

**Shrimp Committee Report  
April 3, 2023  
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**). The Committee then approved the minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) of the October 2022 meeting as written.

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

Dr. Freeman presented information on the biological review of the Texas closure and conveyed the Shrimp Advisory Panel's (AP) motion in support of continuing the Texas Federal Closure in 2023, as seen in Tab D, No. 4a.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **to request that NMFS to continue with the Texas Federal Closure in the coming year in conjunction with the state of Texas Closure in 2023.**

*Motion carried unanimously.*

***Report on Expanded Sampling of the Fleet for Effort Monitoring in the Gulf Shrimp Fishery (Tab D, No. 5)***

Dr. Putman (LGL Ecological Research Associates) presented the final results of the Council funded project 'Expanded Sampling of the Fleet for Effort Monitoring in the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Industry' as seen in Tab D, No. 5a. The project concluded that P-Sea WindPlot cannot perform according to requirements of the shrimp industry, Council, or NOAA Fisheries. LGL Ecological Research Associates do not recommend further investment in P-Sea WindPlot as a method to record and transmit shrimp vessel positions for calculating effort, while adding that it remains a useful piece of software for navigational purposes. A Committee member inquired if a cellular electronic logbook (cELB) unit was not present with Tests #8-10; Dr. Putman verified that a cELB unit was not on those vessels.

***Update on NMFS VMS Project (Tab D, No. 6)***

Mr. Wallace (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]) presented on the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) side-by-side pilot testing of cellular vessel monitoring system (cVMS) units and historical cELB units for Gulf shrimp vessels, as seen in Tab D, No. 6. The two brands of cVMS units that were tested were ZEN and NEMO, with the NEMO unit being the solar-powered version placed on five shrimp vessels in the second deployment and one unit that was hardwired on a research vessel in the first deployment.

A Committee member commented that the NEMO cVMS units failed multiple times and that the ZEN cVMS units did not receive adequate testing, so the list of pros on Slide 17 does not fully reflect the reality of the NMFS testing. Mr. Wallace responded that the pros for the NEMO cVMS units were specific to testing of a unit that was plugged into the ship's power, rather than using solar power. The Committee member then inquired if a version of the NEMO cVMS units which can be hardwired to the vessel is on the market. Mr. Wallace responded that there is a version available on the market that has an USB port for power. Another Committee member inquired what the advantage would be of moving VMS program administration from the Office of Law Enforcement to NMFS Office of Science and Technology (S&T). Dr. Walter (SEFSC) responded that NMFS S&T might be better equipped to handle large data transfer and administration, as would be needed for VMS application in the Gulf shrimp industry. The Committee member then asked if there was a way to upgrade the current cELB units to be compatible with current cellular transmission avenues. Mr. Wallace responded that it was uncertain but that NMFS was exploring that feasibility with the company that developed them. Dr. Walter noted that there is likely no manufacturer support if the cELB units are upgraded in order to transmit data. The Committee then stated that additional information on side-by-side unit testing would be helpful for Committee members for comparison purposes. Dr. Walter noted that if the cELB units malfunction now, then there is no way to know that until the Secure Digital (SD) cards are returned to NMFS, which would occur roughly six months after the return of SD cards.

A Committee member stated that he understands the need for additional testing but has concerns over the range of devices to be tested. He added that development of the draft framework action should continue, with results of further testing informing Council decisions. He noted that the results of the P-Sea WindPlot pilot study might necessitate removal of Alternative 3. Another Committee member inquired how many replacement cELB units are available for replacement of any units that may have malfunctioned onboard vessels, in order to ensure that returned SD cards have usable data. Dr. Walter responded that 899 cELB units are available in storage; however, most of the units would need to be programmed in order to function. The Committee member then stated that NMFS needs to inform the Council of the minimum number of units to be placed on the fleet for effort monitoring as well as for bycatch monitoring. Dr. Walter added that the random sample of vessels carrying a cELB unit was always intended to be redrawn, which has not occurred. He stated that 60% of landings used to be captured by cELB coverage and now roughly 40% of landings are captured. A Committee member commented that the process of having SD cards sent to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission for data processing was intended to be an interim plan lasting only one to two years; however, this endeavor is now over two years, with it seeming likely that another two years may be needed. The Committee member stated that he could not guarantee that the Commission could continue this endeavor for that length of time.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move, to suspend action on the draft Shrimp Framework Action until NMFS conducts side-by-side testing of cELB units with the following cellular units and other cellular units on a minimum of five shrimp vessels for the full length of an average offshore trip and presents the results after the raw data is run through the new NMFS shrimp effort algorithm:**

