

Shrimp Advisory Panel Summary
Gulf Council Office
Tampa, Florida
March 19-20, 2024

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 March 19, 2024. The agenda for this meeting was approved as amended: Update on Shrimp Futures Project was moved to follow Agenda Item IV; addition under Other Business of LGL Summary of Shrimp Bycatch Study Workshop and General Discussion of Shrimp Industry. The meeting summary from October 19, 2023, was approved as written.

Council Actions in Response to Motions from the October 2023 Shrimp AP Meeting

Dr. Freeman presented on the Council's actions in response to four motions from the October 2023 Shrimp AP meeting and a separate motion by the Council at its January 2024 meeting. An AP member inquired if the Council might select its preferred alternative for the draft shrimp framework action at its April 2024 meeting. Dr. Freeman stated that the draft framework action does not currently contain analyses related to the alternatives and that NOAA General Counsel advises the Council to not select a preferred alternative until such analyses have been completed. Dr. Walter (SEFSC) added that NMFS would like to see progress on the draft framework action, particularly with the Reinitiation of the Section 7 consultation of the Shrimp Biological Opinion (BiOp), and that the reasonable and prudent measures detailed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires something new in place for the purpose of modernizing data collection for effort monitoring and sea turtle takes. Dr. Simmons stated the Council has not reviewed the draft framework action in almost a year, so the Council would appreciate feedback from the Shrimp AP. She noted that there would be a period of time where both the current cellular electronic logbook (cELB) program and a replacement program would need to be run concurrently to ensure comparable data is being collected. Mr. Schieble commented that it would be beneficial and provide guidance to the Shrimp Committee and to the Council if the Shrimp AP would state whether it wishes to either update existing motions from March 2023 or retain those motions.

Update on Shrimp Futures Project

Dr. Walter provided an update on NMFS' Shrimp Futures Project. He reviewed issues currently facing the shrimp industry and reviewed additional projects related to the shrimp industry, such as the SEDAR 87 research track assessment. He explained the project objectives, which include identifying pathways and impediments to achieving short, medium, and long-term visions for the shrimp fishery. Dr. Walter then reviewed the four project actions before identifying potential partnerships for the project. He acknowledged that certain issues, such as trade and seafood inspections, faced by the shrimp industry fall outside the purview of NMFS, which highlights the importance of including other government agencies as project partners. He added that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) also has a Future of Gulf Seafood initiative, which dovetails nicely with NMFS' Shrimp Futures Project.

Dr. Freeman asked if the GSMFC is organizing the Shrimp Futures Project meetings. An AP member replied that Sea Grant and GSMFC are working together in preparing a kickstart of the Futures of Gulf Seafood meetings. Dr. Freeman then inquired about the timeline for completion of the Shrimp Futures Project. Dr. Walter responded that timing is dependent on engagement of other government entities and stakeholders for determining completion of the project, so a hard deadline has not been set. An AP member stated the current rules and regulations also affect the current and future state of the shrimp fishery; he also acknowledged that changes to habitat, such as wetlands loss and declining water quality, negatively affect the fishery. He also noted that state partnerships should be specified as part of the project. Another AP member noted that often the impact of shrimpers on the environment is examined, but that an examination of the impact of non-shrimpers on the environment which detrimentally affects the shrimp industry is critical. Dr. Walter responded that the conceptual model will identify drivers affecting shrimp, which should account for the AP member's point. An AP member emphasized the regulatory impact on the shrimp industry that another AP member had stated and encouraged NMFS to minimize the impact on the fishery from all of the ESA actions. While encouraging the inclusion of additional federal agencies, he inquired if a formal or informal structure for agencies participating was envisioned. Dr. Walter responded that no overarching structure or memorandum of understanding is currently prepared and that initial engagement with other federal agencies in the discussions is being sought. An AP member noted that the short-term vision is for 2025, which is rapidly approaching. Dr. Walter acknowledged that little time would be available to address that vision, so realistic expectations would have to be set. He noted that the 2025 vision would have to rely on funding already available. Another AP member commented that a consumer education component of the project should be considered; consumer education on imports should touch on issues such as seafood safety and forced labor concerns in overseas shrimp production. The AP member stated that the project should also include national marketing strategies for domestic wild caught shrimp. The AP member then expressed concern that a project outcome could be a management strategy evaluation and voiced opposition to such. The member had concerns that more regulatory burden for an industry on the brink of collapse could potentially be the outcome of this exercise. Another AP member noted that action is needed, not just a conceptual exercise.

