

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
FULL COUNCIL I
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
June 2026

The Council met in open session on Monday, June 8, and Tuesday, June 9, 2026. The Council adopted the agenda for the week and approved minutes from the March 2026 meeting.

Litigation Update

Shep Grimes, NOAA General Counsel, provided a briefing on ongoing litigation:

- On May 5, 2026, the Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc. and multiple commercial fishing industry representatives filed a civil complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Plaintiffs challenged the May 5, 2026, issuance of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) to North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, under the Administrative Procedure Act.
- The EFPs exempt anglers fishing off the respective states from specific federal regulations governing the recreational harvest of red snapper from the South Atlantic EEZ in the 2026 fishing season. The challenged EFP to Florida authorized its fishing season to begin on May 22, 2026, with the other states' EFPs authorizing their seasons to begin July 1.
- The Court held a hearing in Washington, D.C. on May 20, 2026.
- On May 21, 2026, at about 6:00 PM the Plaintiffs' motion was granted, preventing the EFPs from taking effect.
- NOAA and NMFS officials immediately notified officials with the respective states' agencies, including all the state representatives on the Council.
- On June 2, 2026, The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission filed a motion to intervene in the case.

1. Reports

The Council received report from various representatives. Below are highlights from selected reports.

For-Hire Reporting

The Gulf Council liaison reported that the Gulf Council is moving forward with re-establishing the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program and making improvements to how for-hire data are collected in the Gulf. The South Atlantic Council paused work on an amendment to make similar improvements in June 2025.

The Council discussed requesting a presentation from the Gulf to learn about proposed improvements and then consider re-initiating work on the South Atlantic amendment in the near future (depending on workplan priorities). Council members asked whether the Southeast Regional Office would have the capability to support modifications to the program (funding and personnel). The Regional Administrator indicated there is some Congressional interest in funding this program. Additionally, the Council pointed out the proposed changes

would not entail a regulatory burden since the intent is to improve data collection.

Council Coordination Committee

The Council Coordination Committee (CCC) met in Homer, AK, on May 20-22, 2026. The Council received highlights of the discussions. The 2027 meeting of the CCC will be hosted by the South Atlantic Council. The meeting will take place on May 11-13, 2027, in Charleston, SC.

Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council (Lines)

Staff reviewed the Council's goals and objectives for Lines and encouraged review of the full North Carolina Lines meetings report for information useful when discussing topics on the meeting agenda. North Carolina Council representatives then gave their perspectives on Lines meetings held in March 2026 in North Carolina and what each Council member took out of the interactions they had with stakeholders. Meetings in South Carolina and Florida are planned for later in 2026 and early 2027.

NMFS Updates

- The Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will be hosting recreational roundtables, likely in September 2026.
- Issues with USCG not issuing Certificates of Inspection (COI) were resolved and SERO is largely caught up with issuing permits.
- Three new positions (in Protected Resources and Habitat) have been authorized, as well as an economist position.
- Reinitiation of Section 7 consultation on the FMP for corals (Gulf and SA). Expected to be completed 135 days from May 18, 2026.
- Two assessments (Red Snapper and Black Sea Bass) are expected to be completed by the end of the year. Awaiting Fishing Effort Survey estimates for both.
- NOAA will be conducting studies on shark depredation in the coming months.

Commercial Electronic Logbook Amendment

- Public comment on rulemaking is open until June 26.
- The reporting application is E-trips Mobile or E-Trips Online.
- Challenges with Multi-Factor Authentication constitute a significant hurdle for implementation.
- Voluntary testing will begin in late 2026 with possible implementation in early 2027 (dependent on successful internal infrastructure testing and PIMS permit data).

Shrimp Futures Project

- Shrimp Future workshops are scheduled for November 2026 and February 2027 (2 in South Atlantic and 2 in Gulf).
- Project does not include rock shrimp fishery.

- Delays in project development due to staffing issues, government shutdown, and length of time for approving initial economic snapshot report.
- This project is intended to address the myriad of issues the shrimp industry is facing.
- Georgia will be releasing a comprehensive report by the end of the year that can be made available to inform this project.

Risk/Value Matrix

- NMFS still sees value in proceeding with the data and information that was being put together earlier in the year. Smaller working groups are being put together with NMFS and Council staff.
- Matt McPherson and his group are conducting a social value survey and gathering data with assistance from other NMFS staff and Council staff.
- The SSC and SEP raised some concerns about economic valuation approach (value added) and other issues but had no specific recommendations. The SEFSC addressed most of issues included in Council letter (e.g., how to incorporate durable expenses, etc). Some of the work will influence the national process.
- The Council will continue to work on the underlying concept in the products that we regularly use and continue trying to determine the non-monetary value of fisheries.

2. Marine Recreational Information Program Update

Dr. Richard Cody provided updates on the Fishing Effort Survey follow-up study findings and implementation status of the improved design; anticipated estimate publication schedule; and the National Academies' peer review of the agency's Recreational Fishing Survey and Data Standards. In addition, Tim Sartwell provided a brief overview of the status of the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID).

- The 2026 calibration model was built on what was done in 2018 effort survey changes.
- Calibration results will not be a simple reflection of the 2024 study results.
- Revised design will allow for monthly estimates in the future – currently the framework and survey administration are in place, but wave level estimation is being maintained for the time being due to availability of resources. Will get to monthly level as soon as possible.
- Calibrated estimates (going back 40+ years) will be available in summer 2026 (August)
- RAPID – Launched by Dr. Neil Jacobs on Feb 11, 2026. It is the transition process, not a replacement for MRIP. Shifts from the centralized federal system to a shared-governance model focused on active co-design with regional, state, and federal partners. Small steering committee has been formed. Core team of 6 members will coordinate RAPID activities and help facilitate the regional workshops. Workshops planned for late summer/early fall 2026.

- Strengthening the review process to increase transparency and has launched a more robust procedure for reviewing recreational fishing catch and effort estimates. State partners have responded positively to this.
- ASMFC will be taking the lead in kicking off the workshops and have hired a facilitator. Bob Beal requested that Councils work with his staff to assist with workshop planning.

Timing and Tasks:

MOTION 1: DIRECT STAFF TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- REQUEST PRESENTATION ON FOR-HIRE DATA COLLECTION AMENDMENT FROM GULF COUNCIL STAFF/SERO STAFF FOR A FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING.
- WORK WITH ASMFC TO ASSIST WITH RAPID WORKSHOPS.
- CONVENE A THIRD (IN-PERSON) MEETING OF THE SHRIMP WORKGROUP.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL