

**GULF
COUNCIL**

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September 15, 2026

Dr. Clay Porch
Director of Southeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
75 Virginia Beach Dr.
Miami, Florida 33149

Dear Dr. Porch:

At its August 24-27, 2026, meeting, the Gulf Council (Council) received the summary of the July 2026 Scientific and Statistic Committee (SSC) meeting. Based on the SSC's summary, the Council supports expansion of the bycatch methodology to include additional finfish species that are presently characterized in the shrimp observer program's database such as king mackerel. The Council also recommends that the results of these additional efforts be presented to the Council's Shrimp Bycatch Working Group and/or to the appropriate Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) workshop or topical working group that has shrimp industry participants. Lastly, the Council supports additional investigations into improving the estimation of bycatch for uncharacterized finfish species in the Observer Program, while recognizing that starting in 2025, gray triggerfish is one of the newly characterized finfish species. Continued advancement in finfish bycatch estimation methodologies related to the Gulf shrimp fishery will further enhance SEDAR assessments for finfish stocks.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Matthew Freeman.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kesley Banks
Council Chair

cc: Gulf Council
Council Staff
John Walter, Ph.D.
Frank Helies
Gary Decossas
Shrimp Finfish Bycatch Workgroup