

GULF COUNCIL

GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino & Virtual Biloxi, Mississippi

August 24, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
Kesley Banks.....Texas
Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Mike Allen.....Florida
Kevin Anson.....Alabama
Brenda Ballard.....Texas
Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
Troy Frady.....Alabama
Johnny Marquez.....Mississippi
Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG
Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
Anthony Overton.....Alabama
John Sanchez.....Florida
Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

Alyssa Clift.....Administrative Assistant
Assane Diagne.....Economist
Leonardo "Leo" Egula.....Fishery Outreach Specialist
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist
Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Frank Helies.....NOAA

1 Judy Helmey.....SAFMC
2 Mara Levy.....NOAA GC
3 John Walter.....SEFSC
4
5 - - -
6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Adoption of Agenda.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Approval of April 2026 Minutes.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Action Guide and Next Steps.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Summary Report from July SEDAR Steering Committee.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Adjournment.....</u>	<u>12</u>

- - -

1 The Gulf SEDAR Committee of the Gulf Council convened at the Golden
2 Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on Monday morning,
3 August 24, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman J.D. Dugas.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF APRIL 2026 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** We're going to get started with the Gulf
10 SEDAR Committee. The members are myself, Dr. Banks, Ms. McCawley
11 or Dr. Sweetman, Mr. Montegut or Mr. Schieble, and Mr. Riechers or
12 Mr. Geeslin.

13
14 Item Number I is the Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any edits
15 or changes to the agenda? Seeing none, can I get a motion to adopt
16 the agenda? Motion by Dr. Banks, and seconded by Dr. Sweetman.

17
18 Next up is Approval of the April 2026 minutes. Any edits, or
19 changes? Not seeing any, do I have a motion to adopt? Dr.
20 Sweetman. Seconded by Dr. Banks. Next up is the Action Guide and
21 Next Steps, and I'll turn it over to Mr. Rindone.

22
23 **SUMMARY REPORT FROM THE JULY SEDAR STEERING COMMITTEE**
24

25 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and so Dr. Simmons is going to
26 provide an overview to you guys about the outcomes from the virtual
27 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting held on July 20th, and the summary
28 presentation will provide info on the SEDAR projects report for
29 the Gulf process review and some discussion items and SEDAR project
30 lists and planning grid updates and some other business items.

31
32 You guys should ask questions and provide input on the updated
33 schedule, based on the timing and release of the MRIP-FES pilot
34 study results, any other items of interest for the council staff
35 and the council chair to bring up during the next SEDAR Steering
36 Committee meeting, which will be in February. Dr. Simmons.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Dr. Simmons.
39

40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair,
41 and so this -- Like Mr. Rindone, said, this is a very high-level
42 overview, and it's going to be Gulf focused. It's Tab I, Number
43 4.

44
45 This is an overview of the presentation. I'll briefly touch on
46 the projects report, the process review and discussion, projects

1 list and planning grid, and then two other business items
2 potentially of interest, which is the CIE prioritization process,
3 and then we briefly talked about a SEDAR funding status update.

4
5 For the SEDAR projects report, the Gulf focus, just to bring us
6 back full circle, remember, I think at the June council meeting,
7 we talked about king mackerel, and you received a presentation
8 from Dr. Walter on the Mexico landings and length, and we put those
9 in some letters, and we're working with Science Center staff to
10 send a council member, and perhaps a staff member, to Mexico to
11 participate in that process.

12
13 We followed up with those two letters. The king mackerel
14 assessment also is now expected to be completed in mid-2027,
15 because of those efforts, and SEDAR and the Science Center agreed
16 to a review workshop with a CIE review as well, and that means
17 Council for Independent Experts.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** Center for Independent Experts.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Center for Independent Experts. There
22 we go. All right, and so you directed us to do that, and they
23 responded, and so any questions? No? Okay.

24
25 For SEDAR process review and discussion, we talked about the
26 independence of cooperator appointees for SEDAR peer review, and
27 there were some concerns brought up about the councils appointing
28 peer reviewers who have participated in either the data or
29 assessment phases of the workshop and then also participating
30 during the review process.

31
32 It was noted these appointments appear inconsistent with National
33 Standard 2 and the SEDAR guidance, and they really suggested that
34 we try not to do this, and so this has been a bit of a challenge
35 for us in the Gulf, due to the way the process is set up and the
36 number of eligible SSC members that are available, and so one of
37 the committee outcomes that came from this is we would like to
38 consider revisiting the eligibility requirements for the data
39 workshop participants serving on the assessment and review panels,
40 and particularly if there's also an independent CIE review process,
41 and so maybe we could loosen up some of those a little bit.