Species-Specific Shrimp Effort Estimates

Mr. Dettloff (SEFSC) reviewed the rationale for exploring development of species-specific shrimp effort estimates as well as the assumptions required. He discussed the process of developing these estimates, including examination of effort by season, statistical zone, and depth zone. Because the proposed method for computing species-specific effort requires spatial and temporal information, the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) is utilized for this process, instead of trip tickets which were utilized by the historical matching method for computing species-specific effort estimates. He reviewed examples of how the data would be examined for brown, pink, and royal red shrimp, individually. He noted that at the SEDAR 87 Workshop it was determined that the SEFSC assessment group likely will not require estimates to be divided by species for their modeling exercises; therefore, it was decided that work attempting to estimate species-specific effort back in time was not worth currently pursuing.

An AP member inquired if additional explanation on why species-specific estimates would not be included in SEDAR 87. Dr. Freeman responded that NMFS staff would be available during the

agenda item Update on Research Track (SEDAR 87), so the request could be revisited. The AP member stated that fishery dependent and independent data sets appear to be used together and that the results of fishery dependent and fishery independent analyses were not compared for ground truthing. Mr. Dettloff responded that, while they were vastly different data streams, it was a necessary pairing and did not see an avenue for a good comparison. He added that absolute abundance was not being derived from the SEAMAP data and that it was strictly a proportional or abundance between the brown, pink, and white shrimp. Another AP member commented that different fishing gear is used by the industry in summer versus fall, but that SEAMAP trawls use the same fishing gear in summer and fall, so the proportion of each species present in the SEAMAP catch is not completely representative of the mix of species which would be observed in the industry's catch. The AP member also noted that SEAMAP only occurs in two seasons, summer and fall, however the analysis reflects three seasons and inquired how the third season is being derived. Mr. Dettloff responded that the two SEAMAP seasons are averaged and used as winter proportions. The AP member stated that stock abundance is vastly different in winter due to the colder water temperatures. An AP member expressed concern that commercial landings have been trending downward the past few years and that if any negative trend from SEAMAP data is expressed, due externalities unrelated to shrimp population abundance such as captain turnover aboard SEAMAP vessels or the survey occurring later than usual in the western Gulf, then there would be two data sources showing negative conditions input into the stock assessment model which would not be truly representative of stock health. In this situation, without species specific effort estimates, which would allow the stock assessment model to see an increasing trend in fishery dependent catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), the model could likely misinterpret the landings and SEAMAP datasets. She stated that while SEAMAP has better resolution than trip tickets, SEAMAP does not capture activity in all seasons and has other limitations. Mr. Schieble inquired if a benchmark period had been established to compare the old stock assessment against the new effort algorithm and vet them against each other. Dr. Walter responded that a lot of the decisions on which analyses to use had been vetted through the research track process. Another AP member asked if the impacts of wind energy siting on SEAMAP is being considered. Dr. Walter responded that a survey mitigation strategy has been developed and been discussed with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). He then recommended some of these questions be brought up during the SEDAR 87 agenda item. After discussion about data concerns, the AP made the following motion:

Motion: To request that the SEFSC recall the previous trip matching code/algorithm for determining species-specific shrimp effort and see if there any improvements that can be made in an effort to ensure that we have a long-term, consistent time series of species-specific shrimp effort. This information would be reported back, at a minimum, to the Shrimp AP at its next meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Status of SD Card Returns

Dr. Lowther (SEFSC) presented the data collection status from the six mailings of secure digital (SD) cards in June 2021, January 2022, June 2022, January 2023, June 2023, and January 2024.

