GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Omni Hotel Corpus Christi, Texas

August 20, 2018

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The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi, Texas, Monday afternoon, August 20, 2018, and was called to order by Chairman Dale Diaz.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN DALE DIAZ: I would like to call the Shrimp Management Committee to order. The members of the committee are myself, Mr. Banks, Mr. Anson, Ms. Bosarge, Dr. Crabtree, Mr. Riechers, and Mr. Sanchez. First up on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda.

MR. KEVIN ANSON: I move to adopt the agenda as written.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: So moved by Mr. Anson. It's seconded by Mr. Riechers. The agenda is adopted. The next item is Approval of the Minutes.

MR. ANSON: Move to approve the minutes.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: It's moved by Mr. Anson and seconded by Mr. Riechers. Next up is the Action Guide and Next Steps. Dr. Kilgour, do you want to go over those?

DR. MORGAN KILGOUR: Sure. Today, we just have really one agenda item and another item under Other Business. After we go over the review of the council request regarding the shrimp effort threshold reduction in the area monitored for juvenile red snapper bycatch, I would appreciate some guidance on if you wanted to move forward to modify the shrimp effort threshold, and so that's where we are.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. Dr. Kilgour, if you want to go ahead and move into Item Number IV.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL REQUEST REGARDING SHRIMP EFFORT THRESHOLD REDUCTION IN THE AREA MONITORED FOR JUVENILE RED SNAPPER BYCATCH AND SSC RECOMMENDATIONS

DR. KILGOUR: I get the easy part today, and then I am punting the hard part to Dr. Barbieri, but we wrote a letter, back in April, requesting that the Science Center do an analysis on reducing the baseline of the area monitored for juvenile red snapper bycatch, and that's Statistical Zones 10 through 21, in the ten to thirty-fathom-depth range.

We asked for an analysis of 1 percent decreases all the way to a 60 percent from the baseline, because that was what was outlined in Shrimp Amendment 14, and the Science Center provided us with the analysis, and we provided that information to the SSC.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right, Dr. Barbieri.

DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are going to start with a brief presentation that I put together to kind of walk you through, and Dr. Kilgour already explained to you what was the intent of this analysis and to address your previous request.

In a simple statement, can shrimp effort be increased? There is that threshold value of shrimp effort reduced without harming the resource and impeding the rebuilding or reducing the red snapper ABCs, and we received, as in the SSC received, a presentation of a very thorough analysis conducted by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff that provided some perspective for us on the impact of this shrimp effort reduction on the red snapper in the Gulf.

There were about three or four other slides that go into more detail about the methods that I decided that I would skip, because this is really something that the committee looked at, and it’s something that you don’t need to see all of those results, all those methods, but, in terms of results, it’s basically that any moderate changes in the shrimp effort would have very little to moderate impact on the ABCs or the rebuilding schedule.

Basically, the analysis came to the conclusion that this shrimp effort reduction to that 60 percent level would not really have too much of an impact, would not significantly impact, the rebuilding of the stocks or the ABCs for red snapper.

The table there is just for you to see that the analysis involved a number of years, and it looked at different levels, and not just at one 60 percent or the 63 percent, but it looked a whole different number of levels, as compared to that standard, which was the fishing effort back in 2001 to 2003.

Interpretation of why doesn’t the shrimp effort threshold have a more substantial impact on the ABCs, and there were two reasons for that. One is that, with the evolution of the fishery, the expansion of the stock, and you remember, back in June, the presentation of the SEDAR 52 assessment, that a lot of that

fishing mortality on red snapper, Gulf red snapper, is coming from the closed season, for the recreational sector in the closed season, primarily on the eastern Gulf, where the effort is highest, and so that's one reason that the shrimp bycatch no longer has too much of an impact.

Second is because the updated and upgraded estimates of natural mortality for juvenile red snapper actually now account for a much higher value that is removing the red snapper at that early stage, and so the impact of the shrimp bycatch has actually been lowered significantly, and so those two facts actually make sense, and they're in agreement and consistent with the results, indicating that this reduction in the threshold would not have too much of an impact on the rebuilding or the ABCs of red snapper.

The SSC then recommended that the analysis of the shrimping effort threshold reduction be considered the best scientific information available. The analysis was well done and informative, and it followed all the methodologies that it had to follow, and that changing the shrimp effort reduction threshold to 60 percent in the area monitored for juvenile red snapper bycatch is unlikely to significantly impact yield streams associated with rebuilding the stock by 2032, but that is a long and fancy way to say that the committee did not see a significant impact of this threshold reduction on the health of the stock or the trajectory that we have in place for rebuilding the stock according to the existing rebuilding plan. That, Mr. Chairman, completes my presentation.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Are there questions for Dr. Barbieri? Go ahead, Mr. Riechers.

