

GULF COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

The Battle House Renaissance

Mobile, Alabama

April 7, 2026

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2	Clay Porch.....	SEFSC
3	John Walter.....	SEFSC
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1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The Battle
2 House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday afternoon, April
3 7, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman J.D. Dugas.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF AUGUST 2025 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** I would like to finish what's on the schedule
10 today and move right in the SEDAR Committee, which would be myself,
11 and Number I would be to adopt the agenda. Are there any edits to
12 the agenda? Thank you, Dr. Banks, for reminding me, and so, just
13 to remind everyone, the committee members are myself, Dr. Banks,
14 Dr. Sweetman, Mr. Schieble, and Mr. Geeslin. Dr. Banks moved to
15 adopt the agenda, and seconded by Dr. Sweetman.

16
17 Next would be the minutes, the approval of minutes. Are there any
18 edits, or additions? Nothing? A motion? Dr. Banks. Dr. Sweetman
19 seconds. The next item is the action guide and next steps, and
20 Mr. Rindone will walk us through that, and he is walking in the
21 room. Dr. Simmons will handle it.

22
23 **UPDATE ON MRIP-FISHING EFFORT SURVEY (FES) PILOT RESULTS**
24

25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Okay, and so, first off, we're
26 going to start with an update on the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey
27 Pilot Results with Dr. Richard Cody from NOAA S&T. We'll provide
28 that to the committee, based on the 2026 results and timing for
29 that. The SSC did also receive some information during its
30 February 2026 meeting, and the committee will also receive the
31 SSC's comments after receiving the presentation.

32
33 The committee should ask any clarifying questions and consider the
34 timing of the release of the calibrated historical time series for
35 planning and scheduling of stock assessments and the management
36 needs in the short term. The committee should also provide
37 feedback to the SSC and council, as appropriate, regarding any
38 long-term concerns and next steps.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons, and so next up would be
41 Dr. Cody. Dr. Cody, are you ready?

42
43 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** I am. Thank you for forwarding me the
44 opportunity to present an update. Many of you will recognize some
45 of these slides from the meeting that we did in February, and so
46 there's, you know, a lot of overlap with that, but I'll try to

1 fill in the gaps with some new information as I have it.

2
3 There were three things I wanted to cover today, the first one
4 being the most important. I'll just mention that the other two
5 points here are related to RAPID and then the National Academies'
6 review of the NOAA standards for recreational data and survey,
7 time permitting, and I may just kind of cut through that a little
8 bit quicker, but the main focus today is on the Fishing Effort
9 Survey and the next steps.

10
11 Just a little bit of background. The Fishing Effort Survey has
12 gone through a redesign over the past year or two, and it's been
13 based on a couple of pilot studies that have been completed in
14 previous years, and it's part of a program that we have that
15 basically monitors the survey performance over time, so that we
16 can try to keep up with any kind of impacts to survey performance.

17
18 In 2024, we completed a large-scale study that benchmarked a new
19 design alongside the old FES, the one that had been in operation
20 since 2017, or 2018, and this is based on concerns we had from the
21 recreational fishing community that the estimates were too high,
22 and, in looking at some of the pilot studies that we had done,
23 there was some evidence that suggested that was certainly the case,
24 and so this, as I said, you know, is part of an ongoing program
25 that we've had for a commitment to continuous improvement.

26
27 What we tested in 2024, what we did in 2024, was do a full-size
28 comparison of the new design with the then current design of FES,
29 using a full sample size, and so it wasn't restricted to any
30 particular geographic region, or any certain state, or a certain
31 time period, and so the study itself was conducted in Maine through
32 Mississippi, and also in Hawaii, and it was run January through
33 December.

34
35 The key differences here, compared to the previous FES design, is
36 it increased frequency of administration. We were testing a
37 monthly administration of the survey. We revised the question
38 order as well for a couple of questions related to reporting of
39 fishing trips, and this had a substantial impact on the estimates,
40 and then we had a split reference period.

41
42 Instead of doing a two-month wave, and asking about a two-month
43 fishing period, we split it into two one-month periods, and so
44 this had a couple of effects on the way the survey was delivered
45 to respondents.

1 One, it allowed us to get basically two bites at the apple when it
2 comes to getting information on a particular month, because each
3 month is administered twice as part of this two-month data
4 collection, and then, also, it allowed us to look at composite
5 estimation, and so we were able to combine those two months
6 together and increase the precision and the reliability, or the
7 stability, of the estimates.

