the AP requesting that the council request that the
18 funding gets fully utilized that NMFS receives, and Andy just spoke
19 to the fact that may not be a full \$600,000, but up to, and would
20 we want to entertain making a motion from the council and modifying
21 the language here a little bit? Mr. Sanchez.

22
23 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'll make the motion that we move as recommended by
24 the AP, what's before us right there on the screen, and I'll agree
25 to, if there's a second, a friendly modification to address that.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so Mr. Sanchez is a motion on the
28 board, with potential modification, and do we have a second to
29 what he's proposing? Mr. Broussard. Okay. Mr. Sanchez, do you
30 want to speak to what you want to modify?

31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Well I like it like it is, but I had heard that the
33 full utilization was kind of a gray area, and so, if we can clean
34 that up, or clarify that, I may be agreeable to that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so, Dr. Freeman.

37
38 **DR. FREEMAN:** I'm going to see if I can assist with some
39 wordsmithing, and I will look to Mr. Strelcheck as well, since he
40 referenced that it may be up to. Would it be helpful then, in the
41 first line, to say fully utilize the Fiscal Year 26 appropriation,
42 and not to reference the \$600,000, and then, similar, in that
43 second sentence, refer to how the Fiscal Year 2026, and just say
44 "appropriations will be spent", and would that be a better
45 phrasing, and so I'm just going to toss that out.

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

2
3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think that confusion would be fully utilizing
4 what amount are we talking about then, right, and so I that's where
5 I think we would struggle, in terms of the clarification that Clay
6 and I have been seeking with regard to the budget language.

7
8 I know it's not the industry's intent, but, you know, it would be
9 more along the lines of the budget language to say to request that
10 NMFS utilize up to \$600,000 in appropriations, right, and then,
11 if, you know, it's determined that we're going to fully utilize
12 \$600,000, or something less than that, then that would be the
13 conversation that could be had.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Sanchez, are you good with that
16 amended language in the motion?

17
18 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Not entirely, because, if we're identifying the
19 dollar amount, and then we're saying up to, then what's the whole
20 purpose of this motion, which is to fully utilize the money in
21 hand, and so, no, I'm not comfortable with that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, just to be clear, right, we don't
26 necessarily think it's new money in-hand, and it's within the
27 existing budget, right, and so the "up to" language is directly
28 from the same congressional budget language that I was quoting
29 earlier.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** C.J.

32
33 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you Mr. Chair. I'm not on your committee,
34 and I'm probably just going to ask a very dumb question right now,
35 but I just don't understand how this would even work. It's like
36 so NMFS is going to enforce foreign fishing fleets and TEDs, and
37 like what are they going to do, go to different countries and do
38 TED enforcements? I'm just a little confused, and, of course, our
39 General Counsel is gone.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Walter.

42
43 **DR. WALTER:** That is exactly that. We send people to Suriname, to
44 India, all over the world, and they go down to the docks, to
45 Mexico, and they find out are they -- Have they got TEDs on their
46 nets, and, if they don't, the State Department will stop imports

1 from that country.

2

3 This has teeth, and this is really doing something, and so this is
4 certainly a program that works to level the playing field for
5 ensuring that other fleets follow the same regulations that we
6 require of our fleets. It's what you think it is.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman

9

10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I really appreciate that context, Dr. Walter.

11

12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so I'm going to circle back to Mr.
13 Sanchez and the language in his motion that we currently have on
14 the board. Are you comfortable with it the way you have it, or
15 would you still want to modify it?

16

17 **MR. SANCHEZ:** How does everybody else feel about it? We're going
18 to have to talk about it.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So your seconder was Mr. Broussard. You're
21 still good with it the way we modified it? Okay. Billy says yes.

22

23 **MR. SANCHEZ:** All right. Then let's go.

24

25 **DR. FREEMAN:** Mr. Sanchez, just to verify, and so, the language
26 that's currently on the screen, this is the original language
27 stemming from the AP, no modifications, and so I just want to make
28 sure that that's capturing your intent, because this is the
29 original AP's -- This is the original language from the Shrimp AP,
30 and so there's no modifications currently on the screen, and I
31 just want to make sure -- I believe Mr. Schieble referenced it was
32 a modified motion, but it's not displaying any modifications, and
33 so I just want to make sure that your intent is for the original
34 motion.

35

36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** The intent was to proceed with the original motion,
37 but, after hearing discussion, I will agree to the modification to
38 up to, if that's what it takes to gain some traction and accomplish
39 something.

40

41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman.

42

43 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, so one follow-up question for Mr. Strelcheck.
44 Staff have added back that language to the first sentence. The
45 second sentence, does it need any modifications, since it's
46 referencing, again, specifically the \$600,000, and does that need

1 to be tweaked at all?

2

3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, you could just generalize it, just to
4 say, at a future Shrimp AP, on how the funding will be spent to
5 carry out the implementation and enforcement of the Section 609
6 program.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez are you good with that modification
9 for the second part?

10

11 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Broussard is good with it as well. Okay,
14 and so we have an amended motion on the board. Do we have any
15 further discussion of the motion as amended? **Seeing none, is**
16 **anyone opposed to the motion on the board? Seeing no opposition**
17 **the motion passes.** Now we're going to move on. Dr. Freeman.

18

19 **DR. FREEMAN:** So a question for the committee, given what we just
20 discussed in the Shrimp AP summary, and would the committee like
21 to consider moving up on the agenda the update on the Early Adopter
22 Program, since that may float a little bit there with the
23 conversation, and then return to the update on the working group?

24

25 So that was a question I asked, and I think I'm seeing some nods
26 of the head, and so, Mr. Schieble, does that seem to suit the
27 committee, to address the Early Adopter Program first?

28

29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I think we can move that on the
30 agenda, and then we could come back to the previous motion that we
31 had on the board after that.

32

33 **UPDATE ON EARLY ADOPTER PROGRAM**

34

35 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Great. I will read the action guide for that
36 item, and I'll give Dr. Gloeckner a moment to be prepared to give
37 that presentation, and so, for this item, the committee will be
38 presented with an update on the Early Adopter Program for the
39 federal Gulf shrimp industry's cellular electronic logbook
40 program. The committee should consider the information presented
41 and ask questions.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Gloeckner, are you still with us?
44 Dr. Gloeckner, if you're talking, we can't hear you.

45

46 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Dr. Lowther's hand is up. Dr. Gloeckner is

1 not on.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Lowther, okay, and are you doing this?

4

5 **DR. LOWTHER:** Yes, and Dr. Gloeckner had to leave today, and so I
6 am filling in.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Perfect. That will work. We have the
9 presentation up whenever you're ready.

10

11 **DR. LOWTHER:** Okay. Thank you. Yes, and so this is an update on
12 our Early Adopter Program, where we've been trying to get position
13 recording devices onto shrimp vessels, with an eye towards
14 replacing the current system.

15

16 In light of the earlier conversation, I would point out that we -
17 - You know, because this program started as a voluntary measure,
18 there wasn't -- You know, we didn't start with a sampling design
19 that would have required vessels to take devices, because we had
20 no authority to do that, because there was no rule from the council
21 telling us to do that, and so we were relying solely on
22 volunteers, and then that complicates the process of getting a
23 statistically robust sample.

24

25 As we move forward, we'll be working with what we have, and then
26 trying to use Dr. Detloff's strategy for, you know, turning this
27 into a statistically-valid sample, and I'll get to that in just a
28 minute, and so if we can move on to the next slide.

29

30 Okay, and so, so far -- This slide shows the devices that have
31 been installed so far, and you'll see that we have -- This is by
32 state and by device, and there's a total of 187 devices that have
33 been installed, and our contractor, LGL Associates, has another
34 ninety-seven vessels on a list waiting to get devices, and so
35 that's 284 volunteers as of a couple of weeks ago when we got the
36 last update.

37

38 This breaks it down by year, but one thing that's important to
39 note is that, you know, because of sort of the vagaries of federal
40 funding, it's been -- The money, even though it's Fiscal Year 23,
41 for example, that money didn't get there, to where they could you
42 know purchase devices on January 1, 2023, and so there's a bit of
43 a lag, and then we had some other delays getting them the 2024
44 money, and so they're actually right now spending FY 2024 money,
45 and then, once that's done, we have the 2025 money in-hand, and so
46 they will start spending that, and so we anticipate that the rate

1 of getting these devices on vessels will ramp up quickly in the
2 coming year, and so we just -- You know, I think that the focus
3 will need to be on installation and outreach and soliciting
4 vessels.

