

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Driskill

Austin, Texas

August 15, 2023

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
- 11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 12 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 15 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
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- 17 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 18 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 19 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS

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- 29 Ed Walker.....Florida
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STAFF

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

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 48 Peter Hood.....NMFS
- 49 Jennifer Lee.....NMFS

1 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC
2 John Walter.....SEFSC
3
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1 The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Driskill in Austin, Texas on
3 Tuesday afternoon, August 15, 2023 and was called to order by
4 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 the chair, and Mr. Gill is the vice chair, Mr. Anson,
13 Ms. Boggs, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Dugas, Mr. Geeslin,
14 General Spraggins, and Mr. Strelcheck, and so all of the
15 committee members are present either in-person or virtually
16 today. The first item on the agenda is Adoption of the Agenda,
17 Tab D, Number 1. Is anyone opposed to adopting the agenda as
18 written? Do we have any other business to add to the agenda?
19

20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can
21 we add a short discussion on the possibility of using the
22 climate resilience, the IRA funding, for the cellular VMS units,
23 just to discuss that?
24

25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Under Other Business?

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Under Other Business, please.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Anything else? Dr. Walter.
30

31 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to, in
32 Other Business, have an announcement for the focus group
33 sessions that we're initiating in September, commensurate with
34 the SEDAR workshops, and this will be the first of them, and I
35 will just discuss that briefly. Thank you.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Seeing no
38 other additions to Other Business, we will move on. Is Dr.
39 Freeman virtual? Is he available and good to go?
40

41 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Yes, sir, I'm available.
42

43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Can you lead us through the next
44 agenda item? I'm sorry. We need to approve the minutes from
45 the June 2023 meeting, Tab D, Number 2. Are there any
46 additions, deletions, or edits to the meeting minutes from June
47 of 2023? Seeing none, the meeting minutes are adopted as
48 proposed in the briefing book. Next up is the Action Guide, Tab

1 D, Number 3, and that's Dr. Freeman, please.

2
3 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Thank you. For Agenda Item IV, SERO
4 staff will update the committee on the request for reinitiation
5 of an ESA Section 7 consultation for the Gulf shrimp fishery in
6 federal waters and cover the next steps of the process. To
7 provide context for the request, SERO staff will also review a
8 primer on giant manta rays, including new scientific information
9 on their life history and distribution, as well as an update on
10 smalltooth sawfish. The committee should ask questions and
11 provide feedback on the next steps, and Ms. Lee will be giving
12 that presentation.

13
14 **REINITIATION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SECTION 7 CONSULTATION ON**
15 **THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE SOUTHEAST U.S. SHRIMP FISHERIES IN**
16 **FEDERAL WATERS, GIANT MANTA RAY AND SHRIMP TRAWL INTERACTIONS,**
17 **AND NEXT STEPS**
18

19 **MS. JENNIFER LEE:** I am here to present information on the
20 reinitiation of the Section 7 consultation. Just to give you a
21 little overview of what I'm going to present, I am first going
22 to just remind you of the 2021 biological opinion and then
23 discuss reinitiation of Section 7 consultation, the requirements
24 and then reason and scope of our reinitiation, and then, as Matt
25 said, giant manta rays are a relatively new species, at least
26 under the ESA that is, and so we wanted to give you a primer, if
27 you're not that familiar with them, and so we'll talk a little
28 bit about their life history, population status and size,
29 feeding habits and habitat, distribution and movements.

30
31 Then we'll move on to the giant manta ray trawl effects and
32 bycatch data and new information. Again, that's supporting and
33 just giving you a little more information on the information
34 behind the reinitiation. We will also touch on smalltooth
35 sawfish new information and then go through next steps and
36 timing and what you can do now.

37
38 We do have a relatively recent biological opinion. The 2021
39 shrimp biological opinion analyzed the effects of our ESA TED
40 regs and the authorization of the Southeast U.S. shrimp
41 fisheries managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which, again,
42 we refer to as the proposed action, and we determined that the
43 proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued
44 existence of sea turtles, sturgeons, giant manta ray, and
45 smalltooth sawfish, and then we issued the incidental take
46 statement, which specifies the amount of anticipated incidental
47 take for listed species.

1 I will say that, tomorrow, when we talk about the coastal
2 migratory pelagic resources bi-op, I did put a little bit of a
3 101, for those of you that aren't that familiar with Section 7
4 and biological opinions, at the request of the council, and so
5 ask questions, or you might also get some answers tomorrow too
6 on some of the background, but, with respect to the incidental
7 take statements of the 2021 shrimp biological opinion, giant
8 manta rays, since that's our focus here, is estimated at 16,780
9 non-lethal takes over ten years, and so averaging 1,678 giant
10 manta rays per year, but there were no giant manta ray
11 mortalities that were anticipated.

12
13 That's because we had no records of lethal interactions when we
14 did the consultation, and, of course, I do want to point out
15 that is a highly uncertain estimate, and that's in part because
16 we, at that time, only had one year of data and twelve
17 interactions documented during that time, and part of that is
18 because giant manta rays were not identified to species in the
19 observer records, and so we just -- You know, when a species is
20 listed, we have to improve our species identification issues, so
21 that we have better data.

22
23 As I mentioned, the opinion was done in 2021, and so, in terms
24 of why we're reinitiating, we're required to reinitiate if
25 certain things happen, and that's whether the amount or extent
26 of our take specified in the ITS is exceeded, if we have new
27 information revealing effects that we didn't consider in the
28 biological opinion, if the action -- So if the council takes
29 some action, for example, and modifies how the fishery is
30 operating, so that it causes an effect that we didn't consider,
31 and then, as I know you're aware from other presentations, a new
32 species is listed, or critical habitat designated, that may be
33 affected by the identified actions.

