

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Hyatt Centric New Orleans, Louisiana

January 29, 2024

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 13 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 14 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 15 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 16 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 17 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 18 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 19 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 20 Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 23 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 24 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 25 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 26 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 27 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 28 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 29 Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

- 32 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 38 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 40 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 42 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 43 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 44 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 47 Alan Lowther.....NMFS
- 48 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC
- 49 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

1 Nathan Putman.....LGL
2 John Walter.....SEFSC
3
4 - - -
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1 The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Hyatt Centric, French Quarter
3 in New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday afternoon, January 29, 2024,
4 and was called to order by Chairman Chris Schieble.
5

6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** At this time, I would like to call the
11 Shrimp Committee to order. The members of the committee are
12 myself as chair, Mr. Gill is the vice chair, Dr. Banks, Mr.
13 Broussard, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Donaldson, Dr. Overton, Mr. Geeslin,
14 and General Spraggins, Mr. Strelcheck, and Mr. Williamson. All
15 the committee members are present today in-person.
16

17 The first item on the agenda is Adoption of the Agenda, Tab D,
18 Number 1. Does anyone have any opposition the agenda as
19 written? Seeing no opposition, the agenda passes as written.
20 The next item is Approval of the October 2023 Meeting Minutes,
21 Tab D, Number 2. Does anyone have any additions, deletions, or
22 edits to the minutes from the last Shrimp Committee meeting?
23 Seeing none, is anyone opposed to passing the minutes as
24 written? The minutes are adopted as written. Next is the
25 Action Guide, Tab D, Number 3, and I believe Dr. Freeman is on
26 the virtual world, right?
27

28 **DR. MATTHEW FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Can you hear me?
29

30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir, we can hear you. Take it away,
31 please.
32

33 **DR. FREEMAN:** Terrific. For the first agenda item in the action
34 guide, the committee will receive information on the progress of
35 the early adopter program for cellular vessel monitoring
36 systems, cVMS, with the Gulf of Mexico federal shrimp fleet.
37 The committee should ask question and then provide feedback to
38 NMFS on the early adopter program, noting as well its relevance
39 to the draft shrimp framework action.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Is Lowther
42 on? Can you hear us?
43

44 **DR. ALAN LOWTHER:** (Dr. Lowther's comments are not audible on
45 the recording.)
46

47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Alan, can you call, instead
48 of going through your computer, because I don't think you're

1 using a headset, and that's probably causing the problem. Maybe
2 we can move things around and go to Dr. Walter's presentation
3 first and come back?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Walter, are you ready to go, if I get
6 Dr. Freeman to go through the next action guide item? All
7 right. Dr. Freeman, can you skip over to Action Item V, please?
8

9 **SHRIMP FUTURES PROJECT: WORKSHOPS TO ADDRESS CURRENT CHALLENGES**
10 **AND FUTURE SCENARIO PLANNING**
11

12 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Certainly. For Agenda Item 5, the
13 committee will be presented with information on NMFS' plans for
14 workshops with the Gulf shrimp industry. These workshops are
15 intended to assist NMFS in addressing current challenges faced
16 by the Gulf shrimp industry as well as in developing plans for
17 various future scenarios. The committee should ask questions
18 and provide feedback to NMFS on these planned workshops.
19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Dr. Walter, take it
21 away, please.
22

23 **DR. WALTER:** All right. If staff could pull up the
24 presentation. All right. Great. Thanks, and I'm glad to be
25 here today to present the first in what we're calling Shrimp
26 Futures, which is a project to address the current challenges
27 and the future of the shrimp fishery in the Southeast, both the
28 Gulf of Mexico as well as the South Atlantic, and so the project
29 right now is really just getting started.
30

31 Originally, we had talked about conducting a management strategy
32 evaluation, and I think we learned, fairly early on in that,
33 even in our first workshops that we did, that that wouldn't
34 necessarily be the right tool to address all the challenges that
35 are facing the fishery, and that we really need to pivot a bit,
36 to take a more holistic and broader approach, to bring in more
37 partners, and more players to it, and that the problems were not
38 things that were solely related to management, and many of those
39 problems transcend management and go into a lot of the other
40 factors that affect the entire supply chain, as well as other
41 factors affecting the shrimp fishery.
42

43 Right now, the reason that we're presenting this is that we, as
44 an agency, don't want to go on this alone, and this is not
45 something that we think can be addressed solely by NMFS, or by
46 NOAA, and it's going to have to take other government players to
47 be involved in it, because there's many other agencies that work
48 on shrimp, and then there's many other players who are going to

1 be integral partners in this, including the Gulf States Marine
2 Fisheries Commission, who has a future of gulf seafood tasking,
3 I think, by its commission, and Gulf States has said that they
4 can help with a lot of this, and they're well poised, and
5 positioned, to partner on this, and I think we're going to
6 hopefully accumulate some other partners as we move forward with
7 this.