5
6 With the anticipated funding through 2026, and based at the current
7 rate of how much it's costing per vessel, we do anticipate that we
8 would be able to get as many as 884 devices on vessels.

9
10 You'll see, for 2026, there's a larger number than the 850, and
11 that's because, in 2024, we deducted more than we should have for
12 our overhead costs, and now we're correcting that in 2026, but,
13 also, because we have salary lapse, because of staff who have
14 departed, we're able to apply the entire 850 to devices, and so
15 that's why that 2026 number is such a big number, and so for two
16 reasons. One, we're making up \$61,000, and then the second is
17 that we're not assessing any of our internal maintenance tax.

18
19 Anyway, that will -- Potentially, that gets us up to approximately
20 880 devices, with over \$2.2 million going to the Gulf States
21 Commission, and that 884 compares to a current number of vessels
22 with permits of 1,192, and then, if you look at just active
23 vessels, vessels with landings, and I think we used landings in
24 the last two years, that's 854, and so, theoretically, we could
25 cover the entire active fleet at least.

26
27 The sampling frame, and the strategy, is to target at least 630
28 vessels with permits, and, again, that's to get at this wording of
29 equal or better than the past ten years of coverage, and so that
30 was -- That would get us there, and so we're going to set up a
31 system so that we look at proportional coverage of vessels within
32 five areas, based on this breakdown, and then three seasons, and
33 so January to April, May to August, and September to December, and
34 so we'll have a total of fifteen space-time cells that we would be
35 trying to allocate sample to.

36
37 The way we will try to do this is by looking at -- By trying to
38 get an unbiased sample by including the early adopters, but we'll
39 further divide vessels in those blocks by the last three years of
40 landings, and then we'll assign them to top third, middle third,
41 bottom third.

42
43 Then the vessels that already have devices will be removed from
44 the frame, and we'll try to get target coverage within each of the
45 fifteen -- Well, forty-five at this point, space-time landings
46 blocks, and so we'll be trying to select vessels to fill out the

1 survey, so that -- To fill out the sample so that it's
2 representative.

3
4 The asterisk there is just there's the potential that increased
5 levels of monitoring could be considered if that was required to
6 address interactions with protected species, or endangered
7 species, and so we could adjust. At this level of stratification,
8 we could adjust, and oversample certain cells if we needed to,
9 without creating a biased sample.

10
11 For now what we're -- In terms of a timeframe, and this was a
12 specific question, what we're currently doing is receiving data,
13 making sure that it's in the correct format, and that, therefore,
14 it could be the input data to our effort algorithm, which is
15 currently being used with the with the CELB data, and so that is
16 the case. The data is being received, and it is coming in in the
17 right format.

18
19 Sort of what we're doing now is monitoring the data quality. We
20 want to make sure that the vendors are still able to send the data
21 through the API, that we can accept the quantity of data that we're
22 receiving, and then just doing some checks on the quality of the
23 data, and so, as was discussed earlier, we're -- At this point,
24 we're not having any issues with accepting the quantity of the
25 data received. If that, you know, suddenly triples, potentially
26 there would be an issue, but I don't really think so. I think
27 that the process is solid, and I don't see that that would be an
28 issue.

29
30 What we're looking towards is, once there's a rule in place that
31 that defines this, you know, what we're calling the Early Adopter
32 as the actual official method, the official data collection
33 program, then we can switch over to what we've been talking about,
34 this Early Adopter, and make that the basis for Gulf shrimp effort
35 estimation. I guess that's it, and so I'll take any questions at
36 this point.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Lowther. Do we have any
39 questions on the presentation? None? I guess okay. Well, thank
40 you for the presentation, Dr. Lowther. Good job on that.

41
42 **DR. LOWTHER:** You're welcome.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I guess, Bernie, can you bring up the motion
45 that we previously had up there earlier? It should be Motion
46 Number 3, I believe, request NMFS adopts the following priorities

1 utilizing the Fiscal Year 26 \$850,000 appropriations. Yes, and
2 that's it.

3
4 Okay, so this was the motion as presented from the Shrimp AP. In
5 discussing that, we talked about potentially some edits to this
6 earlier, and so I guess we need to get a formal motion on the board
7 from the council, if we so choose that we want to do that at this
8 point. Mr. Sanchez.

9
10 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'll move that we get that as it reads right there
11 up on the board, and then we can work on it from there.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Perfect. Do we have a second for Mr. Sanchez's
14 motion. Mr. Broussard. Okay, and so the motion reads to request
15 that National Marine Fisheries Service adopts the following
16 priorities for utilizing the Fiscal Year 26 \$850,000 appropriation
17 for ELB development and implementation: 1)sufficient funding to
18 ensure the Southeast Fisheries Science Center server has
19 sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel
20 position data; 2)develop a statistically-robust design for
21 distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that
22 will be comparable to the last ten years; 3)cover the cost of
23 providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels,
24 pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.

25
26 I would like to offer up a friendly amendment to some of the
27 language in here. First of all, Number 1, crossing out "sufficient
28 funding to" and then just capitalize "ensure" and start out with
29 that as the beginning, and so it would read "ensure the Southeast
30 Fisheries Science Center server has sufficient capacity to receive
31 and store shrimp fishery vessel position data".

32
33 Then the second amendment would be, under Number 2, instead of the
34 "representative portion of the fleet that would be comparable to
35 the last ten years", it would be "representative portion of the
36 fleet that would be equal to or greater than the last ten years",
37 which was similar to the original AP motion from 2024 that Matt
38 read to us earlier. So that would be "equal to or greater than
39 the last ten years", Bernie.

40
41 **DR. FREEMAN:** Under Number 2?

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Under Number 2, yes. Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** As I mentioned earlier, we're, obviously, working
46 on the rulemaking for the ELB, and there's been no final decision

1 made in terms of where the data will be housed, and so I would
2 recommend removing "Science Center" and replacing it with "NMFS",
3 as a friendly amendment.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Bernie, can you put the acronym National
6 Marine Fisheries Service, or NMFS, there? Thank you. Okay. We've
7 made a few changes here. Mr. Sanchez, are you good with these
8 amendments to your motion?
9

10 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes.
11

12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Broussard is good with it, as the seconder.
13 Any discussion around the table on this motion? All right. **Seeing**
14 **no further discussion, does anyone oppose the motion as written?**
15 **Seeing no opposition, the motion passes.**
16

17 Moving to the next item on the agenda, which is going backwards on
18 the agenda, to the Presentation and Update on the Working Group
19 for Shrimp Bycatch Methodology for Finfish Species, and Dr.
20 Froeschke, right?
21

22 **PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON WORKING GROUP FOR SHRIMP BYCATCH**
23 **METHODOLOGY FOR FINFISH SPECIES**
24

25 **DR. FREEMAN:** The action guide for this item, the committee will
26 be presented with an update from the March 2026 meeting of the
27 working group. The committee should consider the information
28 presented and ask questions, and, if he's unmuted, we have Dr.
29 Froeschke.
30

31 **DR. FROESCHKE:** All right. Whenever you can pull up my
32 presentation, and I envisioned this as two slides, and so it only
33 turned into eleven, and so not too bad.
34

35 Just to kind of get you up to speed a little bit, this workgroup
36 was formed by the council in November 2025, based on some ongoing
37 discussions and new information, and so the Science Center has
38 been working very hard on a new method to estimate shrimp trawl
39 bycatch and integrate this information into new stock assessments.
40

41 This information was reviewed by the council's SSC in May of 2025.
42 Through no fault of anyone's, it was a virtual presentation, and
43 I don't know that we fully grasped the complexity of what was in
44 everything that it takes to do this, and so the SSC didn't think
45 that they had really enough time, or information, and so they
46 requested some additional information and to review at a future

1 time.

2

3 The other thing, given what we just decided to do, is to form a
4 workgroup that could dive into this a little bit deeper and provide
5 some recommendations for the SSC to help move this process along.

6

7 In November, you all appointed a workgroup, and, as you can see on
8 here, the members on the screen, it's a fairly comprehensive group
9 of SSC members, council staff, Special Shrimp SSC, as well as the
10 Science Center and SERO staff and Shrimp AP members, and so there's
11 a fairly broad brush of expertise and experience in this group,
12 and we were trying to figure out how to move this along.