34
35 Those are the reasons why we have to reinitiate, and, if you go
36 to the next slide, I have outlined specifically why we've
37 reinitiated here, and so we have met the amount, or extent, of
38 the taking specified that is exceeded. We triggered that
39 because, since the 2021 shrimp biological opinion was completed,
40 we have four giant manta ray mortalities that have been
41 observed.

42
43 Those lethal takes have been only confirmed in the Gulf of
44 Mexico, but take records in the South Atlantic include several
45 giant manta rays caught where the disposition was unknown, and
46 so, for that reason, we're reinitiating on the entire -- You
47 know, both the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

48

1 Also, we have new information revealing effects of the action
2 that may affect listed species in a manner or extent not
3 previously considered, and so, again, that recent take data may
4 constitute new information, because, you know, now we have
5 greater impacts than we anticipated, and we also have new
6 publications that may constitute new information revealing
7 effects on giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish.

8
9 At this time, we don't have any other triggers, and so that's
10 good news, and so, for that reason, and because none of the
11 other triggers have been met, the consultation is limited to
12 addressing only giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish and
13 their management under the Gulf and South Atlantic Shrimp FMPs
14 and their implementing regulations.

15
16 I mentioned that I just wanted to give you a little background
17 on giant manta rays, and I've been learning a lot about them
18 recently, and I find them pretty fascinating, and so they're the
19 largest ray in the world, with a wingspan of twenty-nine feet.
20 Their average size is thirteen feet, which is still pretty big,
21 and the female manta rays are believed to reach sexual maturity
22 at around eight to ten years old, and they tend to give birth
23 once every two to three years.

24
25 Their pregnancy lasts actually twelve to thirteen months, and
26 the giant manta ray's long life span, time to maturity, and low
27 reproductive rates means the female will only be able to produce
28 about five to fifteen pups in her lifetime, and their generation
29 time is estimated to be twenty-five years, and juvenile nursery
30 areas, we've discovered, are the Flower Garden Banks National
31 Marine Sanctuary and then, on the Florida east coast, there's an
32 area as well.

33
34 As I mentioned, they've only been listed since 2018, and they
35 were listed based on overfishing, particularly foreign
36 overfishing, and bycatch, and the global population size is
37 unknown. As you can see, we do have some reasonable total
38 abundance estimates listed on the slide, and we're getting some
39 preliminary information, but it's probably too soon for me to
40 mention here, and so that will be coming soon.

41
42 Other interesting information is they are planktivorous, and
43 they're filter feeders, and they have really neat and unique
44 feeding strategies. They do barrel rolling, and they create a
45 feeding chains. They do aggregate in various locations and
46 groups, usually ranging from a hundred to as many as a thousand,
47 and these can function as feeding sites, cleaning stations, or
48 sites where courtship interactions take place, and then also

1 useful, in terms of thinking about where you might interact with
2 them, is they have a wide use of the water column, and so
3 including feeding at the surface and night descents from 200 to
4 450 meters depth, and they're capable of diving to depths
5 exceeding 1,000 meters.

6
7 They are distributed in tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate
8 oceans, but they do have a low degree of interchange between
9 ocean basins, and so that's of note. They are commonly observed
10 offshore in oceanic waters and in nearshore highly-productive
11 coastal areas. That was kind of surprising to me, and so,
12 again, they're way offshore, but we actually have quite a bunch
13 of records of where they're coming closer to shore, following
14 their food, and water temperatures generally between twenty and
15 thirty degrees Celsius, and, again, movements correspond with
16 the zooplankton abundance, current circulation, seasonal
17 upwelling, and seawater temperature, and possibly mating
18 behavior.

19
20 The giant manta ray is an obligate ram-ventilator, and what that
21 means is kind of like sharks, and they can only breathe using
22 that ram ventilation, and so it requires them to constantly swim
23 forward to pass water through the mouth and over the gills, and
24 so capture in trawls can severely restrict that movement, and
25 therefore respiration, resulting in asphyxiation.

26
27 They can -- The degree of injury and stress resulting from the
28 capture can directly impact their ability to survive, and,
29 again, they sort of -- We've seen videos of interactions, and
30 they really get compacted against the netting or the TED, and by
31 the weight of the catch, and then, coupled with, again, that
32 issue with impaired respiration, it can decrease the likelihood
33 of survival, and post-release mortality is a concern,
34 potentially, as well, but we really, at this point, don't have
35 information, and so it's largely unknown, and we typically are
36 looking for species with similarity, and so that's something
37 that can be a concern.

38
39 Now getting into the bycatch data, and so, as I mentioned, I
40 think the lethal takes have only been observed in the Gulf, but
41 we do have records in the Atlantic. Here, you can see that we
42 have, between 2019 and April of 2023, we have twenty-two
43 observed captures, five mortalities, but one note there is a
44 carcass, and we also have six unknown, but the total amount of
45 observed takes we're up to is now thirty-four, and so, again,
46 the 2021 shrimp opinion assumed no mortality, based on that 2019
47 data, and, if we just do the simple math now, we're at 18.5
48 percent for immediate mortality, based on approximately four

1 years of data.

2
3 In terms of the spatial and temporal observations, we are seeing
4 that the majority of interactions are occurring offshore of
5 Louisiana, and so I mentioned the thirty-four, and twenty-five
6 of those were offshore of Louisiana, and then the next highest
7 would be off of Georgia, where we have nine.

8
9 Most interactions are occurring in the spring and fall, and then
10 we have multiple interactions occurring on a single trip and at
11 night, and I know I mentioned how they can travel where they're
12 all together, and so chances are, if you are interacting with
13 one, there are others in the area, and the majority of
14 interactions have been at depths less than a hundred feet.

15
16 Here it's a little dark, but I just wanted to give you an idea
17 of where we have these interactions, and so, again, you can see
18 that they're color-coded here for fall is orange, which you can
19 see there is seven between the September, October, and November,
20 and there are three, and that's in blue, and red is summer, and,
21 again, only three, and then yellow is spring, in which, again,
22 we have twelve between March, April, and May. You can see the
23 number of rays landed, and a few of the dots, the points, are a
24 little generalized, but the bigger ones -- You know, the
25 smallest dots are one animal, and then medium is two, and the
26 large ones are three. The Xs, and I thought folks might be
27 curious, and so I did X-out the ones that we have as known
28 mortalities, that were immediate mortalities.

29
30 I am definitely not here to present and go into the details on
31 this paper, but I did want to note this as one of our sources of
32 new information. Farmer et al. 2022 integrated decades of
33 sighting and survey effort data into a species distribution
34 model, and it actually predicts the highest occurrence around
35 the Mississippi Delta from April through June and October
36 through November, and so during -- Around that area, those are
37 the times of year where it predicts the highest occurrence, and
38 I wanted to make sure that's not misunderstood.

39
40 It predicted the highest occurrence during April off of the
41 northeastern Florida, leading north to North Carolina from June
42 to October, and then south to Georgia from November to March,
43 and so we're just showing some, you know, seasonal movement
44 here, and, notably, the seasonal occurrence and location of
45 shrimp trawl interactions are consistent with the predictions
46 made in Farmer et al. 2022. Like I said, I'm not going to get
47 into the weeds of the paper, but it does show the same kind of
48 seasonal patterns that we're seeing with the data.

1
2 Now I did mention that we also do have some new information on
3 smalltooth sawfish, and what we have is there's a publication,
4 Graham et al. 2022, that highlights trawl threats, and,
5 obviously, 2022 wasn't available, and so we don't consider it in
6 our biological opinion. It does find that female smalltooth
7 sawfish are at a higher risk from shrimp trawl bycatch than
8 males, due to the greater overlap of the areas of shrimp
9 trawling effort, and the authors recommend a year-round closure
10 of shrimp trawling off of much of southwest Florida.

11
12 This information is, you know, I guess, Feldheim et al. 2017 and
13 Smith et al. 2021, and, you know, that's not as new information,
14 but, when you sort of take these two papers together, it raises
15 some points that we would like to look into further, and so I
16 have here how we have only 126 individual females that
17 contributed to the majority of juveniles caught in the sampled
18 nurseries, and so these are sampled nurseries, but, again, it
19 just kind of raises some questions for us.

20
21 We presented this information already, actually, to your Shrimp
22 AP, in late 2022, and so the next step that was in the plan
23 there, and is still the plan, is we're waiting for a population
24 viability analysis to be completed, and it should be ready in
25 late 2023 or early 2024, and I think our date has probably
26 slipped a little since we talked to the AP, but that is still
27 the plan, is to take -- As far as the smalltooth sawfish
28 information, is to present it to your Shrimp AP and move forward
29 from there.

30
31 What we've done is we're trying to, you know, brief you and get
32 you informed on the information we have early on, but we've
33 developed a tentative schedule for working with our center to
34 develop the information we need to formally initiate
35 consultation, and then we need to have time to collaborate with
36 you and the South Atlantic Council.

37
38 I know that I explained why reinitiation was triggered, but, in
39 order to actually do the consultation, we do have to have what
40 is referred to as a complete reinitiation package, and, I mean,
41 we have to have all the information that will go into that new
42 consultation, and we don't have that right now, and so our
43 Sustainable Fisheries group, serving as the action agency, is
44 working with us, and with the center, to take actions so that we
45 can gather and get that information together, and so key data
46 needed includes revised giant mantra ray bycatch estimates,
47 based on the recent observer data, and I just shared with you,
48 you know, the actual take reports, but we haven't extrapolated

1 that out yet, and we don't have take estimates, and that is
2 targeted for December of 2023.

3
4 Then I mentioned the smalltooth sawfish population viability
5 analysis, and then we also want to have a giant manta ray
6 population viability analysis, and so, in addition to that, you
7 know, we're going to be sharing information as we get it, and
8 sort of working on essentially, you know, what amounts to like a
9 biological assessment, or biological evaluation and information
10 we need, and then we'll also need to consider any proposed
11 Shrimp-FMP-driven actions, or any shrimp actions that you or the
12 South Atlantic Council in response to key data as it becomes
13 available, or any action we take, for that matter, that may
14 affect that consultation.

15
16 We expect to have a complete reinitiation package targeted for
17 April of 2024, and so it's going to take us a while, and we're
18 going to share information with you, and I guess that's really I
19 have to say right now, and so thank you for the time to share
20 that with you.

21
22 Sorry, and I do have one last slide, which is what can you do
23 right now, and so we just wanted to remind folks that we do have
24 release guidance for how to handle, if you do catch a giant
25 manta ray or smalltooth sawfish, and, obviously, you cannot read
26 those placards there, but the link is on the slide, and they're
27 also really easily found on the internet, just Googling for
28 them, and then I put to share interaction data with us, because,
29 you know, we're learning, through these new observer records and
30 information, and certainly we know you all have information that
31 would inform us too, and that concludes my presentation.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Lee, for the very
34 detailed explanation of exactly what we're looking at here, and
35 does anybody in the room have any questions for Ms. Lee? Mr.
36 Walker.

37
38 **MR. ED WALKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. I just had one question,
39 and so there was a sentence in there that there was a study that
40 suggested that they stop all shrimping off of southwest Florida,
41 and is that something that's being considered, or that's just
42 pointing out that that was mentioned in that particular study?

43
44 **MS. LEE:** It's pointing out that that study recommended that we
45 do that and not that we are right now taking action. We are
46 following along with investigating and reinitiating and getting
47 those different information sources that we have, that I
48 mentioned.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Kevin.
3
4 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Ms. Lee, for the presentation.
5 Looking at the Slide Number 9, the bycatch data slide, and it
6 has, under observed takes, one carcass. Down at the bottom-
7 right, it indicates the carcass was trawled up, and so I mean
8 that to read that there was a dead manta ray that was trawled
9 up, and, if that was the case, how can that be a take on a dead
10 animal?
11
12 **MS. LEE:** I am just sharing all the information, the observer
13 data, and so I'm not -- That actually -- The point of that was
14 to show you that that's not a -- That wasn't -- That it was
15 already dead when we trawled it up, and so I'm acknowledging
16 that that one is not shrimp related.
17
18 **MR. ANSON:** Okay, and it was just -- It was listed under the
19 observed takes, and so that's all. I understand.
20
21 **MS. LEE:** Yes.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Ms. Boggs.
24
25 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Ms. Lee, for the presentation, and
26 so, when I look at Slide 6, and it talks about the population
27 status and size, are we just relisting them in the U.S. as
28 threatened? I mean, I don't know what you consider to be a
29 healthy population, and you've got 600 in Mozambique, 1,875 in
30 Raja Ampat, and 22,000 in Ecuador and Peru, but what do we see
31 in the Gulf of Mexico, or the U.S., waters, and what is causing
32 this to come back up? We have numbers for everywhere else, but
33 not in the Gulf, and just what you're seeing as takes.
34
35 **MS. LEE:** That's where I mentioned that we're working on a
36 preliminary relative abundance estimate for the northwestern
37 Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. It's not published yet, and it's
38 very preliminary, and so I was advised that maybe it's too
39 preliminary to share right now, but I will have more information
40 for you soon, but, I mean, the bottom line is, when they were
41 listed, they reviewed all of the available information, and they
42 did determine, you know, that they warranted listing as
43 threatened, and so I would just keep that as your context, and
44 it's a fair question, and I'm sorry that I don't have a good
45 answer for you, but, at this time, I really don't. I might have
46 a better answer by Full Council, and I'm going to talk to a
47 couple of people and just see what additionally I can perhaps
48 share there.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Gill.

3
4 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Jennifer,
5 for the presentation, and so, setting the expectation levels,
6 one of the things that we can expect, in the spring or mid-
7 season 2024, is an updated incidental take statement for these
8 creatures, and is that a reasonable expectation?

9
10 **MS. LEE:** Not in terms of a completed bi-op with a revised
11 incidental take statement. What we are saying is that we will
12 have new bycatch estimates that reflect the more recent data,
13 and so an incidental take statement is an end product of a
14 formal consultation, and, by March, or April, of next year,
15 we're saying we're going to have all the information that we
16 needed to where Sustainable Fisheries -- You know, we've given
17 you everything we have, and we have a complete initiation
18 package, and then Protected Resources is doing the actual
19 consultation, writing the biological opinion, and so, when the
20 biological opinion is completed, that's when we get a new
21 incidental take statement, but we probably -- Like I mentioned,
22 we're hoping, by the end of December, that we would have new
23 bycatch estimates that would give us an idea of where we -- You
24 know, where are relative to that previous estimate.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any further questions for Ms. Lee
27 from anyone else? Okay. Well, thank you for the presentation,
28 and I will turn it back to Dr. Freeman, remotely, to do the next
29 action guide item.

30
31 **STATUS UPDATE OF SIDE-BY-SIDE TESTING OF CELLULAR VESSEL**
32 **MONITORING (cVMS) AND CELLULAR ELECTRONIC LOGBOOKS (cELBs) ON**
33 **GULF SHRIMP VESSELS**

34
35 **DR. FREEMAN:** Thank you, sir. For Agenda Item V, Southeast
36 Fisheries Science Center staff will update the committee on the
37 status of the side-by-side testing of the cellular VMS and cELB
38 units on Gulf shrimp vessels, as well as the next steps in the
39 timeline. The committee should ask questions and provide
40 feedback on the next steps.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Walter, are you ready to lead us
43 through?

44
45 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Yes, Chair. Thank you. All right. Good
46 afternoon, everyone, and I'm happy to be able to update the
47 committee on the status of the side-by-side testing and then
48 next steps as we're proceeding with our three-part plan, and so,

1 right now, I'll present on where we are with the testing.

2
3 The objectives of the testing were to recruit five commercial
4 vessels for the project and equip them with a set of vessel
5 tracking and reporting systems and that each vessel was to
6 participate in at least one full shrimping trip of about
7 eighteen days, starting with the initiation of the Texas open,
8 or around July 15.

9
10 Our staff worked really diligently to be able to get out and get
11 boots on the ground, literally, and we had a lot of support from
12 our colleagues at LGL, and we had a lot of support from the
13 shrimp fishery, in offering to put these devices on the vessels,
14 allowing us access, and then making this happen.

15
16 Fourteen vessels volunteered, which was greatly exceeding our
17 initial expectations, and so I think that's really great, and it
18 speaks to the support of the fishery. Five were selected on the
19 basis of actually having some of the existing equipment onboard,
20 particularly the cELB, which we wanted to ensure was one of the
21 side-by-side comparisons. All of the boats were from Palacios,
22 and we also did the testing on our research vessel, the Caretta.

23
24 The devices we had were according to the plan, and we had five
25 Boat Command VMS, five new cELBs, programmed cELB units, one
26 Insight X2 VMS unit, five NEMO units, five Tracker One units,
27 and five Zen VMS units. We actually had more than what we
28 originally had set out to, and we said, well, it's better to try
29 more and see what else we can get on and what we can get support
30 for and conduct the testing while we have the opportunity to be
31 on the boats.

32
33 Then they were installed on the industry vessels, and we had our
34 actual electronics technician come out to assist with the
35 installation, and so we had professional installation on the
36 vessels, and that during July 3 to 5, and so I think that, for
37 our staff, we watched the fireworks in Palacios, and thank you
38 very much for giving up your time there, and thank you to the
39 vessels who allowed us access, and all those vessels left port
40 on the opener, and a number of the vessels seemed to be making
41 trips that might be of a shorter duration, but the units are
42 still onboard the vessels, and we're actually getting data back.

43
44 We were unable to secure Succorfish units, due to some
45 manufacturing shipping time, and remember that we had to get
46 this underway quite quickly. With further, with more, time, we
47 might have been able to work with that manufacturer, and we
48 could only purchase one Insight unit, due to the cost, and we

1 deployed it on the Caretta, because a functioning Insight is not
2 available was not available to get out to Palacios in time.
3 Then one of the Tracker units was nonfunctional, and it was not
4 deployed.

5
6 Right now, we're going to be awaiting the acquisition of all of
7 the data before we start the analysis. Right now, at least
8 preliminary indications are that we're getting most of the data
9 back, and that the data looks pretty good, and we think that
10 we're going to likely get all of the data back, and then we're
11 going to analyze that data for the rest of August and September,
12 and the next step is that we'll be bringing that analysis to the
13 council at their October meeting.

14
15 I think there was a plan to have a special Shrimp AP meeting
16 prior to that, so that we could convey those results and get
17 some feedback from the AP before going to the council with the
18 results, and I think we can confirm whether that's the case or
19 not and whether we can schedule that, but we would be happy to
20 do that.

21
22 Now I will have to apologize that we're using jargon, and I will
23 have to put another dollar in the jargon jar, but API is a
24 something programming interface, and this somehow slipped
25 through the jargon tracker, the automated programming interface,
26 and I think I already owe this council a lot of money, after
27 having given an MSE presentation, which was loaded with jargon,
28 and so I'm probably deeply in the jargon hole.

29
30 What this means, actually, is that we are -- Our internal staff
31 are trying to develop a catcher's mitt to see whether we can
32 actually catch this data. We think we can do it, from the
33 standpoint of testing, which is a small number of units and
34 vessels, a small amount of data, and then that's going to give
35 us the information to determine whether we can set that up on a
36 production scale or whether we need to look for more resources
37 and set that up externally, but, if we can do that, that could
38 be a cost-efficient way of doing it.

39
40 Now, one of the things we were needing from that was that the
41 vendors would actually push the data to us, rather than us
42 having to pull the data, and, if we can do that, and that's a
43 part of what the testing is allowing us to do, is to evaluate
44 that, we might be able to get some cost savings, and so it looks
45 like it's working fairly well, but we will have more information
46 on that as we go along.

47
48 Some next steps is we're going to continue monitoring. For some

1 of the vessels, we may get another trip or two out of them, and
2 we figured that more data is better than less data, and so, if
3 they've got the units on, and they're making a short turnaround,
4 they may be keeping the units on, and then they will just mail
5 in the chips, if they need to replace the chip on the cELBs.

6
7 Then what we want to encourage of the vendors is to try this new
8 API, in terms of getting the data to us, and it's not part of
9 the original testing plan, but we might streamline the next
10 phase of the early adopter approach. We're going to get the
11 data from the cELB units, in terms of getting the chips
12 returned, and then we'll send people out to recover the other
13 devices eventually from the vessels.

14
15 Then we'll do the analysis phase, where we'll run the data
16 through the Dettloff algorithm and compare the total effort from
17 each of the devices, and as well as overlaying the tracks, to
18 see if we are indeed getting the same answer on the total
19 effort, which is really the measure of success or not, and then,
20 after that, we'll assess the initial steps for equipping the
21 vessels with devices, as part of the early adopter program.

22
23 Right now, the Gulf States has a call for contractors to support
24 that early adopter program, and so that is actually underway,
25 and, once that goes out and gets awarded, then the early adopter
26 program will be underway, and it will be starting, and so we're
27 hoping that vessel owners will see that as an opportunity to
28 take on those units and start collecting the data and moving us
29 into the next step of where we're going to go with the future of
30 the program.

31
32 I think that's the last slide, and I'm happy to take questions,
33 and I thank all of the people who participated in this, and it
34 was really a team effort from, I think, our staff, LGL, and the
35 vessel owners, in terms of allowing us to get out there and get
36 this underway. Thanks.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter, for the
39 excellent presentation, and I appreciate that. Do we have any
40 questions for Dr. Walter regarding the testing? Mr. Gill.

41
42 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and this is not related to
43 your presentation, but thank you for that, John, and so, if
44 folks have questions about the presentation, I will defer my
45 questions until after.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I have one quick one, if no one else does,
48 and so the API -- I guess it's a database, or a data housing

1 system, or whatever it is you described, and one of the things
2 that we heard, from the AP in the past, was getting the data
3 from the systems directly to you all, instead of having to go
4 through law enforcement, correct, and do you see this system, in
5 the future, potentially being the clearinghouse for this data
6 coming in directly? Is that the goal?

7
8 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, that's the goal, and remember we've got two
9 paths for how the data might go, and we've got the moving
10 through the normal NOAA protocols and then there's been the
11 desire, and the request, from the AP to explore an alternative
12 option, and this is indeed exploring that alternative option,
13 where the data goes directly to the Science Center from the
14 vendors, and I think that's our due diligence commitment to try
15 to meet the desires of the AP, and then we'll evaluate the costs
16 and benefits and pros and cons of those two and bring that
17 before this council, in terms of what you decide on the
18 recommended approach going forward. Thanks.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Mr. Donaldson, real
21 quick.

22
23 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Under the next
24 steps, what's the timing on the data analysis, and when do you
25 expect that to be complete, and I'm assuming you will come and
26 present that, those findings, to the committee, and kind of just
27 a general timeline, and I understand that sometimes stuff takes
28 longer than normal.

29
30 **DR. WALTER:** We hope to have that in early October, completed,
31 and I think that we wanted to get a special AP, if possible, so
32 that they could get the first sort of review of it, before the
33 council, and is that indeed something that's going to be
34 possible, and do we know? Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any other questions regarding the
37 presentation? Ms. Boggs.

38
39 **MS. BOGGS:** Carrie, do you need a motion to convene the AP, once
40 this information is available, or is that just something that
41 you all can do?

42
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** That's just something we can do. I
44 think we talked about it, multiple times, when we went through
45 the congressionally-funded spend plan with the AP and the
46 council, I believe, and so I don't think we need a motion.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Back to you, Mr. Gill.

1
2 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, again, thank you, John,
3 and so my question, and it somewhat relates to this, was if you
4 could update us on the \$850,000 congressional funding, and what
5 that status is, what the allocation ultimately came to be,
6 because there was some discussion between the agency and the AP
7 that did not necessarily agree, when I last heard about it, and
8 what the status is. I guess the corollary to that is, is that
9 helping fund some of this new API initiative, which gets to some
10 of the AP's concerns?

11
12 **DR. WALTER:** Thank you. We were not able to accommodate the
13 AP's recommended changes to the funding allocations, and so the
14 funding is exactly what we had proposed, and we had actually
15 tightened it as much as we could, focusing on putting as much
16 money as we could towards the early adopter approach, because
17 that's what actually gets units on boats.

18
19 There was, in that, money that was going to support our IT
20 infrastructure, which is helping with that API development, and
21 so indeed our IT experts internal to the center are working on
22 that, and so, yes, indeed, it is probably helping to achieve the
23 desires of the AP on that, but we weren't able to reallocate
24 more money, and I think they had wanted more money to go to
25 early adopter, and less to go to some staff time. However, as I
26 think we see, it takes staff time to make these things happen,
27 and it took staff time on the 4th of July to make the testing
28 happen. Thanks.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Gill.

31
32 **MR. GILL:** Thank you. A follow-up to that, and what's the
33 status of the remainder of the funds, according to the
34 allocation plan that you had presented and the associated
35 timeline for the expenditure of it?

36
37 **DR. WALTER:** So I think the \$360,000 that was supposed to go to
38 the early adopter program -- That money has been sent over to
39 Gulf States, and they have that money, and there will be the
40 awarding, hopefully, if there are valid and good bids for that,
41 and I think that will proceed, if indeed the Gulf States gets
42 good bids for that and can award that contract. That is, right
43 now, in Gulf States' hands, and so they're our partner in this,
44 and I think they're -- We had mentioned that probably, once they
45 said they could do it, they would probably be the better ones to
46 administer that.

47
48 In terms of the remainder of the money, most of that remainder

1 money is either going to a number of internal costs,
2 maintenance and administration and staff time and then the staff
3 time for the IT support.

4
5 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Do we have any other questions for
8 Dr. Walter or regarding the presentation? Then we'll move on to
9 the last agenda item, which is Other Business. Dr. Freeman, do
10 you have anything else for us, before we address those two
11 items?

12
13 **DR. FREEMAN:** No, sir. We can move to the agenda items from Dr.
14 Simmons and Dr. Walter.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Simmons, do you want to take that
17 one?

18
19 **OTHER BUSINESS**

20 **POTENTIAL USE OF IRA FUNDING TO REIMBURSE GULF SHRIMPERS FOR**
21 **TYPE-APPROVED NMFS HARDWARE/SOFTWARE**

22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know
24 you might not be able to answer right now, Andy and John, but I
25 guess, since this early adopter program is kind of falling short
26 of, I guess, what the industry had in mind, is there a potential
27 to use the climate-ready Inflation Reduction Act funding that
28 would come to the Southeast in 2024 to consider offsetting some
29 of that, and it would be putting some more funding towards some
30 type of reimbursement program for those type-approved devices.

31
32 I was thinking it would meet the climate resilience and, you
33 know, adaptability needs of that funding, because, I mean, we
34 use so much of this information, the shrimp effort monitoring
35 information, in almost every single stock assessment, and we use
36 it in the biological opinions, and we need that spatial area
37 information, as Ms. Lee just presented, for specific shrimp
38 fisheries.

39
40 You know, the pink shrimp fishery, if we have that spatial
41 information explicitly, on how they're interacting with these
42 giant manta rays -- I mean, that's very valuable information,
43 and we certainly need that more with time, and so I think it
44 could meet the needs of the priorities of that funding, not to
45 mention the determination, you know, as well as if we've met the
46 red snapper threshold for the shrimp fleet. I just -- I don't
47 know if we could send a letter and get a follow-up or what that
48 process needs to be, but I would just like to put that out

1 there. Thanks.