8
9 I think it's pretty evident, to many people who have been paying
10 attention, that the current state of the fishery is not good,
11 and there's a lot of problems it's facing, both in foreign
12 imports, high fuel prices, labor shortages, challenges related
13 to weather and disasters, and then I think everyone also feels
14 that it's a fishery that has a very high economic and cultural
15 importance to this region.

16
17 It's something that is part of our culture down here, and it's
18 something that I think that most people want to see exist, and I
19 think that's the key element of Shrimp Futures, is to say what
20 do we want out of the fishery, by say the year 2050, and I think
21 we could probably all agree that we want to see a healthy,
22 sustainable, wild-capture fishery in existence that's both
23 profitable, because the key to its sustainability, and
24 sustaining that fishery, is that it is profitable, and that it
25 exists to provide seafood for the nation.

26
27 Other challenges that it's facing are that the future is
28 uncertain, and I think that's one of the things that -- So far,
29 we don't have a lot of funding for this project, but some of the
30 funding that we do have in our climate, ecosystem, and fisheries
31 initiatives are going to support this, and in the sense that we
32 are going to be using future projections of what the climate is
33 likely to bring, both for the resource, but also for the
34 environment and for the communities, and incorporating those
35 uncertainties to be able to identify whether we'll meet the
36 goals for 2050 are going to be key to being able to identify the
37 key actions that might need to be taken to ensure that that
38 happens.

39
40 There's a number of ongoing projects, and you might want to know
41 where those fit in, and we currently have the SEDAR 87 research
42 track assessment for brown, pink, and white shrimp, and that is
43 largely a separate process that's on its own timeframe, and we
44 think that's going to proceed fairly well, and that we've got a
45 process in place for doing the stock assessment for shrimp, and
46 that will give us our needed status assessment, but it won't
47 address many of the other challenges.

48

1 We've also been embarking upon our equity and environmental
2 justice focus groups. The presentations of that have been
3 reported to this council, and we'll also hear about the
4 implementation plans for that later on this week, and one of the
5 key themes that resonated in those focus groups was on the
6 importance of the shrimp fishery to many of our communities and
7 how the Shrimp Futures has a strong element of EEJ encompassed
8 in it.

9
10 As I noted, the climate, ecosystem, and fisheries initiative,
11 which is where a fair bit of the IRA funding is going from
12 within our agency, to build climate-resilient and climate-ready
13 fisheries and communities.

14
15 The objectives, right now, are to characterize the current state
16 of the fishery and the major challenges, to develop a short,
17 medium, and long-term vision for the fishery, and hopefully that
18 vision is something that this council can adopt as something
19 that they would want to see happen, and I think that's key to
20 whether we're going to get to where we want to be in 2050, is
21 being able to take that long-term view, and then that allows us
22 to identify and address the major pathways and impediments
23 towards achieving that vision. We can identify where we want to
24 go, chart the future with scenario planning, as to how we're
25 going to get there, and then identify -- We're probably going to
26 need to make some interventions to achieve that, and then we can
27 begin the path of doing those interventions, whatever they may
28 be.

29
30 These are our, unfortunately, Number 1 through 1, and they
31 should be 1 through 4, but the first action is conceptual
32 modeling, and this is something that our social sciences
33 research group has excelled at, which is working collaboratively
34 with stakeholders to develop a conceptual model encompassing all
35 of the factors that affect the fishery, from the economic,
36 social, biophysical, and regulatory, and mapping that out to
37 identify what are the pressures, and the drivers, of the
38 fishery.

39
40 I think it's pretty clear that what we've heard is that there's
41 a lot of pressures that are external, such as foreign imports,
42 and there's also pressures that are likely internal, and I
43 think, by mapping those out, that allows us to then build the
44 conceptual model that we would then project forward with
45 scenario planning.

46
47 Then vision identification, and, as I noted, it's critical to
48 develop those visions of where you want to go. If you don't

1 have the vision for where you want to go, it's impossible to
2 achieve it.

3

4 Then uncertainty analysis, identifying the critical factors
5 influencing the fishery, developing a list of short, medium, and
6 long-term uncertainties that will shape the future, and the
7 short, medium, and long-term actions that could affect the
8 future, and that scenario planning is basically forward
9 projections of the fishery, and the communities, with the
10 climate linkage, because the climate is going to be something we
11 have to account for, that our fisheries are going to be affected
12 by weather, that animals themselves are likely to be affected by
13 climate, and then how do we get to where we want to go by 2050.

14

15 I talked about potential partnerships, and one of the key
16 partnerships is with the National Seafood Strategy, where it's
17 likely that this project is going to become one of the regional
18 focus projects for the National Seafood Strategy.

19

20 It meshes very well with the objectives of that strategy, which
21 we'll hear more about from Dr. Michael Rubino later this week,
22 and, by having a regional implementation of that strategy, it
23 allows us to both leverage the national strengths of the
24 National Seafood Strategy, of which the whole of government
25 approach is part of that, in terms of opening the doors in other
26 agencies, where we need to be able to find out how they could
27 help support this, for instance, the Economic Development
28 Agency, FDA, International Affairs and Seafood Safety, and other
29 organizations that might play a role in the shrimp fishery and
30 might have a part in unlocking some of the barriers and
31 challenges.

