

**Shrimp Committee Report
October 23, 2023
Chris Schieble, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab D, No. 1**) with the addition of a discussion of the Early Adopter Program Rollout under Other Business. Under Other Business, Dr. Simmons also requested an update from a NOAA Fisheries representative in response to the Council’s letter on the potential for use of Inflation Reduction Act funding for data acquisition in the federally managed Gulf shrimp fishery. The Committee then approved the minutes (**Tab D, No. 2**) of the August 2023 meeting as amended.

Results of Side-by-Side Testing of Cellular Vessel Monitoring Systems (cVMS) and Cellular Electronic Logbooks (cELBs) on Gulf Shrimp Vessels (Tab D, No. 4)

Dr. Walter (SEFSC) presented the results of side-by-side testing of cVMS and cELBs on Gulf shrimp vessels (Tab D, No. 4).

A Council member noted that the Boat Command units appeared to have collected additional data points and inquired how that might be an issue. Dr. Walter responded that some of the vessel monitoring system (VMS) units ping when crossing certain boundaries or when powered on/off, so it is not unusual to collect additional pings. He added that the effort algorithm is capable of handling those additional pings. A Committee member commented that, while the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is using these devices for the purposes of vessel location only, the Council would be using them to derive effort estimates. A Council member asked why the Zen units did not transmit directly to the SEFSC during testing. Dr. Walter responded that the Application Programming Interface was created during the testing phase, but that the Zen units can use the portal in the future. The Council member also inquired why the map of the Zen unit plots for Vessel 4 is different from those of the other tested devices. Dr. Walter responded that the map of the Zen unit plots shows an extra three days of fishing, compared to the map of the other tested devices’ plots.

Ms. Bosarge (Shrimp AP Chair) then reviewed the Shrimp AP’s discussion of the SEFSC’s presentation on the side-by-side testing (Tab D, No. 4a). She noted that the AP did not consider the Tracker One or NEMO units to be successful during the testing, which is why the AP passed a motion requesting that NMFS not include these two units within the Early Adopter Program. She stated that the Boat Command and Zen units show some promise for data collection in the Gulf shrimp industry. She commented that the Early Adopter Program could be considered additional testing of units within the industry.

A Committee member requested a response from the SEFSC to the Shrimp AP’s motion on the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Walter stated that it is not their stance to exclude units, but rather to set specifications, which vendors can meet or not meet. Another Committee member inquired if a shrimp vessel would have to return to the dock if a unit failed during the Early Adopter Program. Dr. Walter responded that a vessel would not have to do so. Another Committee

member added that it would be unclear, until a vessel was back within cellular range, if a device had failed. Dr. Porch added that vendors would have to meet reporting requirements, including data being in an appropriate format. Dr. Simmons asked if the specifications for the Early Adopter Program would be those of the national VMS program, if results from the Early Adopter Program could be brought to the Council, and when those initial results might be available. A Committee member asked if the second half of the AP's motion would be feasible for NMFS to do. Dr. Walter responded that NMFS is exploring how to distribute a concise version of the testing results so that shrimpers could make an informed decision, and noted that a Committee motion to that effect would not be necessary for NMFS to consider this action.

A Committee member requested that a copy of the Southern Shrimp Alliance's letters, that were referenced in the AP's motions, be distributed to Council members before Full Council. Dr. Freeman responded that those letters could be distributed following Shrimp Committee.

Dr. Freeman reminded the Committee of the Council's motion from April that the draft framework action be brought back to the Council once NMFS had completed its side-by-side testing of cellular VMS units and cellular electronic logbooks, and asked for direction on further development of the draft framework action. A Committee member stated that, while results from the Early Adopter Program would inform the Council's decisions, the draft framework action should be brought back to the Council in January 2024.

Remaining Items from Summary of the October 19, 2023, Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting (Tab D, No. 4a)

Ms. Bosarge reviewed the remaining items from the Shrimp AP's October 2023 meeting. She stated the industry was not interested in participating in the proposed shrimp effort project to inform sea turtle restoration efforts, citing the unfavorable outcomes to the industry that have resulted from similar collaborative projects in the past.

In response to the update from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on Gulf wind energy, Ms. Bosarge stated the Shrimp AP supports a provision to require the removal of non-producing wind mills similar to the requirements of the petroleum industry to remove "idle iron" once the production has ceased. She stated that the removal of idle windmills would restore shrimping opportunities in this area if no longer supporting wind energy generation.

Ms. Bosarge summarized the Shrimp AP's feedback on the Endangered Species Act listing and Critical Habitat Rule update. With regard to green sea turtles, she identified that much of the supporting data and references were unpublished data and may not have been as thoroughly reviewed and vetted, as with peer-reviewed research products. She indicated this may undermine the confidence in the proposed rule by the shrimp industry that may ultimately be affected by this rule.

Regarding Rice's whale, the Shrimp AP recommends modifying the critical habitat depth boundaries to 120 m (from 100 m) and to 350 m (from 400 m) depth. She stated that there is little empirical evidence of Rice's whale presence shallower than 120 m and deeper than 350 m

and this would allow historical shrimping activities to occur in these zones with no harmful effect on the Rice's whales.

Ms. Bosarge reviewed the Shrimp AP feedback on the proposed critical habitat for threatened Caribbean corals. She stated that the proposed definition and resulting maps of critical habitat had not been provided to the Shrimp AP or Gulf Council for feedback and that the Shrimp AP would appreciate an opportunity to review the proposed maps through the Council process.

Other Business

Discussion

Dr. Simmons asked for an update on the Council's letter on the potential for use of Inflation Reduction Act funding for data acquisition in the federally managed Gulf shrimp fishery. Dr. Porch responded that the regional spend plans are being firmed up and that there is a long queue of items for funding consideration.

Early Adopter Program Rollout

Dr. Walter stated that the handouts on the Early Adopter Program Rollout are available on the Council meeting website. He also noted that NMFS is exploring synergies with a project on the inshore shrimp industry, given that there is additional funding related to inshore shrimp effort and sea turtle restoration efforts, even though the Shrimp AP had not expressed an interest in this approach.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.