8
9 Just to give you an idea of the extent of the changes to the
10 survey, you'll see that really only two questions were impacted,
11 Questions 15 and 16, and they relate to a question, or questions,
12 on the numbers of trips that people take, private boat or shore,
13 and, in the top-left, you see the older design, and so we ask about
14 the current wave, or the current reporting period, first, and we
15 don't distinguish between months.

16
17 It's just basically we get a two-month sum of the trips, and then
18 we ask about the number of fishing trips taken within a year, and
19 that's the same for both private boat and shore.

20
21 In the experimental questionnaire, you'll see that what we've done
22 is we've pushed the annual question first, and so we're asking
23 about the numbers of trips they took during the year, and then we
24 go to the reporting period, and so that would be two months, and
25 each month is asked about separately, and so what that means is
26 that, in a monthly administration, you would get one of those
27 months asked about again, and so you get, as I mentioned, two bites
28 of the apple, and so that's basically the survey design changes.

29
30 I'll have to say that there's quite a bit of literature out there
31 defending both approaches. The first approach, where we asked
32 about the two-month period first, is often used to increase
33 response rates in surveys. You ask the easy question first, that
34 people can remember, and then you ask the larger question, and so
35 you get a bounding effect, sort of, or at least you get something
36 that you can compare, an angler can compare, for determining the
37 annual rate.

38
39 The second, in the experimental questionnaire, we asked that
40 bounding question first, and so we asked about their annual trips,
41 and we think the effect of that is really what it does is it
42 constrains the angler's thinking about that trip first. If they
43 haven't made any trips in recent years, or recent months, but they
44 have made trips during the year, it's satisfies a desire to report
45 their trips, and then we lead into the first month and the second
46 month, and so recall periods are a little bit different there, and

1 so that's the difference.

2
3 The general literature support for the second approach is that the
4 bounding question, asking that first, constrains the need, the
5 desire, to report trips, and it also asks in a way that the angler
6 can reference that year total when it comes to looking at the
7 reporting period.

8
9 I have a few of these bar graphs, and, essentially, what you're
10 looking at here is just a distribution of effort information from
11 the experimental versus the old FES, we'll call it, and it's
12 presented here as a ratio, and so, in this case, we have the
13 experimental value shown as a proportion of the FES, and,
14 obviously, if that proportion is below one, it means that the
15 experimental value is lower than the FES estimate.

16
17 You can see, in both cases here, we have prior boat and shore box
18 plots, and, both of them, the means are below that one value, which
19 is the green line going across the graph, and that's for aggregated
20 data across all states, and all at once, and that's a little
21 different than what was presented in the original pilot study,
22 which was quite substantially lower than that, on average.

23
24 This is the same information, but broken out by wave throughout
25 the year, and you'll see you've got shore estimates on top, and
26 you've got the private boat on the bottom, and what you'll notice
27 is that there's a pronounced -- We'll call it a seasonal effect,
28 and so the difference between the experimental FES and the FES are
29 more pronounced in what I would call low-activity waves and less
30 pronounced in the higher-activity waves, Waves 3 and 4, and, in
31 the case in the bottom, the average is actually slightly higher.

32
33 Here we have just the same information, but broken out by state,
34 and you can see that the states differ in the impact of the change,
35 and so the Gulf states that we covered are identified there by the
36 green box around them, but you'll see that some states are actually
37 above that one ratio, and I would caution on just interpreting
38 this as a direct translation of what estimates are going to look
39 like for catch. We are talking about effort estimates here, and
40 catch is not part of the graphic.

41
42 The general finding is that they're generally -- State-level
43 estimates are below what the FES numbers were, and so the key
44 findings, and the conclusions that we came to, is the new FES
45 should increase the accuracy of the recreational effort estimates
46 by mitigating potential overreporting in fishing trips, and we did

1 some cognitive testing of the new design, using a panel of anglers
2 to look at how they responded to it, and that was supported by
3 that work.

4
5 The experimental estimates for angler trips are generally lower
6 than the original FES design, but differences are more pronounced
7 for private boat, and also in low-activity waves, and then the
8 primary driver for differences was revised question order. It
9 created what we would call a beneficial bounding effect to mitigate
10 overreporting.

11
12 What we find is that anglers want to report their trips, and, in
13 some cases, there's some frustration when the reporting period
14 doesn't coincide with when they took a trip, and so there is a
15 tendency to telescope trips from an out-of-reporting period into
16 the current reporting period. Let's see if there's anything else
17 I need to mention there.

