

Shrimp Advisory Panel Summary
Gulf Council Office
Tampa, Florida
October 19, 2023

The meeting of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) was convened at 8:30 AM EST on October 19, 2023. The agenda for this meeting was approved as amended: the addition of two items under Other Business – (1) Early Adopter Program Rollout and (2) Shrimp Listening Sessions Update. The meeting summaries from March 15-16, 2023, and May 18, 2023, were approved as written.

*Quorum for this meeting of the Shrimp AP was not reached.

Council Actions in Response to Motions from the March 2023 and May 2023 Shrimp AP Meetings

Dr. Freeman presented on the Council's actions in response to the AP's motions from the March 2023 and May 2023 meetings. The AP Chair expressed thanks to members of the industry for assisting with Secure Digital (SD) card retrieval from shrimp vessels as part of the data collection process.

Presentation on NMFS cVMS Project

Dr. Rowell (SEFSC) presented on the NMFS cellular vessel monitoring system (cVMS) project to modernize shrimp effort data collection. This presentation was a direct response to a Council motion at its April 2023 meeting.

An AP member asked for clarification on why Nautic Alert Insight units were unavailable for testing. Dr. Quinlan (SEFSC) responded that it was not possible to get five units due to costs. One unit was ordered by the SEFSC, but it would not initialize. The replacement device arrived too late for testing on a shrimp vessel. Another AP member inquired if the Boat Command and NEMO units have potential for NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) type-approval. Dr. Walter responded that type approval is for NMFS VMS, and not specifically for NMFS OLE, and a vendor must submit their product for approval. An AP member inquired if data points recorded on vessels was inclusive of time spent at the docks between fishing trips. Dr. Rowell confirmed that data points were recorded while at the docks as well as while on fishing trips.

Dr. Simmons inquired if the NEMO and Tracker One devices were hardwired to the vessels, rather than solar-powered, and if the captain would have any knowledge that a device is malfunctioning. Dr. Quinlan responded that the NEMO device was hardwired to the vessel and that the Tracker One device was plugged into the vessel. He added that the devices have activity lights but that he didn't believe any of the activity lights would necessarily clarify to a captain if a device was malfunctioning. Dr. Simmons inquired if a reboot of a NEMO device could be done remotely. Dr.

Quinlan responded that the equipment needed for a reboot was not on the vessel at that time; otherwise, it would have been possible.

An AP member asked which of the cVMS devices could transmit to the SEFSC directly. Dr. Walter responded that all devices were capable of that. AP members also discussed that power supply issues on vessels may have occurred, since multiple cVMS devices showed data gaps at the same time. Dr. Rowell agreed to look into these occurrences of putative power supply issues.

Mr. Gill (Council member) inquired about the extra data points received within a 10-minute interval and how the SEFSC determines which data point to use. Dr. Rowell noted that data points are time stamped and associated with coordinates, so additional data points when not accompanied by prolonged periods of data gaps are not problematic for effort estimation. Dr. Rowell noted that Mr. Dettloff (SEFSC) who developed the new shrimp effort estimation model would be best equipped to answer additional questions.

An AP member noted that at least two cVMS units have emerged as sufficiently reliable and that having multiple units for boat operators to choose from would be ideal. Another AP member inquired if vendor portals were available for all devices. Dr. Quinlan commented that vendor portals were available for all devices, except for Zen¹, for data retrieval. The AP member requested that NMFS ensure that Zen would have the capability for data retrieval, without the need for vendor emails. Dr. Rowell added that further development and improvement for data retrieval would continue during the Early Adopter Program. Another AP member stated that Boat Command and Zen seemed to have performed reliably and asked NMFS if the AP was being too critical of NEMO's performance. Dr. Rowell responded that the presentation was only noting which vendors had successfully tested pushing data into the database during the at-sea testing phase using the Application Programming Interface and was not necessarily encouraging which devices should be chosen for the Early Adopter Program. The AP member asked if NMFS would or would not use these research results to screen vendors, or if all vendors could potentially apply for inclusion in the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Walter responded that the agency is not being prescriptive on which devices could be used, and that vessel operators could certainly use these research results to inform their decision on which device to adopt. An AP member asked how many vessels might be outfitted in the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Walter replied that 50-100 vessels may be included in the program. The AP member then stated that cVMS units that have not failed testing should be included in the Early Adopter Program but that cVMS units that did not perform well, such as Tracker One and NEMO, should not be included.

Dr. Simmons inquired if the agency has plans to develop technical specifications for the shrimp industry for cVMS units similarly to what was done for the for-hire fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Walter replied that any modifications included in the framework action using the VMS route in Alternative 2 would be incorporated into the current technical specifications. However, new technical specifications would have to be developed under Alternative 3, and Dr. Walter stated that most of the technical specifications would be very similar to that of the existing NMFS type-approval specifications. Dr. Walter added that he views the route of transmission to be one of the major differences in type-approval between Alternatives 2 and 3.

