Tab D

Shrimp Committee Report
April 12, 2021
Leann Bosarge, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda **(Tab D, No. 1)** as re-organized, with the Update on Effort Data Collection **(Tab D, No. 7a-c)** moved after the Action Guide and Next Steps **(Tab D, No. 3).** The Committee approved the minutes **(Tab D, No. 2)** of the November 2020 meeting as written.

Update on Effort Data Collection (Tab D, No. 7a-c)

Status of 3G cELBs

Dr. Gloeckner presented on the shrimp cellular electronic logbook (cELB) interim data collection process. The cELB units ceased transmitting on December 31, 2020; however, the Stennis unit shut down the machine receiving the data on December 7, 2020. The units are still collecting data, just not cellularly transmitting the data to NFMS. The data will be manually retrieved from the units in 2021. Dr. Gloeckner reviewed the timeline and steps for manual collection of the data. This entails the Science Center sending new SanDisk cards in self-addressed envelopes to shrimp permit holders with instructions for changing out the old SanDisk card with the new one and sending the old SanDisk to Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) for downloading and transfer of the data to the Science Center.

Ms. Bosarge inquired if the reason that the data from the SanDisk cards has to go to the GSMFC first is to avoid a computer virus. Dr. Gloeckner confirmed that there are some federal security guidelines, so it is easier for the Science Center to access the data from the GSMFC. Ms. Bosarge inquired about the computer servers from Stennis that had been used to collect data from the 3G cELBs, which have been relocated to facilities in Ashville, North Carolina and Pascagoula, Mississippi, and if those could be used to collect the data from the SanDisk cards. Dr. Gloeckner replied that the servers were old, and he was unsure as to their status.

Mr. Anson inquired how shrimpers know that the data is actively being collected. Dr. Gloeckner replied that, only after the first round of SanDisk cards are returned by shrimpers, will the Science Center know which devices are not working and will need to be replaced. Dr. Gloeckner confirmed that the Science Center does have replacement units available if needed.

Ms. Bosarge asked Dr. Gloeckner to speak broadly to the permit renewal process, in light of the SanDisk cards needing to be returned with effort data. Dr. Gloeckner replied that it still needs to be determined how quickly shrimpers need to return the cards once letters have been sent, for purposes of compliance and permit renewal. Ms. Bosarge responded that, at a minimum, a 3 to 6-month period for cards to be returned should be considered. Mr. Swindell asked how many vessels are involved in the process. Dr. Gloeckner responded that it is around 600 vessels.

Pilot Program Using P-Sea WindPlot

Dr. Gallaway provided an overview of the transmittal issue with the current 3G cELBs and the industry-led solution for monitoring shrimping effort through use of the P-Sea WindPlot platform as a replacement, which would record the same information as the existing 3G cELB device (location data at 10-minute intervals). Collected location data could be run through the effort calculation programs with catch data simultaneously paired. The efficacy of the utilization of the P-Sea WindPlot program was proven during Phase I of Dr. Galloway's project, which was funded by the shrimp industry. Two proposal alternatives were discussed as potential next steps for the project. One would expand the number of shrimp boats running P-Sea WindPlot with the ELB update; the other would develop a method to automatically transmit ELB data from P-Sea WindPlot to a designated server.

Dr. Frazer inquired where the data would be transmitted to, if the Stennis servers are no longer available through the Science Center. Dr. Gallaway replied that they would transmit the data to LGL to test the process, until the Science Center servers are prepared. Mr. Strelcheck commented that 2-way transmission was discussed during the Shrimp Advisory Panel and that they would be prepared to assist Dr. Gallaway and other vendors with the process of meeting type approval of a VMS unit. Mr. Swindell commented that another roughly $700,000 was needed to carry out both of the proposed alternatives and asked if LGL had received those funds yet. Dr. Gallaway replied that those funds are needed to proceed with the pilot program. Ms. Bosarge commented that there had been a previous Council discussion of assisting with the first of the two proposal alternatives, which would expand the number of shrimp boats in the pilot program, but due to the requirement of automatic transmission, Dr. Gallaway had since developed an additional proposal alternative to meet that requirement. Mr. Anson commented that the Council needed to ensure that other vendors would be included in potential use for effort data collection.

Alternative Options for Consideration

Dr. Gloeckner discussed the key characteristics of the cELB system that need to be carried over to a new effort data collection program. He then noted regulations that must be considered, including the definitions of a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Enhanced Mobile Transceiver Unit, Cellular Based (EMTU-C). He also reviewed the list for type approval and then covered the reimbursement process for a NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) Type-Approval VMS unit. Dr. Gloeckner's presentation provided some important definitions and national regulations from 50 CFR part 600 subpart Q that were published on August 7, 2020, regarding Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and cellular based transmission requirements. Specifically, an EMTU-C only needs to be capable of transmission two-ways when in the range of a cellular network (MTUs (one-way transmission) are no longer approved for new installations on VMS vessels) (§600.1502(a)(6)).[1] Dr. Gloeckner noted that there should be funds available to accommodate a reimbursement of hardware for permit holders that install a

[1] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/07/08/2020-14600/vessel-monitoring-systems-requirements-for-type-approval-of-cellular-transceiver-units

type approved VMS unit. He also commented that NOAA prefers to write specifications for type approval rather than require specific vendors.

Ms. Bosarge noted that previously only a $17-19/month fee for service was required with 3G cELBs and that the transmission costs associated with satellite units for "quick" type approval had a substantially greater monthly cost. She then noted that the cellular units would need to be in range to transmit data, so while they would not be true real-time data, the transmission costs were much lower.

Mr. Strelcheck stated that the Council might need to consider a few decision points, such as the number of vessels that would be required to have an effort data collection device. Mr. Diaz stated that a framework action could take through spring of next year for development and approval by the Council and asked if the current process of collecting effort data could be extended through next year. Dr. Gloeckner responded that the current process likely could be extended until the new system is put in place.

Ms. Bosarge commented that cost-sharing would need to be addressed in a framework amendment, since platforms are changing, but stated that the current regulation does not specify cellular or satellite. Mr. Strelcheck commented that the Council could decide to change the current selection process of who is selected to participate in the reporting program. Ms. Bosarge stated that, if the type of tool for collecting effort data is a decision point, both cELBs and trip tickets should be considered in the reasonable range of alternatives. She also stated that where and whom the effort data is transmitted to, as well as how it is intended to be used should be included in an amendment, since it has always been used for scientific data whereas VMS data in other fisheries is typically transferred to the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). Ms. Levy stated that a motion is needed for Council staff to begin a document to address effort data collection and that an IPT could then determine decision points for the Council to consider.

With no opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move:

To direct staff to begin a Framework Action to set up reporting requirements for the expiring 3G cELB program to transition it to a new platform for effort reporting of the Gulf of Mexico federal shrimp fishery.

Dr. Freeman discussed motions from the March 2021 Shrimp AP meeting's summary report relevant to this agenda item. The first Shrimp AP motion requested that the Council contribute funds to the LGL proposed project to develop a method for automatic transmission of ELB effort data from P-Sea WindPlot to a designated server. The second motion requested that the Council write a letter to NOAA OLE requesting exemption of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp industry from the recently published VMS requirements including that of 2-way transmission and reception and only be required to have 1-way transmission of effort data. The third motion requested that the Council and NMFS work with LGL on type approval for its P-Sea WindPlot pilot program.

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

Dr. Masi presented a biological review of the Texas Closure. She noted that the Original Shrimp Fishery Management Plan was implemented in 1981 with one of the goals being to increase the yield of brown shrimp harvested from offshore Texas waters. She also noted that, historically, the closure has been from mid-May to mid-July; since 1990, the near-shore (less than 4 fathoms) area has also been closed in conjunction with the Texas closure.

Since the 1980s, there has been an overall decline in July for offshore Texas brown shrimp landings, which corresponds to the Texas Closure. Since the mid-1990s, there has been an increase in August landings overall, which corresponds with the initiation of the near-shore closure. For May-August 2020, catches are lowest in May and June, with the highest catches in August. The lowest amount of August catch is found in the smallest market size category (>67 count), suggesting that the Texas Closure is successful in allowing shrimp to grow to larger sizes before harvest.

Dr. Masi next reviewed the annual percentage of Texas total shrimp landings from 1981-2020 by region (upper, middle, and lower). Proportional to 2019, the upper and lower regions had a decrease in the percentage of total shrimp landings, while the middle region had an increase.

Offshore Texas white shrimp catch for both July and August 2020 was highest in the 15-20 count. The distribution shifts to the larger size count categories in August, compared to July, showing the impacts of the Texas closure allowing the shrimp to reach larger sizes.

With no opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move:

To recommend to NMFS that federal waters be closed out to 200 miles to run concurrent with the date that the State of Texas recommends for the 2021 Texas shrimp closure in the Texas Territorial Sea.

Gulf Shrimp Fishery Effort and Landings (Tab D, No. 5)

Dr. Masi reviewed the Gulf shrimp fishery effort and landings from 2019. She noted that the 2019 information is based on 3G cELB data that was transmitted to NOAA. While Louisiana, Texas, and an area around the Dry Tortugas showed high levels of fishing effort in 2019, total offshore shrimp landings decreased in 2019 from the previous year and were at the lowest level in the 1981-2019 time series. All managed shrimp species are included within the total offshore shrimp landings and effort in the figures shown to the Shrimp Committee. While a slight decline was shown in the 2019 CPUE, it is consistent with inter-annual fluctuations observed over the past 15 years. The target reduction goal for the shrimp effort threshold is 60% below the baseline effort in the years 2001-2003; 2019 had a 76.09% reduction, which not only meets but exceeds the 60% required reduction threshold.

2019 Royal Red Shrimp Index (Tab D, No. 6)

Dr. Masi presented the 2019 Royal red shrimp index, with landings from 1994-2019. The Annual Catch Limit (ACL) was established in 2011 at 337,000 lbs of tails and is based on 1994 landings. 2019 landings showed a slight increase over 2018, by roughly 17,000 lbs of tails.

Remaining Items from Summary of the Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting (Tab D, No. 8)

Dr. Freeman discussed remaining items from the summary report and motions from the March 2021 Shrimp AP meeting. The AP requested that NMFS continue with the Texas Federal Closure in the coming year in conjunction with the State of Texas Closure in 2021. The AP made a motion for Dr. Masi to begin including information in her future AP presentations on the number of active as well as valid and renewable permits in the Gulf of Mexico from years 2000-current for white/brown/pink/royal red species. The AP also requested that the Council consider comments from the Southern Shrimp Alliance to the NOAA Office of Aquaculture on identifying Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in the Gulf of Mexico. Lastly, the AP also requested the Council communicate support to NOAA for a new stock assessment of the Kemp's ridley sea turtle population according to the modelling approach presented by LGL Ecological Research Associates.

Other Business

No other business was brought up by the Committee.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.