18
19 The main focus really of the study was to demonstrate that there
20 was the feasibility of monthly sampling. We were able to conduct
21 the mail survey, and it had the added benefit of getting, as I
22 said, two attempts to collect data in a single month, and so we
23 were able to look at different ways of estimation, such as
24 composite estimation, and that had an added benefit of increasing
25 precision of those estimates.

26
27 Implementation, right now, as I mentioned, you know, this model is
28 based on that 2024 study. It contains inputs from the previous
29 studies as well. We have conducted a peer review of the
30 calibration model and the historical time series produced. Those
31 reviews were done by the CIE, back in September, and we have the
32 final reports from those, and I expect those to be posted.

33
34 We're just waiting on approval, like I mentioned, for the multiyear
35 averaging report, to get those up on the website and make them
36 available, and they should be available at the CIE program webpages
37 at the NOAA website. Let's see.

38
39 The consensus among the reviewers was that the proposed method was
40 reasonable, and scientifically defensible, and we're talking about
41 the calibration approach as well. Let me see as far as any other
42 things we need to do.

43
44 The other things to note here are that the calibration results,
45 and I mentioned this earlier too, won't be a simple proportional
46 change, and we shouldn't expect the calibration results to be

1 reflected in the final catch estimates, because we have inputs
2 from APAIS as well that are currently part of this final time
3 series, and so it wouldn't be a straight conversion of that.

4
5 The revised monthly design provides a little bit more flexibility,
6 in terms of being able to produce monthly estimates, and we're
7 looking at -- Right now, we're looking at our resource needs to
8 shift in the monthly estimate production. We have put the
9 framework in place, but we are not currently generating monthly
10 estimates.

11
12 The impact, and so, summer of 2026, we will publish the calibrated
13 historical estimates, and that will include the entire time series,
14 all forty-plus years, and those will be rescaled for the new
15 design, and the hope is that, you know, they'll be available for
16 all species for stock assessment and management purposes.

17
18 The updated information could lead to changes in fishing
19 regulations and catch limits, but that, right now, we have not
20 really looked at those kinds of impacts. FES only produces private
21 boat and shore mode fishing trip information, or effort, and so
22 the species information that's collected through dockside and
23 public access interviews come from the APAIS, and so it's important
24 to just -- When you look at the plots that I presented, that we're
25 only dealing with -- That we realize we're only dealing with the
26 effort estimates.

27
28 Then another point I would make, and this is largely in response
29 to some requests we've had recently from the councils, is if we
30 could prioritize certain species, and the catch estimation process
31 itself is a batch process, and so we run the entire data stream
32 through at the annual level, or the wave level, and so all species
33 are included in those data. It would be, I would say, technically
34 problematic for us to try and tease out certain species, and
35 prioritize those, and I don't think it would speed up the process
36 any.

37
38 These are some of the milestones. I know they're hard to read,
39 but, basically, the top group that are highlighted in green, those
40 are the ones that have more or less been met, but some are pending.
41 The last two boxes there, the peer-reviewed, the availability of
42 the peer-reviewed reports, and, that one in particular, we are
43 still waiting on approvals for the posting of that.

44
45 The last one, our original timeline for the time series and the
46 calibration model being rolled out, basically was spring 2026. We

1 -- You know, the shutdown obviously affected things. We lost a
2 number of staff that were directly involved with the calibration
3 work, and working with the consultants on the model, and so, you
4 know, we've kind of changed that timeline to summer, and we're
5 hoping that -- You know, I don't want to push a month out there,
6 but August is probably a conservative estimate of when we would
7 have it available. I don't know, Carrie, if you want me to continue
8 on and talk about RAPID for a minute, if there's time.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We have a question from Dr. Allen.

11
12 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Yes, and, before we get off this, thank you, Dr.
13 Cody, for this presentation. I appreciate the work that's been
14 done here, and I'm wondering about the calibration that would come
15 out at the end of this. What is that going to produce? Is that
16 going to be -- How would we use that like to correct landings, you
17 know, in the past?

18
19 **DR. CODY:** Well, it's a Bayesian -- A hierarchical Bayesian
20 approach, and so it builds on what we used previously. We used a
21 small area estimation approach for that, for the FES in the
22 original calibration, and so it's able to take the information
23 that we've had already in that, and we had a three-year side-by-
24 side study for that, and so that's why I think we can manage with
25 one year of side-by-side for this one. It does contain components
26 that deal with state differences, geographical and temporal, you
27 know, and --

28
29 **DR. ALLEN:** The seasonal differences you saw, would it factor in
30 those seasonal differences you saw in the --

31
32 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and those are incorporated in there, and so all of
33 this is in the model. It's a far more, I would say, robust model
34 than the one we previously had. It makes better use of the data,
35 and then the Bayesian approach allows us to, you know, really
36 resample that data to get the most out of it.

