

GULF COUNCIL

ECOSYSTEM COMMITTEE

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino & Virtual Biloxi, Mississippi

November 3, 2025

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Mike Allen.....Florida
Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
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1 The Ecosystem Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The Golden
2 Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on Monday morning,
3 November 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

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

9 **CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON:** Before we get into the agenda, and approval
10 of agenda, I just want to go through the membership for the
11 Ecosystem Committee. That includes Dr. Allen as vice chair, Dr.
12 Banks, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Marquez, Dr. Sweetman, Mr. Schieble, Dr.
13 Overton, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, and Mr. Strelcheck.

14
15 Now we will go ahead and approve the agenda. Are there any
16 additions or changes or modifications to the agenda? Not seeing
17 any, can I have a motion to approve the agenda? I can't see who.
18 Is that C.J.? Was that you? C.J. approves the agenda, and I have
19 second by Mr. Sanchez. Is there any opposition to approving the
20 agenda as written? Seeing none, the agenda is adopted.

21
22 The next item on the agenda is Item Number II, Approval of the
23 June 2025 Minutes. Is there any comments or any changes needed to
24 the minutes? Seeing none, can I have a motion to adopt the minutes?
25 C.J. has a motion, and that's seconded by Dr. Allen. Is there any
26 opposition to accepting the minutes as written? Not seeing any,
27 the motion carries. That will take us to Item Number III, Action
28 Guide and Next Steps. Dr. Wang.

29
30 **DR. VERENA WANG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we have one item on
31 the agenda for the committee to discuss today, and that is the
32 Draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan, and so staff will provide an overview
33 of the draft Gulf fishery ecosystem plan, which is a non-regulatory
34 document that's meant to guide the use of ecosystem information in
35 Gulf fisheries management.

36
37 The draft fishery ecosystem plan outlines a structured process for
38 investigating fishery ecosystem issues of concern and identifying
39 potential approaches for addressing these issues, and so the order
40 that things are happening is a little bit atypical.

41
42 Normally, the Ecosystem Technical Committee, the ETC, would have
43 had a chance to meet and review the draft fishery ecosystem plan
44 and provide recommendations for the committee, and we did have an
45 ETC webinar scheduled for October 21, but, unfortunately, we had
46 to cancel that webinar, because of the ongoing government shutdown.

1 There are a number of ETC members who are NMFS staff, and that
2 includes the chair of the ETC.

3
4 The draft that the committee is seeing today has not yet been
5 reviewed by the ETC, but we do intend to also seek their input,
6 and their feedback, as soon as it's possible for us to do so, and
7 so, today, the committee should discuss the draft and provide
8 feedback for both staff and for the ETC to consider, and, after
9 both the committee and the ETC have had a chance to review the
10 draft, we are going to begin the next phase for operationalizing
11 the fishery ecosystem plan.

12
13 I think that's the main reason why we didn't want to delay putting
14 this draft before the committee, is that there are a number of
15 moving parts with our ongoing Inflation Reduction Act projects
16 related to the fishery ecosystem plan that we need to keep moving
17 forward.

18
19 Specifically, the council is currently in the process of selecting
20 a contractor to develop and conduct stakeholder engagements for
21 the fishery ecosystem plan, and this is going to include
22 identifying stakeholder-driven fishery ecosystem issues of
23 concern, helping us to determine how to prioritize those fishery
24 ecosystem issues, and then eventually evaluating the social and
25 economic impacts of these fishery ecosystem issues on Gulf
26 stakeholders, and these stakeholder engagements are slated to
27 start early next year, and that's it for the action guide, Mr.
28 Chair.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Wang. Are there any questions for
31 Dr. Wang? I'm not seeing any, and so that will take us to Item
32 Number IV, Draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan Review. Dr. Wang.

33
34 **DRAFT FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN**

35
36 **DR. WANG:** Bernie, can you pull up 4(a), please? Thanks, and you
37 can just leave it on that first page for a minute. I'm just going
38 to start off with a little bit of background for the new members
39 of the committee.

40
41 In 2021, the council contracted LGL Ecological Research Associates
42 to develop a fishery ecosystem plan for the Gulf, and they
43 submitted that draft fishery ecosystem plan in 2022, and this
44 fishery ecosystem plan that LGL developed was done in consultation
45 with the council, and with the ETC, and was really designed to be
46 actionable at the council's request.