32

33 Then, as I noted, we have partnerships with the Gulf States
34 Marine Fisheries Commission, and we're seeking the support of
35 the council here, and we don't need financial resources, but we
36 think that the council is an essential partner, particularly
37 because this council manages the resource that this is
38 addressing, and then we also seek additional partnerships, and I
39 think that the state partners are going to be key here as well,
40 because I know that the fisheries are quite valuable, and
41 important, resources for each of the southeastern states.

42

43 That's it. Okay, and the one other thing that I will note is
44 that we'll also be giving the same presentation to the South
45 Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and they've expressed a
46 similar interest in this, and I think that their shrimp
47 fisheries are also facing many of the exact same realities, and
48 so I think we will also embark on this in the South Atlantic,

1 and you will note that we have not presented anything about the
2 timing for the workshops, or what they're going to look like,
3 and that is actually intentional.

4
5 I think one of the reasons is -- What we need to do is, one,
6 build-out our partnerships, in terms of who else is onboard, and
7 then what those workshops are going to look like is going to
8 follow from that, and I think one of the key things we found is
9 that, when we did have our first workshop with stakeholders, it
10 was pretty quickly evident that many of the issues transcended
11 what we, as fisheries biologists and sociologists, could
12 address, and we needed to get some more information,
13 particularly from the other government agencies, and, until we
14 have some of those contacts, and information, we weren't going
15 to be very effective in addressing the problems, and so that's
16 why we haven't scheduled those workshops, and I think this is a
17 conversation we want to embark upon, in how those actually
18 happen. Thanks, and I would be happy to take more questions on
19 this.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Does
22 anyone have any questions for Dr. Walter regarding the workshops
23 coming up? No questions, and I just have one comment. I know
24 you all were going to present this to our Louisiana Shrimp
25 Taskforce, last week I think it was, but the meeting was
26 cancelled, because we had office shutdowns, due to winter
27 weather, and I believe the meeting is rescheduled for March 6,
28 at our headquarters office, and so you'll be able to come or
29 participate virtually, through Zoom, to the taskforce, or come
30 in-person, and it's your choice for that, but I would encourage
31 you to try to see if you could present this again, and I think
32 it would be beneficial for the taskforce. Mr. Walker.

33
34 **MR. ED WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see that one of the
35 asks here would be council support, and how can we provide you
36 council support? Is there any specific we can do to show the
37 council support for this?

38
39 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I think one show of support was the letter
40 sent to the National Seafood Strategy and Michael Rubino, which
41 actually was recommending and asking for some regional attention
42 for this, and I think that got attention of the National Seafood
43 Strategy, and that's, I think, why they're seeing this as
44 probably one of the regional focus projects.

45
46 Beyond that, I think that lending staff time, perhaps, to some
47 of these workshops, because there's a lot of talented staff at
48 the council, and then some of the climate staff who are going to

1 be added additionally I think are going to have a particular
2 skillset that will be valuable to this. We saw the proposal
3 from the Executive Director to add several staff members, and I
4 think they could be valuable here in supporting this.

5
6 Beyond that, I think it's a question of how much the council
7 wants to be a part of this, in terms of leaning in, and I guess
8 I would reflect that back on it's kind of at your discretion how
9 much further -- Whether it's wait and watch, active
10 participation, lend staff time, and I'm open to conversation.
11 Thanks.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. We have Mr. Diaz and then Mr. Gill
14 with a question.

15
16 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** I just wanted to make a comment, and I want to
17 applaud the effort, Dr. Walter, and I think it's worthwhile, and
18 I personally think the council needs to be a partner. We do
19 manage the fishery in offshore waters, and I think this is -- I
20 mean, I'm from the Mississippi coast, and this is very important
21 culturally, I mean, to the Mississippi coast. There are many
22 old family names there that ended up on the Mississippi coast
23 because they came here for the seafood industry, and some still
24 participate, and some don't, because it's getting so tough to
25 stay in it right now, and I can't think of a fishery that is in
26 more need of help than the shrimp industry is right now, and so
27 I'm definitely in support of the council being a partner. Thank
28 you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Mr. Gill.

31
32 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm in full
33 agreement with Dr. Walter's and Dale's comments regarding -- You
34 know, clearly, this is right up our alley, and we do need to
35 support it, and I guess I would like to ask how would you like
36 to proceed, and would you like a motion recommending the council
37 support it, or something else that we can get on the record and
38 be thinking about this going forward, how to integrate it with
39 all of our other activities?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think that's a good point, and maybe
42 needed, and I wanted to ask the same question. When you say
43 "integrate", is that something that we want to consider, having
44 one of these meetings in joint with a council meeting, at a
45 different location, or is that not possible, just before we make
46 a motion.

47
48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so

1 I think we would need to understand a little bit more of the
2 format of this, because I think, when we had the focus group
3 meeting at the council office, it wasn't in conjunction with a
4 meeting, and I don't know that that's the best approach, but
5 that was a slightly different format.

