

# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

## Proposed Improvements to the Advisory Panel and Scientific & Statistical Committee Appointment Process

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## **Introduction**

Current Advisory Panel (AP) and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) terms are two years, with no term limit, and there is no formal provision for replacing members who resign before the end of their term.

The following is a proposal to establish an integrated and diversified AP/SSC appointment process with a web based application system.

## **Proposed Terms and Term Limits**

A major component of the proposed changes intended to streamline the process is to appoint AP and SSC members for three-year terms with staggered appointments where one-third of all members would be considered for reappointment every year.

***Draft Motion:*** *The AP seats may, at the pleasure of the Council, be reappointed for two additional terms, not to exceed three successive terms. However, AP members may be reappointed to the same advisory panel after having been off the advisory panel for at least one year. No individual can serve on more than two APs simultaneously.*

***Draft Motion:*** *The SSC seats have no term limits.*

***Draft Motion:*** *AP and SSC terms will be staggered to provide for the appointment of 1/3 of the membership of the AP and SSC each year.*

## **Draft Motion: Approve the Following Proposed Application Process**

The Council will solicit AP and SSC applications annually to fill expiring terms and/or to replace members who have resigned or who have been removed.

Applicants are required to submit a formal application, which will be made available online or can be mailed, upon request.

The Council's AP seats will be filled by individuals who meet particular criteria to ensure that the broadest range of stakeholders possible comprise each panel. The criteria described below for each AP will be used as a guideline for appointments and not all "designated" seats may be filled.

The Council will give highest priority to the following considerations when selecting AP and SSC members:

1. The ability of the candidate to be objective and to consider all aspects of an issue.
2. A commitment to full and active participation in each meeting.
3. The overall experience and expertise of the candidate.
4. An interest in improving fisheries management in the Gulf of Mexico.

Council staff will announce vacancies through the media, Council mailing lists, NOAA Fisheries mailings, and other such means to solicit qualified nominees.

# ***Proposed Updates to the Advisory Panel Structure***

## **Introduction**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council currently has 17 Advisory Panels, including four Ad Hoc Advisory Panels. There is no set membership structure, and panel membership varies by panel in both sector representation and in the number of members appointed.

The following is a proposal to establish an Advisory Panel membership structure for the Council to use as guidance in selecting adequate representation from all stakeholders.

## **Proposed Panel Size and Representation**

Panel size and representation will vary depending on the species, but panels should be composed of no more than 15-18 members (groups of 15 or less are generally recognized as optimal). The categories and number of seats per category are guidance recommendations and will not established fixed seats or membership levels.

**Draft Motion(s):** *Each Advisory Panel structure proposed below can be voted on individually or all APs can be approved in one motion.*

### **Coastal Migratory Pelagics Advisory Panel – 19 seats (currently 24 seats)**

Recreational (all zones combined)	3 private anglers 3 for-hire 2 environmentalist or other
Eastern Zone (Northern & Southern Subzones):	3 commercial hook & line-Northern Subzone 3 commercial hook & line-Southern Subzone 1 gillnet (Southern Subzone Only)
Western Zone:	4 commercial hook& line

### **Coral Advisory Panel – 7 seats (currently 4 seats)**

1 commercial  
1 private anglers  
1 for-hire  
2 scientists  
2 environmentalists or other

### **Data Collection Advisory Panel—16 seats (currently 25 seats)**

4 commercial  
4 private angler  
4 for-hire  
2 scientists  
1 law enforcement  
1 environmentalist or other

**Outreach and Education Advisory Panel – 13 seats (currently 11 seats)**

5 communications (1 from each state resource department)  
1 NOAA Fisheries communications  
3 Sea Grant educators  
4 other

**Red Drum Advisory Panel – 10 seats (currently 10 seats)**

2 commercial  
4 private angler  
2 for-hire  
2 environmentalist or other

**Red Snapper Advisory Panel – 16 seats (currently 14 seats)**

4 commercial  
4 private angler  
4 for-hire  
4 environmentalist or other

**Reef Fish Advisory Panel – 18 seats (currently 21 seats)**

7 commercial  
4 private angler  
4 for-hire  
3 environmentalist or other

**SEDAR Workshop Advisory Panel – unlimited (currently 9)**

This special AP is to allow individuals who are not on an AP or SSC to be eligible to participate in SEDAR workshops on behalf of the Gulf Council and to have their travel paid with SEDAR funds from the SEFSC.