1
2 They designed a fishery ecosystem plan that was centered around
3 the concept of the fishery ecosystem issue, and investigating
4 individual fishery ecosystem issues of concern, and this was really
5 meant to be a tangible, and sort of right-sized approach, to
6 ecosystem planning to fit the needs specifically of this region.
7

8 In 2022, the council approved the draft LGL fishery ecosystem plan
9 as a concept, and as a baseline, for continued development of the
10 fishery ecosystem plan, and so, since then, the ETC has met quite
11 a few times to continue to discuss the fishery ecosystem plan, to
12 discuss the processes and procedures, and how to develop those for
13 the fishery ecosystem plan, and to discuss how to begin to
14 operationalize the fishery ecosystem plan.
15

16 The draft that the committee is seeing today is the first new
17 version of the fishery ecosystem plan that's been developed since
18 the 2022 LGL contracted version, and I can pause here and see if
19 there are any general questions, or discussion. Otherwise, I can
20 step through the document a little bit and ask for some specific
21 feedback.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** It looks like we have a question from Dr.
24 Sweetman.
25

26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a real quick question
27 for you, Dr. Wang, and so let's say the council has a new
28 recommendation for a research topic that they want included within
29 this plan here. My question is, process-wise, like, how would
30 that work? Like it seems like, right now, the Ecosystem Technical
31 Committee can reject a council recommendation there, and I'm just
32 wondering how that works.
33

34 **DR. WANG:** That's a good question, and I think that the way that
35 it is written now -- Maybe it looks like it's that way, but I don't
36 think it was intended to read that way, and so I think -- We'll
37 get to this later on, as I go through the document, but we intended
38 the Ecosystem Technical Committee to be sort of the clearinghouse
39 for new fishery ecosystem issues that come up through stakeholders
40 or through the APs.
41

42 They could evaluate them, and see mostly whether they're even
43 within the council's purview, and then things that aren't can sort
44 of be, you know, moved off to the side, and so, if it's something
45 that the council has no chance of doing anything about, then it
46 doesn't make sense to include it to the list, but that was not

1 intended to be written that the council can propose something that
2 the ETC will give a big thumbs-down to.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions at this time? All right.
5 Dr. Wang, if you want to go through the document.

6
7 **DR. WANG:** Great. Bernie, can you go to Section 1.3, please?
8 Thank you. Okay, and so Chapter 1 starts with just an introduction
9 to national-level ecosystem guidance, and then it provides some
10 background about the ecosystem efforts in the Gulf so far, and how
11 we got to where we are today with the current fishery ecosystem
12 plan, but I wanted to start here on the goals of the fishery
13 ecosystem plan and get some feedback from the committee about the
14 mission statement.

15
16 The mission statement that's in italics there, and I'll read it in
17 a minute, is something that was proposed by the ETC in 2020. That's
18 really before the development of the fishery ecosystem plan really
19 kicked off, but it's something that's been maintained to this day,
20 and so I thought that now would be a good time to check in with
21 the committee, and make sure that this still represents the spirit
22 of the fishery ecosystem plan, and see whether there are any
23 updates that are necessary.

24
25 There have been a couple of minor language tweaks since 2020, just
26 to keep things updated, but it does stand essentially as it was
27 written by the ETC back then, and so I'll read it.

28
29 The mission statement for the fishery ecosystem plan is to provide
30 a structured process for integrating ecosystem science into the
31 Gulf Fishery Management Council's decision-making for long-term
32 ecological, social, and economic sustainability of Gulf of America
33 resources. I'll stop here and see if there are any comments from
34 the committee about the mission statement.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any comments? Mr. Strelcheck.

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I would be interested in other committee
39 members' perspectives, and so I agree with this statement. I think
40 what I feel like maybe is missing is the short-term responsiveness,
41 right, and so a lot of the ecosystem events, like red tide events,
42 we want to be proactive, and not reactive to, right, and so I think
43 that's really the focus here, is like the long-term sustainability,
44 but in also addressing these short-term events, to make sure that
45 we have them readily available for consideration in management.

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other comments? Andy, do you have a -- Do
2 you have any -- C.J., and then followed by Mr. Dugas.