MR. ROBIN RIECHERS: Andy or Mara, remind me, just because my memory back to 2011 isn't going to allow me to remember this myself, how did we institutionalize the change that had occurred from the 2001 to 2003, Shrimp Amendment 14, to the current change value or the current effort reduction value at the time, based on baseline comparison to 67 percent, because that's basically the analysis we asked for, which is now, I think, suggesting, even though they looked at a range, it's suggesting that it could be reduced to 60 percent, as compared to that baseline, based on all the changes we've seen in red snapper since that time. How did we formalize that, because I am just not remembering.

MR. ANDY STRELCHECK: Robin, unfortunately, I don't think we're remembering either, and we need to look it up. If history

serves me well, I think the original rebuilding plan, or the revision back in 2007, started with a 74 percent reduction. Then it went down to 67 percent, but it was intended to gradually decrease down to 60 percent. We never instituted the gradual decrease, and so it was fixed at 67 percent.

MR. RIECHERS: Yes, and it kind of makes sense that we wouldn't have been gradually doing it, because the only time we can really get a snapshot is when we do a new full what we used to term benchmark, and so it makes sense that we're doing it in a staggered approach, because we're getting those in an every three or five or six-year period, whatever it is.

Again, this is just the evolution of that and a thought process about -- Like I said, I'm with you all. Maybe we can, between now and Full Council, just decide whether it has to go in an amendment or whether it was done just as a policy action, because the way we framed it in 14 that maybe it can be, and I just don't remember or recall.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Kilgour.

DR. KILGOUR: I didn't understand the question, but now I think I do. In the Amendment 14, we outlined a 74 percent reduction. Then, by 2011, it would go down to 67 percent in that amendment. Also, in that amendment, it established that it could go down to 60 percent by 2032, but it didn't establish -- It said through a framework procedure, but it didn't establish a procedure, and so it would be a full amendment to go to a lower than 67 percent reduction, but those two, 74 and 67 percent, were outlined in Amendment 14, and they were given a timeline. That 60 percent was more nebulous, and there wasn't a timeline given to that one, other than 2032.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Barbieri, did the SSC consider, or did a motion come up relative to, reducing it to 56 percent? I mean, there is only 0.1 million pounds difference in the ABC from 2032 compared to 60 percent, and were they using the 60 percent reference in Amendment 14, or can you describe some of that discussion? Thank you.

DR. BARBIERI: Again, this is what we were discussing earlier, in terms of what questions we are asking the SSC to address and how much we're leaving it up to the committee to basically interpret what is being asked and what it's trying to provide.

The committee saw the letter going to the Center, and it was explicit for that going from the 67 to the 60 percent, and so it stayed within that lane, basically, even though the analysis was more inclusive, at your request, because you wanted to see different levels, and so we just stuck with that 60 percent, basically saying that, for the direct question that you asked on whether bringing that effort threshold down to 60 percent, whether this would impact the rebuilding plan, the rebuilding trajectory, or the current sustainability of the stock, and we said no, given the analysis that we were presented with. Refresh my memory if I am misremembering, Dr. Kilgour, but --

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Riechers.

MR. RIECHERS: I am not certain that I'm prepared to make a motion to start it, because I think I would rather wait and have another shrimp action as this to be a sole action in a shrimp document, and so I would probably want to at least have a notion of when our next assessments are coming up and so forth, so that we can maybe time it with something else.

It seems to me we've got two choices, and that's to lower -- We have now redone the calibration, and so you can lower that effort threshold, but still have a target, as Shrimp Amendment 14/27 said, of 60, or, Kevin, I think you're suggesting there may not be much difference.

It's still benchmarking when that threshold should be, and so that has to be 2032. Now, the question is whether it can be reduced now and stay that way all the way to 2032, with that as your frame of reference if it rises above that level and then we have an issue.

This was just brought to us because we had a slight tick-up in effort last time that was getting a little closer to the threshold, I think a few percentage points, but it was a little bit up, and so we just need to redo this based on the discussion in 27/14 and the way the model was done then, as compared to what it would show us now, and so, again, I will maybe have a discussion offline about what other things we have going on in the Shrimp Committee possibly coming up.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Any other questions for Dr. Barbieri? I guess I will make a comment off of what Mr. Riechers just said. Do we have any update on where we're at -- We don't have anything for this year to know where we're at in effort in that area, and it's probably way too soon for that, I would assume.

I would hate for us to wait for another action to add it into another document and then they would slightly go over this effort that we currently have on the books, when we know that the recommendation is that the 60 percent effort would have very little impact, and so that would be my concern on waiting. Does that make sense? Dr. Kilgour.

DR. KILGOUR: The closest that the shrimp industry has gotten to meeting this threshold is in 2014, when they had a 67.4 percent reduction from that baseline, and so there's been a -- There might have been a slight increase compared to previous years this past year, but, really, conditions were perfect in 2014 for the shrimp fishery, and so they got really close, but they have been well below the threshold every year, and there is all of those permits that are not being renewed, and it's an aging fleet, and so I just wanted to put that on the record.