He noted that a feedback card was included beginning with the fourth mailing, allowing for identification of issues such as ‘not fishing’ or ‘cELB unit damaged’. He stated that return rates had improved since the ‘boots on the ground’ approach began in April 2023; however, funds for this activity, which were provided by the Southern Shrimp Alliance, have run out. He added that return rates are not necessarily representative of data quality as some the chips they received from the cellular electronic logbook (cELB) devices were considered ‘bad’ (having a future date or null or bad GPS values). Dr. Freeman inquired why the number of SD card return requests fluctuated across the six mailings. Dr. Lowther stated that requests were dependent on how recently a SD card had been returned. So, if a SD card had been returned right before the next mailing, then a request to a specific vessel might not be made in that next mailing. For instance, the ‘boots on the ground’ approach had led to a high number of returns right before the June 2023 mailing. An AP member inquired if responses to the feedback card for ‘not fishing’ or ‘cELB unit damaged’ were being received. Dr. Lowther replied that responses were coming back, primarily for ‘not fishing’. Another AP member asked for information on that to be included in a future presentation. An AP member stated that the Southern Shrimp Alliance’s board could consider funding another round of the ‘boots on the ground’ approach. Dr. Walter noted that roughly 25% of the fleet is currently being represented with cELB devices and that expansion of the sampled vessels may need to occur through the alternatives in the current draft shrimp framework action in order to ensure that the fleet is truly being represented, and possibly with finer scale data, in the data collection process. He added that, while the ‘boots on the ground’ approach has improved the return of SD cards, automatic transmission of data should be the eventual solution.

Update on Wind Energy Areas in the Gulf of Mexico

Mr. Celata (BOEM) reviewed the renewable energy process before discussing the completed timeline for Gulf of Mexico Wind 1 process. He then discussed the Gulf of Mexico Wind 2 process and potential areas for leasing. He noted that four more auctions are to be held in 2024, with one being in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that discussions for the Wind 3 process are moving forward.

An AP member commented on the loss of coastal wetlands in Louisiana and expressed his concern of dredging for transmission lines and the impact on wetlands. He inquired if there were any estimates on wetland loss due to dredging. Mr. Celata responded that BOEM is working on transmission planning and that dialogues have included putting transmission cables in the right of ways for existing pipelines to lessen impacts. In response to an AP member’s question as to what analysis has been carried out to evaluate the area of the unsolicited bid off of the Mississippi and Alabama coasts, he noted that there would be a public comment period for any unsolicited proposal. The AP member raised concern that a 30-day comment period may be hard for the Shrimp AP, or Council to respond to, and requested that an overlay of the shrimp effort in the area of the unsolicited bid region be presented to the Shrimp AP at an upcoming meeting in order to provide comment and feedback. Dr. Walter commented that unsolicited lease requests can be challenging as they have not been vetted. Dr. Walter stated that a cumulative, holistic view of wind energy siting, its impacts, and the fishing industry is needed.

Discussion of Wind Energy Meeting in California

Ms. Bosarge (Shrimp AP Chair) explained that she participated as a representative of the commercial shrimp industry in the Gulf in a forward-thinking meeting on wind energy held in January 2024 in California. She noted that participants were primarily scientists and with backgrounds largely in fin fish, rather than shrimp. The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis hosted the meeting which included participants from NMFS and BOEM. She stated that the discussion included: what science is needed now; what might be the potential impacts be; what should the research priorities be. They noted in the meeting that it is unknown what the impacts from wind energy will be, particularly in comparison to impacts from the oil and gas industry. She stated that baseline data in the lease areas on factors such as EMF (electromagnetic field), substrate temperatures, noise and vibration are needed prior to installation, in order to assess any changes and impacts to benthic burrowing creatures, such as shrimp, will be after structure installation. She emphasized that ongoing sampling to continue to collect these data after installation of the wind energy infrastructure would be crucial to analyzing and understanding potential impacts.

SERO Protected Resources Update, Sea Turtle Take and TED Compliance

Ms. Lee (SERO) presented on a variety of requested topics, such as sea turtle takes in shrimp trawls in 2023 and TED compliance data. The Galveston Shrimp Observer Program observed 12 sea turtles captured in Gulf shrimp trawls in 2023. 54 trips (representing 1,050 sea days and 10,641 hours) were observed, and there was roughly 2% coverage by the Observer Program. 131 TED-related incidents occurred in 2023, with 83 closed with no violations documented. She stated there has been a notable increase in the adoption of an allowable TED modification (Chauvin shrimp deflector) within the northern Gulf shrimp fleet. She stated that, for 2023, there were no cold-stunned sea turtles in Texas and 160 in Florida. She then provided an update on reinitiation of the 2021 Shrimp BiOp and noted that, in June 2023, the Southeast Regional Office had requested the Protected Resources Division reinitiate Section 7 consultation to address giant manta ray mortalities in shrimp trawls and to consider new information on both giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish. SERO requested data and analyses from the SEFSC including updated bycatch estimates for giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish and a population viability analysis (PVA) for giant manta ray. While the initial target date for having all information needed to conduct the consultation was April 2024, effort data availability for analyses caused the target date to be pushed back. Ms. Lee noted an ongoing smalltooth sawfish mortality event in the Florida Keys since late January; as of March 14, 2024, NMFS is aware of 84 unique sawfish reports with 24 confirmed mortalities. The cause is currently unknown but being investigated.

Dr. Freeman noted that there were 43 sea turtle captures in 2021, 25 in 2022, and 12 in 2023 and inquired if that was likely due to the downward trend in shrimping effort. Ms. Lee responded that the 2% coverage by the Observer Program likely represented fewer trips in recent years; therefore, fewer sea turtle captures were noted. An AP member inquired as to the difference between PVA and jeopardy analysis in the BiOp. Ms. Lee responded that PVA is one piece of information considered for use in the jeopardy analysis. An AP member commented that he hoped NMFS would reach out to the shrimp industry during the Shrimp BiOp. Ms. Lee replied that NMFS had been working to engage with the Council on the Section 7 consultation, including providing

updates and sharing information. Another member inquired about the Bayesian modeling for sea turtle take estimates. Ms. Lee responded that it had been found to be the best way to produce statistically valid estimates that were reliable and sound.

Update on Smalltooth Sawfish Population Viability Analysis

Dr. Carlson (SEFSC) provided information on the historical contraction of the range of smalltooth sawfish in the Gulf and Atlantic that was attributed to overfishing and habitat loss. The smalltooth sawfish recovery plan utilizes population viability analysis to evaluate the effect of fishery takes on the species' viability. He noted that, the original recovery plan predicted recovery to take 100 years. He discussed ways to advance PVA, such as refining bycatch estimates and improving life history and virgin population size information. An AP member inquired if state trawl data had been examined for historical to current interactions with smalltooth sawfish and recommended looking at data from the Gulf of Mexico Estuarine Inventory. Another AP member noted that effort estimates derived from cELB devices for various statistical zones should assist with potential interactions between the Gulf shrimp industry and smalltooth sawfish. An AP member noted that a significant portion of the effort in the relevant statistical zone occurs outside of the area where smalltooth sawfish interactions seem to be observed and inquired if effort for the entire statistical zone had been extrapolated as occurring in the primary smalltooth sawfish habitat interaction area. Dr. Carlson answered in the affirmative and stated they did not have access to the effort data at that fine a resolution at present. An AP member commented that efforts to reduce uncertainty in the estimates of takes would be greatly appreciated.

Update on NOAA Fisheries' National Seafood Strategy

Dr. Rubino (NMFS) presented on NOAA's National Seafood Strategy and explained that one of the drivers for the concept was coronavirus and the corresponding restaurant closures and other impacts to the seafood industry. He then reviewed the objectives of the Seafood Strategy and the elements of the implementation plan. Actions in the implementation plan will be released in the next few months. The implementation plan is a living document, so continued feedback is encouraged.

An AP member inquired how the Shrimp Futures Project aligns with the National Seafood Strategy and how various agencies would be incorporated in the Seafood Strategy for a 'whole of government' approach. Dr. Rubino responded that advice is provided to other agencies in terms of tariffs and trade, similar to how NMFS advises the United States Department of Agriculture on buying programs. A regional approach with the Gulf Council, Sea Grant, SERO, the SEFSC, and other agencies working with industry and listening to stakeholders would help direct activities. The Shrimp Future Project would provide inputs for the Seafood Strategy. Another AP member commented that, related to the first of the four strategy objectives, there are some underutilized species, possibly due to lack of marketing or due to lack of the knowledge of chefs. Dr. Rubino recognized that, in recent years, the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Competition had begun including seafood marketing. Another member highlighted the potential for a long-term marketing effort with stable and consistent funding for domestic seafood.

Mr. Schieble stated that a pilot project for shrimp was presented to the Council at its January 2024 meeting and inquired why it was not included in this presentation. Dr. Rubino stated that he had anticipated it would be in the Shrimp Futures Project presentation and did not want to be repetitive. An AP member stated that the Shrimp Futures Project presentation was fairly conceptual and requested a description of the pilot project for shrimp¹.