37
38 We didn't sail, I would say, completely through the review process
39 without some recommendations that we're going to have to address,
40 and that some we are already currently addressing. One was to use
41 a general regression approach rather than small-area approach, and
42 there's benefits, you know, costs and benefits, to either approach,
43 but those are things that I don't think were seen as showstoppers
44 for the calibration model.

45
46 All the terms of reference were more or less met, or partially

1 met, and so I think the consensus among the reviewers was that it
2 was a reasonable and defensible approach.

3
4 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you for that.

5
6 **DR. CODY:** But I'll be able to post some of the more technical
7 details as soon as, you know, we get the approval for the reports.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** One more question from Dr. Sweetman.

10
11 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thank you for the presentation, Dr.
12 Cody, and so just a quick question about the monthly estimate
13 production, and I know you guys said that you're going to maintain
14 kind of the bi-monthly way that we're going about it, based on
15 current resources, and you're kind of assessing, and do you have
16 any idea when -- Are we talking one to two years maybe until
17 something, or are we talking five to ten years? I mean, I'm
18 curious just the timeline what you're thinking generally.

19
20 **DR. CODY:** I mean, I can't speak to a budget that's, you know,
21 down the road, unfortunately. I would say, you know, we would
22 prefer to go to a monthly estimate production.

23
24 There are other things to consider as well. You know, we would
25 have to redesign, or re-engineer, the website to do the queries,
26 and to get that information presentable, and so there are some
27 other challenges that we have, and then just limited staff
28 resources right now to do that, but I would want to do it sooner
29 rather than later, and I don't see it being three or four years.
30 I think it's going to be something that either folks want it, and
31 need it, and then there's pressure to get it done, or, you know,
32 it's, you know, we continue as we have, and there's no real
33 benefit.

34
35 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. That's -- I didn't realize
36 it, and, well, obviously now I realize it was a fiscal situation
37 there, but that's an important discussion, and I -- You know, I
38 agree with what you're saying. I mean, this moving towards a
39 monthly estimation would greatly improve kind of timeliness for
40 even what the council can do on some of these things here too, and
41 so, I mean, I'm very supportive of that, if we can find any
42 direction in that way, but thank you.

43
44 **DR. CODY:** That said, we did receive some promise of funding for
45 this year that would allow us to increase the both the APAIS and
46 the FES samples, and so that should help a little bit, or at least

1 give us some stronger footing to defend it going forward.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions? Dr. Cody, I have one for
4 you on page 6. Bernie, can go back to page 6? My question is,
5 looking at the top-right, you know, the way I understand it is we
6 managed out from nine miles out to 200 miles federal waters, and
7 my question is why are you -- Why are we focused on the shore, the
8 docks, the bridges, the causeways, the beaches, the banks?

9
10 Why are we focused on that, because I do recall, a couple years
11 ago maybe, we had a conversation about one fish being caught on a
12 bridge that extrapolated numbers that were outrageous, and I think
13 it was a mangrove snapper, or it was gag. Sorry. I don't
14 understand why we're focused on shore. I thought the focus was
15 offshore, and could you give me an explanation?

16
17 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and this is -- This is a general effort survey,
18 and so we want information on all trips made by anglers. I mean,
19 you can argue that it's an increase in the response burden, having
20 an extra question that talks about shore fishing, but you would
21 have to at least have some way to delineate.

22
23 If you ask just about private boat fishing, we -- Well, let's see.
24 We -- Well, I'll put it this way. We need to produce national-
25 level estimates for fisheries in the U.S., and so we need an effort
26 estimate that spans a number of different states, or any states
27 that we can do the survey in.

28
29 That estimate is based on, you know, all fishing activities, and
30 so, when you use that information to say look at economic impacts
31 and things like that, you need to have a sense of how much money
32 is going towards one or the other, if you can partition it out so
33 that you have a little bit of a better understanding.

34
35 Also, I would say that, you know, for some of the Mid-Atlantic
36 species, those shore catches can be very important, when it comes
37 to some of the commission-managed species in particular, and so we
38 want to get as much resolution as we can get.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. Dr. Porch.

41
42 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Yes, and just to add, I mean, MRIP was designed
43 to get estimates for all saltwater fishing, including inshore, and
44 so it's not just federally-managed species, and, on top of that,
45 as he said, it's not only for the Mid-Atlantic, but, in some cases,
46 such as gray snapper, there's considerable catch from the shore,

1 and so that would still go into the stock assessment and be part
2 of the quota.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. I think what we're going
5 to do is go to Mr. Moncrief for the SSC report, and then we have
6 Dr. Cody coming back.