**Shrimp Advisory Panel – 12 seats (currently 12)**

8 commercial  
4 environmentalist or other

**Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel – 9 seats (currently 5)**

4 commercial  
3 recreational  
2 environmentalist or other

## Ad Hoc Advisory Panels

### Artificial Substrate—10 seats (currently 20)

Created October 2012

- 1 from each state resource department
- 1 oil industry
- 1 GSMFC staff
- 1 BOEM
- 2 academic
- 2 shrimp
- 2 environmentalist

### Private Recreational Data Collection --0 seats (currently 9)

Created October 2011

**Draft Motion:** *Discontinue the Private Recreational Data Collection AP and integrate function into the Data Collection AP.*

### Red Snapper IFQ—16 seats (currently 18)

Created August 2013

- 10 commercial
- 2 private angler
- 2 for-hire
- 2 environmentalist or other

### Red Snapper For-Hire IFQ—16 seats (currently 21)

Created June 2014

- 2 commercial
- 2 private angler
- 10 for-hire
- 2 environmentalist or other

**Draft Motion:** *Establish a **sunset date** of May 2018 for each Ad Hoc AP that can be renewed for an additional period at Council discretion.*

**Draft Motion:** *Eliminate the three State Habitat APs.*

## *Proposed Integration of the Scientific and Statistical Committees*

### **Introduction**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has a more complicated SSC structure than the other eight regional management councils. While the other Councils have a single SSC, the Gulf Council has three primary SSCs (Standing, Ecosystem, and Socioeconomic) that operate and advise the Council independently, as well as eight smaller Special SSCs that meet in conjunction with the Standing SSC (See Council SSC listing below).

SAFMC	SSC 18 members; Socioeconomic Panel 9 members
CFMC	SSC 10 members
MAFMC	SSC 20 members
NEFMC	SSC 18 members
PFMC	SSC 17 members with six species subcommittees
NPFMC	SSC 17 members
WPFMC	SSC 20 members
GMFMC	SSC 70 members (14 Standing; 11 Ecosystem; 13 Socioeconomic; 32 Specials)

The Standing and Special SSCs have formed the core basis for scientific peer review since the Gulf Council's inception. The Ecosystem SSC was originally formed to assist with an ecosystem grant and is currently being used to advise the Council on ecosystem matters. The Socioeconomic SSC was originally formed as a panel to assist with incorporating economic information into stock assessment projections, but has evolved into a peer review body for general economic analyses. The Ecosystem and Socioeconomic panels were converted to SSCs in 2010. Although the Council's SOPPs do not mention the Ecosystem SSC and refer to the Socioeconomic SSC as a subcommittee of the Standing SSC the three major SSCs have always operated independently of one another.

The intended purpose of the SSC as stated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) (see MSA Section 302 below) is to provide multi-disciplinary advice to the councils on biology, economics, and social aspects of fisheries science and management. There is value in a multi-disciplinary approach to scientific review because virtually all management actions have biological, economic, and social implications or ramifications. A more multi-disciplinary SSC approach would provide both a holistic review process and an integrated mechanism to advise the Councils.

**SEC. 302. REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCILS**

*“(g) (1)(A) Each Council shall establish, maintain, and appoint the members of a scientific and statistical committee to assist it in the development, collection, evaluation, and peer review of such statistical, biological, economic, social, and other scientific information as is relevant to such Council’s development and amendment of any fishery management plan.*

*(B) Each scientific and statistical committee shall provide its Council ongoing scientific advice for fishery management decisions, including recommendations for acceptable biological catch, preventing overfishing, maximum sustainable yield, and achieving rebuilding targets, and reports on stock status and health, bycatch, habitat status, social and economic impacts of management measures, and sustainability of fishing practices.”*

**Proposed SSC Integration**

Staff proposes to integrate the three large SSCs, which currently total 35 members, into a single Standing SSC of 18 individuals with the following multi-disciplinary structure:

- 7 stock assessment or quantitative biologists/ecologists,
- 3 ecosystem scientists,
- 3 economists,
- 3 quantitative anthropologists/sociologists,
- 1 environmentalist scientist, and
- 1 other scientist from one of the above disciplines or from some other field.

The Special SSCs shall remain in place to contribute ecological, life history, or other species specific knowledge.

This proposed SSC integration proposal was discussed with the Standing SSC and reflects the general advice provided to staff. To address the concern that the new integrated SSC may not have sufficient expertise to address socioeconomic issues, it was suggested that a Special Socioeconomic SSC be created comprised of 2 economists and 2 anthropologists/sociologists that could meet jointly with the Standing SSC, similar to other special SSCs, when needed.

**Draft Motion:** *Create a Special Socioeconomic SSC to be comprised of 2 economists and 2 anthropologists/sociologists.*

**Draft Motion:** *Limit the size of the Special SSCs to three to five members each.*

The integrated Standing SSC will have sufficient numbers of scientists from the major fishery related disciplines to form a core synergy for each area of expertise. This core synergy will strengthen the role of each of the disciplines and enable the formation of effective working groups (or ad hoc subcommittees) to address specific issues to be brought back to the full Standing SSC for consideration and recommendations to the Council. It is expected that Council staff and NMFS staff will actively participate in these working group meetings.

**Draft Motion:** *Postpone Selection of the SSC appointments until June, 2015 due to the 45-day lead time needed for SOFI’s to the submitted and to reduce potential confusion and workload during the transition to staggered terms and the online application process.*