6
7 I think we're going to have to engage local leadership, Sea
8 Grant and others, to really get the industry to come out, the
9 shrimp industry to come out, to this type of event, and I don't
10 know the council format is the best format, Mr. Chair, and then,
11 just real quickly, while I have the mic, just regarding the
12 Inflation Reduction Act proposal that the council looked at this
13 morning, we're only looking at hiring one additional fulltime
14 staff member, the ecosystem analyst, and so we are looking at
15 contracting other folks, such as the social scientist, to help
16 with those engagements, and then engage our other committees
17 that we already have populated that the council normally uses,
18 but it's not like we're going to hire a bunch more staff to
19 operationalize that proposal.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Mr. Gill, I
22 don't want to put you on the spot, but do you have a motion
23 already cooked up over there?

24
25 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure I can come up with
26 one, but, given the rather generalized nature of what has been
27 presented, and details are not known, and I think that's
28 something we determine going forward, but I do think that we
29 ought to put on the record that we support this endeavor. **My**
30 **motion is to recommend the council support the Shrimp Futures**
31 **Project.**

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** It's seconded by Mr. Broussard. Dr.
34 Simmons.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so would
37 it be helpful if we had a little bit more information about this
38 project, and I think you've already been talking to Dr. Freeman,
39 Dr. Walter, about the Shrimp AP meeting, to see if we could get
40 a little bit more information in front of them, get their
41 feedback on the format, see where it fits into either our
42 administrative or the Inflation Reduction Act efforts, and then
43 bring that back to the council?

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Go ahead, Dr. Walter.

46
47 **DR. WALTER:** I think, yes, certainly your AP could play a very
48 good role here, because they advise the council, and I think we

1 would be more than happy with engaging with the AP on this. Our
2 only -- You know, my only concern is there are sometimes the
3 formalities that become difficult, and I hope -- From an agency
4 perspective, that we have a lot of formalities, with regard to
5 meetings, that make it rather difficult, at times, for us to
6 hold meetings of different types, and the council has similar
7 rules, and so, until we flesh out what the needs for these
8 workshops are, I think I'm less inclined to be too worried about
9 fitting into the structure of council or agency, and say that
10 the general recommendation here is probably good to allow us to
11 proceed forward, but then allow those details to be addressed as
12 we take it further.

13

14 I think, with enough partners who have some different
15 flexibility, in terms of how they hold meetings, and with what
16 groups, and that actually plays to the strengths of being able
17 to get multiple different stakeholders to the table, because
18 like the council has a certain formal structure, and I guess I
19 would say let's try to work that through, and, yes, we can bring
20 something to the AP at I think the March AP.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

23

24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that
25 would be really helpful, because I just kind of feel like it's -
26 - It could be a little, and it could be a lot, and I don't
27 really know the level of support, from a staffing perspective,
28 that we're providing, and I think it's great to support the
29 effort, and it's great to try to integrate it better maybe into
30 the Inflation Reduction Act effort that we're working on, and I
31 just am a little bit concerned about bandwidth for everything
32 that we have going on and what we're agreeing to right now,
33 without understanding more about the format.

34

35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Simmons. I might
36 suggest that, if you do present this, if you're able to at the
37 Louisiana Shrimp Taskforce, you might get some good feedback
38 from that taskforce that you could then bring to the April
39 council meeting as well, and maybe some more detail, further
40 detail, on this.

41

42 **DR. WALTER:** One thing we've learned, in some of our initial
43 conversations, is that we don't have the answers, and that we
44 have some techniques that can be used to derive the answers, and
45 we have some connections that we can make, through the National
46 Seafood Strategy, et cetera, to being able to try to find those,
47 but, if we're too prescriptive about exactly what we will do,
48 without listening to feedback from people, we will probably go

1 in the wrong direction, and that's what we do not want to do,
2 particularly because we really, in a lot of cases, only have a
3 short time to have conversations with a lot of people, and a lot
4 of people involved in this fishery, because we might only get
5 one chance to talk to them, and you only get one chance to make
6 a first impression, and they will tell you -- If we get out
7 there, they will tell us what they need, but that will then set
8 the clock for expectations for something to happen.

9
10 I think we want to do this right, so that we ensure that there
11 is a process for actually achieving some success, and we don't
12 waste stakeholders' time by just listening, and then something
13 not happening, because I think that's a key to achieving
14 stakeholder burnout, by not having that process in place, and
15 that's why we're not jumping in, because the solutions are going
16 to take some time. Thanks.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Do we have any more
19 questions regarding this agenda item? Do we have Dr. Lowther
20 back on the phone? I'm sorry. We have a motion that I forgot
21 about. Do we have any other comments on the motion? **All in**
22 **favor of the motion; any opposed. The motion passes.**

23
24 Now we will go back to Agenda Item IV. Dr. Lowther, if you are
25 ready on the phone, we'll try to pull up your presentation
26 again.

