

**Shrimp Committee Report
August 15, 2023
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with the additions of a discussion of the potential use of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to reimburse the Gulf shrimp fleet for type-approved National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) hardware/software equipment under Other Business and an announcement of a forthcoming NMFS listening session with Gulf shrimpers. The Committee then approved the minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) of the June 2023 meeting as written.

Re-initiation of Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation on the Authorization of the Southeast U.S. Shrimp Fisheries in Federal Waters, Giant Manta Ray and Shrimp Trawl Interactions, and Next Steps (Tab D, No. 4a)

Ms. Lee (SERO) presented an update on the re-initiation of the Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation (Tab D, No. 4a). She reviewed the 2021 Shrimp Biological Opinion and the rationale for the re-initiation. Ms. Lee then provided information on giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish relevant to the re-initiation, before reviewing next steps in the process.

A Committee member asked if ceasing all shrimping off southwest Florida is being considered by NMFS. Ms. Lee responded that a study referenced in the presentation had that as a recommendation but that the agency is currently focused on the re-initiation itself. Another Committee member inquired, within the bycatch data, if an observed take had included a carcass, rather than the trawl being the cause of the mortality. Ms. Lee responded that it was not attributed as a trawl mortality. A Committee member then inquired how giant manta rays were being listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act when the population size in the Gulf is unknown. Ms. Lee commented that there is a preliminary estimate for the northwest Atlantic population that has not yet been published, and that the determination to list the species as threatened was supported by the information in the listing rule.

Status Update of Side-by-Side Testing of Cellular Vessel Monitoring Systems (cVMS) and Cellular Electronic Logbooks (cELBs) on Gulf Shrimp Vessels (Tab D, No. 5)

Dr. Walter (SEFSC) presented an update on NMFS' side-by-side testing of cVMS and cELBs on shrimp vessels in the Gulf (Tab D, No. 5). He reviewed the objectives of the testing, which devices are being tested, and deployment issues. He noted that NOAA had constructed a new prototype application programming interface (API), which would enable vendors to push data to a SEFSC database. Lastly, Dr. Walter reviewed the next steps for testing, which includes the data analysis phase.

A Committee member inquired if the API would assist in data being routed to the SEFSC rather than the Office of Law Enforcement. Dr. Walter responded that this would allow the SEFSC to

evaluate the feasibility of this alternative routing of the data. Mr. Donaldson inquired as to a general timeline of the next steps. Dr. Walter responded that data analysis may potentially be completed in early October 2023, which would allow for a presentation to the Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) in mid-October and to the Council at its October meeting.

Another Committee member inquired how the \$850,000 Congressional funding was ultimately used by the SEFSC and if any of those funds were being used to explore the API. Dr. Walter responded that the agency was unable to incorporate the Shrimp AP's requests for redistribution of funds. The Committee member then asked how the timeline for the expenditure of funds was proceeding. Dr. Walter explained that the early adopter funds had been sent to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and that internal funds for NMFS staff time were currently being utilized.

Other Business

Potential Use of IRA Funding to Reimburse Gulf Shrimp Fleet for Type-Approved NMFS Hardware/Software Equipment

Dr. Simmons inquired of NMFS as to the potential use of IRA funding to reimburse the Gulf shrimp fleet for type-approved NMFS hardware/software equipment. She noted the importance of the data in stock assessments and for shrimp biological opinions. Mr. Strelcheck responded that he could not respond to whether or not those funds could be utilized for the described purpose. However, an additional \$850,000 is in the current Senate appropriations bill, which could be utilized in the shrimp data collection process, but the bill has not been passed at this time. Dr. Frazer posed a follow-up to Dr. Simmons' question and inquired who needed to follow-up on the subject of IRA funding use. Dr. Walter responded that it appears the referenced IRA funds are for transformative purposes, which the shrimp data collection process might not meet. Mr. Strelcheck recommended speaking with Dr. Howell (NOAA Office of Science and Technology).

Announcement: Shrimp Listening Sessions

Dr. Walter informed the Shrimp Committee of an upcoming listening session with Gulf shrimpers to be held on September 20, 2023, in Tampa, Florida, for participatory modeling, which has been used for other purposes including red tide. Additional listening sessions will be scheduled later in the year around the Gulf. This process identifies main pressures and drivers for a conceptual model, which may identify regional differences as well. This information could then be used for a management strategy evaluation for Gulf shrimp. Dr. Simmons stated that participants needed to be informed that the Center's desire to complete a management strategy evaluation for the shrimp fishery was separate from the SEDAR 87 stock assessment for shrimp and the September listening session.

A Committee member inquired how the listening session would be advertised, beyond the Federal Registry Notice (FRN). Dr. Walter explained that Council staff would assist in distribution of the listening session announcement to stakeholders and forward the press release after the FRN publishes. Another Committee member inquired about using the Council meeting

venue in New Orleans in January 2024 for a listening session. Dr. Simmons responded that the listening sessions are run by NMFS, so she would defer to NMFS to consider that. Dr. Walter stated that January 2024 in New Orleans would be a possibility for targeting individuals from the Louisiana fleet.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.