13

14 If you look at the date, we met on March 30, which is a long time
15 from November, and we had to get the group populated, and there
16 were government shutdowns, and we had a hard time connecting with
17 the Science Center on how and what to do, and so, once we kind of
18 got that resolved, we did meet, and what was presented from the
19 Science Center was billed as a soup-to-nuts presentation on how
20 this was done. It was a very thorough and comprehensive
21 presentation, and it was very informative.

22

23 We probably underestimated how much information was there, and how
24 much time was needed to go through that, and so, the next time
25 this group hopefully gets together, we'll try to schedule some
26 more time.

27

28 The workgroup did provide some initial feedback, that I'll go
29 through here, and we requested some additional information that
30 would be helpful in providing the recommendations to the SSC that
31 we'll go through.

32

33 Kind of the key takeaways here, the first one is kind of a given,
34 but the bycatch information is very important, not only for the
35 shrimp fishery but as far as the requirements for example for the
36 juvenile red snapper bycatch. That is part of their limitations
37 to the shrimp fishery, and so it's important that we get that
38 correct.

39

40 The shrimp data collection program, like many others, has changed
41 a lot over time. There was the period of where the ELBs were
42 working and transmitting automatically, and that was working
43 pretty well. More recently, we've gone to a mail-in period, and
44 then we're transitioning to what we're calling the Early Adopters,
45 and so there's a lot of things to think about, both going back in
46 time and then as we move forward, of how this will work.

1
2 All the way back to some internal conversations at the Science
3 Center, this all started in looking at their own methods, and how
4 this was done, and they had some initial discussions on could this
5 be done better, or are there things that we need to consider how
6 it was done, and so props to them for taking a look at this, and
7 they -- You know, they investigated this.

8
9 What they call their legacy code was pretty complicated just to
10 make work, and, once they did that, they identified some potential
11 areas of concern, meaning that, if you take, for example, the catch
12 of shrimp, they think that the total known catch through the trip
13 ticket program is correct, and, by extension, if you the observer
14 program -- If you take those landings from the observer, and
15 extrapolate it all the way upwards, it should approximately match
16 the trip tickets, in terms of total landings, and, you know, sort
17 of one other thing is the way that you would do that for shrimp is
18 really the same as you would do it for like juvenile red snapper,
19 and it's just a different species, but it's the same -- It's the
20 same program.

21
22 What they figured out is, once they did that, those weren't
23 matching up, and that the trip ticket was consistently higher, and
24 they said then, okay, well, what's the problem, and, you know, all
25 the way back from is it the effort, and there's all these different
26 factors.

27
28 Sort of what they figured out is that it's not at the base level,
29 and the observer data is correct, and it's the scaling up, with
30 the effort, CPUE, all these other things that probably need to be
31 delved into, and so that's the process they went through to try to
32 figure out what the areas of concern were and potentially how they
33 could be improved, and so they've made a number of recommendations
34 on how to improve it.

35
36 I'll try to give you just a little bit of a taste of some of the
37 of how this works, without giving -- You know, making it
38 overwhelming, and, to the full extent, we're trying to at least -
39 - As a council staff, I'm trying to understand this, but I'm by no
40 means the expert. That's the Science Center, but, in general, I'm
41 using this for bycatch, and it's really shrimp catch is the same,
42 but we're kind of using those interchangeably, since the focus of
43 this group is on the bycatch, but it's a classic formula, and so,
44 in this case, bycatch is a function of the bycatch per unit effort
45 times the effort.

46

1 What this group was trying to understand is if there were changes
2 made to both of those, and so the bycatch, at its core, is estimated
3 by observers working on vessels that sample trips, that each have
4 individual tows composed of one or more nets that are subsampled
5 into buckets, into those buckets.

6
7 Once you start all the way from there's bycatch in a bucket that's
8 extrapolated up to the number of buckets, potentially the number
9 of nets times the number of trips times the number of vessels that
10 are applicable in the strata, okay, and so the strata is
11 essentially a way to break up the Gulf into smaller physical units,
12 such that the catch can be representative of those, but not be
13 extrapolated to areas beyond either the time or space, which that
14 might not be appropriate.

15
16 For the purposes of this map, you can see on here the color-coded
17 areas are the four -- There are four spatial strata, yellow, green,
18 purple, and red. Within those, there are three depth zones, and
19 there are four seasons, I think, and so there -- If you multiply
20 those together, there are thirty-six strata, okay, and so, with
21 each of those -- So, for example, an observer edit effort would be
22 mapped to one of those strata.

23
24 What you could see is, if you figure out all those different
25 strata, it would take a fair amount of observer coverage, which is
26 already limited, and so it gets complicated quickly. The effort,
27 and I kind of illustrate it in the formula, primarily comes from
28 the shrimp ELB data.

29
30 Now that we've got the simpleness of the strata, what the Science
31 Center -- I'm saying Science Center, and they hire contractors,
32 and so they work together, and so I'm using those terms
33 interchangeably, but it is their staff and their expertise.

34
35 What they further investigated, and so, on an individual vessel,
36 some vessels are primarily two-net vessels, and some primarily are
37 four-net vessels, and then, in terms of how they actually shrimp,
38 some shrimp during the day, and some shrimp during the night, and
39 what they looked at was, well, does this matter, in terms of catch
40 rate, and they looked at this for brown shrimp, white shrimp, and
41 red snapper, which is illustrated here.

42
43 What they found is that the composition of the -- Whether it's day
44 versus night, or two nets versus four, matters greatly on the
45 estimated bycatch rate, and so you can see here, for juvenile red
46 snapper, the N4, and so night and four-net vessels, had a much

1 higher rate, and so incorporating this as an additional level of
2 stratification is how they've moved forward as a recommendation
3 to-date.

4
5 We talked a little bit about this. The workgroup, which I'll get
6 to, had some follow-up questions to try to better understand what
7 are the implications of this, but, in the work recommended to-
8 date, and would be applied to the stock assessments going forward
9 to-date, this is how it would be done.

10
11 I kind of mentioned here that we had a three-hour meeting. This
12 presentation took at least that long, and so we kind of tried to
13 move ahead, so we could get at least some preliminary discussions,
14 acknowledging that this is going to take some more time for
15 discussion to better understand this and what ultimately might be
16 the best path forward.

17
18 One of the recommendations from the group, or I'm not sure if it's
19 a recommendation, and it's probably more of a request, is
20 presentations on the species-specific shrimp effort estimates to
21 better inform this, and so, what I presented there, the strata are
22 pink, brown, and white.

23
24 These can be decomposed into species-specific estimates, although
25 there are some complications to how that's done, and so the
26 workgroup would like to learn more about that. The other thing
27 that the observer program -- Not every taxa is identified down to
28 species, for example, and there's hundreds of species, and so that
29 makes sense, and so there's a subset of species that are identified
30 to species, or some higher taxa, but that's not been consistent
31 throughout the entire duration of the observer program, and the
32 observer program is being improved subsequent, or ongoing, and so
33 there are some additional changes, and so we want to learn more
34 about that and how that extrapolation of that feeds into this
35 process, and so that's a recommendation for a presentation.

36
37 We discussed -- On the gear selectivity, we did discuss the two
38 versus four nets, the day versus night, and you can see the
39 differences in the graph, plain as day, and so that part, given
40 that we have not included this level of stratification in the past,
41 there was some question about, well, if you didn't do it, how
42 different would it be, and is this a big factor or not?

43
44 For example, if the composition of the fleet was all a single two-
45 net, or four-net, or day versus night, it probably wouldn't matter
46 very much, because there's not much -- But we don't understand

1 that, and we would like to learn more about that, as well as if
2 there are spatial patterns and how those are.

3
4 Like, for example, the two-nets are likely inshore vessels, and so
5 we would like to learn about that, because those strata may have
6 a different bycatch composition than the other ones, and so we're
7 trying to figure that out.

8
9 We're requesting a presentation on the protocols to expand the
10 bycatch, and so I kind of alluded to this, although I don't fully
11 understand it, but if you think about it, at the sample unit,
12 there's a five-gallon bucket that's enumerated for the bycatch,
13 that there might be several buckets that come from bycatch from
14 one net, and there might be multiple nets on a haul, and that
15 vessel may make multiple hauls during a trip, and that trip may be
16 expanded to the effort of the vessel in the strata. There may be
17 many vessels, and so that may be -- There's lots of rooms for
18 expansion, and so it sounds really easy when you just describe it
19 at a high level, but you can get pretty lost when you go through
20 the nuts and bolts and try to ask questions, and so we were just
21 -- We want to learn more about that.