An AP member recommended consumer education on seafood safety as it relates to imports and inspections; she anticipated that consumers, when educated on seafood safety, would choose domestic products over imports. The AP member also voiced reservations about continued research being a part of the strategy, but offered a research topic she felt could potentially aid the industry by analyzing the U.S. Customs inspection and rejection records for imported shrimp and comparing those rejections on a company level basis to the proportion of total imports each company represents on the U.S. market and then using this information to provide an extrapolated estimate of the percentage of imported shrimp which likely does not meet the food safety laws of the US. The AP member then asked if there was funding provided for the Seafood Strategy. Dr. Rubino responded that there was no new funding for the Seafood Strategy itself, but there was some funding from the Inflation Reduction Act for social and economic work related to climate change. He added that there would be some refocusing of existing efforts and programs. Another AP member stated that it was hard for the industry to plan when it is unclear if a federal program will be repeated in following years, such as USDA seafood purchases.

Dr. Freeman inquired as to the timeframe of the Seafood Strategy. Dr. Rubino responded that it is a 5-year strategy. Dr. Freeman then inquired if the actions in the implementation plan would be released in time for discussion by the Council at its June 2024 meeting. Dr. Rubino responded that he anticipated that would be the case.

Reducing Juvenile Sea Turtle Bycatch through Development of Reduced Bar Spacing TEDs

Mr. Gearhart (SEFSC) explained the reduced bar spacing turtle excluder device (TED) project was selected for funding in 2019, while noting that restoration is non-regulatory and relies on industry engagement on a voluntary basis. He reviewed the proof of concept testing results from three TED devices (top opening super shooter, bottom opening super shooter, and top opening straight bar rectangular) by comparing the shrimp loss, increase in bycatch, and increase in sea turtle exclusion with that of the industry standard. Ms. Hazelkorn (SERO) then discussed next steps for the project. Based on project results, NOAA has put forward the project idea for additional sea turtle restoration funding. If selected, the project would work with members of the shrimp fishing fleet to voluntarily outfit their vessels with TED designs from this project. Ms. Hazelkorn next outlined industry outreach meetings in 2024.

Public Comment

No public comment.

¹ <https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/A-7-Council-NSS-Implementation-Plan-briefing-1-18-24.pdf>

2022 Gulf Shrimp Fishery Landings

*This presentation was unavailable.

Biological Review of the 2023 Texas Closure

Dr. Lowther presented on landings and count distribution for offshore Texas brown shrimp in July and August from 2016-2023. Landings in 2023 showed an increase in July as well as in August, compared to those months in 2022. Landings of offshore Texas white shrimp in July and August declined in 2023, compared to those months in 2022. He then presented on the count distribution for offshore Texas brown shrimp. The count distribution was greatest in the 21-25 count for July 2023 and in the 26-30 count for August 2023. He then presented on the count distribution for offshore Texas white shrimp. The count distribution was greatest in the 0-15 count for both July and August 2023. Proportionally, the lower and upper Texas regions had a slight increase in landings in 2023, relative to 2022, whereas the middle Texas region had a decrease in landings in 2023.

An AP member commented that he had heard effort after the Texas closure was down compared to previous years. He then stated that he could not make a recommendation on the Texas closure for 2024 without catch per unit effort information. Another AP member stated that the Texas industry has been anticipating the 2024 Texas closure as a business strategy. Several AP members deferred to AP members shrimping in Texas to determine whether the Texas closure should occur in 2024. Dr. Lowther responded that he would explore including CPUE in future presentations. Dr. Freeman stated that he could work with Dr. Lowther regarding the types of information that had traditionally been provided to the AP each year, both in the presentation and the absent report, which were not prepared and presented at the annual March Shrimp AP meeting this year.

Motion: To request that NMFS continue with the Texas Federal Closure in the coming year in conjunction with the state of Texas closure in 2024.

Motion carried with one abstention.

Review of 2022 Royal Red Landings

*This presentation was unavailable.

2022 Gulf Shrimp Fishery Effort

Mr. Dettloff reminded the AP of the new effort algorithm that went into use in 2023 and is being used in the SEDAR 87 process to compute total effort. He reviewed the assumptions of the effort algorithm. Total offshore effort (brown, pink and white combined) has continued to decrease in 2022, with effort (as measured by 24-hour days) falling from 46,711 in 2021 to 35,870 in 2022. Several AP members discussed various economic conditions that were contributing to the decline in effort. Dr. Travis (SERO) commented that aggregate optimum yield is set at 85.76 million pounds, so optimum yield is not being achieved if the fishery is consistently below that level. Dr. Simmons inquired how landings were included in this presentation but could not be provided in

earlier presentation. Mr. Dettloff responded that these landings were pulled from trip tickets and were not species-specific. Another AP member inquired if these landings used the updated conversion ratios for converting from head-on weight to tail weight for brown, pink and white shrimp individually, to which Mr. Dettloff replied the new conversion ratios were utilized to compute the 2023 effort estimates.