27
28 **UPDATE ON EARLY ADOPTER PROGRAM FOR SHRIMP CVMS**

29
30 **DR. LOWTHER:** All right, and thank you very much, Mr. Chair.
31 Sorry for the technical difficulties, and so I'm providing an
32 update on the early adopter program for the shrimp vessel
33 monitoring system, for the cellular vessel monitoring system.

34
35 Just let me briefly kind of review, and I know we have heard
36 this kind of review several times, and so I will try to go
37 through it quickly, but the cellular ELB ceased transmitting
38 information on December 31, 2020, and so we had -- So we've been
39 looking for alternative ways to collect effort information.
40 Basically, what we've gone to is a manual retrieval of SD cards,
41 and so mail-in retrieval, mailing back.

42
43 In the FY2023 budget, there was a congressional appropriation of
44 \$850,000 for NMFS, in consultation with the council and the
45 industry, to continue the development, and the implementation,
46 of a newly-approved electronic logbook program, and thanks to
47 everybody who worked on getting that approved. I know the SSA
48 played a big role in that, and that was very much appreciated.

1
2 In May of 2023, we had a special AP meeting to discuss a spend
3 plan for these funds, and one of the results of that meeting was
4 that \$360,000 was allocated to this early adopter program.

5
6 Where are we on that? The first step was we had to figure out a
7 way to spend the money, which, if you deal with the federal
8 government, you know that's not always the easiest thing, and so
9 we provided the funds to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
10 Commission, and we really appreciate them working with us on
11 this, and so they sent out a request for proposals, in August of
12 2023, that would include elements of what we thought should be
13 in the program, including recruitment and outreach,
14 installation, the travel to get to the vessels to install
15 devices, providing the devices and two years of cellular
16 service, and then receiving the data and troubleshooting any
17 problems that came up.

18
19 As part of that process, in September of 2023, LGL Ecological
20 Associates was awarded the contract, and, you know, LGL has a
21 long, and very valuable, history working with the Gulf shrimp
22 industry, and so I think that was fortunate that they were
23 awarded the contract.

24
25 In the proposal, LGL provided, based on the RFP, this timeline
26 for how the project will work, and you can see we have developed
27 the outreach and reimbursement plans, and that's been done last
28 fall. The solicitation of volunteers, that process has started,
29 and I will say more about that in just a minute, and then you
30 see that's expected to continue through July, at least, and then
31 the installation of devices, again, was expected to start in
32 December of 2023, and we do have a couple on vessels, but I will
33 talk more about that in just a minute too.

34
35 Then the process for the reimbursement and cellular payments,
36 and troubleshooting and operations, and so those are continuing
37 activities. Those last two, you know, are anticipated to go
38 through the length of the program, and so all the way through
39 August of 2026.

40
41 Based on two rounds of testing, three vendors were invited to
42 participate in this program: Atlantic Radio and Telephone, with
43 the Zen devices; Viatrax, with the Boat Command device; and the
44 Woods Hole group with the NEMO devices. Essentially, other
45 devices could be included, if a vendor was able to demonstrate
46 that it would be a viable option. I don't think we've had any
47 additional ones, and so we're going with those three for now.

48

1 All three of those vendors have successfully transmitted data to
2 the Science Center through an API, and so, for those, one of the
3 concerns that -- One of the things of the early adopter program
4 is that the data is transmitted directly to the Southeast
5 Fisheries Science Center, and, like I said, all three vendors
6 have successfully demonstrated that they can push that data
7 through the API. In addition, LGL has agreements in place for
8 purchasing and shipping devices from the vendors.

9
10 As you can imagine, outreach is a big component of this program,
11 and so LGL has been active on this front, and they presented the
12 program to the Southern Shrimp Alliance board meeting last
13 December, and they're working on setting up additional meetings,
14 and so some of the types of meetings that they would like to
15 attend are regional shrimp association meetings.

16
17 They do have a meeting on the books this Wednesday at the Port
18 Arthur Area Shrimp Association, and, also, they will be
19 presenting at the Louisiana Shrimp Taskforce meeting that was
20 mentioned in the last discussion, and I don't know why I put the
21 Port Arthur Shrimp Association on here twice, and I apologize
22 for that, but I know that we're looking for more outreach
23 opportunities, and so, if you have suggestions for meetings that
24 LGL could attend, either in-person or virtually, you know, those
25 kind of suggestions would be very valuable, because, you know,
26 we need to get the word out.

27
28 Our communications team, along with LGL, has put together some
29 outreach materials, and there was a NOAA webstory. We put out a
30 fact sheet on that, and there was a notice in the Fishery
31 Bulletin, letting people know about this program and that we
32 were soliciting volunteers, and then LGL also put together a
33 document that just shows the different devices compared, and I
34 will show that in the next slide, but they have told me that
35 some direct contacts from shrimpers have resulted from the
36 outreach materials.