7
8 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** I'll be brief in ours, as soon as we get
9 that slide pulled up. So, obviously, you all know the background,
10 kind of everything else, and this is the MSE evaluation, and so
11 it's the wrong slide, but, either way, what I'll say is we had a
12 pretty good discussion.

13
14 A lot of questions came from the SSC. I think some of those that
15 are relatively pertinent were the, you know, potential reasons as
16 to why we were seeing disparity across the different high and low-
17 use waves. There was a question from Dr. Scyphers that I thought
18 was a pretty good one of, you know, if you've got a consistent
19 treatment across all the different states, why would you expect to
20 see such contrast, and, for example, obviously, we see the
21 disparity in Mississippi versus other states.

22
23 Richard just gave you all the rest of the timeline, everything
24 else like that, but I think, when it comes down to the catch stuff,
25 we had this conversation as well, and it came up in multiple
26 themes. I mean, obviously, you would expect to have some sort of
27 correlation between the differences that were observed from the
28 effort survey alone and the corresponding catch estimates, but
29 there are going to be those seasonal species that do occur in the
30 low-use wave, such as Wave 5, that will likely have a little bit
31 larger impact than other species that may occur during Wave 3,
32 where we saw relatively comparable results from that.

33
34 I think that's all stuff just that we're going to keep an eye on
35 at the SSC level, and, as we go through this process, we'll all
36 kind of keep an eye on and see where the impacts are, and how large
37 they are.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Moncrief. Any questions? I'm not
40 seeing any. Trevor, thanks. Dr. Cody, it's my understanding that
41 the remaining information was maybe volunteered by your shop to be
42 put on the presentation, and so, in lieu of time, I would ask if
43 we can maybe go through the next three slides, and then maybe stop
44 there, unless there's a council member that absolutely needs to
45 hear Dr. Cody talk about the rest of the slides, and so go ahead,
46 Dr. Cody.

1
2 **DR. CODY:** All right. The next topic I want to talk about is
3 RAPID. It's probably something that's you've been hearing a little
4 bit about, and so this is basically an initiative to re-envision
5 the recreational data partnership, and this started earlier,
6 actually in 2024 and 2025, but I would say, in this case, there
7 were some specific differences to the way we were looking at the
8 re-envisioning process for that.

9
10 In that process alone, we did engage a large number of partners,
11 and conducted internal interviews with forty-plus Regional Offices
12 and Science Centers, and then had input from other partners as
13 well in listening sessions, and so that produced a framework part,
14 a report, that was really just the starting point for RAPID to
15 kick off from.

16
17 RAPID means Recreational Angular Partnership Improvement
18 Directive, and it sounds complicated, but the main focus of this
19 is on improving the partnerships that we have with the states and
20 to make the process of recreational data collection less NOAA
21 driven and more partner driven.

22
23 The first thing to note is that it supersedes the original re-
24 envisioning process that we kicked off earlier, but it does use
25 the information that we were able to collect with that. I think,
26 importantly, the directive changes the trajectory in two major
27 ways. One is that there's high level buy-in from the NOAA policy
28 team, and support for the effort, and then partner-led design.

29
30 The intent, as I mentioned, is to shift -- Make this like a co-
31 owner, or a co-ownership, type of a partnership, and, knowing that
32 there are a number of different challenges there, the idea is to
33 work regionally, and ASMFC has agreed to manage the workshop plan
34 that we put in place, but, basically, we'll have a number of
35 regional workshops where we'll get input on regional priorities,
36 those priorities that are specific to the regions, and that will
37 be the focus of at least the kickoff component of this.

38
39 Funding, I mentioned a little bit about that. There has been an
40 initial injection of funding to add some sample to the APHIS and
41 the FES, but I think, also, there is some funding coming for some
42 of the states that will also be going through the commissions as
43 well for state survey needs.

44
45 This is just reiterating what I mentioned earlier. As I mentioned,
46 the focus on this is really on improving the partnership, and

1 there's different levels to this partnership, in terms of how it
2 would operate, and the main thing here is that, you know, we start
3 in the regions and kind of work our way towards a more nationally-
4 cohesive program, and the focus, some of the focus, will be on
5 standards for survey production, also leveraging some of the
6 innovation that has occurred at the state level as well, and then
7 continuing to provide our guidance in terms of, you know, technical
8 expertise and so on to the states. Next slide, and that might be
9 the last one. Yes.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. Do we have any questions
12 for Dr. Cody? Not seeing any, I think we can wrap up right there,
13 Dr. Cody.

