

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL I
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
December 2025

The Council met in open session on Tuesday, December 9, 2025. The Council adopted the agenda for the week and approved minutes from the September 2025 meeting.

1. Reports

Council liaisons provided reports. Dakus Geeslin briefed the Council on Gulf Fishery Management Council activities and Sonny Gwinn provided the report for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Lines of Communication – Georgia Council representatives gave their perspectives on how the first round of *Lines of Communications* meetings held in November 2025 in Georgia went and what each Council member took out of the interactions they had with stakeholders.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) – Compliance Liaison Matt Walia provided a brief on fisheries enforcement during Quarters 3 and 4 of 2025. Over the latter half of 2025 there were 137 referrals through South Atlantic partnerships (e.g., Joint Enforcement Agreements). The brief included a reminder on enforcement precepts for enforceability of regulations: regulations need to be simple, compatible, and accountable. The brief highlighted a couple of recent cases, including a criminal case. A Council member inquired whether more resources were being made available to meet new mandates in a recent Executive Order (increased attention to IUU fishing and new MMPA determination with import restrictions). The agency has not received additional resources to meet the new mandates, and none are expected. Council members applauded OLE's efforts to not seize a vessel's catch if the vessel is in violation of a regulation. Instead, the product is allowed to go to market and OLE applies the requisite fine in addition to the total value of the catch. Sometimes OLE allows a vessel to donate the catch when a violation occurs.

US Coast Guard (USCG) – Lt. Tom Pease delivered a brief on USCG activities FY2025 in support of fisheries enforcement. There were zero incursions of foreign vessels in the EEZ in FY2025 due to increased USCG presence. Lt Pease noted there was a 7.5% increase in fishing vessel boardings. An Alabama-based shrimper was caught fishing illegally off FL in joint operation with NOAA OLE. Vessel was allowed to offload catch but fined on top of the total value of the catch (14,000 lbs of rocks shrimp). Lt. Pease reviewed status of goals for FY2025. Lt Pease informed the Council he is being transferred at the end of June 2026 so his replacement will be attending the June Council meeting. The Council has expressed interest in expanding outreach to the commercial industry. Perhaps there is an opportunity to do so in partnership with the USCG's to support their priority to enforce commercial vessel safety requirements.

National Marine Fisheries Service – Andy Strelcheck and Dr. Clay Porch provided updates from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), respectively.

SERO: Golden tilefish landings (longline) have continued to come in after the closure but no overage is anticipated. Gag has a small overage as a result of late reporting, however, and this will need to be paid back next year.

SERO will conduct an annual planning meeting with SEFSC and will share more on prioritization of activities at a future Council meeting.

A Council member asked whether modifications to Section 7 ESA definitions would affect the ongoing consultation on the shrimp fishery.

SEFSC: The Center has been assessing the effects of the recent furlough. The South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey (SADLS) was not affected but there will be some delay in finalizing FES statistics. Stock assessment output has been severely affected, especially after the loss of the lead analyst Dr. Kyle Shertzer. The SEFSC looks forward to working with Council staff to identify how to complete various assessments given that there are currently only three analysts supporting the South Atlantic region. The Council should look at relative priorities of assessments for 2027-2028.

2. Management Program Review Project

Steve Poland and Purcie Bennet-Nickerson provided a short brief on the project's objectives, design, and progress to date. The project aims to enhance the Council's responsiveness to changing fisheries and ecosystems by improving regulatory processes and governance structures. It will focus on three objectives: resolving regulatory bottlenecks, optimizing the Council's committee structure and coordination, and developing a more robust risk policy framework. Case studies of recent amendments are being will help illustrate challenges and opportunities. Interviews with a wide range of Council and industry participants (e.g., Council members and staff, advisory panel chairs) will be an integral part of this project. The Council will receive a more in-depth update at the March 2026 meeting.

3. Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey Revisions

Dr. Katherine Papacostas delivered a presentation to update the Council on recent revisions to the Fishing Effort Survey (FES). The NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) has concluded data collection and analysis as part of a [large-scale study conducted throughout 2024 to test improvements to the Fishing Effort Survey](#) (based on results from prior studies). The preliminary study, completed in 2023, indicated the order of fishing questions had an impact on the overall estimates of recreational effort, but a more robust study was necessary to confirm findings. This more comprehensive study was completed in summer 2025 and underwent a peer review by the [Center for Independent Experts](#) to help fine-tune the revised methods for obtaining recreational effort estimates. In addition, a [calibration model](#), developed to rescale the historical effort estimates produced from the current Fishing Effort Survey, also recently underwent peer review. The presentation included an update on the status of the follow-up study, calibration, and associated peer review processes, along with additional relevant programmatic updates. Highlights of the subsequent discussion are below:

- An adaptive management framework that accounts for data limitations is something that the SA region looks forward to and has been needed for very long time.
- Will MRIP eventually become suitable to monitor pulse fisheries or fisheries with very short seasons? There is no solution at this stage but monthly estimates as opposed to by two-month wave will be an improvement.
- Availability of recalibrated FES data as soon as possible will be hugely important to ASMFC and the Councils.
- MRIP anticipates having partial data for wave 1 from the multiple mailings of the FES. They have been in touch with ACCSP and the states to investigate releasing partial data next year and have full MRIP estimates for wave 1 in 2027.

4. Southeast Region Permitting Information Management System Updates

Kevin McIntosh, Assistant Regional Administrator for NMFS Operations, Management and Information Systems, delivered a presentation outlining the history, successes, and future

enhancements of the Southeast Region Permitting System (PIMS). The improved system (PIMS 2.0) is anticipated to go online in January or February 2026. Questions and comments during the subsequent discussion are below:

- The Permits Office is in conversations with ACCSP so permit information can be uploaded to the ACCSP's data warehouse so state agencies can access more easily.
- Permits that are undergoing processing for renewal that were terminated may not appear on the webpage so there will be small discrepancies because of that.
- Council members expressed appreciation for how easy it is to renew permits these days and for the overall improvements in the Permits Office has put in place.
- What is the process for transferring a SG1 in the event a permit holder's death? Kevin handles each case individually in collaboration with NOAA General Counsel.
- Andy Strelcheck clarified that once PIMS 2.0 is ready the permit data will be again available to use in amendments. SERO will give an update in March.

5. One-Stop Reporting Update

Dr. Jessica Stephen, SERO Branch Chief, gave the Council a presentation on progress towards One-Stop Reporting (OSR).

- For hire programs (e.g., SEFHIER) will not be included in the initial application of the program. The OSR project will only include the Southeast Coastal Logbook, GARFOs eVTRs and the HMS pelagic logbook.
- Dr. Stephens explained that a recent Executive Order mandates that all government agencies require multi-factor authentication. This is the biggest hurdle for implementing OSR. Currently, all NMFS systems are single-factor authentication. All systems will have to be modified to go thru Login.gov. This will be a problem for vessel owners who have others (e.g., captains) entering information for the vessel. GARFO already has operator cards that are fulfilling this function so NMFS is looking into how this could be adapted to the SE region.
- Authentication will also allow users to enter some info and then come back to complete later. Still working on requirements for each of the different systems/permits.
- Currently, there are varied reporting requirements (e.g., trip level, set level) which will need to be standardized. Also, how depth is reported (fishing depth, bottom depth) often varies.
- Is there going to be outreach to TIP samplers or port samplers to educate them on upcoming changes? Dr. Stephens stated that outreach would be considered before the release of the new system.
- Council members inquired as to how multi-factor authentication would affect state agencies and whether there is a deadline for implementation. Dr. Stephens reiterated that there will be many challenges to overcome. There will need to be extensive outreach and education (e.g., currently many fishermen share their password to allow others to complete reports). NMFS and states will need to collaborate closely to communicate effectively to fishermen on upcoming changes.
- There may be a beta application available in late winter or early spring to allow fishermen to try out the system voluntarily to test it out.