

**Shrimp Committee Report
April 8, 2024
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with the movement of Agenda Item VII before Agenda Item VI and the addition of a discussion regarding certification non-compliance under Other Business. The Committee then approved the minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) of the October 2023 meeting as written.

Biological Review of the Texas Closure (Tab D, No. 4a)

Ms. Bosarge (AP Chair) reviewed the Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) summary as it relates to the biological review of the Texas closure. She noted that much of the AP’s discussion revolved around the economic benefits to the industry from the Texas closure, concluding with a motion requesting the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implement the Texas closure in 2024.

A Committee member stated that the process of approving the Texas closure is mostly rubber-stamping based on inadequate information instead of good economic information. He emphasized the inclusion of economic data in future presentations. Another Committee member acknowledged that the AP members and NMFS staff discussed including catch-per-unit-effort data in future presentations; he added that it was stated during the Shrimp AP meeting that shrimpers in Texas were making business decisions with an expectation of the Texas closure in 2024. A Committee member commented that the biological data is in conjunction with the economic data, such as larger size bins being landed, which in turn command higher prices. A Committee member questioned the effectiveness of the Texas closure in the future if landings continue to decrease. A Council member inquired if there was information on the typical size bins with which shrimp imports are associated. Ms. Bosarge responded that she was not familiar with that data, but that NMFS may have such information. A Committee member added that a meeting in Baton Rouge will be hosted by Sea Grant and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission at the end of April 2024 on the future of the Gulf shrimp industry and will address many of the issues faced.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, 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 unanimously.

Draft Shrimp Framework Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery (Tab D, No. 5a)

Dr. Freeman presented the draft shrimp framework action. A Committee member recommended modifying the Purpose Statement to account for minimizing the economic burden on NMFS, not just on the industry. Dr. Walter (SEFSC) stated that setting up a duplicative process under

Alternative 3 would add costs to the agency and not achieve the purpose of minimizing costs; he added that, in terms of hardware/software, the units installed with the Early Adopter Program had been type-approved for other fisheries and could be programmed for the purposes of data collection in the shrimp industry. Dr. Freeman requested a committee response to the IPT's feedback to reference only 'a trip' in **Alternatives 2 and 3**, rather than 'a shrimp fishing trip'. A Committee member responded that, when shrimp vessels are rigged for shrimping, the expense of switching gear would prohibit the majority of shrimp vessels from going on other types of trips; however, he would leave it to the IPT's discretion on that wording of the alternatives. He added that he was opposed to a declaration requirement for the shrimp industry.

Dr. Freeman then requested a committee response to the Shrimp AP's motion for rewording Alternative 3. A Committee member commented that the intent of the Shrimp AP's motion is primarily on the data transmission side. Another Committee member noted that the language referencing a 'non-OLE NMFS server' offers NMFS maximum flexibility, such that transmitted data could go to the SEFSC or to the Office of Science and Technology (S&T). A Committee member responded that the collected data is not for enforcement purposes and should not be transmitted to the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). A Committee member commented that the Shrimp AP had discussed that OLE could still access data from the SEFSC. Another Council member stated that comparative costs to NMFS from the approaches in **Alternatives 2 and 3** would come later and the wording is focused on the flexibility of which non-OLE server receives transmitted data. Dr. Walter stated that there are ongoing discussions about transferring VMS data collection and administration to S&T, but that a potential transitional situation could have SEFSC receive the data for a few years until such time as the handoff of VMS from OLE to S&T occurs. Then S&T could become the recipient and warehouse for this data, as well as VMS data, from other fisheries removing the long-term burden on data curation from SEFSC and potentially providing future cost-savings. Ms. Bosarge stated that the AP thinks that the data are being weaponized when it is transmitted to OLE, so data should only be transmitted to the SEFSC as scientific data, which is being done with the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Walter stated that there would be cost implications noted in the analyses if data transmission and storage is restricted only to the SEFSC. A Committee member stated that the Council could consider S&T as an option if that becomes viable in the future.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in **Alternative 3**, to replace “a non-OLE” with “the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC)”.

Motion carried with one opposed.

