



Roles and Responsibilities in the Development of a Gulf of Mexico Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Background

- The Council recognizes the role of ecosystem considerations in fishery management
 - Held numerous ecosystem workshops
 - Had an Ecosystem SSC [later integrated into Standing SSC]
 - Interacts frequently with the Science Center and academics regarding advances in ecosystem management and modeling
 - Have integrated environmental effects (e.g., red tide) into stock assessment modeling and harvest projections
 - Fully integrating ecosystem considerations into management remains difficult



Ecosystem Status Report

- Ecosystem Status Report (Science Center, 2013)
 - Comprehensive report documenting the status of various ecosystem attributes in the Gulf of Mexico
 - Discussed the influence of human impacts on the Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystem
 - Identified long-term declines in ecological condition and related effects to Gulf fisheries.
 - Identified data gaps that complicate our understanding ecosystem level effects and processes
- Ecosystem Status Report Update (Science Center, 2017)
 - Built on and updated previous report
 - Used as on-ramp by the Council for a broader ecosystem effort (Fishery Ecosystem Plan)



Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP)

- Work began toward a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) in Jan. 2018
 - Council staff developed an outline of the components of an FEP and presented to the Council in October 2018
- Council established an Ecosystem Technical Committee
 - Purpose: To provide guidance on the development of a Gulf FEP
 - 1st Met in March 2020
 - Reviewed existing work to inform FEP
 - Reviewed draft FEP Outline
 - Developed FEP Mission Statement



FEP: Mission Statement

- Mission Statement: “To provide a framework for integrating ecosystem science into the Council’s decision making for long term ecological and socio-economic sustainability of Gulf of Mexico resources.”
- Soon after this meeting, the pandemic began and required a rapid restructuring of Council activities and priorities
 - Many meetings were postponed
 - Council staff developed and implemented new procedures to allow virtual meetings
 - Council focused on pandemic effects to fisheries and fisherman
 - Standing SSC was repopulated in 2020 resulting in some changes to the ETC membership after the Mar. 2020 meeting



Contractor to Develop FEP

- Jan 2021: Council posted a Request for Proposals for a contractor to design and execute the development of a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) to support ecosystem-based fishery management in the Gulf of Mexico
- LGL Ecological Research Associates, Inc. was awarded the contract and has provided several products to inform the FEP that remains in development
- The work products have been developed in close coordination with Council and Science Center staff and collaborators



LGL Contract: Milestones and Deliverables

- Summary of FEPs developed by other Councils [Item 5]
- A review of past ecosystem-based fishery management scoping activities in the Gulf of Mexico [Item 5]
- Develop a process for stakeholder engagement; present results to ETC [Item 6]
- Develop plan to integrate ecosystem indicators into management [Item 7]
- Develop a decision support tool to digest and integrate ecosystem information into management [Item 7c]
- Produce an FEP to be presented to the ETC and the Council [Spring 2022]



Roles and Responsibilities

- Council: The management body that will review and integrate the applicable results from this work into the final FEP
- LGL: Responsible for draft FEP and related deliverables
- ETC: Serves as a technical review body for the draft FEP and relative deliverables produced by LGL. Also provides recommendations to the Council for integration of these products into the final FEP
- Council Staff: Project management, review draft materials, and act as the liaison between LGL, the ETC, and the Council
- Science Center staff: Contribute data products, technical review, and ongoing support toward EBFM



Questions