- 1) The Woods Hole NEMO unit that is hard-wired to the vessel
- 2) The Atlantic Radio Telephone ZEN VMS LTE
- 3) Nautic Alert Insight X3

*Motion carried with 2 in opposition.*

***Draft Shrimp Framework Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery (Tab D, No. 7)***

Dr. Walter (SEFSC) presented a brief verbal update on Congressional funding for shrimp vessel position data reporting. NMFS was provided \$850,000 that, in consultation with the Council and shrimp industry stakeholders, is to be used to continue the development and implementation of the newly approved ELB program that archives vessel position and automatically transmits scientific shrimp fishing effort data via cellular service to NMFS. He noted that 20% of those funds are directed to overhead costs, leaving a remaining \$663,000. He stated that funds could be used for early adoption of cVMS for roughly 200 Gulf shrimp vessels.

Dr. Simmons inquired if additional information for a proposed spending plan would be prepared for a forthcoming Shrimp AP meeting in mid-May 2023. Dr. Walter replied that NMFS was looking for feedback from the Council during this meeting on whether an early adoption of cVMS was a reasonable path forward with those funds. A Committee member asked for more information on the timeline for spending of these funds and about the source of funding for additional testing of cVMS units on Gulf shrimp vessels. Dr. Walter responded that the funds are allocated for use in fiscal year 2023; he added that a component of cVMS testing could potentially be folded into an early adoption program. Another Committee member inquired if NMFS could use funds to hire personnel to fill the role of the Commission in data processing of SD cards. Dr. Walter responded that the main issue is having a server to store the data and that those funds possibly could be used for that purpose; however, NMFS would need to consider if that would constitute a duplicative use of funds.

Dr. Freeman then reviewed the purpose and need statements and the alternatives in the draft shrimp framework action, as seen in Tab D, No. 7aii, along with related motions from the AP. A Committee member inquired what types of devices would fall under Alternative 3. Mr. Strelcheck responded that the devices could be considered a cVMS, but not type-approved as would be the case under Alternative 2. Another Committee member inquired why a minimum number of position fixes of 14,400 was set under Alternatives 2 and 3, as that would represent 100 days of 10-minute pings. Dr. Freeman responded that minimum storage of 100 days of 10-minute pings would ensure that there was more than adequate memory to store data for long trips prior to data transmission.

***Update on Shrimp Effort Estimation Model and 2021 Gulf Shrimp Fishery Effort (Tab D, No. 8)***

Mr. Dettloff (SEFSC) provided an update on the shrimp effort estimation model, as seen in Tab D, No. 8a, and noted that his presentation incorporates feedback from a workshop held in February 2023 and from both the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) meeting and Shrimp AP's meeting in March 2023. A Committee member asked for more information on the effort scaling. Mr. Dettloff referred to Appendix 2 in his presentation, where effort is grouped by zones.

Dr. Nance (SSC Chair) reviewed the SSC's feedback on the shrimp effort estimation model, as seen in Tab B, No. 8a. Ms. Bosarge (Shrimp AP Chair) reviewed the AP's feedback on the shrimp effort estimation model, as seen in Tab D, Nos. 4a and 8b. She noted that the AP expressed concerns over the types of models which could be explored in Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) 87 if total effort is generated as a combined function of brown, white, and pink shrimp and is not also generated for each individual shrimp species.

***Remaining Items from Summary of the November 15, 2022 (Tab D, No. 8b) and March 15-16, 2023, Shrimp Advisory Panel Meetings (Tab D, No. 4a)***

Ms. Bosarge noted that the AP recommended NMFS purchase a dedicated server for housing shrimp data within the SEFSC, using the Congressional funds discussed earlier by Dr. Walter. She added that the AP was appreciative of the presentation at its March 2023 meeting from Dr. Rubino on NOAA Fisheries' draft National Seafood Strategy and that the Gulf shrimp industry would be sending a letter containing related concerns and recommendations on the draft National Seafood Strategy.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.