3
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I guess, to that point, Andy, fair. I
5 mean, I don't think we want to create an ecosystem plan that just
6 ends up being kind of a paperweight, right, that we don't really
7 do anything with here.

8
9 Maybe, Andy, what you're looking at is the structured process for
10 integrating into ecosystem science, and maybe -- Are you looking
11 for more clarification about what that structured process actually
12 is for how we would integrate this? I guess a question back to
13 you.

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** This is a broad mission statement, and so I was
16 just kind of thinking out loud with regard to the focus is,
17 obviously, on the long-term ecological, social, and economic
18 sustainability, right, but, in order to achieve that, you also
19 have to have a process that's responsive, even under shorter-term
20 windows, and so that's all I guess I was pointing out. As long
21 as, I think, the ecosystem plan develops, and that's encapsulated
22 in it, in terms of the structure of the process, then the mission
23 statement will be fine as it stands.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

26
27 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and I totally agree with Andy there. I mean,
28 if -- I think it's all about that phrase "structured process", and
29 like if we're able to act in a timely manner to actually do
30 something with this, and I think that's the entire point, and I
31 agree with Andy.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

34
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
36 I think, maybe when we were talking about this a while ago, perhaps
37 the more newer operational pieces that we would try to integrate
38 would be the fishery ecosystem issues piece, and maybe it would be
39 helpful for Verena to kind of go through that, go through the
40 document, and then perhaps we could come back to our mission
41 statement and see if we need maybe to add some objectives, or
42 refine this from that, and just an idea.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other thoughts? All right. Not seeing any,
45 Dr. Wang.

1 **DR. WANG:** Great. Bernie, can you go to Section 3.1, please? If
2 you could just scroll up a tiny bit, so we can see the chapter
3 title. Thanks.

4
5 I'm skipping over Chapter 2 a little bit. Chapter 2 really just
6 kind of provides an overview of the principles of fishery ecosystem
7 planning, and defines the concept of the fishery ecosystem issue,
8 and sort of how we came to arrive at using the fishery ecosystem
9 issue as sort of a functional unit for this active, actionable
10 fishery ecosystem plan.

11
12 Again, a fishery ecosystem issue is an ecosystem issue of concern
13 that arises in the Gulf that affects numerous Gulf stakeholders
14 and that rises beyond single species management, and perhaps needs
15 additional consideration, and so those definitions are provided in
16 Chapter 2, but Chapter 3 is where we really get into the meat of
17 the fishery ecosystem plan, and where we start to define some of
18 the processes and procedures for actually doing some of this work
19 and for identifying fishery ecosystem issues and for how we
20 investigate individual fishery ecosystem issues in a structured
21 way.

22
23 For this first section here in 3.1, identifying fishery ecosystem
24 issues, this is something that C.J. touched on a little bit
25 already, and so fishery ecosystem issues are going to sort of
26 bubble up to the council process in a natural way through -- As
27 stakeholders are making observations on the water, when their
28 ecosystem changes, and those are going to come up through public
29 comment, through the advisory panels, and make their way to the
30 council through those means, as well as other means of council
31 communication.

32
33 In order to kick off this fishery ecosystem plan, we also are
34 planning to populate an initial list of fishery ecosystem issues,
35 and we're doing that with the help of a social science contractor,
36 and so this is something that I mentioned previously as one of our
37 Inflation Reduction Act projects.

38
39 We are going to bring on a social science contractor, and they are
40 going to use a structured process that they develop to identify
41 stakeholder-driven fishery ecosystem issues in an equitable way
42 that represents the many different stakeholders in the Gulf, and
43 is also representative of the five different Gulf states.

44
45 They're going to do this and develop an initial list of fishery
46 ecosystem issues for the council to consider, and this list is

1 going to live in the appendix of this document, and so the appendix
2 is really going to be sort of the living part of this document.

3
4 So, of course, this contracted process is only going to happen
5 once, and, as conditions change, as time passes, of course, there
6 are going to be new fishery ecosystem issues that arise, and this
7 is where we get to what C.J. was mentioning before, is that new
8 fishery ecosystem issues can be recommended by stakeholders, by
9 the advisory panels, by the different technical committees, and we
10 are envisioning that the ETC is going to be the clearinghouse for
11 these fishery ecosystem issues, to give them a once-over, determine
12 whether they fit within the council's purview, whether -- Things
13 of that nature, and then those will then be added to the appendix
14 with this list of fishery ecosystem issues. Again, of course, the
15 council can directly recommend something to be added to that list
16 of fishery ecosystem issues.