37
38 This is the information sheet that LGL put together for the
39 early adopter program, and I should acknowledge the LGL staff
40 that we've been working with, and they've been great to work
41 with. They're very excited about the program, and they're very
42 energetic, Nathan Putnam and Taylor Beyea, and so they've been
43 good to work with, and I think, you know, if you have
44 suggestions for additional outreach opportunities, they would be
45 very interested in considering those.

46
47 This was more of a technical information about what the three
48 devices were that the shrimpers could select from, and so I

1 think I will let you look at that, but we don't need to go over
2 the details of this one, but, again, it's the Zen, the Boat
3 Command, and the NEMO.

4
5 When I first turned in the presentation, it was eleven vessels
6 that had signed up to participate, and I just asked Nathan
7 today, and he told me that we're up to sixteen, and so we're
8 making some progress. Three units have already been installed,
9 and I don't know if any of those five additional ones have
10 already been installed, and so I forgot to ask that question,
11 but the timing for more installations will probably depend on
12 having the vessels -- Obviously, the vessels have to be back in
13 port, and, ideally, LGL would be able to have a critical number
14 of installations in a particular area, just so they're not
15 traveling to do each individual installation, but if they could
16 set up, you know, ten installations in the Brownsville area,
17 then that, you know, makes it a more efficient process, and so
18 they're working on that.

19
20 I think the next steps are the continued focus on outreach and
21 recruitment, and that's really the biggest thing here. The way
22 the program was structured was it was set up that, you know,
23 until the funds run out, we need to keep getting more
24 volunteers, and we estimate that we should -- With the funding
25 that we have from last year, we should be able to get probably
26 from fifty to seventy-five vessels, depending on the other
27 costs, and so that's -- You know, we want to at least get that
28 many into the program. Once we do that, then the installation,
29 and then they can start monitoring the data transmission, and
30 the data quality, coming out of these devices.

31
32 I will take your questions, and I do have one more slide after
33 this, and so why don't we go ahead and go to that? Council
34 staff asked me to also give a brief return on -- I'm sorry. A
35 brief update on SD card returns, and so I don't know if you want
36 me to go through this now, or would you rather talk about the
37 early adopter and come back to this?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** No, and that's fine. Why don't you keep on
40 going through this, and then we'll go through questions on the
41 first part afterwards.

42
43 **DR. LOWTHER:** Okay. Anyway, I have provided this information
44 before, but now we've had a couple more mailings, and so, in
45 terms of how the SD card process is going, and you can see that
46 we did start getting more back starting with the Mailing 4 and
47 Mailing 5, and a lot of that is attributable to the SSA-funded
48 boots-on-the-ground, the so-called boots-on-the-ground effort,

1 where Gary Graham, and some others, have been going around and
2 actually going to the vessels and asking them for the SD cards
3 and getting those returned, and so that has proved beneficial.

4
5 You might notice that the Mailing 5 -- The number sent out was
6 rather small, and the reason for that is that Gary had just
7 started his efforts, and so a lot of cards had been returned in
8 the previous two or three months, before that mailing, and so we
9 didn't see a need to bother these people by having them send
10 another one right back, and so that's why that number is
11 smaller.

12
13 I think it's important to note that these return rates don't
14 tell the entire story, and the data quality from the ELB devices
15 has been an issue, and that was something that, if you saw the
16 results of the last round of cellular ELB testing, you saw that
17 the old ELB devices did not have a very good performance, and
18 they were failing at a pretty high rate, and so, overall, during
19 this process, we've received data from 410 ELB devices, and, of
20 these, 185 have given us what we would call good data, and the
21 criteria that was used for that was that no more than 20 percent
22 of the data was having a future date, was null, or had bad GPS
23 values.

24
25 You know, even though the return rates were higher, it looks
26 like what we're getting is a higher amount of not very good
27 data, and so we're -- You know, we're still in a position where
28 we really need to act on some sort of new methodology here, and
29 I guess, with that, I will pause and stop for questions. Thank
30 you. I appreciate it.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Lowther. I guess I
33 will start with questions on the SC card returns that you just
34 showed, and then we'll go back to your original portion of the
35 presentation, with some questions on that, if anyone has any,
36 and so does anyone have questions on the SD card return rate
37 information? Seeing none, okay, and we'll go back to the first
38 part of the presentation. I've got one quick one for you.

39
40 You said that the number of sign-ups was eleven, and then
41 there's an update on that slide to sixteen. Those five
42 additional sign-ups, are they in the same two states, Alabama
43 and Texas?

44
45 **DR. LOWTHER:** So that's what I was saying where I didn't -- I
46 didn't get the details on the additional sign-ups. I do know
47 that -- I think Nathan and Taylor are on the call, and so I
48 don't know if they have the ability to chime-in on that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Fair enough. I would like to thank
3 you for your presentation, and also thank you for your
4 flexibility in being able to sign-up for the Louisiana Shrimp
5 Taskforce updated date in March. I know that we originally had
6 you signed-up as well, but then the weather cancelled the
7 meeting, and so thank you for being flexible in moving it, and I
8 think it will be beneficial to get this in front of the
9 taskforce. Do we have any other questions for Dr. Lowther? Mr.
10 Strelcheck.