14
15 **DR. CODY:** All right. Thank you.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for your presentation. Thank you, Dr.
18 Cody. Moving on to the next item, I'll turn it over to Mr. Rindone
19 for the action guide.

20
21 **SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE UPDATES AND MEETING**
22 **OUTCOMES**

23
24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I'll go ahead and do it again.
25 Thanks, Mr. Chair. The next one we're going to go through, council
26 staff is going to provide an overview of the outcomes from the
27 SEDAR Steering Committee held February 11th and 12th of this year
28 in Charleston, South Carolina.

29
30 We have a very short presentation of those outcomes that are Gulf-
31 focused. We talked about stock assessment delays due to the 2025
32 government shutdown, implications to schedule due to the timing
33 and release of the 2026 FES pilot study results that just heard
34 about from Dr. Cody, and we had some assessments for -- Assessment
35 requests for the Gulf in 2027 and beyond, and so, after that, Ryan
36 will go into a little bit more detail on those changes to the Gulf
37 SEDAR schedule, and then we encourage the committee to ask
38 questions and provide input.

39
40 We spent a lot of time going through the SEDAR stocks, and so I'm
41 going to skip those slides, and, if you guys have specific
42 questions, you can look at the report.

43
44 This is the outline, and so we'll skip the first thing. It's the
45 SOPPs, and we'll focus on the schedule discussion. Again, that's
46 going to be Gulf-focused. I'm not going to talk about South

1 Atlantic, Caribbean, or HMS requests.

2
3 The delays we just talked about, the response to request for
4 transferring analytical responsibility, and then Ryan will go more
5 into the stock assessment schedule requests, and then there's two
6 Other Business items that I just wanted to point you guys to.

7
8 We're going to skip this one. These are just for your information.
9 If you want to read about that in more detail, there's the link to
10 the report and the SOPPs.

11
12 Okay, and so let's start here. When we started talking about the
13 schedule, we received this information regarding the 2025
14 government shutdown, and what it meant for the ongoing assessments,
15 and so, for red snapper, the SEDAR 98, that changed the review to
16 about a five-month impact. You can see the review workshop was
17 moved from potentially April of this year to September, and you
18 see the dates there.

19
20 King mackerel, not quite as much of an impact, about one-and-a-
21 half months. Gray triggerfish, there was an impact to the data
22 workshop report, and the distribution of that, for about four
23 months, but the review is still currently scheduled, as was
24 discussed earlier, for August, and then, for gag grouper, that was
25 about a one-month delay.

26
27 So, just very quickly, you'll recall the council, in August of
28 2025, we heard some information from the agency on the reduced
29 staff and resources from the Science Center, and that resulted in
30 a letter that requested the steering committee consider
31 transferring analytical responsibilities for both gag and red
32 grouper from the Science Center to USF and that abbreviation that
33 I won't tell you guys what it is, because I can't remember.

34
35 Then, subsequently, we talked about Florida had increased their
36 analytical capacity, at the SEDAR Steering Committee, with the
37 University of South Florida, and they had agreed to conduct the
38 gag stock assessment process, starting with SEDAR 105 jointly, and
39 then that would be followed along with the red grouper assessment,
40 and so that is going to slow down things a little bit, I think
41 because they're changing, you know, analysts, and changing the
42 cooperator that's leading that, but that seems to be in the works,
43 and that transfer seems to be moving forward. Florida FWC did
44 note, during the meeting, that these two stock assessments will
45 continue to run through the SEDAR process.

1 Next, we got into the assessment schedule requests, and so, in
2 2026, as we talked about, we're anticipating the MRIP updates after
3 the pilot project results come out, and so that's going to impact
4 the red snapper, the gray triggerfish, and the king mackerel
5 ongoing assessments, and those delays, as we talked about, are
6 going to continue to impact those right now, and so that will
7 probably go into 2027.

8
9 We also asked that the greater amberjack assessment be moved up in
10 priority, and it looks like that was moved up about six months,
11 potentially, in priority during the discussion. We also requested
12 a scamp assessment, based on postponing work on the Reef Fish
13 Amendment 58A, and then it was noted that, as I mentioned earlier,
14 the gag assessment would extend into 2027, based on the change in
15 the analytical body that's going to be doing that work.