22
23 Then the other part of this is the gray triggerfish stock
24 assessment is ongoing, and so this will likely feed into that in
25 some way.

26
27 I mentioned that the observable program doesn't characterize all
28 species. Gray triggerfish was not a species that was historically
29 characterized, and so there was use of a proxy species. This is
30 kind of a one-off method, and we want to learn more about how this
31 works, so we can understand it and see if there are limitations or
32 other things to be considered for the use of this process. There's
33 a question.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker.

36
37 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, John. What does using a lane snapper as a
38 gray trigger proxy mean, because I've been on some shrimp boats in
39 south Florida, and there was a zillion lane snapper, and no
40 triggerfish, and I saw no relationship, in my experience, between
41 those two. I mean, there are literally thousands of lane snapper
42 on these boats. I don't know how you can have any correlation to
43 triggerfish with lane snapper.

44
45 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I'm going to ask the Science Center if they would,
46 or Dr. Simmons.

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CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Well, I can try to help, and so I think this is something that the group wants to see more of, and it will come back to the SSC, and then the council again, but the issue, I mean, from the old information, and not including 2025, is the observer data did not characterize gray triggerfish.

During the stock assessment for gray triggerfish, they were trying to update that information, to rerun it in the model, and what was happening is, because that species wasn't characterized in the observer data, what were they going to use for that, right, because, in the previous assessment, shrimp trawl bycatch, particularly in the western Gulf, they thought played a large part in mortality of the species, and so they felt that they had to come up with a proxy.

With the contractors and the scientists on staff, that's one of the things they were looking at, via a working paper is to see is there a proxy species that could be used for gray triggerfish, because they're not currently characterized in the observer data.

The question is we're asking for more information on that, with the methodology and the rationale to go to this working group, and it will go to the SSC, council, SEDAR, all those types of things after that, because I think they felt like they had to come up with something, but is that the right approach, and I think that was what the working group was asking for more information on.

The SSC, in May, got a little bit of information on gray triggerfish. In 2025, the focus was primarily red snapper, and so it was supposed to be the general bycatch methodology for finfish, then it's applied to red snapper, then it's applied to gray triggerfish, as it moves through the stock assessment process.

The issue has been this has been such a long process, and there's slightly different changes and methodologies being used, based on the data that's available, when we get into those stock assessments, and we don't really have necessarily all the right experts, particularly folks that are very intimately involved in the shrimp fleet, involved in those data workshops, and so that was the point of this working group, taking a deep dive into that and bringing those recommendations to the SSC.

The SSC, as a whole body, would get that information, with the

1 Special Shrimp SSC, and they would see those recommendations, and
2 so I think that's what the group is asking for next, and so we've
3 gone through red snapper. We've asked for some different
4 clarification there with the group. Gray triggerfish is next, and
5 then king mackerel will follow, based on the assessment schedule,
6 and so hopefully that makes sense.

7
8 **DR. FROESCHKE:** All right, and so that last bullet -- That last
9 bullet there on the requested summary, and so the gray triggerfish
10 is now being characterized in the observer program, and so what
11 we're requesting here is just to pull the data that was collected
12 in 2025 and just see how many gray triggerfish were in there.

13
14 You know, it's our understanding that, using the proxy, there would
15 be quite a few that would be estimated by proxy, and we just want
16 to see if these are actually being harvested, or being caught, or
17 not, and so that's what that's about.

18
19 So kind of the next steps, and this is where it gets a little bit
20 dicey, and our goal is to provide the workgroup's recommendation
21 to the SSC meeting on May 26. The SSC meets in early May, the 5th
22 and the 6th, which means that, in order for this group to meet and
23 provide recommendations, it would, obviously, have to be prior to
24 that. The SSC meeting materials are usually due April 28, by the
25 end, and so we would want some time before that.

26
27 It's already well into April, but that's what we're hoping to do,
28 given the stock assessment schedule, as we understand it. If that
29 were the case, then we would provide the recommendations from the
30 SSC, along with these workgroups, to the council, to you all, at
31 the next meeting. Once we get through the finfish, then we start
32 working on the protected resources.

33
34 The next steps, just to kind of take a dive into the timeline,
35 like I said, we've had a lot of difficulty getting this group
36 together. There's some of the factors beyond our control, with
37 shutdowns and things. The timing, and just trying to get
38 availability of the Science Center staff, has been very
39 challenging, and so it took a long time to find a time and get
40 that going.

41
42 I mentioned that the bulk of the work was prepared by the
43 contractors to the Science Center, and so we don't have direct
44 access to them, and their workload is dictated by the Science
45 Center, and presumably they've moved on to other things, and so to
46 get them to come back to this has been challenging for us to

1 facilitate that process.

2

3 This time, you know, we had hoped to have this information in time
4 that the workgroup could get it, and we didn't get it until right
5 before the meeting. It was a Monday morning meeting, and we got
6 it on Friday or Saturday morning, and so it was difficult. We
7 hope to work on that better in the future, but it's just that's
8 been a challenge.

9

10 As I mentioned, through no fault of anyone, we had a three-hour
11 meeting, and we probably needed twice that time, but trying to
12 figure out -- It was difficult to find a period where people could
13 attend for three hours, much less start getting into longer blocks,
14 and it just was difficult, and so those are some of the things
15 that, you know, have challenged the process so far, but we do look
16 forward to continuing to work on this, and it's interesting, and
17 the work that has gone into this is impressive, but it's
18 challenging work. I think that's the last slide.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Do we have any questions for Dr.
21 Froeschke regarding the presentation? Dr. Walter.

22

23 **DR. WALTER:** Thanks, John, and I don't envy you summarizing all of
24 that work and trying to get it to fit into twelve slides, and so
25 thanks for putting that together.

26

27 I think one of the things that would be good to have is some
28 prioritization of which stock assessments, and which particular
29 aspects of the stock assessments, that the group really wants to
30 address, because we started out with an all-things-bycatch
31 presentation, and we were doing a lot of background material, but
32 that will potentially not meet the stock assessment --

33

34 If we continue to do that, we may not meet the needs of getting
35 into the stock assessment, and so I think it's time probably to
36 have some clear prioritization as to which input to the stock
37 assessment the group really wants to drill into, and that may mean
38 putting off some of the background material, the diving into some
39 of the other species, and some of the other requests, if the goal
40 is to, and I'll be very specific, address how bycatch is input
41 for, say, gray triggerfish, and so I'm just wondering whether some
42 narrowing of the focus, given the timeline, is useful and
43 necessary. Thanks.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Dr. Froeschke.

46

1 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and, to that end, I mean, we've been asked to
2 request, try to formalize all this in a request to the Science
3 Center, which we're working on, and we plan to winnow that down as
4 best we can.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mara.

7
8 **MS. LEVY:** So, I mean, I wasn't here in November when you formed
9 this committee. I'm just going to remind you that this is
10 essentially an AP, and it needs to be conducted as such, in terms
11 of business, and so it needs to be noticed. It needs to be open
12 to the public. You need to follow all those procedures whenever
13 this working group intends to meet next. Thanks.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you. Ms. Levy. Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and one other comment, and so given, John,
18 what you just outlined, in terms of some of the challenges with
19 this workgroup proceeding, my other concern is the timeframe,
20 obviously, to complete this work and then transition to the
21 protected resources work, right, because that's now ongoing with
22 the South Atlantic, and I think it's critical that we have some
23 overlap of those two working groups.

24
25 We want to work with the councils to address these very sticky
26 take-related issues under the ESA as we work on re-initiation of
27 the BiOp, and so I think we need to be thinking about how can we
28 start at least standing up the workgroup for the protected
29 resources, so that they're ready to hit the ground running by the
30 time this group actually completes their work.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons, and then Dr. Sweetman.

33
34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
35 we may have to consider a different approach. I don't really think
36 this is working very well, especially if we have to notice it in
37 the FRN, and so I would not be in favor of moving forward with a
38 protected resources working group until we nail down some of these
39 basics for finfish, because I think there's still a lot of
40 questions, and I don't think we had enough time available really
41 for the group to really engage and ask anything other than
42 technical questions.

43
44 I mean, we can't make people's time available, but I do think, if
45 we really want to put our heart into this, and really make an
46 effort towards making things better, and understandable, that

1 we're going to have to make it a priority, meaning not just us,
2 the council, but the Science Center and the Regional Office.

3
4 I'm not pointing fingers, but I will say that we had a very
5 difficult time getting this large number of people together, and
6 I expect -- We had a maximum of fifteen, I think, for the protected
7 resources, but the contention for protected resources, and that
8 effort, I think, will make it even more difficult if we don't get
9 this kind of under our belt right now. That's my two-cents.