42
43 The other thing I wanted to bring up is we are planning,
44 potentially, to bring, early next year, because we'll have the SSC
45 appointments in mid-2027, and we might think about having a
46 different pool perhaps of SSC members that we could have to

1 participate in this process, because it is quite rigorous and time-
2 consuming, and we do seem to have issues with these overlapping
3 with academics being able to participate completely independently,
4 and so we're working on this. It was brought up for discussion,
5 and so I'll pause there and see, Mr. Chair, if you wanted to add
6 anything else.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I don't have anything, Carrie. Do we have any
9 questions? Dr. Sweetman.

10
11 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Not entirely a question. I understand the
12 challenges here. I just get a little concerned. I mean,
13 obviously, having participated in some of the assessment reviews,
14 and knowing that it is a challenge to find eligible SSC members,
15 and so, while I get that, it ultimately translates into somewhat
16 having some of the same people.

17
18 I also don't want to detract from the process here for getting
19 quality people that are reviewing it, and so maybe there's a way
20 to -- If some of these folks are involved in multiple aspects of
21 it, is there a way that they can recuse themselves from part of
22 the process, to make it more independent? I don't know.

23
24 I mean, I'm trying to figure that out, because, if we're just
25 ultimately going to get people that are not entirely familiar with
26 the assessment, just for the sake of independence here, I don't
27 necessarily know that that benefits the process altogether. I
28 like people that are familiar with the fisheries, familiar with
29 the topics and the council, but I also understand what is some of
30 it's saying on here, that it appears inconsistent with National
31 Standard 2, and I do recognize that there is some interpretation
32 for "appears inconsistent", but I'm just going to stop there.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Geeslin.

35
36 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I share some of
37 the concerns of Dr. Sweetman. I question whether our bench is
38 that deep, and we have the luxury of just a vast universe of folks
39 that can serve in this capacity without some level of overlap.

40
41 I can certainly appreciate, you know, the perception, or the
42 optics, of being biased one way or the other, and participating in
43 the, you know, one effort versus the next, but this is just a
44 concern I share, that I don't see us having the true depth on a
45 bench within this community to draw separate and distinct bodies,
46 and I guess I truly don't understand the concerns and issues that

1 may have developed over time. I'm sure there are some, but that's
2 my comment here.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Do we have any other
5 comments, or questions, for Dr. Simmons? Dr. Allen.

6
7 **MR. MIKE ALLEN:** Yes, I just want to echo C.J.'s and Dakus' points.
8 I think this is a difficult situation. Like, for example, if you
9 have somebody who serves on evaluating some of the age composition
10 data that goes into an assessment, you know, does that preclude
11 them from being able to review the assessment overall?

12
13 It seems like maybe we could set some criteria where if they're,
14 you know, involved in only one part of it, like C.J. said, maybe
15 recuse themselves from discussion there, but allow them to serve,
16 because our bench is not that deep, and going to CIE reviewers
17 brings in folks that are not familiar with the fishery at all,
18 potentially, and could cause some delays. I mean, I'm all for CIE
19 reviewers in some cases, but I just feel like being able to use
20 some of these folks that are familiar with the dataset is an
21 advantage.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. Dr. Simmons.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Yes, and so I think one of the things we spent
26 a little bit more time talking about, and want to come back to, is
27 the participation in the data and then the review seems okay, but,
28 along the way, when they're making decisions through the assessment
29 phase, and then they go to the review, that seems to be a little
30 bit more concerning, in particular when they don't have the CIE
31 reviewers, was my understanding, and so I just wanted to make sure
32 that was clear, and that was discussed.

33
34 **DR. ALLEN:** Okay. That makes sense. Yes, and that makes sense.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Sanchez.

37
38 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** How realistic is it to expect a more independent
39 review, and is there the budget to accomplish that?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

42
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I mean, that's a fair point. We were
44 advised against not doing this, and I think for the red snapper
45 review, we have a situation where someone did serve on the
46 assessment and is also participating in the review. It was

1 suggested we go out and get a contractor, and I just said we can't
2 afford that, because there is going to be a CIE review for that
3 assessment.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

6
7 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Yes, and I'm wondering if there's a compromise
8 here, where an SSC member wouldn't be a reviewer at the CIE review,
9 but they would still be able to participate, and it would be
10 clearly denoted as to what their role is. They wouldn't be
11 formally part of drafting the review workshop findings, but would,
12 kind of like an assessment scientist be able to say -- Still
13 provide some, you know, why was this decision made, and usually,
14 when they're part of the panel, then they're part of that decision
15 process, and have valuable insights, and so is there a middle
16 ground?