It's not like their effort is increasing every year and they're getting closer and closer. There are those rare years where they get close, but they have been below that threshold every year.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Riechers.

MR. RIECHERS: Well, and I certainly agree with that, and I don't think anyone was trying to sound an alarm. It's just that, procedurally, we were trying to date back to something that had occurred somewhere around sixteen years ago, when we were all struggling around the council table last time to say, okay, here's what's been done, and we need to take a look at it, and then, more importantly, how do we procedurally now move forward, and I'm not even certain, procedurally, we necessarily -- I will look to NMFS, but whether we necessarily have to do anything, given this analysis. I think what you're saying is, by 2032, you have to do something, but --

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I was hoping that someone from NMFS would answer or respond to Robin's comment.

MR. STRELCHECK: We don't think that you have to do anything. You don't have to act here. That was part of the original rebuilding plan, but there's been modifications that have taken place since that time.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: But the procedure is still in place, and, if the fishery does change, if economic conditions or consumers attitudes towards foreign-imported shrimp go down and they want to buy more domestic shrimp, then that could cause effort to come back, and more boats could be built.

I mean, things could happen, and so I would rather take care of it, through some mechanism, and not have us -- You know, have a little bit more cushion, if you will, and the SSC -- The Science Center has done the analysis, and the SSC has reviewed it, and we've got a number that we could use and start to implement and do a new -- I would assume that it would be a framework action, but I don't know, and that's, I guess, what I was trying to look at over at NMFS, was to see what would be required or needed.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. MARA LEVY: Well, I think, as Morgan had indicated, I think you're going to have to do a plan amendment. This was sort of set up, in a way, where it automatically went down, and then, at some other point, you were going to reevaluate and see whether you could reduce it more, and it references a framework procedure, but there is not actually a framework procedure that was put in place to do it, and so, as far as I can tell, there is no framework procedure that allows you to do that, and so you would do a plan amendment to change the threshold.

I mean, really, a plan amendment, a framework, they're pretty much equivalent. It requires a little bit different comment period, but the analysis is what the analysis is, regardless of what you're going to call it.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Boyd.

MR. DOUG BOYD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not on the committee, but I have a question for Dr. Barbieri. At this stat level, what other species are in the bycatch, and are those significant?

DR. BARBIERI: Oh, gosh. To tell the truth, I would have to -- I wouldn't know, off the top of my head, to tell the truth, and I would have to reach out to other people. We do have Dr. Gallaway here, who has a history of analyzing that type of data, the shrimp bycatch in the Gulf, especially in that area, as you know, and so --

MR. BOYD: Well, I will just see him offline then, and I won't hold up the council.

DR. BARBIERI: Absolutely, yes.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I would like to make a motion then that we instruct staff to proceed with developing a plan amendment for the shrimp fishery to look at reducing the effort to 60 percent relative to the red snapper bycatch.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I will let them get that on the board, and then I will see if there's a second. Mr. Anson, is that your motion?

MR. ANSON: Thanks to Dr. Kilgour it is, yes.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. We have a motion. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Ms. Bosarge. Is there discussion? Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Well, it's just some opportunity here. We did this to kind of constrain the shrimp fishery, to avoid any impacts on one species, and it appears that species is at a point now where some of those constraints can be reduced, relaxed, a little bit, and we ought to, I think, take advantage of that, so that we can provide the maximum opportunity for the shrimp fleet while still trying to achieve the rebuilding target for red snapper. It appears like the data shows that we can do that.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Any further discussion? **Seeing none, is there opposition to the motion on the board? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

Is that it for you, Dr. Kilgour? Thank you. I think that takes care of everything under Item Number IV, and so we're going to move to Other Business, and I believe Dr. Porch is going to take care of that. Dr. Porch.

OTHER BUSINESS
SEA TURTLE BYCATCH MEMO

DR. CLAY PORCH: I will just go through this really quickly, if you could move to Table 9, which is on page 23. The gist of it is we developed a statistically-defensible method for estimating the total bycatch of various species of sea turtles in the shrimp fishery, and so that's turtles both caught in the try nets and then also caught in the main nets that don't get extruded through the turtle excluder device.

This method is generally a Bayesian-type statistical model that assumes a negative binomial distribution, and so it's kind of standard statistical techniques, and I won't get into the technical details beyond that, but it's a great improvement over the methods that were used in the past, which had to make a number of assumptions.

The results are shown here in Table 9, and what you can generally see is not only the estimates of bycatch mortality are lower, but, generally, they have been decreasing since 2007 for Kemp's ridley and loggerheads and more or less level for green sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. That's all I have to say about that.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Any questions for Dr. Porch? Thank you for bringing that to our attention, Dr. Porch, and thank you all for doing everything you can do to improve this data. Is there any other business to come before this committee? Seeing none, we're adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 20, 2018.)

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