2

3 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I can jump in.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Go ahead, Andy.

6

7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** In response to Carrie, I couldn't speak to
8 whether or not climate-ready IRA funds could or couldn't be used
9 for what, you know, you're suggesting, and I think that would
10 have to be a conversation with those leading, obviously, the
11 various buckets and how that aligns, or doesn't align, with the
12 goals and objectives of IRA, going forward.

13

14 What I can say is that there is an appropriations bill that
15 includes an additional \$850,000 for next year, and it's still --
16 That is not approved, right, and that's just in a bill right now
17 being proposed, and so, if that goes through, like the \$850,000
18 did in FY23, then that would also be available for use for the
19 shrimp ELB program, and the Science Center, working with the
20 council and others, would come up with a proposed budget in
21 which to expend those funds, but, right now, it's not definitive
22 whether that will pass or not, and so I just wanted to mention
23 that this at least in an appropriations bill at this time.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Frazer.

26

27 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I just am -- I want to kind of hone-in a little
28 bit on Carrie's query here, right, and so, in the climate-ready
29 fisheries, there is \$349 million in there, and one of the kind
30 of boxes for the lead, right, is the essential data acquisition
31 and the advanced technology, and so I think the question is it's
32 both of those, and it's essential data, and it's kind of
33 innovative technology, or advanced technology, and is it
34 appropriate, I guess, and for what individual, to contact a lead
35 of that particular bucket to pursue this, to see if it's an
36 option? Is it the Science Center's responsibility, or is it the
37 council's responsibility? Who needs to push the ball?

38

39 **DR. WALTER:** Mr. Chair, I'm a little at a -- You have stumped me
40 here, because I think we're going to need to get back to you, in
41 terms of what of those buckets it would fit under, if it would,
42 and I know that a lot of the advanced tech is not -- It's to
43 develop things like automated systems that would change the way
44 we're collecting our survey data, and fundamentally change
45 things.

46

47 To my mind, this wouldn't fundamentally change anything, and
48 it's not really using advanced tech, and so it wouldn't quite

1 fit that bucket, because it's largely just implementing existing
2 technology for an existing need, and so I think, as we look
3 across those buckets of IRA funding, and where it might be most
4 effective, from what I have seen, those are for more
5 transformative projects. This is not transformative,
6 necessarily, and it's filling an existing need. It might be a
7 little bit of an uphill battle to fit in those buckets, as I
8 have read them.

9
10 **DR. FRAZER:** Yes, but it's certainly -- I get that, and I know
11 where they want to go, right, but I don't think you can get more
12 essential, right, and that's the key word in that, essential
13 data acquisition, and so, anyway, if you can get back to us. If
14 we need to push the ball, right, to make the inquiry that's
15 going to get a response, we'll do that.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Walter, the last Other Business
18 item.

19
20 **DR. WALTER:** I think we have Andy who would be wanting to weigh-
21 in here on Tom's --

22
23 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just one other comment, and I don't -- I am,
24 obviously, not there in the room, and so I don't know if Evan
25 Howell is still there, but I would certainly recommend that you
26 talk to Evan as well about the climate-ready fisheries bucket,
27 since he's one of our leads on the IRA funding.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Andy, I think he left, but he'll be back
30 later, supposedly, and so sorry.

31
32 **DR. FRAZER:** That's all right, and so I appreciate that comment.
33 I will track Evan down, and, I mean, there's a number of folks,
34 obviously, from the agency that are here, and I'll have some
35 conversations behind the scenes. Thanks.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Anything further on that topic? Then
38 we can go to the last Other Business item.

39
40 **ANNOUNCEMENT OF SHRIMP FOCUS GROUP LISTENING SESSIONS**

41
42 **DR. WALTER:** Thank you, Chair, and I wanted to announce that we
43 are, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, holding what we
44 call focus groups for the shrimp fishery participants. The
45 purpose of these are to conduct the participatory modeling, and
46 this is a process that we've embarked upon and used for red tide
47 research, and we've used it for dolphinfish research in the
48 South Atlantic, and, basically, it's getting participants in the

1 fishery, and stakeholders, into a room to develop conceptual
2 models of the drivers and pressures in their fishery.

3
4 By doing that across different diverse groups, then you begin to
5 capture two things. One, what are the main pressures and
6 drivers and what are similar across different regions, and then
7 what are the ones, the pressures and drivers, that are
8 different, that need to be accounted for on a regionally-
9 specific basis.

10
11 This was quite effective in us being able to develop what are
12 the conceptual management objectives for the dolphinfish
13 fishery, which were very different between south Florida and
14 North Carolina, and that is the building block for us to be able
15 to incorporate those and turn those into operational management
16 objectives, if you were going to embark on things such as
17 management strategy evaluation, and so this is the initial
18 scoping for those kind of things, because we need to understand
19 what drives the fishery, what are the things that they need,
20 what are the things that they want, and what are the pressures
21 they face, as well as the ecosystem connections that might
22 actually affect the shrimp population that they're fishing on.

23
24 The first of these is going to be commensurate with the SEDAR
25 that's going to occur in Tampa in September, and I think
26 September 20, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., is when we're going to
27 hold the first of those sessions, and it's going to be in-
28 person.

29
30 The reason that it needs to be in-person is because these
31 sessions work best when you have people around the table, so
32 that they can interact with each other. This is the first of
33 what's going to be several, and the other ones are going to be
34 scheduled for areas that are probably a little more convenient
35 to the bulk of the shrimp fishery, and, ideally, we can get to
36 Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana in the winter timeframe, but
37 this will be at least the start, because there will be a number
38 of participants from the fishery who are there as part of the
39 SEDAR process.