17
18 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

19
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We talked a little bit about that,
21 Dr. Walter, but, to me, that's just another person that has to be
22 there, and maybe they may not feel like they can contribute in the
23 same way, and they potentially would still be eligible for a salary
24 from the council, depending on their position, and I'm not sure
25 that helps us a whole lot. I'm sure they would contribute in other
26 ways to the process, but, if the purpose is to have someone that's
27 truly independent there to review, I'm not sure, but I do think we
28 need to look at it in more detail.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Rindone.

31
32 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On that same thread, I mean,
33 if we have -- Like with red snapper, and we have one reviewer who
34 will have also participated during the assessment phase, and this
35 person is very capable for reviewing stock assessments, and that's
36 why they were picked for the assessment phase also, and why they're
37 also appropriate for the review, but they are, in this particular
38 case, one person out of the five total who will be independently
39 reviewing the red snapper stock assessment.

40
41 In that particular instance, you have four other people who were
42 not participants in the other components of the process, and you
43 just have this one person who you could argue is providing
44 continuity, which is something that we've discussed with the SEDAR
45 Steering Committee before, is a request to the council for like
46 carrying the baton forward from the assessment process into the

1 review, and so this does have that added benefit.

2
3 My point more being that the other four people are there too, and
4 so, if that one person was overly advocating for something, I mean,
5 that would be unprofessional as part of the independent review.
6 It would -- We would expect it would be noticed, and it's just not
7 the -- It's not like a written rule, but it's just not in keeping
8 with how you would do that sort of thing, and it would be frowned
9 upon, and so, from a practicality standpoint, we don't expect that
10 sort of thing to happen at the review anyway.

11
12 Even if there was somebody that was brought forward from the data
13 workshop, and participated in the review, or the assessment
14 workshop, it's just -- It's not something fellow scientists would
15 expect of each other, and it would be called out, and so --

16
17 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ryan. Any other questions, or
18 comments, regarding this for Dr. Simmons? Then we'll move on.

19
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you. The next item we talked
21 about is the SEDAR SOPPs, and so, during the February 2026 meeting,
22 we spent a long time going through the SOPPs, as Mr. Dugas and Dr.
23 Banks can attest to, and we directed SEDAR staff to compile those
24 items into several appendices, and then we considered those at
25 this meeting, and we signed off on those SEDAR SOPPs appendices,
26 with minor edits.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** If you're listening online, we're going to have
29 to pause for a moment. We have a fire alarm going off in the room.

30
31 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

32
33 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right, and so we're going to continue. We
34 can work with these lights blinking. Bernie has internet and
35 everything she needs to run the meeting, and so we're going to
36 continue whenever Dr. Simmons is ready.

37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Can I ask for hazard pay? Just
39 kidding. All right, and so next we talked about the SEDAR projects
40 list and planning grid. The committee was informed, and this was
41 in July, that the final pilot results would be released for the
42 MREP-FES study August 31st, and then this month -- I think we might
43 be getting some more updates on that during the Data Collection
44 Committee today.

45
46 All right, and so, just as a reminder, the Science Center proposed

1 options for incorporating those new pilot results into those
2 existing assessments, and like we just completed the gray
3 triggerfish review, and, also, the king mackerel assessment is
4 coming up, and then red snapper is next month, and so they
5 suggested that they do Option 2, after those are completed, with
6 the updated recreational FES data. If there are no questions,
7 next slide, please.

8
9 Okay. Just as a reminder, in 2026, we anticipate the MRIP lite
10 updates, after the pilot is done for those three species, and those
11 will probably go into 2027, and to be determined once we receive
12 those results.

13
14 The greater amberjack assessment was requested to be moved up in
15 priority in 2027. We did ask for that scamp assessment, and we
16 recently sent a memo on the Gulf gag assessment that will be
17 extended into 2027, and asking for an updated terminal year of
18 2025. If there are no questions there, next slide, please.

19
20 For 2028, we added red snapper to the schedule. Again, that's
21 expected to have those historical updates for the landings with
22 the Alabama and Mississippi adoption of the LA Creel system. We
23 added the red grouper to update status, given the time since the
24 last assessment and the actions the council had on Reef Fish
25 Amendment 62.

