

Tab D

Shrimp Committee Report August 24, 2026 Chris Schieble, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with updates on Shrimp Amendment 19 (Shrimp Permit Moratorium), the Shrimp Futures Program, and the Early Adopter Program added under Other Business. The Committee approved the June 2026 meeting minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**).

July 2026 SSC Meeting Summary (Tab B, No. 7a) and Presentation (Tab B, No. 7b)

Mr. Moncrief (SSC Chair) presented on the SSC's discussion of the updates to red snapper bycatch estimation in shrimp trawls and the SSC's motions. He then presented on the SSC's discussion of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's (SEFSC) proposed methodology for estimating gray triggerfish bycatch in shrimp trawls through use of a proxy species. A Committee member expressed concern about use of lane snapper as a proxy species for gray triggerfish. The SSC Chair responded that they discussed further validation and noted one SSC member's suggestion to use the same approach and apply it to a species that is included in both the Shrimp Observer Program and SEAMAP to see if it performs similarly. Another Committee member commented that the spatial overlap between lane snapper and gray triggerfish, Gulf-wide, in the SEAMAP trawls appeared to help convince the SSC to approve this approach.

A Committee member inquired if the SSC had expressed interest in estimation of shrimp trawl bycatch of king mackerel, which are characterized in the Observer Program via basket subsampling like lane snapper. Council staff noted that the Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Methodology for Finfish Workgroup had made that request, but additional time was needed for integration of Mexico landings as well as time prioritization of the Working Group to Address Interactions and Bycatch of Protected Resources in Shrimp Trawls.

The Committee then considered the SSC's motions and made the following Committee motions:

The committee recommends, and I so **move**, that the methodology using observer data that has been developed by the SEFSC and being used to estimate red snapper bycatch in the Gulf is acceptable for data input into the current red snapper assessment model.

Motion carried unanimously.

The committee recommends, and I so **move**, to support expanding the bycatch methodology to include additional finfish species that are presently in the observer database. The SSC also recommends that the results of these additional efforts be presented to the Shrimp Bycatch Working Group and/or the appropriate SEDAR workshop or topical working group.

Motion carried unanimously.

The committee recommends, and I so **move**, to recommend the Council write a letter to SEFSC supporting future investigations into improving the estimation of bycatch for finfish species not characterized since 2025 in the Observer Program.

Motion carried unanimously.

The SSC Chair then reviewed the discussion with NMFS on potential analyses for updating the minimum threshold for federal Gulf shrimp permits. A Committee member stated that NMFS presented the SSC with initial data and information, with updated catch per unit effort and overall shrimp effort, and that bycatch information is being updated. He commented that there is also the complexity of poor economic conditions that the industry is facing, which has led to declining effort and prevents achievement of optimum yield. He added that the Council may want to focus on the upcoming trigger to establish a review panel for examining details of a permit pool. Council staff noted that Shrimp Amendment 17B states that the review panel would consist of Shrimp AP members, SSC members, NMFS staff, and Council staff. Council staff added that, in July 2026, the trigger for the review panel was only 10 permits away from being met, so the Council may want to consider the panel's membership at its October meeting. NMFS staff stated that they could bring an update on the number of federal Gulf shrimp permits to that meeting.

A Committee member stated that work should be postponed, rather than ended, on updated analyses of the minimum threshold for permits, as the more immediate need is for the Council to consider the review panel for a shrimp permit pool. Then, as more information becomes available, the minimum threshold can be evaluated more holistically with the shrimp industry, especially in light of economic conditions.

The committee recommends, and I so **move**, to postpone work on updated analyses for the minimum threshold number of federal Gulf shrimp commercial permits and continue work on Shrimp Amendment 20 to update status determination criteria.

Motion carried unanimously.

Status Update on Working Group to Address Interactions and Bycatch of Protected Resources in Shrimp Trawls

Council staff provided a status update on the Working Group. Council staff and NMFS staff met on August 5, 2026, to discuss a data request for holding a Working Group meeting. That data request included updating protected resources bycatch up to 2025, updating smalltooth sawfish population viability analysis based on the SSC's feedback from its May 2025 meeting, information on active federal shrimp permits, and various economic information on the federal Gulf shrimp industry. Council staff expects to have an agenda prepared for the first meeting of the working group in the week or two following the Council meeting.

Dr. Walter notified the Committee that the SEFSC has secured funding for increased observer coverage in the pink shrimp fishery, with the plan to double observer coverage from about 2.5% to 5% for 2027, which will provide better information in that area where smalltooth sawfish

interactions occur. Council staff inquired why there would not also be increased observer coverage in areas where giant manta ray interactions occur. Dr. Walter responded that it was due to concerns about the status of smalltooth sawfish and that any mitigation efforts would require good spatially explicit data.

Other Business

Update on Shrimp Amendment 19 (Shrimp Permit Moratorium)

SERO staff responded that their public comment period ended at the beginning of August 2026, and a decision must be made by next week, at which point the amendment package would go to headquarters. The proposed rule will publish August 25, 2026, with a 30-day comment period. Comments will be due on September 24, 2026.

Update on the Shrimp Futures Program

Dr. Walter stated that the scenario planning workshops have target dates of December 1-3, 2026, and February 23-25, 2027, likely in the Louisiana region, with stakeholders to develop scenario planning for the future of the shrimp fishery. This will help identify specific actions that can be taken to ensure the sustainability of the shrimp fishery.

Update on the Early Adopter Program

Dr. Walter noted that four years of data has been collected through the Early Adopter Program. Devices have been installed on 312 vessels. Remaining funds should allow for devices to be installed on a total of 884 vessels, which may be above the current active fleet number. Once the framework action is implemented, the sampling design for vessels that are required to have a cellular electronic logbook will be rolled out, and it will ensure representative coverage in space and time as well as particular areas of high interaction with protected resources.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.