¹ During the public comment period, it was revealed that Zen does have an extensive user portal.

Motion: At this time, based on the most recent NMFS cVMS testing, the Shrimp AP would request that the Tracker One and NEMO units not be included in the Early Adopter Program. If improved versions of those units are available at a later date, the Shrimp AP could consider them at that point. The Shrimp AP further requests NMFS widely distribute the results of the NMFS cVMS testing directly to federal shrimp permit holders.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Discussing a Collaborative Path Forward to Understanding Inshore Shrimp Effort to Inform Sea Turtle Restoration Efforts in the Gulf of Mexico

Ms. Hazelkorn (SERO) presented on a Deepwater Horizon funded project aiming to characterize shrimping effort in Gulf of Mexico state waters compared to sea turtle distribution data. An AP member inquired how specifically the effort data would be used in sea turtle restoration. Ms. Hazelkorn responded that overlaying effort data with sea turtle distribution and mortality would better inform sea turtle restoration efforts. The AP member noted that new information from the project could trigger a re-initiation of the shrimp Biological Opinion and then inquired what concerns fishers had expressed over automatic identification system (AIS). Ms. Hazelkorn noted that expressed concerns related to AIS dealt with the 24/7 recording of data. Dr. Walter commented that fine scale effort data would further assist with bycatch concerns, such as with smalltooth sawfish. Dr. Walter pointed out that shrimp effort data play a pivotal role informing mitigation strategies to allow the fishery to continue to operate under a biological opinion. Dr. Walter also noted that as all federally-permitted vessels are also state permitted and some do fish in state waters, there could be mutually beneficial synergies between the project and the early adopter program. An AP member expressed concerns that data collected in this project could ultimately lead to new management actions, such as area closures.

Update from BOEM on Gulf Wind Energy

Mr. Celata (BOEM) presented updates on offshore wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico. An AP member inquired how long the lease lasts for the provisional winner for wind energy area (WEA) M. Mr. Celata responded that the lease is for 33 years. Another AP member noted that NMFS has proposed a critical habitat area for Rice's whale, which includes a requirement for sufficiently quiet conditions, and he expressed concern over wind energy development's impacts on Rice's whale.

Motion: To request BOEM continue to collaborate closely with NOAA NCCOS and the Gulf shrimp industry through the GOMW-2 process to avoid and minimize any adverse impacts of offshore wind energy development on the Gulf shrimp industry and associated ecosystem.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Update on Re-initiation of Shrimp BiOp due to Sawfish and Giant Manta Rays

Ms. Lee (SERO) presented on the re-initiation of the Shrimp Biological Opinion (BiOp). An AP member asked Ms. Lee to explain what population viability analyses (PVAs) are and what they are used for. Ms. Lee explained that PVAs are models that can show how the removal of animals from a population impacts a population's rate of extinction and are one tool that NOAA Fisheries can use, particularly when total population sizes are small, to evaluate the jeopardy standard. The AP also asked Ms. Lee how the shrimp industry could engage in the BiOp development process and any reasonable and prudent measures. Ms. Lee noted that her presentation was only the first step in engaging industry and that she would continue to share information as the process continued. She referenced the current NOAA Fisheries Endangered Species Act (ESA) Magnuson-Stevens Act integration policy directive, as well as that NOAA Fisheries and the Council Coordination Committee were working together on revisions to the policy to incorporate additional cooperation during the consultation process. An AP member asked what size giant manta rays were being caught and if NMFS knew what their natural mortality was. Ms. Lee responded that the giant manta rays being caught are in the 6-12 feet wingspan width range, that they are born with a 6-foot wingspan, and that their natural mortality rate is expected to be very low. An AP member asked if NOAA Fisheries Giant Manta Ray Release Guidance document could be shared with the Shrimp AP and with Sea Grant. AP members also inquired if these documents had been translated into languages such as Spanish or Vietnamese. Ms. Lee responded that she would ensure those documents were distributed further and would need to check into whether translations were available. Another AP member commented that it appeared in the maps during the presentation that interactions with giant manta rays were in near-shore waters. Ms. Lee responded that most were in federal waters, but some were closer to the state waters line.

Endangered Species Act Listing and Critical Habitat Rule Update

Ms. Lee (SERO) reviewed four recent ESA rules and potential implications, if any, for the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Mexico. An AP member expressed concern that the critical habitat designations would further restrict the shrimp industry. Another AP member commented that she did not recall the Gulf Council ever reviewing maps on proposed critical habitat for threatened Caribbean corals and that she wished fishermen had the opportunity through the Council process to comment. Ms. Lee explained that, although there is some overlap between where shrimping occurs and the proposed and final critical habitat designations, shrimping is not expected to affect their essential or physical and biological features, so she did not anticipate the rules triggering formal consultation on the shrimp fishery. Another AP member asked when the critical habitat rules would go into effect. Ms. Lee responded that a final rule is generally published within one year of the date of the proposed rule.