11
12 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Hi, Alan. Andy Strelcheck. Thanks for
13 the presentation. You had mentioned, I think, sixteen people
14 have signed-up, and three have been installed. Any indication
15 of what the shrimpers are -- Which devices they're selecting at
16 this point? Are they selecting all three, or is there one
17 preferred at this point that seems to be selected?

18
19 **DR. LOWTHER:** I don't have that information.

20
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Okay. Thanks.

22
23 **DR. LOWTHER:** Sorry.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Gill.

26
27 **DR. LOWTHER:** I will try to get with LGL and answer the
28 questions that you both asked about the additional sign-ups.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We have a question from Mr. Gill for you.

31
32 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Lowther. I
33 have several questions, and so if we could go to the LGL
34 timeline slide, which I think is Number 4. My question revolves
35 around deadlines for people to participate in this program, and
36 what that might entail, and so, for example, installations,
37 according to this, stops on August 2024, and I don't know
38 whether that means LGL's installation or not, and, secondly, at
39 the next-to-last column, reimbursement and troubleshooting
40 operations, it goes through 2026, and is there a deadline for
41 people to participate in the program, and, as part of that, is
42 there a difference in what may happen, for example, no
43 installation by the agency, or LGL, after August 2024, for
44 example, or could you explain that a little bit?

45
46 **DR. LOWTHER:** Sure, and so I think what -- The reason it was
47 structured this way is that we have to have all the funds spent
48 from this contract by August of 2026, and so the idea was that

1 we wanted to provide two years of cellular service, and so, in
2 order to do that, the device would have to be installed by
3 August of 2024.

4
5 I suspect that we would have some flexibility. If there are
6 funds available in October of 2024, and somebody wants to
7 participate, we probably could have them participate, and we
8 just might not be able to guarantee the full two years of
9 cellular service, because it would then go beyond when we had to
10 have the funds spent.

11
12 **MR. GILL:** Thank you for that. To that point, do you have any
13 estimate on how many units, recognizing the variation in cost
14 over the first two years, that you will be able to entertain?
15 Have you made an estimate of that, based on the knowledge that
16 you have thus far?

17
18 **DR. LOWTHER:** Yes, and so we've estimated from fifty to seventy-
19 five devices, and, you know, I don't know what -- I guess none
20 of us know what the federal budget situation is, if we would
21 have any more funds this year, you know, based on what happened
22 last year, if there is the same earmark, or whatever you want to
23 refer to it as, the same language, and so I don't know if
24 there's potentially more funds, but, right now, we're estimating
25 fifty to seventy-five, and, again, that just depends on the
26 device selected, but it also depends on the travel costs and
27 other factors like that.

28
29 **MR. GILL:** Thank you for that. I have another question relative
30 to the LGL VMS slide, if we could go to that, Bernie. I think
31 some details in there, for everybody's understanding, would be
32 useful to talk about. For example, you take the annual cellular
33 fees, and I'm assuming, number one, that's for -- To the VMS
34 manufacturer, and it does not include a cell plan that the
35 individual might have, and is that correct?

36
37 **DR. LOWTHER:** Right. That is the cellular transmission of --
38 Sorry. I should have just said, yes, that's correct.

39
40 **MR. GILL:** For the annual interface fee, that is by the
41 manufacturer, and not anyone else, correct?

42
43 **DR. LOWTHER:** Right, and the shrimper would not be paying that.
44 That would be -- I see that Nathan has his hand up, and he
45 probably could give a better explanation of that question, if
46 that's okay, and we could go to him.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Lowther. We'll see if Dr.

1 Putman can hear us. If you can, can you please try to address
2 that most recent question, and maybe a follow-up for the prior
3 question too, if you can.

4

5 **DR. NATHAN PUTMAN:** Sure. Can you all hear me?

6

7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir. Go ahead.

8

9 **DR. PUTMAN:** Okay. The costs here were shown to give a sense of
10 the market value, you know, the retail price of what would be
11 paid, and so they are -- They reflect what, you know, you would
12 spend if you went out and bought one of these yourself, and they
13 are not necessarily reflective of what we negotiated with the
14 companies, but we thought that was more important to a shrimper,
15 so that they would know, when they are selecting things, if they
16 liked it, and they had to buy a new one one day, or something
17 like that, that that would be more informative than what we were
18 spending, versus what the market price would be.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Putman. Regarding the
21 timeline, installation date of August 2024 is really the --
22 That's the critical portion of the timescale, correct, that they
23 would have to be signed up for installation first?

24

25 **DR. PUTMAN:** That is actually a bit more flexible than we
26 thought when we put the proposal together, and so sorry about
27 giving Alan an older timeline, but we were able to discuss, with
28 all three of the VMS companies, that, at any point during the
29 early adopter program, if we purchased a unit, and a plan for
30 them, it would carry through for two years, and so, in
31 principle, even if it was -- I mean, hopefully we won't do this,
32 and we're targeting -- We think we can get seventy-five out
33 relatively quickly, but, in principle, even if, you know,
34 someone signed up in July of the final year, you know, right
35 before the thing ends, we could get that installed on their
36 boat, and they would have two years of service covered through
37 the program, and so there's more flexibility on that timing now.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Putman. Do we have
40 any other questions, while he's on the line, real quick? Dr.
41 Simmons.