Update on Early Adopter Program

Dr. Putman (LGL Ecological Associates) presented background information on the Early Adopter Program for a cellular vessel monitoring system (cVMS) with the Gulf federal shrimp fleet. Volunteer participants in the program receive free cVMS units, installation, two years of cellular service, and access to an online portal. Total costs associated with each unit installed were about \$2,488. Dr. Froeschke inquired if technical specifications were in place for the cVMS units approved for the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Putman responded that vendors who had reached out for inclusion in the program had been type-approved by NMFS but not for a specific fishery. He then reviewed outreach efforts through the Early Adopter Program. An AP member inquired where data are being transmitted to and housed at as they come in from the cVMS units. Dr. Putman responded that the data are transmitted directly to the SEFSC's application programming interface (API). Another AP member inquired as to the API's capacity and potential for expanding the current capacity to receive and house additional data as more devices become operational. Dr. Putman responded that he did not have that type of information. Dr. Lowther responded that the capacity could be expanded by purchasing additional cloud storage. He then noted the Early Adopter Program has 123 volunteers as of March 20, 2024. An AP member inquired if any major problems had been encountered with installed devices. Dr. Putman responded that no major problems had been encountered. He then discussed the breakdown of requested and installed cVMS units across the three options; he noted that no requests or installations of Nemo units had been made to-date. Responding to an AP member's question, Dr. Putman stated that 70% of the 87 requests listed in the presentation have cELB units. He stated that 75-100 units could be installed with available funding. Dr. Freeman inquired, given the interest from state permitted shrimp vessels, if or how LGL was ensuring that volunteers are federally permitted. Dr. Putman responded that permit numbers have to be provided. Another AP member reinforced the necessity for Mr. Dettloff to access the API cloud-based server to test the process of importing position data that has been transmitted directly to the SEFSC's API server from vessels operating offshore and into the Dettloff shrimp effort algorithm and then to run the algorithm utilizing the directly transmitted data and ensure the resulting effort estimates seem accurate and reliable as this is the ultimate goal of any new shrimp effort program. The AP member also requested that, for the vessels which have an operational cELB as well as one of the new Early Adopter devices onboard, that a side-by-side comparison of the data be evaluated to ensure the previously performed limited testing of these devices is representative of more wide-scale implementation by the commercial fleet to ensure there are no discrepancies in the data collected by the old and new devices nor any gaps in the data collection, from devices malfunctioning, for the Early Adopter devices.

Review of Draft Shrimp Framework Action

Dr. Freeman reviewed the draft shrimp framework action and noted the changes to Alternatives 2 and 3 made by the Council at its April 2023 meeting. An AP member stated that the Council may

select a preferred alternative before the AP is convened again and suggesting revising its position from the March 2023 Shrimp AP meeting. The AP member stated that the data collected from this program should not be weaponized, and the alternative needs to explicitly state that data will not go to the Office of Law Enforcement but to the SEFSC. The AP Chair recognized a member of the public (Daniel Smith, shrimper) who stated that shrimpers should be paid for the data provided. Dr. Lowther commented that taxpayer funds may not be used for duplicative systems and needs to be kept in mind with the existing system for receiving and storing vessel position location data. Dr. Travis stated that the necessary effort data cannot be derived from state trip ticket information. An AP member stated that from the fishermen's point of view, they are already under a duplicative system as they are required to submit landings and effort data on state trip tickets which are then forwarded to NMFS from the states, and that the fishermen must also report their landings a second time directly to NMFS in the form of an Annual Gulf Shrimp Landings Report and submit their effort data a second time via position recording devices aboard the vessel directly to NMFS.