10

11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman.

12

13 **MR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I guess my question -- Sorry, and I'm not
14 on the committee there, but I don't disagree with what Carrie is
15 saying. I guess my question is, for the protected resources
16 component, I'm concerned about any time-certain deadlines that we
17 need to operate under relative to kind of what Ms. Lee had
18 previously presented for some of those things there.

19

20 I don't know if anyone from our federal colleagues over there can
21 let us know when -- Andy has highlighted that we need to, you know,
22 at least set up, form up, the protected resources working group,
23 so they're ready to go, and so I'm just wondering kind of when
24 we've checked off the box that we're doing what we need to do,
25 from a statutory deadline, relative to that protected resources
26 working group issue.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. To that point, Mr. Strelcheck, and then
29 we have Dr. Porch.

30

31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and Jenny Lee is listening, and she may want
32 to also add onto my comments, but, you know, recall it was several
33 years ago already that we -- I believe we were here in Alabama,
34 and we kind of updated you on the process for reinitiation.

35

36 We talked, at that time, about some work that needed to be done,
37 including population viability analyses, you know, and information
38 still being provided with regard to estimates of bycatch and
39 observer coverage, and you name it, and so we are, obviously, kind
40 of quickly approaching completion of that work, and we've stood up
41 these working groups because, in our view, the next step is to
42 work with the councils on some solutions, so that, as we go into
43 the BiOp process, that we are working hand-in-hand as part of the
44 approach, obviously, to reduce take for these particular species.

45

46 Is there a specific timing component? No. I mean, there's not a

1 deadline out in the future, but, obviously, each month that goes
2 by pushes that timeline back, and there is certainly risk, with
3 the BiOp being reinitiated, that we would need to, you know, move
4 forward as quickly as possible.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and, Dr. Porch, you had your hand up
7 earlier?

8
9 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, and, just so we don't end on too negative a note,
10 just to reiterate that we have initiated the specialized
11 subsampling for gray trigger of the observer program for gray
12 trigger and king mackerel and other species, and so, moving
13 forward, this will be easier. It's just a case that we looked
14 under the hood, and the type of sampling that was done in the past
15 was, obviously, not completely adequate, which is why they got
16 into all these discussions about proxies and all that.

17
18 Red snapper was the only one where we had a concerted sampling
19 program, where we could say it was fairly representative, and so
20 I think this will be easier as we move forward, once we get that
21 2025 data, and, you know, possibly we can move forward with this
22 working group looking at that data in time to incorporate it in
23 the upcoming king mackerel and gray trigger assessments.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Froeschke.

26
27 **DR. FROESCHKE:** One more thought. Bernie, can you go back to one
28 slide? I guess what I just want to make sure everyone understands,
29 in my view, is many of the issues, or almost all of the issues,
30 that are relevant to protected resources are the same thing here.

31
32 For example, one of the requests, and maybe it's the previous one,
33 was to understand the species-specific effort estimates, and so,
34 when I mentioned in the presentation, based off the work the
35 Science Center contractor presented to us, the trip tickets they
36 said, were accurate at the aggregate level.

37
38 However, at the species level, I think there are ongoing concerns,
39 and they can correct me if I'm wrong, but, for example, a protected
40 resource, something like sawfish, and that's a pink shrimp fishery
41 interaction, and so, if you don't have the pink shrimp fishery
42 effort correct, it's going to be -- Your extrapolations, or your
43 expansion factors, are going to be off, and so those are the kinds
44 of things that we're still just trying to figure out.

45
46 If we just go to the protected resources without understanding it

1 for this, it's not going to be any easier. I mean, finfish is
2 going to be easier, because the expansion factor is going to be
3 less, because you're going to have more data, and so all the
4 reasons we have to better understand this before we move forward,
5 as I see it.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. One
8 question from me, I guess, going forward, and forgive my ignorance
9 on this, but, if the South Atlantic is at the protected resources
10 level already, working on that in their working group, did they go
11 through the finfish bycatch already, before that, or did they just
12 start with that? Do you know what they did, C.J.? Did they start
13 with the protected resources right out of the gate, without finfish
14 bycatch? Okay. That's what I thought. Dr. Simmons.

15
16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I'm not familiar with what's happening
17 as I probably should be in the South Atlantic, but I think the
18 datasets, and the cELBs, and everything that we have in the Gulf,
19 as far as estimating effort in the fleet, is very different than
20 the South Atlantic, and so I don't know if we can just make those
21 comparisons without fully understanding some of that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** No, and I wasn't trying to make a comparison.
24 I was after looking, if they had already gone through these steps,
25 what was the outcome of their meetings, is what I was trying to
26 get at, but they didn't do finfish, and so -- Dr. Freeman.

27
28 **DR. FREEMAN:** I'll just add that there was South Atlantic staff
29 that asked to sit in on our March meeting for that purpose, so
30 they could see what we were addressing, so that, when they did
31 meet to address that, they would not be necessarily reinventing
32 the wheel.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, it's a really different process,
37 right, and maybe for all the reasons, but they're not vetting,
38 reviewing, evaluating the data upfront. They jumped into really
39 looking at what is the information before them, what are practical
40 solutions, things that they could offer with regard to management
41 to help with addressing take of manta rays and smalltooth sawfish.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Walter, did you have your hand up?

44
45 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, and so, on the prioritization that I think the
46 council staff are putting together, focusing on the pending stock

1 assessments I think is going to be key, in terms of the timing.
2 If there is a specific request to say change the treatment of how
3 bycatch is dealt with for triggerfish, then we could focus on those
4 pending issues, and try to get them done, because I do believe the
5 timeframe on some of these other requests is going to be longer
6 than what the recommendation here is, particularly if we're going
7 to go through many of the deep dives into the other aspects of how
8 the data is collected, schedule the meetings, noting the challenges
9 in scheduling them, and so I would just reiterate the need to focus
10 on the most pressing issues right now, to be able to get them into
11 the stock assessments, if that is indeed the concern. Thanks.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Because it's kind of come up in this conversation,
16 I would ask if we could have Jenny Lee just provide a very short
17 synopsis of the first South Atlantic meetings, just give you an
18 idea of what was discussed, how they're going about their business,
19 if that's okay.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Hold on to that for a second. Do we have time
22 for that now, or do we want to make that during Full Council for
23 the next agenda items? Okay, and it's sounding like we may come
24 back to the two Other Business items, and what you're talking
25 about, Mr. Strelcheck, after lunch, and does that work, or do we
26 need to do it now, from a logistic standpoint with Jenny Lee?

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** She's available after lunch.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez.

31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** A quick question before we break for lunch. When
33 does the shrimp bycatch, finfish bycatch, working group meet again?
34 I know we have an SSC in May, but are we going to talk to see if
35 the priorities that they established in March, those big-ticket
36 items, if they're going to be, you know, revisited, or given some
37 direction, before the SSC in May?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So I believe Dr. Freeman sent out a doodle
40 poll, and he's soliciting open dates from folks to schedule the
41 next one.

42
43 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, as Mr. Schieble said, I sent out a doodle poll,
44 towards the end of last week, with some dates and times for the
45 last two weeks of April, so that as well the summary could be
46 prepared in time for the SSC meeting. There's some concern right

1 now if this meeting has to be noticed, and we may have to revamp
2 those dates. We'll have to see if there's enough time for the
3 working group to meet prior to that SSC meeting.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.
6

7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think we need to think about maybe
8 a different process. I know maybe we could have the group meet
9 right before the SSC meeting or something like that, because, if
10 we have to notice this in the Federal Register -- I mean, we're
11 getting ready to submit the SSC Federal Register notice, and so,
12 essentially, we're out of time already, if we have to notice the
13 meeting for the working group.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and it sounds like we're going to take
16 the lunch break now and return to the two Other Business items
17 after we come back from the lunch break, and so, Dr. Gervasi, if
18 you're listening, that's the plan here, and so when will we return,
19 Mr. Chair?
20

21 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Yes, and we'll take our lunch
22 break and return at 1:30 as scheduled.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So stand by for 1:30 Central Time, please.
25

26 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on April 7, 2026.)
27

28 - - -
29

30 April 7, 2026
31

32 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION
33

34 - - -
35

36 The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened at
37 The Battle House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday
38 afternoon, April 7, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Chris
39 Schieble.
40