Motion: To request the Council and NMFS to consider the comments submitted by the Southern Shrimp Alliance regarding the Proposed Rule to designate critical habitat for the Green Sea Turtle, and to further request NMFS to carefully reevaluate any areas within the range of the North Atlantic DPS, and identified in the Proposed Rule as having a “Moderate” or “High” conservation value, for exclusion from designation as critical habitat because the benefits of such exclusion may outweigh the benefits of critical habitat designations for these areas.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Motion: To request the Council and NMFS consider the comments submitted by the Southern Shrimp Alliance regarding the Proposed Rule to designate critical habitat for the Rice's Whale, and to further request NMFS to revise the proposed inner boundary of the Critical Habitat Area from the 100m isobath to no less than the 120m isobath, and to revise the proposed outer boundary of the Critical Habitat Area from the 400m isobath to no greater than the 350m isobath particularly in those portions of the proposed critical habitat area to the west of the Core Habitat area.

Motion carried with no opposition.

SEDAR 87 Assessment Update for Brown, White, and Pink Shrimp

Dr. Stevens presented an update on the SEDAR 87 stock assessment process and schedule for brown, white, and pink shrimp.

Information Update on Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource and Damage Assessment Projects

Dr. Freeman asked the AP if members would like to receive a future presentation on any of the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource and Damage Assessment projects contained within the information sheet listed on the meeting website. At this time, the AP did not indicate needing a future presentation on any of the listed projects.

Public Comment

Mr. Lovingfoss (Atlantic Radio Telephone) commented on concerns related to emailing data to Dr. Quinlan's team instead of the SEFSC having the ability to log into the vendor portal to view the data in real time as with the Boat Command and Tracker One vendor portals. Their company was under the impression that NMFS would not be using an API during this research project, so they reassigned their engineer to another project offshore. When notified differently, their engineer was able to use the API successfully towards the end of the research project. Mr. Lovingfoss also noted that their company does have a vendor portal.

Mr. Johnston (Boat Command cVMS) expressed gratitude for inclusion of their device in the research study. He noted that Boat Command cVMS was approved for the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program, but after the court decision. He noted that devices would cost roughly \$378, which would include a year of transmission.

Other Business

Early Adopter Program Rollout

Ms. Emory (SEFSC) reviewed the handouts developed for the Early Adopter Program of cVMS devices in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp industry. Dr. Simmons noted that volunteers are being sought through September 2024 but that the funding may run out prior to that time period. Ms.

Emory responded that messaging will be consistent that it is “first come, first serve” for all the outreach materials.

Shrimp Listening Sessions Update

Dr. Stevens (SEFSC) provided an update on shrimp listening sessions, now called stakeholder workshops. She added that additional workshops will be held January-March 2024. Locations will be informed by preliminary work through the Equity and Environmental Justice strategy. An AP member commented that he did not understand the need for a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the Gulf shrimp industry. Dr. Walter responded that the agency is aware that the fishery is experiencing many severe challenges. Embarking upon the listening sessions and, potentially an MSE, will allow us to identify the management objectives of the fishery, identify barriers (either local or regional) and explore how we could better these achieve these objectives.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm eastern time on October 19, 2023.

Meeting Participants

Members Present:

Leann Bosarge, Chair
Steve Bosarge
Thu Bui
Glenn Delaney
Gary Graham
Lance Nacio
Laura Picariello
John Williams

Council Staff:

Matt Freeman
John Froeschke
Lisa Hollensead
Jessica Matos
Natasha Mendez-Ferrer
Ryan Rindone
Bernadine Roy
Charlotte Schiaffo
Carrie Simmons
Carly Somerset

NMFS Staff:

Gretchen Bath
Shannon Cass-Calay
Meaghan Emory
Nicholas Farmer
David Gloeckner

David Hanisko
Rebeccah Hazelkorn
Frank Helies
Calusa Horn
Kimberly Johnson
Jennifer Lee
Alan Lowther
Rich Malinowski
Michelle Masi
Adam Pollack
John Quinlan
James Reinhardt
David Records
Timothy Rowell
Jamie Schubert
Elizabeth Scott-Denton
Rebecca Smith
Molly Stevens
Michael Travis
Farron Wallace
Katie Walter
John Walter

Council Members:

Susan Boggs
Bob Gill (representative)
Chris Schieble
Andy Strelcheck