17
18 If you could scroll down a little bit, to that box that's just
19 underneath, and so, within the appendix with the fishery ecosystem
20 issue list, there's also going to be a fishery ecosystem issue
21 description, and so the description is going to accompany each
22 fishery ecosystem issue, and it's going to have each of the
23 components that are listed here in this little box, so that there
24 can be a quick reference for what each of the fishery ecosystem
25 issues is about.

26
27 Bernie, if you could scroll to Section 3.2, please, just
28 underneath. All right, and so that was the process for identifying
29 fishery ecosystem issues and getting them added to that list of
30 prospective things for the council to consider, and so that, aside
31 from direct council recommendations, is going to be at the
32 discretion of the ETC.

33
34 The council is ultimately going to be responsible for determining
35 what fishery ecosystem issues to begin work on, which fishery
36 ecosystem issues to initiate, and that can depend on a lot of
37 different factors, and that could include the urgency and the
38 priority of the issue, the breadth of the issue, how many
39 stakeholders it is impacting, and it could also include
40 considerations for resource availability, things like staff time
41 to actually work on these ecosystem issues, considerations for
42 maybe what else is currently on the action schedule, and also
43 considerations for the data availability and whether there is --
44 Whether meaningful progress can be made toward this fishery
45 ecosystem issue, given the information that is currently
46 available.

1
2 As I mentioned before, the appendix, with this list of fishery
3 ecosystem issues, is going to be the living part of this document,
4 and we are envisioning that that is going to be reviewed by the
5 council annually.

6
7 At that point, any new fishery ecosystem issues that have been
8 added to the list can be presented and discussed. The council can
9 decide whether or not to initiate work on a fishery ecosystem
10 issue, or they can choose to deprioritize or remove a fishery
11 ecosystem issue from the list, and, at that point, it would be put
12 in an archive of some sort.

13
14 Again, that reassessing of the list of fishery ecosystem issues
15 would happen annually, and then the actual main body of this
16 fishery ecosystem plan document is a little bit more static. It
17 just outlines the processes and procedures, and we are envisioning
18 that that would happen on a five-year basis, where we would revisit
19 the fishery ecosystem plan itself and see whether there are any
20 updates or revisions that are needed to happen, and, of course,
21 fishery ecosystem issues that actually have work that is ongoing
22 will receive more regular progress updates, on an ad hoc basis, as
23 work is continuing.

24
25 Are there are any comments or questions right now about these kind
26 of general processes and the timing for reviewing fishery ecosystem
27 issues?

28
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? Dr. Allen.

30
31 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Thank you, Dr. Wang. I like this format of having
32 these ecosystem issues at the back of the document, this kind of
33 a live document, and I think that, you know, we have some successes
34 in this category, like, for example, the use of satellite imagery
35 for red tide and modifying natural mortality for red grouper. That
36 was a fairly recent study that showed success, and I wonder if, in
37 those ecosystem plans at the end, those examples could be
38 highlighted.

39
40 So red tide I'm sure will be one of the categories, but it might
41 be good to add some text in there about, you know, how this has
42 been done in the past and kind of showed success in that area,
43 because -- I was thinking, Andy, about your comment versus --
44 Reactive versus proactive.

45
46 In one sense, it's reactive to build an assessment to do that in

1 response to a past red tide event, but it's also proactive, because
2 it lays out a framework of how this was done, right, and so it can
3 be used for the future.

4
5 **DR. WANG:** Yes, and that's a really good point, and I would also
6 like to point out, because this happened before you came on the
7 council, is that red tide was recommended as the pilot fishery
8 ecosystem issue to consider, and it's something that the ETC has
9 begun work on, and that we are continuing to work with the ETC
10 chair on, to identify other avenues to address red tide that are
11 outside of just adjusting for episodic mortality in the stock
12 assessment, to identify ways that could directly benefit
13 stakeholders, and to do other things in terms of red tide that
14 could help in sort of the fisheries management realm, but it is a
15 good idea to highlight these, and I'll talk about it a little more
16 in the communication section.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions or comments on the document
19 thus far? All right, Dr. Wang.