42

43 **DR. PUTMAN:** Those other boats were in Florida, the additional
44 ones that we just got recently, and one has been installed, and
45 so, moving from eleven to sixteen, and those were Florida boats,
46 with one installation.

47

48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you for that presentation. I

1 had a question about where the data is going for the early
2 adopter program, and so, for the new units being put on the
3 vessels, is that data going to the Science Center, or is that
4 data going to an LGL server?

5

6 **DR. LOWTHER:** It's going to the Science Center.

7

8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I had one other question. My
9 understanding is there's some extra old cellular ELB devices
10 that could be put on at the same time, or checked, for the
11 vessels that currently have those, to see if they're
12 operational, to make sure that we're running that side-by-side
13 as long as possible, as these new vendors come onboard and
14 they're being tested. From the pilot study that was done, the
15 current ELB system actually worked better than many of the new
16 proposed devices, and just so we have that information as we're
17 moving forward and testing these, and is it possible to do that,
18 as you're installing the new devices?

19

20 **DR. LOWTHER:** The problem with that is our -- We have limited
21 capacity to reprogram the cellular devices that we have, and so
22 -- I would have to get with my staff to kind of get some more
23 details on that, but I know that, you know, the process for
24 programing the ELBs is limited to basically the ones we have on-
25 hand, because of various issues of, you know, staff leaving, and
26 I think we don't have a good grasp on what was done to program
27 them, and so it's a bit of an issue, and it doesn't say that
28 it's impossible, but I don't -- I don't think we have an
29 unlimited supply of preprogrammed ELB devices, but we can look
30 into how many we have and what would need to be done, if that
31 was desired. I mean, in the testing, it was definitely clear
32 that, when new ELB devices were installed, they performed much
33 better than the old ELB devices.

34

35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Lowther. Dr. Walter has a
36 comment.

37

38 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, but we're not going to be investing resources
39 in those old ELBs as part of this, because we would have to
40 program them, and it really wouldn't get us anywhere to put them
41 on during this early adopter, because we've already shown the
42 testing, and that was part of the original testing, to ensure
43 that we had working ELBs to compare with the new VMS units, and
44 that's why, when we put those new ones on, because the old ones
45 had mostly failed, we had new working ones to compare, but, at
46 this point, it's to transition to something new, which is the
47 goal of this early adopter, is to get something new that will be
48 the future of data collection for this fishery, and I think the

1 cELBs are -- We are largely in agreement that that is the past,
2 and something that you have to mail in is not really part of
3 modern data collection. Thanks.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

6
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I
8 guess what I was trying to suggest is, if the contractor is
9 going to meet with industry, and they already have a device on
10 there, the current ELB device, that they could check and see if
11 it's operational or not, and perhaps change out the chip, and,
12 as you're getting new vendors onboard, and you're testing this
13 through the early adopter program, you would have more
14 information about the efficacy of those new devices.

15
16 **DR. WALTER:** Well, we would have a comparison between the ELBs
17 and the new devices, but, at this point, I think we've already
18 done that testing, and we're seeing that the efficacy is high,
19 and that they work, and now it's a matter of getting them out on
20 vessels, and so we're not in that testing phase, or that
21 comparison, anymore, and so we're moving beyond that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I understand, and I guess my point
26 was that was very limited testing, and I think there was like
27 eleven vessels, and, actually, many of those -- I think the NEMO
28 failed, that was solar, and the only reason you knew some of
29 that occurred was because you had your current cellular ELB on
30 there to compare it, and so I was just suggesting, if it's
31 possible, without too much effort, and, if they already have the
32 device, then they could just check it, and you have that
33 information to compare side-by-side, as you get new vendors
34 onboard.

35
36 **DR. WALTER:** We will take the suggestion and talk to the
37 contractor about whether it's possible.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Do we have any other further
40 questions for Dr. Lowther or Dr. Putman, while they're on the
41 line? If not, I will turn back to Dr. Freeman to wrap this up,
42 and I have one bit of housekeeping for Dr. Freeman. During the
43 October Shrimp Committee, we -- I guess the committee asked for
44 the draft amendment to come back by the April 2024 council
45 meeting, and do you feel we're still on track to be doing that
46 for this coming April meeting?

47
48 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. That's what we currently

1 have planned. The IPT met in December, to discuss that
2 discussion from the October council meeting, and we'll be
3 reviewing the document, to see what potential additions could be
4 included, such as information on the early adopter program, to
5 better inform the committee, and the council, in April, and so,
6 yes, we are on track for the April meeting.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Do we have any further questions for the
9 Shrimp Committee? If there are none at this time, Mr. Chair, I
10 will turn it back over to you.

11
12 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 29, 2024.)

13
14

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