16
17 In 2028, we added red snapper to the schedule, based on the
18 expected updates to the historical recreational landings of
19 primarily Alabama and Mississippi that have the adoption of the
20 creel program, and then we added red grouper to the stock -- We
21 added red grouper, to update stock status, given the time since
22 the last assessment and the council actions on Reef Fish Amendment
23 62.

24
25 There were two Other Business items. SEDAR staff had shared
26 progress on infographics to explain the process, and those were
27 nice, and can be used, when they're finalized, for us at workshops,
28 as well as probably during the MREP trainings, and we received a
29 status report on the request from the Science Center to coordinate
30 with the Gulf states, through the commission, to consider those
31 data gaps in sampling coverage and capacity.

32
33 I think that concludes my very brief summary of the meeting, and
34 I don't know if you want to wait on questions until Ryan goes
35 through the stock assessment schedule, and then we can stop there.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and we can wait, and let Ryan go, and then
38 take questions. Mr. Rindone.

39
40 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Okay, and so our current SEDAR schedule is up
41 on the screen for you guys right now. Bernie, you might blow that
42 up a little bit for some folks. There we go. Thanks. We are
43 still underway with our red snapper, gray triggerfish, kingfish,
44 and gag stock assessments.

45
46 The Science Center is going to be starting work on the tilefish

1 data triage here in the coming months, and Dr. Cody talked a little
2 bit already about the timing of the MRIP updates, and when those
3 data should be available. Right now, the expectation is by late
4 August, and we'll see when that comes out, and then the Science
5 Center will start working on updating our managed species that use
6 those data through the MRIP lites that we have discussed with them
7 at the steering committee level.

8
9 The hogfish assessment is going to wrap up here soon, in July,
10 with a review workshop, as is the SSC's evaluation of the black
11 grouper management strategy evaluation that FWC contracted.

12
13 Then we move into 2027, and we start the amberjack assessment,
14 which I know has been a long time coming for some folks, and then
15 we're also going to do assessments on vermilion, scamp, and gray
16 snapper. Vermilion and gray snapper are getting a bit dusty,
17 especially vermilion, and so it's time to brush those off, and the
18 tilefish data triage should be wrapped up.

19
20 One of the goals, hopefully at least for that one, for the tilefish
21 one, is to have a snappy way, perhaps through the interim analysis
22 process or some other method, for quickly evaluating that complex.
23 It's strongly tied to longline effort and landings, and so, whether
24 we use the NMFS bottom longline, and/or the commercial longline
25 effort index, or something like that, those would be -- Those would
26 be things to definitely look at for tilefish.

27
28 Then, moving on to 2028, we're going to finish up the amberjack
29 assessment and get an updated yellowedge operational assessment.
30 We're going to look at data-limited methods for more rapidly
31 evaluating cobia, lane snapper, and the Spanish mackerel, and then
32 the joint assessment for red grouper between the Science Center
33 and the FWC crew that operates out of USF now, and that will also
34 start.

35
36 We added back an operational assessment of red snapper, because,
37 by that point in time, we will probably need it, and so we went
38 ahead and put it on the calendar, and wrapping up the data-limited
39 effort for those three species in 2029. I went ahead and, just to
40 keep Luiz excited, put hogfish back on there for FWC for the 2029.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Do we have any questions
43 for Dr. Simmons or Mr. Rindone? Mr. Sanchez.

44
45 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you. I'm not on your committee, but I
46 did have a question, which is regarding the king mackerel, if you

1 could scroll back, back up to the top of the page. Thank you. I
2 note that it's an operational assessment, and I had some
3 preliminary discussions with the Science Center, inquiring as to
4 what are the limiting factors of doing an operational assessment,
5 rather than a benchmark, in terms of some of the things that were
6 brought up during the working group, which were start dates, 1929
7 versus 1980s, and looking at some recent trends, best practices,
8 fecundity versus weight, as of recently, and natural mortality
9 estimates, and some updated calibrated MRIP issues.

10
11 I don't know, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I would
12 like to know if those things are too much detail for an operational
13 assessment, and more appropriate maybe in a benchmark, and I will
14 add that, the last time we did a benchmark was 2014, twelve years
15 ago, and we had an Amendment 55 with some pretty dramatic action
16 items in it, and so I'm thinking, when we asked and delayed it, I
17 was assuming we were going to get a benchmark, and so are we going
18 to be able to tackle and address those issues in a meaningful way
19 in an operational? That's my question, and I'm sorry to ask that
20 at five o'clock, on the end of the day.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez.

23
24 **MR. RINDONE:** I can swing or you can swing.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I'm looking at Dr. Porch or Mr. Rindone.

