



SAFMC Shrimp Workgroup



Reason for the Workgroup

During the [September 2025 SAFMC meeting](#) the Council reviewed updates to the ESA section 7 consultation for **giant manta rays** and **smalltooth sawfish** including bycatch estimates from the shrimp trawl fisheries in the Gulf and South Atlantic. In response, the SAFMC made the following motion:

POPULATE AND CONVENE A NEW WORKING GROUP COMPRISED OF SHRIMP HARVESTER SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES, NMFS STAFF, COUNCIL STAFF, COUNCIL MEMBERS, AN SSC MEMBER, RESEARCHERS, AND OTHERS TO IDENTIFY WORKABLE SOLUTIONS THAT AIM TO REDUCE INTERACTIONS WITH SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH AND GIANT MANTA RAYS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FEDERAL SHRIMP TRAWL FISHERY. THIS NEW WORKING GROUP SHOULD BE FORMED BY THE COUNCIL CHAIR; SHRIMP COMMITTEE CHAIR, REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WITH NO MORE THAN 15 MEMBERS.



Workgroup Goals

1. Bring together experts in giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish biology with managers and fishery stakeholders to explore ways to reduce and minimize bycatch of these species in shrimp fisheries.
2. Develop an action plan for giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish that includes conservation and management measures to reduce interactions with these species in the shrimp fisheries of the South Atlantic, including any specific modifications to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan.

The workgroup will review and modify these goals if needed at their March 2026 meeting.



Workgroup Objectives

The objectives provide a method for which to achieve the goals for the workgroup:

1. Review the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation process with regards to these species.
2. Review scientific papers, bycatch data, and analyses on giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish, relevant to the species' status and impacts of federal shrimp fisheries, including but not limited to spatial extent of bycatch characteristics, post release mortality data, effort data, model-derived estimates of bycatch, and any population-level analyses (Population Viability Analysis [PVA]).
3. Identify data gaps and suggest new analyses with current data to inform bycatch reduction solutions.
4. Review shrimp fishery operations with regards to interactions with giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish and the feasibility of any potential actions with fishermen.
5. Identify possible effects suggested actions may have on the shrimp fisheries in the South Atlantic.

The workgroup will review and modify these objectives if needed at their March 2026 meeting.



Milestones

Milestones	Status	Timeline
Develop workgroup according to the Sep. motion	Done ▾	December 2025
Provide the SAFMC with updates on the workgroup's progress	Done ▾	March 2026
Hold 1 st workgroup meeting	Upcoming ▾	March 2026
Provide the SAFMC with updates on the workgroup's progress	Upcoming ▾	June 2026
Hold 2 nd workgroup meeting/develop the action plan	Upcoming ▾	TBD
Present action plan to the SAFMC	Upcoming ▾	TBD