MOTION: To request the Council to amend Action 1: Alternative 3 as follows and to select Alternative 3 as so amended as its preferred Alternative:

Alternative 3: Implement a cellular ELB (cELB) requirement for the Gulf shrimp fishery that provides archived position data compatible with the SEFSC's shrimp effort algorithm. If selected by the SRD, the owner or operator of a shrimp vessel with a valid or renewable SPGM would be required to install a NMFS-approved ELB that archives vessel position when on a shrimp fishing trip in the Gulf and automatically transmits those data via cellular service to a non-OLE NMFS server. Data shall not be transmitted directly to the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement but shall instead be transmitted automatically and directly via cellular service to the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center's server. NMFS-approved ELBs for the Gulf shrimp fishery would not be type-approved based on regulations at 50 CFR 600.1501.

Motion carried unanimously.

An AP member noted the Congressional FY24 ELB appropriations² and made the following motion:

MOTION: The Shrimp AP recommends that the Council requests NMFS adopt the following priorities for utilizing the FY24 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development and implementation:

- 1) Sufficient funding to ensure the SEFSC server has sufficient capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel position data.**
- 2) Develop a statistically robust design for distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that would be comparable to the last 10 years.**

² Page 41 of the FY 2024 Senate Appropriations Committee Report 118-62 details the provision referenced by the Shrimp AP's motion. <https://www.congress.gov/118/crpt/srpt62/CRPT-118srpt62.pdf>

3) Cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.

Motion carried unanimously.

Another AP member recommended that the IPT consider adding the word ‘annual’ in the Note to Action 1 (“Consistent with current annual requirements...”). The AP member also requested an update on side-by-side cELB and cVMS data from the Early Adopter Program volunteers and that data be run through the effort algorithm.

Update on Research Track (SEDAR 87)

Dr. Stevens (SEFSC) provided the timeline for the data workshops, including post-data workshops, and stated that the data workshop report will be finalized soon. She noted that seven assessment webinars would be held monthly from May to November 2024 and that the complete assessment report is expected at the end of May 2025. She stated that two assessment model platforms are being explored and explained that the empirical dynamic model approach could be used for brown and white shrimp, but likely not for pink shrimp as a long time period of data is needed. Dr. Simmons commented that it did not seem that several of the Terms of Reference (TORs) were going to be met for this assessment. Dr. Stevens responded that the first assessment webinar would go through the TORs. Dr. Siegfried added that the TORs will be met. Dr. Siegfried (SEFSC) noted that the assessment is intended to model the stock, not what is going on in the industry. An AP member agreed with this notion, but suggested that fishery dependent data, such as species-specific effort estimates, are vital to the success of accurately modeling the stock. She gave specific examples of how the CPUE from fishery independent SEAMAP data declines by over 30% from 2021 to 2022, whereas the CPUE trend in the commercial fleet for this same period is increasing significantly. She noted that in 2022 there was a change in captain aboard the SEAMAP vessel and that the previous long-term captain aboard the vessel came from a commercial shrimping background, whereas the new captain seemed to lack any shrimping experience. The member also noted that in 2022 the vessel sampled after the Texas closure had been lifted, which was a departure from the historical SEAMAP methodology of sampling occurring prior to the Texas shrimp season opening. Another AP member reiterated that the CPUE on the day of the Texas opening is significantly higher than the CPUE after the season has been open for weeks inferring that this late sampling by the SEAMAP vessel would produce significantly lower CPUE than would have occurred under the historical SEAMAP sampling timeframe. The AP member was concerned that, without fishery dependent species-specific effort data or commercial fleet CPUE, the model may not have the information necessary to accurately assess the state of the stock and that the model would therefore be forced to conclude that a decrease in commercial landings combined with a decrease in fishery independent SEAMAP CPUE was reflective of a downturn in the shrimp stock, since fishery dependent data showing a positive trend (decreasing effort and increasing CPUE) was being omitted from the model. Several AP members expressed questions over landings data, including for pink shrimp. Dr. Stevens responded that the errors have been brought to their attention and work is being done to ensure all shrimp caught in the Gulf is being included in the model, regardless of where it’s landed (Gulf or South Atlantic). Dr. Siegfried commented that this is not the proper venue to relitigate the SEDAR process because decisions have to be weighed in front of the group, and she added that, since the data workshop report is not complete, it means that decisions have not been finalized. She stated

that the AP's concerns have to be raised during the SEDAR process and noted that the data workshop report is not finalized as there are still questions about several data sources.

Public Comment

Mr. Daniel Smith (shrimper) stated that there had been misuse of economic data in that shrimping landings data for all of Florida, instead of just Monroe County, had been utilized by the Tourist Development Commission there, which could have identified earlier the economic collapse of the shrimp industry.