27
28 **DR. PORCH:** So the short answer is we can accommodate most of those
29 things as part of an operational, through the topical working
30 groups, which could be, you know, a series of webinars, or they
31 could even have an in-person meeting.

32
33 To reboot now, and say, okay, now we want to do a benchmark, which
34 by definition really means relitigating every piece of
35 information, then we would be starting essentially from square
36 one, and you wouldn't get an assessment for quite some time, which
37 means it would be rather old data, and so I think, many of the
38 things that you described, they have -- They are looking at. I
39 can't remember if every single one is. I would have to look at
40 the terms of reference again, but I think most of the things you
41 describe are being discussed.

42
43 We could consider -- If there is something that you've mentioned
44 that hasn't been discussed, we can float that to the group and see
45 if it's within bounds of the topical working group, but we have to
46 be real careful about not expanding the scope of work unless we're

1 willing to delay the process.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez.

4
5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Would it be helpful if I compile my comprehensive
6 list, and, that way, you have that, and then you can tell me, yes,
7 no, we can, or we can't, what have you, through these alternate
8 means that you're suggesting?

9
10 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. That would be helpful, and John agrees with me
11 that he thinks that most of the items you've talked about were
12 already in the terms of reference.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. Do we have any other
15 questions for Dr. Simmons or Ryan? Dr. Sweetman.

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, in 2028, I see
18 yellowedge operational, and is that inclusive of the entire
19 deepwater complex, or are we just looking at yellowedge?

20
21 **MR. RINDONE:** It's just yellowedge. We don't have stock
22 assessments on the other three species, and so, the last time,
23 when the SSC evaluated those for updating the catch advice, they
24 just used updated landings and applied Tier 3A of the ABC control
25 rule, and then we folded all that together to allow the complex to
26 continue to be managed together.

27
28 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So then maybe, operationally, this might be
29 challenging, but, I mean, one of the other fisheries I've heard
30 concerns about is snowy, and so, I mean, I would be very curious
31 to see the health, what that would look like, but I don't even
32 know if there's really -- If we're just walking into another
33 yellowedge grouper data-poor-type assessment, and we're talking
34 about utilizing different approaches relative to the data that we
35 actually have, and so I'm wondering if there's like, you know,
36 other ways to skin the cat here to look at some of these deepwater
37 fisheries that we haven't looked at before.

38
39 **MR. RINDONE:** So I guess one consideration for you guys, when
40 you're thinking about adding new species, is we have a stated
41 amount of capacity that we can push through with the Science
42 Center, and with CEASA and the USF group, and so, whenever we're
43 going to add something else to it, it's probably going to come at
44 a cost somewhere along the way to something else.

45
46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I mean, you've got a bunch of slots blank in 2029,

1 and that's really what I'm thinking about there.

2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** Right, and I was reticent to put those there. I
4 guess the important thing to remember is that, you know, you guys
5 have your key stocks, you know, things like gray triggerfish, which
6 you could absolutely add gray triggerfish back there in 2029. We
7 could absolutely add black grouper back in there at some point.
8 You know, we have things that we have stock assessments on, like
9 mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper. There are other things
10 that we're actively doing things to manage now.

11
12 We also have the issue of throughput of the things that the council
13 works on, and transmits, and those things getting implemented,
14 and, adding additional assessments to the mix -- I'm just saying
15 be considerate of the global bandwidth, both to do the stock
16 assessments and --

17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I totally understand, and I'm not asking for the
19 Cadillac version, as Clay likes to call it, for snowy grouper, or
20 anything like that. I mean, this entire process was to try to
21 explore other approaches that don't require these three to four-
22 year assessments to go down, right, and so I'm just wondering like
23 is this now the time where we can start looking at some of these
24 other fisheries, basically, or at least looking at different ways
25 to assess them if the traditional data-intensive stock assessment
26 won't work?

27
28 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and I would look at Clay.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Porch.

31
32 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, and the Science Center is, you know, re-examining
33 all the data that's available for the species managed by the
34 council for exactly that purpose, and what can we actually do for
35 each of those species, and I suspect snowy is going to fall in
36 that category where it would have to be part of a complex. I don't
37 think we have the detailed information that we could do even an
38 index-based assessment, but I'm not absolutely sure about that.
39 That's what our staff are looking into now.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other questions for the Science Center or
42 Ryan or Dr. Simmons? No? Seeing none, okay. The next item is
43 Other Business, and there was no other business to come before the
44 committee, and we will adjourn for the day and reconvene at 8:30
45 in the morning.

1 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 7, 2026.)

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