41 **MR. DUGAS:** All right. Welcome back from lunch. Thank you, all.
42 Before I turn it back over to Mr. Schieble, I would like to thank
43 Mr. Johnny Greene being here, a past council member, and, also, my
44 fault, and Ms. Leann Bosarge has been here all morning as well,
45 previous council members. Thank you, all. Mr. Schieble.
46

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll reconvene the
2 Shrimp Management Committee. Dr. Freeman, can you guide us into
3 the next step with the working group stuff?
4

5 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so I think where we left off, right
6 before lunch, is Mr. Strelcheck had suggested that a member of
7 SERO give a very brief synopsis. I recognize we're pressed for
8 time, and I believe Ms. Lee is on the webinar, and, if she could
9 address that, and, again, since this wasn't on the agenda,
10 hopefully we'll try to keep it very brief, like a minute or two,
11 just an overview of what the South Atlantic has done with their
12 working group on protected resources.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Ms. Lee, can you hear us?
15

16 **MS. LEE:** I can. Good afternoon, and thank you for giving me just
17 a couple of minutes to share a little information that might be
18 pertinent to your discussion, and so, as you heard, it was March
19 24th, and so not too long ago, the South Atlantic ESA Working Group
20 met to embark basically on the same task that you all made a motion
21 last August to do, which is to get a group together to review
22 information and assess what possibly could be done to minimize
23 smalltooth sawfish and giant manta ray interactions.
24

25 The first meeting was all about just getting everybody on the same
26 page, and so, essentially, it was just workgroup introductions,
27 some background on the workgroup goals and objectives, and then I
28 gave a presentation on the ESA Section 7 and integration with the
29 Magnuson-Stevens Act policy, reviewing so that everyone kind of
30 had an understanding of how the working group's goals and
31 objectives fit in with the Section 7 consultation timeline and
32 working through the council, and then we briefly went over some
33 available data sources.
34

35 We just walked through some resources that I had started to
36 compile, along with the council, and then, from there, we went
37 into what the agenda described as a facilitated information
38 gathering session, but, really, what we wanted to do was, again,
39 just in acclimating everybody to the issue, we broke down
40 information relative to shrimp fishery information, species
41 biological research and data, and then bycatch and bycatch impacts
42 reduction information.
43

44 Really, the goal of that first meeting was just to talk about,
45 okay, well, what information is pertinent to looking at potential
46 ways to minimize interactions and mortality, and so, getting the

1 working group to think about are these the right questions relative
2 to the shrimp fishery that we need to know, and do we have the
3 right information, and do you have questions that it looks like
4 we're not getting at relative to the species, and the same thing
5 with what we have for our bycatch and bycatch impacts reduction.

6
7 The group really just kind of wrapped their heads around what it
8 was we were doing, talked a little bit about different, you know,
9 parts of information. There was a focus on wanting to kind of
10 overlay what we knew based on, you know, where the fishery occurred
11 relative to where the animals, based on their behavior, where and
12 what particular animals would likely be encountered and some of
13 the information.

14
15 It was really just an introductory meeting trying to focus around
16 the purpose and set up for the second meeting, which we don't have
17 a draft agenda, per se, but there's an understanding that it would
18 focus on, you know, the smalltooth sawfish and giant manta ray
19 kind of key presentation on the species, and then looking at the
20 observer and bycatch estimate data that we have, and then trying
21 to think about what we want to put together, but there was a
22 recognition at the meeting of, of course, the status of the shrimp
23 fishery.

24
25 We did talk about, you know, the information that was available,
26 and maybe what wasn't available, but the real focus of it was,
27 with the available information, what are some -- You know, the
28 goal is to work towards what are some things that can be done to
29 minimize impacts, and, just as a reminder, you know, as I said, I
30 outlined the integration policy of ESA and MSA, and so, again,
31 where we are is that, you know, under that policy, councils and
32 everybody wanted to engage in this process, and so we're trying to
33 upfront bring you along and think about what can be done to
34 minimize.

35
36 At the end of the day, when a biological is written, even if it's
37 a non-jeopardy opinion, there's still terms and conditions. We
38 still have to minimize the amount of take that is authorized, and
39 so, at any level, there needs to be feasible ways to minimize
40 impacts, and so it's really just getting the people that are
41 intimate with the fishery, and intimate with the knowledge and the
42 species together, and seeing what they can come up with.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. I appreciate the synopsis.
45 A quick question for you, and so, our first original meeting, that
46 was a noticed public meeting, and, if so, do you have a list of

1 all the attendees that you could send us?

2
3 **MS. LEE:** Sure. Yes, it was noticed, and I don't think we had any
4 trouble getting that right out once we realized that, you know, we
5 were treating it or -- You know, it needs to be treated as an
6 advisory panel, basically, and so, yes, we do have a list of those
7 people. There's some draft meeting notes that aren't finalized
8 yet, but that can be shared as soon as they are, and then, again,
9 the next meeting will also be noticed, and so anyone can listen in
10 on that conversation.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you. Do we have any other
13 questions for Ms. Lee? Okay. I appreciate that. Moving to the
14 final parts of the working group, and so do we have any other
15 questions, or comments, regarding the working group meeting
16 itself? Mr. Sanchez?

17
18 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Being that Leann made it all the way here, and she
19 is part of the working group, as well as the AP, I would like to
20 give her one more opportunity to approach the committee, and maybe
21 give us her final thoughts.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Bosarge, could you please give us a rundown
24 on the working group meeting?

25
26 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. Yes, and maybe just a little different
27 perspective on that working group and why it might be important to
28 some of the members around the table that maybe aren't in the
29 shrimp industry, but I think sometimes we forget how many things
30 this new methodology is going to touch.

31
32 For example, I remember, when I was on the council, we had a gray
33 triggerfish assessment that came out, and the SSC really went back
34 and forth as to whether or not to bless it as the best available
35 science to be used for management purposes, and the council ended
36 up having to use that assessment.

37
38 One of the issues with that assessment, which there were several,
39 but one of them was shrimp trawl bycatch. You have another gray
40 trigger assessment coming up, and we still really haven't rectified
41 the issues with the shrimp trawl bycatch in that assessment, and
42 so, if you feed things into your model, and then expect your model
43 to try and make chicken salad out of chicken shit, then you don't
44 really get the results that you want.

45
46 The same thing can be said sometimes for the other assessment,

1 king mackerel, that you have coming up. The last king mackerel
2 assessment, shrimp trawl bycatch goes into that one as well. The
3 shrimp trawl bycatch tripled from the previous assessment. When
4 questioned about it, one of the scientists said to the SSC, well,
5 the man that used to run that analysis retired, and we couldn't
6 reproduce his work.

7
8 This is our opportunity to get it right. We, as an industry, have
9 asked to please have this working group, and let's sit down and
10 look at this new methodology, and let's make sure we get chicken
11 salad for you all to use, so that, all the other species you
12 manage, you can get good, solid foundations for your management.

13
14 It touches so many things that I think we forget it touches, and
15 we really would like to prioritize this, so that we can get you
16 some recommendations, and some consensus, and go through it and
17 make it as strong as it can be before you get it into these
18 assessments.

19
20 Now, we can't do that if all the parties involved don't prioritize
21 it, and so that's what we're asking for. We need a meeting soon,
22 and we actually need the data that we asked for. That's going to
23 have to be a priority. For some reason, it doesn't rise to that
24 level. Even when it was peer-reviewed by independent scientists
25 from overseas, they didn't get the presentations until the day of
26 the meeting, and so it just -- We've got to do something to say,
27 hey, this is a priority, and we are going to slow down and take
28 the time that we need to get this right, because it's important
29 for all the other things we manage, and so that would be my two-
30 cents for the council. I hope you'll take some stock in that.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. I'll never
33 look at chicken salad the same way again. Does anyone have any
34 questions regarding the working group? Mr. Sanchez.

35
36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Not a question, but I would like to follow her lead,
37 given that this is going to touch so many of the fisheries that
38 we're managing, and I would like to present a motion, to see if we
39 can't push this forward and give it some more focused direction,
40 and I'm going to read that. I don't know if it happens to be
41 available, because it has been circulating, but I'll go ahead and
42 read it, and, if it's up, the staff can pull it up.

43
44 **It says a motion to request that Southeast Fisheries Science Center**
45 **staff and contractors make the shrimp bycatch of finfish working**
46 **groups recommendations and requests from its March 2026 meeting a**

1 **priority for the next meeting of the working group. The**
2 **recommendations for finfish bycatch will need to be completed prior**
3 **to and presented at the May 2026 SSC meeting. I can hand this**
4 over to somebody if it needs to be typed.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Did you send that to staff?