Other Business

Reminder of Shrimp AP Applications

Dr. Freeman reminded the AP that the deadline to apply or reapply to serve on the AP had been extended to noon EST on Friday, March 22, 2024, and that the Council would review applications at its April 2024 meeting.

LGL Summary of Shrimp Bycatch Study Workshop

Ms. Beyea (LGL Ecological Associates) stated that LGL hosted a bycatch hotspots initiative shrimp workshop March 4-5, 2024, in Baton Rouge. LGL is using funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to host these workshops, with the purpose of supporting fishers in establishing communication networks to improve catch and reduce unwanted catch. The discussion at the Baton Rouge workshop focused primarily on smalltooth sawfish and giant manta rays, and the shrimp industry participants were interested in better understanding interactions with the two species and how to avoid interactions. Two separate plans were established during the workshop, one for each species. For smalltooth sawfish, captains will be provided a short paper form to complete at the end of each trip that describe any smalltooth sawfish interaction, and those forms will be emailed or texted to LGL. For giant manta rays, a group texting system will be established to allow captains to text when and where a giant manta ray or school is seen or caught, with the goal of allowing captains to avoid those areas. Data from the group texting system will be maintained by LGL. Data from both plans will be presented regularly to an industry advisory panel to determine when and how the data should be shared with other stakeholders and NOAA. LGL is seeking funding through NOAA's Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program to fund further outreach to get volunteers for the two aforementioned plans and to improve spatial modeling of interactions and smalltooth sawfish and giant manta ray habitat.

General Discussion of Shrimp Industry

An AP member commented that the process of inspecting seafood imports is currently very lackadaisical. He also stated that low shrimp prices are being faced by the U.S. shrimp industry. Another AP member stated that India is one of the biggest shrimp exporters to the U.S. and that forced labor and child labor is an issue with the shrimp industry in India. An AP member inquired if the Council's Outreach and Education Technical Committee could be presented some of the investigative reports being produced which have revealed the human and safety abuses in overseas

shrimp production and the group then provide suggestions on how to educate consumers on issues like child labor with seafood imports. The AP member then requested a presentation from the Corporate Accountability Lab to the Council to elevate and highlight the overseas abuses that are affecting the domestic shrimp fishery. Dr. Simmons stated the Council would need to engage with NMFS' National Seafood Strategy. She stated that accurate labeling by restaurants is needed for consumers.

An AP member requested information on permits at a future AP meeting. Dr. Travis stated that he would giving a presentation on valid and renewable permits to the Council at its April 2024 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:27 pm eastern time on March 20, 2024.

Meeting Participants

Members Present:

Leann Bosarge, Chair
Corky Perret, Vice-Chair
Steve Bosarge
Thu Bui
Glenn Delaney
Gary Graham
Harris Lasseigne, Jr.
Laura Picariello
John Williams

Council Staff:

Max Birdsong
Matt Freeman
John Froeschke
Lisa Hollensead
Jessica Matos
Ryan Rindone
Bernadine Roy
Charlotte Schiaffo
Camilla Shireman
Carrie Simmons

NMFS Staff:

Lisa Ailloud
Adam Brame
John Carlson
Jade Chau
Kyle Dettloff
Christy Fellas
Jeff Gearhart

David Gloeckner
David Hanisko
Rebeccah Hazelkorn
Frank Helies
Kimberly Johnson
Jennifer Lee
Jennifer Leo
Mara Levy
Alan Lowther
Rich Malinowski
Michelle Masi
Cassidy Peterson
Michael Rubino
Sarah Shoffler
Katie Siegfried
Rebecca Smith
Molly Stevens
Michael Travis
Brendan Turley
John Walter
Jo Williams

Council Members:

Chris Schieble (representative)

Other Attendees:

Jason Adriance
Ricky Alexander
Maria Barrera-Jaross
Taylor Beyea
Robert Brooks

Peyton Cagle
Michael Celata
Dennis Crosby
Tre Glenn
Matthew Hellerman
Will Heyman
Joseph Hudson
Allie Iberle
Max Lee
Katherine Segarra
Todd Kennedy
Greg Lovingfoss

Lewis Naisbett-Jones
Jenny Netherton
Cam Poole
Nathan Putman
Bill Rosenzweig
Jason Saucier
Mary Schuiteboer
Katherine Segarra
Daniel Smith
Cheryl Stahl
Mariana Steen