Dr. Walter stated that the addition of “for the Gulf shrimp fishery” from the Shrimp AP's motion on **Alternative 3** could potentially preclude the units in the Early Adopter Program from being used, as the units are type-approved for use in other fisheries. A Committee member stated that there is no real difference between the cellular VMS in **Alternative 2** and the cellular ELB in **Alternative 3**, other than where the data goes and how the units are type-approved. Ms. Bosarge stated that type-approval for the shrimp industry does not currently exist, which is why the Shrimp AP agrees with the language in **Alternative 3** that “NMFS-approved ELBs would not be type-approved based on regulations at 50 CFR 600.1501”. Dr. Walter added that type-approval under the existing VMS program allows for reimbursement, and reimbursement would not exist

for units under **Alternative 3**. He added that units type-approved for use in the Early Adopter Program meet type-approval in other fisheries and stated that costs based on devices in the Early Adopter Program would be used for analyses in the draft framework action.

Dr. Walter commented that one area for future discussion should focus on how a representative data collection process, which could include a random sample, will happen. He added that the discussion should consider what the data needs will be in the future, such as spatially explicit, fine-scale data particularly for interactions with species covered by the Endangered Species Act. A Committee member commented that the language “if selected by the SRD” could mean that vessels may be selected and de-selected if a randomized sample was drawn repeatedly over time. Another Committee member stated that the old cellular ELB system used the same language “if selected by the SRD” and had been successful, so no changes to the language are needed.

Dr. Freeman requested a committee response to the Shrimp AP’s motion on how to prioritize spending of the FY24 \$850,000 Congressional appropriation. Dr. Walter responded that these funds could further prop up the Early Adopter Program and could likely double the coverage of units on shrimp vessels. A Committee member inquired if NMFS administrative funds would need to be drawn out from the funding. Dr. Walter replied that a standard rate to administer the funds would be deducted from the appropriation, but less funding would be needed for programming support than was needed from the previous \$850,000. He added that the prioritization in the Shrimp AP’s motion appears to meet the intent of the Congressional language.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, 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 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.**
- 3) **Cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.**

Motion carried without one abstention.

A Council member stated this motion relates to Congressional funding and noted that the third bullet point in the motion assumes the data is going to the SEFSC. Dr. Freeman responded that the Congressional funding language refers to “NMFS” and not a specific subset of the agency. Dr. Walter added that it would not be timely to bring a proposed budget for the FY24 \$850,000 to the Shrimp AP.

Dr. Freeman inquired if the Committee would like an update from NMFS on how the \$850,000 in Congressional funding for updating the shrimp data collection program was spent. The Committee expressed interest in receiving that update at its August 2024 meeting, when the draft framework action is brought back to the Committee.

Update on the Number of Valid and Renewable Gulf Shrimp Permits and Discussion of Management Implications (Tab D, No. 7a)

Dr. Travis (SERO) presented on the number of valid and renewable Gulf shrimp permits and management implications as it relates to Shrimp Amendment 17B, as seen in Tab D, No. 7a.

A Committee member inquired if there is an expected target date when the minimum threshold might be met. Dr. Travis responded that it would be best for the Council to receive an update at its November 2024 meeting as it would be difficult to provide an expected target date at this time. Another Committee member inquired if the process in determining the minimum threshold of permits in Shrimp Amendment 17B was similar to that used in determining overcapitalization in the IFQ system. Dr. Freeman responded that he would work with the Committee member to relay that question to Dr. Travis and potentially have an answer during Full Council.

2022 Gulf Shrimp Effort (Tab D, No. 4a)

Ms. Bosarge referenced the 2022 Gulf Shrimp Effort presentation from NMFS, as seen in Tab D, No. 6. She noted that the Gulf shrimp industry is still in compliance, for 2022, with its effort monitored in statistical zones 10-21, as it relates to red snapper bycatch. The Council may consider further discussion in Full Council.

Remaining Items from Summary of the March 19-20, 2024, Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting (Tab D, No. 4a)

Ms. Bosarge reviewed remaining items from the March 2024 Shrimp AP meeting, as seen in Tab D, No. 4a. A Committee member concurred with the need for additional educational and marketing efforts towards seafood consumers that would further distinguish differences between Gulf shrimp and imported shrimp.

Other Business

Discussion of Certification Non-compliance

This discussion may be considered in Full Council.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.