7
8 **MR. SANCHEZ:** It's here.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. While they're pulling that up, do
11 you want to elaborate on your motion? It was pretty lengthy, and,
12 if you could kind of go through it a little bit piece-by-piece,
13 that would be helpful.

14
15 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Okay. Well, it seems like Leann has kind of pretty
16 succinctly presented her case, and it's just critical, I think,
17 for us to collaborate with everyone that's involved in this and
18 bring these priority data items to the forefront, so that we don't
19 find ourselves gray triggerfish again, and doing these same
20 mistakes that we keep doing. Let's go ahead and do things right.
21 If it takes a little longer, I would rather take a little longer
22 to do something right, and have a better finished product, than to
23 rush through it to meet some deadlines.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. We have the
26 motion on the board here. I'll read it real quick, since we didn't
27 have it up for a second. **To request that Southeast Fisheries**
28 **Science Center staff and contractors make the shrimp bycatch of**
29 **finfish working groups recommendations and requests from its March**
30 **2026 meeting a priority for the next meeting of the working group.**
31 **The recommendations for finfish bycatch will need to be completed**
32 **prior to and presented at the May 2026 SSC meeting.** Do we have a
33 second to this motion? Dr. Allen seconds. Any further
34 discussion, or questions? Dr. Allen.

35
36 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I seconded this motion because
37 I do think it needs to be a priority, because it's going to affect
38 not only the shrimp fishery, but also, you know, so many of our
39 finfish fisheries, and this is one that, you know, we need to get
40 it right.

41
42 I'm just wondering if doing this, having that group and
43 recommendations ready for the May SSC meeting, is possible, because
44 that's in like three-and-a-half or four weeks, and so that's my
45 concern, but I seconded it just to get it up for discussion.

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right, and so it seems like a very short
2 timeline. If it were not to make the May SSC meeting, when's the
3 next SSC meeting? July, the worst-case scenario, I think, and so
4 help me out here, Dr. Freeman. Now that we found out that the
5 working group meeting has to be publicly noticed, what's the
6 timeline on that for this to be able to be put in front of the SSC
7 in May?
8

9 **DR. FREEMAN:** Excuse me, and I'm just emailing to find out, because
10 I couldn't recall right offhand, and she was saying that it was a
11 thirty-days' notice, and so, unless we magically had the meeting
12 I think like this afternoon -- Or like noticed it like today or
13 something, I think it would still be like the day before the SSC
14 meeting or something. I just don't think there's time.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So, reasonably, it would be more likely to get
17 this in front of the July SSC meeting.
18

19 **DR. ALLEN:** Could I offer a friendly amendment, John, to move that
20 to the July 2026 SSC meeting?
21

22 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I agree. It doesn't sound like we have a choice.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we have an amended motion on the
25 board. Any further discussion on it as written now with the July
26 date? Dr. Simmons.
27

28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, I mean,
29 we're working on the memo right now, based on the working group's
30 recommendations. I think some of the things we're asking for have
31 already been developed by the center.
32

33 There's some stuff that has to be updated in there, and so we'll
34 have to work with them and see how long that's going to take, but,
35 if we wait until the July SSC meeting, and specifically to gray
36 triggerfish, the review right now is scheduled for August 11th
37 through 14th, and so, I mean, if the SSC working group made
38 recommendations, which I assume they are going to, I don't know if
39 that timeline works for the analysts, or what would happen in that
40 case, if they would be able to make any changes or not.
41

42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We don't know when the July SSC meeting is yet
43 in the month of July?
44

45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and so, right now the July SSC
46 meeting is scheduled the 21st through 23rd. I mean, we could try

1 to maybe have a special SSC meeting or something, but it's just
2 all tight. It's a tight timeline all the way around.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Pretty late in the month. Dr. Walter.

5
6 **DR. WALTER:** Yeah, back to my original point about prioritizing
7 the pending deadlines and the key things, and since the gray
8 triggerfish assessment is scheduled for a CIE review in August,
9 which means that, unless something gets -- If the goal is to do
10 something for gray triggerfish, a different treatment of bycatch,
11 then I think that has to be a priority, if it's going to be worked
12 into the stock assessment.

13
14 Working backwards from that, getting it before an SSC, if it has
15 to, and getting it through the working group, means that, yes,
16 that would have to get started, but it would probably then need to
17 take priority over some of the other action items, if that is the
18 goalpost. Thanks.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Allen.

21
22 **DR. ALLEN:** Could I ask a question? Carrie, you may know this.
23 If the bycatch of gray triggerfish was counted in 2025, is there
24 something that could be done there to use that information in time
25 to get this in?

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, as part
30 of our request, we have asked that that be included, just the raw
31 numbers from that new methodology from the observer data for 2025,
32 to just look at the gray triggerfish and the lane snapper, since
33 that's the proxy we're looking at potentially using, for just 2025,
34 just the raw information, and so stat zone, observer trips, species
35 characterized.

36
37 **DR. ALLEN:** So there wouldn't be time to do any kind of calibration
38 back in time or anything like that, I'm sure. I mean, it would
39 just be information for 2025.

40
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I don't know that I'm the best person
42 to answer that question. I mean, I think the concern was if it's
43 not, you know, characterized in the observer data, does that high
44 catch exist in the bycatch, and is lane snapper the correct proxy
45 to use, and so, calibration or not, I mean, the question is, is
46 this a research -- You know, this is a research question, right,

1 until you have the data, and so is that appropriate, and so I think
2 that's the conundrum we're in right now.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez.

5

6 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I have a question too, just to help me understand
7 how this relates to some of the other fisheries that are near and
8 dear, you know, I guess to me. We heard references that there was
9 some changes in the shrimp trawl bycatch with king mackerel and
10 we're about to undergo -- When we get into our SEDAR discussion,
11 I guess this afternoon, we're going to look at king mackerel is on
12 the schedule before long, and my question then is, well, which
13 king mackerel bycatch are we going to be using, this one, that
14 there's some questions about it, or the former ones?

15

16 Why I'm asking is because it's obviously going to have some kind
17 of an impact on the assessment, and then, depending on the type of
18 assessment we have, whether it's benchmark, operational, interim,
19 whatever the nomenclature is, I don't know if we'll be able to
20 dive deep enough into issues like that, and so this affects
21 everything we do, is the point I'm trying to make, and the question
22 there was how does this question regarding bycatch in king mackerel
23 relate to the king mackerel assessment, and what about that?

24

25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Other comments,
26 or questions? Dr. Walter.

27

28 **DR. WALTER:** A lot of this is addressed in each of the SEDAR
29 working groups, and so, I mean, we're basically doing something
30 that's outside of SEDAR to then inform the SEDAR, and so I think,
31 you know, this working group needs to consider what it wants to
32 tell SEDAR to do, and if it's not getting -- If the SEDAR process
33 is not actually doing what this working group wants, what does the
34 SEDAR process need to do differently, because a lot of these kind
35 of decisions about how we treat data and how we develop bycatch
36 estimates go through a SEDAR data prep, and a lot of these have
37 already gone through that, and so, in some cases, we're taking a
38 closer look at the products that have already gone through there.

39

40 I think that's sort of the question here about -- What I'm hearing
41 is that, for sure, gray triggerfish, we want to take a close look
42 at what was done, and a reevaluation, and try to get something
43 through.

44

45 What I'm hearing for John is king mackerel is a priority as well,
46 and so I would say that, while there's a long list of things that

1 I think I saw on the screen here, if there's two stocks for which
2 there is the greatest pending concern, it's gray triggerfish and
3 king mackerel, and it's trying to ensure that the treatment of
4 bycatch meets the -- Is either both understood by all parties and
5 acknowledged as the right treatment by all parties, and, if it
6 isn't, if there's really a lot of uncertainty, the other way of
7 doing this, through the SEDAR process is that the models account
8 for what is unknown, and so there's often ways that we can treat
9 this within the modeling framework, for instance sensitivity runs
10 of what if you made a completely different assumption about
11 bycatch.