26
27 One thing that the center has been able to do, particularly for
28 the Gulf, is we're getting some assessment-type updates external
29 to SEDAR, and you'll receive that tomorrow with the tilefish
30 complex. Some work was done there, and they asked us to prioritize
31 a similar kind of exercise for vermilion snapper and/or gray
32 snapper, and they asked us to prioritize those during the steering
33 committee.

34
35 Originally, we requested that vermilion snapper be a higher
36 priority, based on concerns about effort shifting, particularly in
37 the recreational sector to that species, but the life history staff
38 told us that wasn't really possible, and so we ended up putting
39 gray snapper first for that.

40
41 Just a note there that we may have to work again with the center
42 on -- When we get the MRIP-FES pilot, to see if we'll have to go
43 back through the SEDAR schedule, and so that is something that
44 we're keeping an eye on, and we'll let the council stay updated on
45 that.

1 Okay, and so there's two other business items we briefly discussed,
2 and that was the CIE prioritization process, and this was really
3 just an informational request to try to better understand
4 internally what the process is, via Headquarters and the various
5 science centers, because of a small issue we had with hogfish, and
6 so, that information was provided to us.

7
8 Basically, the science centers have to submit to Headquarters a
9 request for those reviews. There's not a limitation by region for
10 the number of requests, but they do have to meet certain
11 requirements, and so the committee was just interested in learning
12 more about that, and so that was appreciated.

13
14 We got a short update on the SEDAR funding status, and we talked
15 -- The Gulf gets a small apportionment annually, about \$30,000, to
16 administer and staff the SEDAR process for the Gulf as a
17 cooperator, and we gave an update on where we were with our
18 funding, and so, annually, we've expended our 2025 and our 2026
19 money to-date.

20
21 The South Atlantic Council receives about \$600,000 annually in
22 funding to administer the SEDAR program, and, in 2025, some
23 categories, such as personnel and benefits, were overspent, while
24 other categories, such as meeting costs and travel, were
25 underspent. In 2026, they reported the expenditures were reported
26 on target, and so, Mr. Chair, that concludes my report. I don't
27 know if you or Dr. Banks want to add anything.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Do we have any questions
30 for Dr. Simmons? We do from Mr. Anson.

31
32 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Not necessarily to Dr. Simmons, but maybe to Dr.
33 Walter. Relative to the data that National Marine Fisheries
34 Service is getting from Mexico on king mackerel, are you getting
35 information for other species, specifically cobia, historical
36 landings for that species from Mexico?

37
38 **DR. WALTER:** I'll have to ask if we are getting that, because I
39 think that is kind of a good question, that those gillnets probably
40 are catching other ones, but I don't know off the top of my head,
41 and so let me get back on that.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Kevin.

44
45 **MR. ANSON:** Again, not privy to the structure of the agreement, or
46 any of the discussions that were made between Mexico and National

1 Marine Fisheries Service, but has the data request been specific
2 to just that year, or are we trying to see if we can -- I mean, I
3 would be curious to know if the landings in general, you know, for
4 all years, but, again, my first initial question was specific to
5 cobia.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

8
9 **DR. WALTER:** We're getting handline and gillnet, and catch rates
10 from those, which we might be able to derive an index, but the
11 project was for king mackerel, and maybe Spanish, and so I don't
12 know if we're getting other species, and so I'll have to find out
13 about that. It's sort of -- That project has had fits and starts.
14 It's been ongoing for many years, and we're finally getting some
15 traction and participation.

16
17 We're going down to Mexico. John is going to Mexico, and so we
18 are making good progress, but I think we do need to tread a bit
19 carefully, that Mexico can sometimes get a little bit -- As these
20 processes, you know, might have management implications, then
21 there could be some concerns raised, and so I'll ask about whether
22 there's potential for other data, or maybe, if this plays out well,
23 and it's providing useful management advice for Mexico, and a good
24 collaboration, then the next step might be, okay, what about doing
25 this for other stocks that might be shared stocks, or straddling,
26 or where there's interaction. Thanks.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Do we have any other questions, or
29 comments? I don't have anything to add, Dr. Simmons. Dr. Banks?
30 No? All right. Is there any other business that needs to come
31 before the SEDAR Committee? Not seeing any, all right. We'll
32 move on, and we're going to switch gears a little bit, due to time.
33 Let's move on to the Sustainable Fisheries Committee, and Dr. Banks
34 is going to lead us through that committee.

35
36 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 24, 2026.)

37
38 - - -