

Gulf Council
Standing Scientific and Statistical Committee
Scope of Work
September 29 – 30, 2026
Tampa, Florida

Agenda Item 4: Review: SEDAR 94 West Florida Hogfish Stock Assessment

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Chris Swanson (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Center for Environmental Analysis, Synthesis, and Application) will present the stock assessment data, methods, and findings for SEDAR 94, which assessed the West Florida hogfish stock. This stock assessment is inclusive of private recreational landings data collected by the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey. Council staff will present the findings of the Council's Fishermen Feedback tool, which collects and analyzes stakeholder sentiment regarding a specific species. Fishermen Feedback was implemented for West Florida hogfish ahead of the SEDAR 94 stock assessment. The SSC should review the materials presented and ask questions of Dr. Swanson and recommend any model modifications as appropriate. If the SSC finds the stock assessment to be consistent with the best scientific information available, then the SSC should pass a motion recommending as much to the Council.

Motion/recommendation to Council expected

Agenda Item 5: Review: Mississippi and Alabama Creel Surveys

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendation

Committee input and next steps: Representatives from the states of Alabama and Mississippi will present their respective implementations of the Creel survey originally created by Louisiana (LA Creel). AL Creel and MS Creel are state-specific extensions of LA Creel in those respective states, and the survey is designed to replace the data historically collected and estimated by the federal Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions of state staff, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item 6: Review: Results of the 2024 Marine Recreational Information Program Pilot Study and Data Recalibration

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendation

Committee input and next steps: Representatives from NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) will present the results of the 2024 pilot study which was designed to

investigate and correct for telescoping bias in the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES). This telescoping bias was determined to have resulted in overestimation of fishing effort in the shore and private recreational vessel fleets, and by extension, overestimation of the landings associated with those fleets. NOAA OST staff will detail the steps taken to correct this bias, detail other modifications made to the MRIP-FES program, and review the results of the revised estimation method for federally managed species in the Gulf. The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions of OST staff, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item 8: Review: SEDAR 94 West Florida Hogfish Yield Projections

Action: Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Swanson will review the catch projections for West Florida hogfish resulting from the SEDAR 94 stock assessment, including any model modifications specified by the SSC the day prior. Dr. Swanson will review the projections specifications with the SSC and make modifications as appropriate. The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations regarding the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC), as appropriate. The SSC should consider annual and constant catch scenarios, and the duration of time for which the projections will be considered for making OFL and ABC recommendations.

Motion/recommendation to Council expected

Agenda Item 9: Review: SHELF Egg Project

Action: Presentation and discussions

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Chris Stallings (University of South Florida, Mackerel SSC) will review the Spawning Habitat and Early-Life Linkages to Fisheries (SHELF) program with the SSC. The SHELF program was established in 2017 to develop a long-term record of fish reproductive activity on the West Florida Shelf through DNA barcoding of individual fish eggs. By leveraging archived egg collections from the SEAMAP Fall Plankton Survey, SHELF extended the resulting time series back to 2013 while continuing annual sampling. More recently, SHELF developed an independent Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) to augment SEAMAP sampling. Together, these efforts have produced a species-level record of spawning activity for managed and non-managed fishes in the eastern Gulf. As SHELF concludes its third phase and over ten years of observations, the data are beginning to support fisheries applications and other management-relevant products. Data products from SHELF are considered in Gulf stock assessments (e.g., recently, SEDAR 99 for Gulf migratory group king mackerel). While SHELF currently samples only the eastern Gulf and may not be suitable as a direct tuning index for Gulf-wide assessments, it provides an independent source of information that can strengthen confidence in assessment outcomes and reveal patterns not detected by other monitoring programs. The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions of Dr. Stallings, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item 10: Review: Social Science Questionnaire for Gulf Species

Action: Presentation and discussions

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Matt McPherson (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]) will present the findings of a pilot expert survey on assessing the social value of Gulf of America fisheries. Social value can inform species prioritization and regulatory review alongside economic and ecological information. NOAA Fisheries is implementing a multi-annual priority strategy with two main goals: to prioritize key species for assessing social value, and to revise and address regulatory barriers as appropriate, based on the key species prioritization. The overall objective of this pilot study was to determine whether structured expert elicitation is a useful approach for assessing the social value of fisheries and, if so, identify the refinements needed before a full-scale application. The SSC should consider the information presented, ask questions of Dr. McPherson, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item 11: Discussion: Regulatory Streamlining

Action: Presentation and discussions

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Peter Hood (independent contractor) will present proposed mechanisms for improving the efficiency of routine and minor adjustments to management advice, including developing a more automated process for updating catch limits and other management changes for a suite of pilot species. The Council funded this work as part of its ongoing regulatory streamlining efforts, with the aim of improving the timeliness and throughput of incorporating updated scientific information into the management process. This work will continue with development of prospective amendments to fishery management plans to implement the regulatory efficiency measures. The SSC should consider the information presented, including the species proposed and data available to support automated processes, ask questions of Mr. Hood, and make any recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item 7, 12: Public Comment

Action: Information

Committee Input and Next Steps: Members of the public will be able to address the SSC directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item 13: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by SSC members, time permitting. If the SSC wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future SSC meeting.