12
13 I know that the assessments already are considering those
14 sensitivity runs, but, again, I'm focusing on, if it's triggerfish
15 and king mackerel, and getting something different, then I think
16 that needs to be the focus of the working group in the short term.
17 Thanks.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Do we have any
20 other comments regarding the motion on the board? **Seeing none, is**
21 **there anyone opposed to the motion on the board as written? No**
22 **opposition. The motion passes as written.**

23
24 All right. Then moving to the final item in the Shrimp agenda,
25 right, or there's under, but it's -- So, in New Business, we have
26 two items to discuss in there, and the first one is the Update on
27 the Shrimp Futures Initiative, and we have Dr. Gervasi online,
28 correct? Can you hear us, Dr. Gervasi? If you can hear us, you're
29 muted.

30
31 **DR. CARISSA GERVASI:** There we go. I think I'm unmuted now. Can
32 you all hear me?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, we I can hear you.

35
36 **OTHER BUSINESS**
37 **UPDATE ON SHRIMP FUTURES INITIATIVE**

38
39 **DR. GERVASI:** Okay. Great. Thank you so much for this opportunity.
40 I'm really excited to give a quick update on our Shrimp Futures
41 initiative. Thank you, and so, as we all know, we saw Christopher
42 Liese presented this quite a few times, but we all know the shrimp
43 industry is seeing this downward trajectory that's been going on
44 for a long time now.

45
46 It was really great to hear Ms. Bosarge's comments this morning

1 that the industry is really wanting to chart a new path, figure
2 out a vision for the future, and how it's going to be achieved,
3 and that's exactly what this Shrimp Future initiative aims to
4 support, and so these are just sort of our broad objectives.

5
6 The first is to figure out where the industry is, and that's sort
7 of what we're wrapping up right now. We're assessing the financial
8 state of the industry throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic,
9 analyzing supply chain dynamics, and also how the issues and
10 potential solutions vary throughout the region.

11
12 Then, from that baseline, we'll start thinking about the future,
13 and so this will involve a series of workshops with industry
14 members, as well as individuals from other agencies that may have
15 leverage, opportunities, et cetera. We'll start by defining a
16 vision for the future, and then, using the wealth of data and
17 expertise we have at NOAA Fisheries, we'll think about future
18 scenarios that are plausible, considering the state of shrimp
19 populations, economic environments, and other future risks, and
20 then we'll collectively identify actions that are robust to future
21 uncertainty and prioritize them based on feasibility, investment
22 needs, the time horizon, et cetera.

23
24 Again, this first part of the project is really thinking about
25 what's going on right now. We recently rolled out the economic
26 snapshot report. Hopefully, you've all seen it. If not, there's
27 a link on the slide here.

28
29 We also have a companion report in the works that is an industry
30 perspectives snapshot, and that's based on interviews with subject
31 matter experts and industry members throughout the region, and
32 I'll talk more about that in a minute, and then we also have this
33 communications component, where we're working to highlight
34 industry members and issues via web stories, blog posts, et cetera,
35 to sort of use our platform to get the word out about what's going
36 on with the industry.

37
38 Very briefly, I just wanted to highlight some feedback we received
39 from an industry member that basically the Gulf shrimp economic
40 report was really helpful for pushing for some state legislation
41 in Texas, and we really appreciated getting that feedback. It's
42 great to see that this product was useful for the industry, and I
43 just want to highlight, again, that we are open to any other
44 feedback that industry members have on how this project can be
45 useful and what we can do to assist the industry, and so that was
46 really, really wonderful to get that feedback.

1
2 Something else we really hope is going to be useful for the
3 industry is this industry perspectives report that we're putting
4 together right now, and so we traveled to shrimping communities
5 all throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic, visiting all eight
6 states in the region, and we interviewed industry members and
7 subject matter experts, about a hundred people total, and, right
8 now, we're putting together this report that compiles everything,
9 and, broadly, we've sort of split the challenges the industry is
10 facing into these three different pillars, including market
11 pressures, operational barriers, and external threats.

12
13 From what we've heard from these conversations, it's really these
14 three pillars of challenges need to be addressed concurrently for
15 the industry to sort of bounce back from this downward trajectory,
16 and then we heard a lot of really amazing strategies and things
17 that people are already doing, as well as ideas that they had for
18 how some of these challenges can be addressed, and so all of that
19 is going to be synthesized in this report.

20
21 It should hopefully be out in the next few months, but it will
22 depend a little bit on how long the review process takes, but
23 hopefully, that will be coming soon, and we'll definitely share
24 that with everyone broadly.

25
26 From there, our next step is the scenario planning workshops, and
27 so these are slated to be held this winter, and so the early 2027
28 timeframe. We're going to be holding a two-part in-person workshop
29 series for each region, and so one for the Gulf and one for the
30 South Atlantic.

31
32 We're going to be identifying a really broad group of stakeholders
33 to be involved in these workshops, and we want, again, separate
34 groups for the Gulf and South Atlantic. We're also going to have
35 a series of virtual workshops, so that we can include the broader
36 stakeholder community, get some feedback on the results of the
37 workshop series, and try to include as many people as we can.

38
39 Their focus is really on action, and so we'll be incorporating
40 members from other NOAA offices, or agencies, that may have
41 potential ideas, funding, leverage, et cetera, and we'll be trying
42 to identify clear actions and paths towards achieving them.

43
44 Just briefly, what we anticipate coming out of this scenario
45 planning process is, again, engagement with other agencies. I
46 know we've heard a lot about USDA and other agencies that are

1 involved with farmers, and have sort of incentives that may be
2 transferable to the shrimp industry, and so we want to make those
3 connections and bring those people together.

4
5 Also, identifying both short and long-term visions and goals for
6 the industry. What do we actually want this industry to look like?
7 Then look at some of the success stories. There are some people
8 that have some really great, innovative ideas, and have already
9 been sort of building up these businesses, in spite of all the
10 struggles that they're facing, and we want to provide some
11 recommendations for policies, programs, or other actions, based on
12 our insights, and potentially look at some industry trajectories
13 under different future conditions.

14
15 This is just a quick overview at our tentative timeline, and so,
16 right now, where we're at, we're finalizing those snapshot reports
17 and starting to plan and coordinate the workshop series, which is
18 going to be held in the winter, and so we sort of have a window
19 from November 2026 to March 2027 where we're going to be thinking
20 about planning these workshops, and so, if the council has any
21 advice, or suggestions, on a timeframe that would be best for
22 industry members in general, we're open to some suggestions about
23 when would be the best time to schedule these workshops.

24
25 Again, there's going to be a two-part workshop series in the Gulf,
26 hopefully in a centralized location, and we will be reimbursing
27 travel fees and providing honoraria to the stakeholders who are
28 able to attend.

29
30 Just quickly, I wanted to pop up here our Shrimp Futures team. We
31 have a really diverse group of people working on this project,
32 including Sarah Schoffler, who is the NOAA Fisheries Seafood
33 Advisor at the national level, and so we have that coordination
34 with other agencies through her. Joy Hazell is with Florida Sea
35 Grant, and she is going to be working on the workshop development,
36 and doing the facilitation, and so we're really excited to have
37 Sea Grant involved in this as well.

38
39 For anybody who wants to reach out to us, our contact email is on
40 that slide as well. We welcome any and all feedback on this, and
41 I know John Walter and Kelsi Furman are in the room today, and so
42 they can also answer any questions about this, and I think the
43 next slide is the last one, and that's all for me, and so I'll
44 take any questions, if you all have them, but thank you so much
45 for listening.

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Gervasi. We appreciate
2 the presentation. Do we have questions around the room on the
3 Shrimp Futures? All right. Seeing none, thank you for the
4 presentation again, and we'll be moving on to one last item under
5 Other Business, which is Dr. Walter, correct, or Frank. Sorry.
6 Frank.

7
8 **UPDATE ON STATUS OF ELB RULEMAKING**
9

10 **MR. FRANK HELIES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll speaking for Andy
11 here, and I'm sorry that he had to take a call here this afternoon.
12 Real quick on the shrimp ELB framework amendment, the framework
13 action that you guys submitted on January 26 for agency review and
14 implementation, it is a priority of the administration. It's a
15 priority for our region. We're working hard to get the proposal
16 package up to Headquarters, and cleared, and we'll keep you posted
17 on that.

18
19 For the Shrimp 19, that was transmitted to us on March 16. We're
20 also working on that diligently, to ensure we can get it in place
21 before the October 26 expiration. Any questions on that, I would
22 be happy to take them. Thanks.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Frank. We appreciate the
25 updates on where the amendments are. Any other questions for
26 Frank? Seeing none, I think this concludes the Shrimp marathon.
27 I'll give it back to you, Mr. Chair, an hour and forty minutes
28 overdue.

29
30 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 7, 2026.)
31

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33