20
21 **DR. WANG:** All right. Bernie, you could scroll down just a little
22 bit to the figure that's under 3.3. Thanks, and so this figure is
23 the fishery ecosystem issue loop, and I know that you can't really
24 see it on the screen here, but this is a figure that the committee
25 has seen many different iterations of before, and the fishery
26 ecosystem issue loop really outlines the structured process by
27 which a fishery ecosystem issue that the council chooses to
28 initiate is going to proceed.

29
30 It kind of gives us some structure for how we're going to
31 investigate each of these individual fishery ecosystem issues, and
32 so the fishery ecosystem issue loop begins with a scoping process,
33 to kind of identify where we are now, and that includes stakeholder
34 involvement, identifying the key questions and goals that can and
35 cannot be addressed in this process, identifying the dimensions of
36 the problem and the data availability, and, of course, whether the
37 council has the authority to manage the issue.

38
39 The loop proceeds through development of a workplan and defining
40 objectives and timelines and data and research needs, and
41 eventually can end in analyses that are being conducted either
42 directly by council staff or by NMFS partners, or, if there are
43 more involved analyses that are necessary, there can be research
44 recommendations that come out of this loop.

45
46 Eventually, the idea is to move far enough along in the process,

1 and gather enough information, that we can eventually provide
2 recommendations either for management considerations or for
3 communications or other things that would help to address the issue
4 of concern.

5
6 This is the figure itself, and underneath this figure is sort of
7 a detailing of what each of these individual steps in the fishery
8 ecosystem issue loop entails, and so this iteration of the fishery
9 ecosystem issue loop -- Like I said, it has changed many times,
10 but I do think that this is the same version that the committee
11 saw in June of this year, and so I'll pause here and see if there
12 are any comments on the loop itself.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

15
16 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, kind of getting to
17 Andy's question, and what Mike's point was, we're working on the
18 red tide, right, as kind of the first go-round here, and so just
19 -- I'm not trying to speculate as to what comes out from this kind
20 of analysis here, but like let's say they identify, the ETC
21 identifies -- I know gag grouper was incorporated within the
22 assessment, as far as impacts from red tide and natural mortality.

23
24 What other mechanism would the council have to actually do
25 something on that, and so I guess I'm wondering -- Kind of like
26 let's say you find that red tide has a significant impact on a
27 variety of fisheries here and like, beyond like incorporating it
28 into an assessment, and this might be tricky here, because I'm
29 trying to get you to kind of speculate as to maybe what the ETC
30 might recommend for specific issues here, but like -- I'm just
31 trying to understand like how would the council actually act upon
32 something along those lines, and using red tide as an example.

33
34 **DR. WANG:** That is tricky, and I'm going to try to be careful here,
35 and not sort of put words in the ETC's mouth, but there are some
36 things that the ETC discussed, specifically that incorporating red
37 tide into stock assessments is not a particularly satisfying thing
38 for stakeholders who are being impacted by red tide, and a lot of
39 times too, stakeholders, hearing that episodic mortality, more
40 mortality, from this event, that they have no control over, is
41 being introduced into a stock assessment.

42
43 To them, it often seems like this can only reduce their catch, and
44 it's only ever going to result in bad things for them, and so one
45 of the potential outcomes that the ETC discussed is potentially
46 improving our communications around the issue of red tide and

1 helping folks to understand what these kinds of adjustments within
2 a stock assessment can do. It doesn't always end in resulting in
3 catch.

4
5 I think, in the previous red grouper assessment, it actually ended
6 up in increasing the level of catch, because the red tide was not
7 as severe as previously predicted, and so there was more -- There
8 was less uncertainty around red tide episodic mortality.

9
10 There are other things that the ETC has discussed as potential
11 goals for things that could be addressed through -- For red tide
12 through this fishery ecosystem issue process, but I think I don't
13 -- I don't want to go too far down that path right now.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. I have Dr. Froeschke.