40
41 There is going to be -- We've got an announcement for that, and
42 there will be a Federal Register notice that should come out
43 tomorrow, and we hope to glean a lot of information that's going
44 to help us set a path forward for the shrimp fishery, because I
45 think we haven't really taken a deep dive into a lot of these
46 things that come up repeatedly in the APs that say, hey, you
47 need to better account for ecosystem considerations, that we're
48 struggling, because of this factor or that factor, and I think

1 this is the opportunity for us to start gathering that material
2 and then turning it into things that might give us a better
3 assessment and better management advice. Thanks.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Mr. Gill, you have a
6 question?

7
8 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, John, and so
9 could you talk a little bit, so that folks listening can know,
10 how you're going about inviting people to these, and I know it's
11 an FRN coming, but not everybody reads the FRNs, but,
12 nevertheless, for those listening in, they can pass the word as
13 well, but how are you going about identifying and getting the
14 word out for folks that should be at these listening sessions?

15
16 **DR. WALTER:** That's a great point, and what we would like to do
17 is have the Gulf Council agree to actually putting it as one of
18 their scheduled events, and also kind of echo this, and I think,
19 if we can get it on the announcement and the link to where we're
20 hosting it on our webpage, that would be good. I think passing
21 the word around, for people who are stakeholders, deckhands,
22 captains, owners, in the shrimp fishery, that these are
23 occurring, and this is an opportunity, is what we would like to
24 get. Then I'm open to other ways that we can amplify the
25 message, either on social media, or if there is other
26 recommendations.

27
28 **MR. GILL:** Well, I have one, to put the word out to the Shrimp
29 AP and ask them to touch base with all their folks, and you will
30 probably get the word out faster that way than most any other,
31 and certainly better than the FRN.

32
33 **DR. WALTER:** If we could use the Shrimp AP distribution list, we
34 would welcome being able to do that. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we
39 have the draft flyer, that I think you shared with us, and, as
40 soon as the FRN publishes, and you guys produce a press release,
41 we will forward that, in addition to the flyer, to the Shrimp AP
42 and to our listserv.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I've got a quick question, Dr. Simmons, and
45 so we have a council meeting in January in New Orleans, which
46 would be a good venue for one of these, and is that something
47 that can be added like after the end of the day at a council
48 meeting, perhaps?

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think we could, if we think that
3 we could get folks to the council venue, and it would just
4 probably take some planning, but we're not running the meetings
5 and hosting them, and I think it might be too late in January
6 for them to consider it for the stock assessment, but I will let
7 Dr. Walter chime-in on if they want to tack-on having another
8 listening session for penaeid shrimp in January.

9
10 **DR. WALTER:** I think January would be an excellent time. I
11 can't guarantee that this information is going to be used in the
12 stock assessment. Most likely, it won't, in the sense that the
13 stock assessment is going to probably not -- It's going to have
14 to proceed on its own timeframe, and so I don't want to set an
15 expectation that this will -- That this is going to be a
16 separate process, but I think that would be a good time to
17 target, as we get out to areas that are a little closer and more
18 convenient to say, for instance, the Louisiana fleet. Thanks.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Any other
21 questions? Dr. Froeschke.

22
23 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** You just piqued my interest, and so I guess
24 what is the primary use of this, of the listening sessions,
25 then?

26
27 **DR. WALTER:** Well, as I noted, I mean, the first step is to
28 identify what are the drivers that are actually affecting the
29 fishery and what are the ecosystem factors that we need to be
30 considering. What it does is it builds a conceptual model of
31 all the things that are the pressures and drivers and the things
32 that stakeholders need, and then, eventually, from that, we
33 build the model, and those help to inform, and we've been very
34 open about wanting to develop a management strategy evaluation
35 for the shrimp fishery.

36
37 It's, as I've noted, not funded right now, and we may or may not
38 get support for it, but we think that it's one of those
39 fisheries that, because it's so interconnected to everything
40 that we do in so many other things, that it's one of those
41 things that needs that kind of holistic consideration, because
42 you can't manage one stock without considering the backs of the
43 shrimp fishery on other ones, and it's challenging to have those
44 conversations, and I think it sets up things that people might
45 be concerned that there are conflicts going on.

46
47 There are actually conflicts between the shrimp fishery and just
48 about all of our other fisheries, and whether we acknowledge

1 them, explicitly acknowledge them, they still are actually in
2 effect, and I think we saw, for instance, in the biological
3 opinion and Section 7 consultations, we've already seen that
4 there are conflicts that are going on.

5
6 How we manage those, going into the future, is that we've got to
7 actually write those down, identify management that finds the
8 best solution to those, but also meets the goals and needs and
9 objectives of all the participants and stakeholders in it.
10 That's a tall order, and I think it's one of those things that I
11 something that you could say that we would love to get there,
12 and I think that's why we're trying to start slow, small, and
13 just saying, okay, what does the shrimp fishery need to stay in
14 existence. Let's get that information and bring it to the
15 table, and then we'll proceed from there, depending on how much
16 further we can take say a full management strategy evaluation.
17 Thanks.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Dr. Simmons.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you. I just think we need to
22 be super careful about terminology though, when we're talking
23 about listening sessions and workshops and engagements and
24 management strategy evaluations during a stock assessment, and
25 so let's try to keep those separate and make sure we're crystal
26 clear with the public on what we're trying to do. Thanks.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any further questions? Well, thank
29 you, Dr. Walter. We appreciate it, and we'll look forward to
30 your further results in October, at the October council meeting,
31 and, with that, Mr. Chair, I conclude the Shrimp Committee.

32
33 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 15, 2023.)

34
35 - - -