

**Shrimp Committee Report
June 5, 2023
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with the addition of a brief discussion of re-opening of Section 7 Consultation with the shrimp fishery due to recent interactions with giant manta rays under Other Business. The Committee then approved the minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) of the April 2023 meeting as written.

Next Steps for Congressional Funding Budget for Shrimp Vessel Position Data Reporting (Tab D, Nos. 4ai, 4aii, 4b, and 4c)

Dr. Walter presented an updated spend plan for the Congressional funding for shrimp vessel position data reporting (**Tab D, No. 4ai**). He reviewed the three-part approach, timeline, and spend plan for establishing a modernized electronic location recording program to monitor trawling effort in the Gulf shrimp fishery by 2025, while noting that shrimpers will need to continue returning the Secure Digital (SD) cards until a new program is implemented. He added that more details on the line items in the updated spend plan can be found in the accompanying document (**Tab D, No. 4aii**). Dr. Walter noted that data from devices in the testing phase will be transmitted directly from the vendors to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC).

Dr. Freeman reviewed the Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) summary (**Tab D, No. 4b**) and highlighted feedback and questions the AP had, along with the AP's motion.

Ms. Bosarge (Shrimp AP Chair) commented that the Shrimp AP thought the proposed timeline in the spend plan was overly ambitious and may need to be extended. She noted that the financial burden will substantially shift to the shrimp industry under the proposed programs to replace the cellular electronic logbook program. She added that monies in the spend plan presented by Dr. Walter included salaries for National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) personnel as well as projects that could be considered 'wants' instead of 'needs' for shrimp management, which the AP felt should be diverted to establishing a new program as noted in the AP's motion. She further reviewed the categorical shifts in the proposed budget that the AP had suggested and provided rationale for those shifts (**Tab D, No. 4c**). Ms. Bosarge stated that it was unclear how the data would be transmitted from vendors to the SEFSC and emphasized the importance of this data transmission pathway to the SEFSC being capable of handling information from roughly 500 shrimp vessels.

A Committee member stated that he heard from shrimpers in Mississippi that prices were so low that some vessels may not be operating this year. Ms. Bosarge responded that not only are prices low, but there are docks currently unable to purchase shrimp. As a result, it may take longer to find vessels that can volunteer for the testing phase. Ms. Bosarge stated that vessels in Texas that will operate after the Texas Closure are most likely to participate in the testing phase.

Another Committee member inquired what the approximate costs of the devices may be. Dr. Walter responded that the devices would be, on average, \$1,200 to \$1,400 plus monthly cellular fees. The Committee member then inquired what the financial burden would be for the shrimp industry and if any reimbursement would be available. Dr. Walter noted that there are monies from the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) for devices that are NMFS type-approved but that the early adoption program proposed in the spend plan would reduce the financial burden for the shrimp industry. The Committee member then asked if the SEFSC would have the personnel to handle the data from a new program for roughly 500 shrimp vessels. Dr. Walter responded that some of the monies from the spend plan would address integrating that data stream along with other data streams. Dr. Porch added that the data management component is extremely important and must be set up in a manner to ensure continued running in the future.

A Committee member inquired if the proposed monies for hardware costs would need to increase if the number of devices to be tested was to be increased. Dr. Walter responded that additional funds may be needed but that the agency was trying to be cost-effective in its approach. Another Committee member asked if the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) was amendable to processing data from the SD cards through 2025. A Committee member responded that, at this time, it would be feasible for the GSMFC to do so.

A Committee member inquired if funding would be an issue once a new program is established. Dr. Porch responded that funding would need to be maintained somehow into the future. Another Committee member asked if the choice of the recipient of the data, whether OLE or the SEFSC, would impact the cost of a new program, specifically if it would cost less if OLE was the recipient of data. Dr. Porch responded in the affirmative that it would be cheaper to use the existing path for data, which includes OLE.

Other Business

Mr. Strelcheck informed the Committee that his Sustainable Fisheries Division has requested reinitiation under the Endangered Species Act of Section 7 consultation on the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Shrimp Fisheries. The consultation needs to be initiated to address unanticipated giant manta ray mortalities in shrimp trawls and to consider new information on both giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish. The 2021 shrimp opinion's Incidental Take Statement anticipated an average of 1,678 giant manta ray non-lethal takes per year. No lethal takes of giant manta rays were anticipated because there were no records of such at that time. However, since the 2021 shrimp opinion was completed, four incidents of lethal takes of giant manta rays by the shrimp industry have been observed by NOAA Fisheries, with two occurring on the same trip in 2023. In addition, there are new publications on giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish that may contain new information revealing shrimp trawling effects that were not considered in the 2021 shrimp opinion. The reinitiation of consultation will focus only on giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish. SERO has developed a tentative schedule for preparing the information necessary to formally conduct the consultation on these species and for collaborating with the Councils while doing so. SERO will provide more information about this reinitiation at the August Council meeting.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.