16
17 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** I guess, without getting too far in that
18 specific example, but one potential scenario I could see with which
19 this process would be helpful is that it's -- To-date, it seems
20 that what we've learned is that the biological response may have
21 not been what we have anticipated, and the stock may -- For
22 example, it might be much more resilient to that.

23
24 In the past, what we've done is said, okay, we have a red tide
25 that has immediate social and economic impacts on this, which are
26 negative, and the initial reaction is, well, because the biological
27 response has also been negative, that the -- These are going to be
28 prolonged effects that you might expect, and, well, there's going
29 to be necessarily reductions in allowable harvest, which was going
30 to exacerbate social and economic effects, and what we -- If that
31 were not accurate, and say, okay, the stock is more resilient than
32 we thought, because recruitment tends to be better, and this is a
33 mechanistic thing that we can -- That we feel confident about, and
34 I'm not suggesting that's true, but, if that were to -- That
35 necessarily extending, or exacerbating, social and economic
36 impacts, or reductions necessary in the future, may not be even
37 the right response.

38
39 I think there is some work around in that space for this, and that,
40 you know, as we learn more, and understand how this works, I think
41 we could improve the management to go along with it.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so my
46 comment was just going to be more like high-level, as we start

1 selecting the FEIs to develop. I mean, there may not be, you know,
2 a direct correlation with those regulatory changes, but it could
3 provide -- As we flesh those out, you know, and as more studies
4 perhaps come available on that particular issue, it could inform
5 your decision making, and we could cite that module, that FEI,
6 when you're making those decisions, be it seasonality, mortality,
7 and so they may or may not change the council's mind, but it could
8 reinforce what the public is seeing, explain why they're perhaps
9 seeing that, and maybe inform your decision differently, and so
10 that's how I see some of these potentially also working as we go
11 through this process, or that's my hope.

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

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, just kind of thinking through just
16 examples, you know, shifting away from red tide, like a species
17 like king mackerel, that we've been talking about in recent years,
18 right, where we've seen these fundamental shifts and changes in
19 distribution and abundance, right, and now I'm hearing some
20 promising signs that maybe they're showing back up again.

21
22 Well, trying to, once again, be reactive, in terms of understanding
23 what caused that, and then, based on that information, use that to
24 be proactive, in terms of how we manage those resources going
25 forward, I think that's really key to how we can better manage
26 these fisheries, and, like we talked about earlier this morning,
27 how do we have a more responsive process that then adapts to that,
28 once we know kind of, or understand better, what's going on in the
29 ecosystem.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other comments? All right, Dr. Wang.

32
33 **DR. WANG:** Thank you. That's all really good feedback. Bernie,
34 can you go to Chapter 4, please? Thank you. Chapter 4 is the
35 last chapter of the fishery ecosystem plan outside of the appendix
36 with the list of fishery ecosystem issues, but Chapter 4 outlines
37 our communications plan, and this is something that we have been
38 thinking a lot about, because a fishery ecosystem plan is pretty
39 different than what we are typically used to communicating when it
40 comes to our more regulatory documents.

41
42 We are trying to develop ways to communicate the fishery ecosystem
43 plan on a high level that kind of accurately communicates the goals
44 and expectations of a fishery ecosystem plan, and also sort of
45 outlines what we can and cannot accomplish through this process.

1 It is not going to be the saving grace for everything, and so we
2 want to make sure to temper expectations and to communicate really
3 clearly what a fishery ecosystem plan, in this context, is aiming
4 to do.

5
6 Our main avenue of planned communication for the fishery ecosystem
7 plan itself is the council's website, and so there is an ecosystem
8 landing page currently on the council's website, and that really
9 just contains links to some older NMFS documents around ecosystem
10 in the Gulf, regional EBFM plans, things like that, but we are
11 planning to redesign the ecosystem landing page to focus on the
12 fishery ecosystem plan, to communicate broadly these goals, and to
13 explain the fishery ecosystem plan in a way that is sort of
14 palatable.

15
16 We are also planning to -- If you can scroll down a little bit to
17 4.2, Bernie, and we are also planning to use websites as our main
18 communication for individual fishery ecosystem issues that are
19 selected to be worked on.

20
21 Each fishery ecosystem issue is going to have its own specific web
22 landing page, and that is where we are going to provide background
23 information about the fishery ecosystem issue and its impacts on
24 stakeholders, hopefully in something like a storyboard format, and
25 that is also where we are going to provide updates and information
26 about how progress is going through the loop and new information
27 that is arising as work is proceeding through the process, and so
28 that is it for the communication plan and for this document, if
29 there any other questions.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any further questions about the document? I think
32 this iteration is a little clearer, I think, than the previous
33 one, and is, I think, what has been in line with the previous ETC
34 meetings that I have been a part of, and it kind of holds true to
35 that.

36
37 I just have one question, Dr. Wang, about the graphic in 3.3.1. I
38 am just wondering if there needs to be any -- To me, it seems
39 unclear as to when the actual FEI investigation will occur. I
40 assume it is at the development of the workplan, but there is
41 nothing in there that just specifically states, okay, all this
42 information has been gathered, and then the council makes a
43 decision, and I am just wondering if that might need to be looked
44 at to make it a little more clear.

45
46 **DR. WANG:** Bernie, can you go to Figure 3.3.1, please? So, to

1 answer your question, the work is beginning at Step 1, and so the
2 scoping is part of the work, and so, once the council initiates
3 and selects a fishery ecosystem issue to begin, that is when the
4 scoping process will start.

5
6 That is when we will really do a full inventory of what the needs
7 are, what information is available, and where we could potentially
8 go from there, and it is always possible, after the scoping
9 process, that we determine that there are really large data needs,
10 or really big research recommendations, that could cause the loop
11 to sit for a minute while other things are happening, but it really
12 does begin with this scoping process. This fully fleshed-out
13 scoping process isn't going to start until the council chooses a
14 fishery ecosystem issue to begin, and that is something that we
15 can try to make more clear in the document.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Any other comments or --
18 Dr. Allen?

19
20 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am kind of making the same
21 comment here, Dr. Wang, of I think, when it comes to the
22 communication plan, it would be good to highlight examples of how
23 we have had success, or how this kind of information has been
24 incorporated into fishery management, because I think it is hard
25 for people -- It is hard for me sometimes to even get my head
26 around what do we mean when we talk about ecosystem effects.
27 Showing examples I think is -- It will drive it home, as to how
28 this can be used.

29
30 **DR. WANG:** Yes, and that is a great comment, and I think that a
31 good place to do that would be on the general fishery ecosystem
32 plan webpage, outside of the individual fishery ecosystem issues,
33 where we can highlight some of the efforts that have been ongoing
34 and how we are trying to build from those efforts to build sort of
35 a more strategic effort to incorporate these ecosystem concerns
36 into management here in this region.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Any other comments, last comments, or
39 questions? Not seeing any. Mr. Sanchez.

40
41 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you. I am in support of, you know, doing
42 the things that we are discussing here, and identifying ways to
43 address the things we are encountering, ecosystem-related, but I
44 do want to share just a frustration, in that -- It has nothing to
45 do with this document, but it's just the reality that here we are
46 creating something, which is all well and good, and I am in support

1 of, but it seems to be reactionary, and then us, because we have
2 our hands tied -- It seems like, a lot of the things that we are
3 documenting how we respond to, we are not doing anything on an
4 interagency basis to really control.

5
6 You know, we were talking about red tide. We know we have
7 aggravating land-based factors that just fuel these things, and
8 blow them up, yet we don't do anything about it, and water quality,
9 to me, in the Keys and everywhere, it's the head of the snake, and
10 unless we get past, you know, operating in our little box, in this
11 case reactionary, and really forcing our partners in these things
12 to do something about it, we are just counting the fallout, you
13 know, the problem, and we are kind of spinning our wheels here. I
14 just wanted to throw that out there.

15
16 **DR. WANG:** Yes, and that is a very fair comment, and I will point
17 out that, in this fishery ecosystem issue loop process, one of the
18 outcomes can be to recommend interagency communication, or
19 cooperation, and, to some degree, there is only so much you can
20 do. You can't really tell another agency what to do, but we do
21 want to keep them informed about how their actions are potentially
22 impacting Gulf fisheries.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. It doesn't look like there's any other
25 comments, or questions, and we had no other business brought up
26 when we approved the agenda. I'm not seeing any other hands to
27 that, and so, Mr. Chair, that concludes Ecosystem Committee.

28
29 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on November 3, 2025.)
30

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