Shrimp Advisory Panel Summary
Webinar
May 18, 2023

The meeting of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) was convened at 8:30 AM EST on May 18, 2023. The agenda for this meeting was approved as written.

Discussion of NMFS' Draft Budget Proposal for Congressional Funds for Shrimp Vessel Position Data Report

Dr. Walter (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]) presented on the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) draft spend plan for the $850,000 in Congressional funds for shrimp vessel position data reporting. He stated that $187,000 (22%) would be retained by NMFS for management and administration of the funds, leaving the remaining $663,000 available for continuing the development and implementation of the shrimp electronic logbook program. He noted the three mandates relevant to shrimp vessel position data reporting, including the FY23 Omnibus, the 2020 Shrimp Biological Opinion, and the Council's Shrimp Amendment 18. He then reviewed the three-part approach in the proposal: (1) phase-out 3G cELB system (2023-2024); (2) testing (2023); (3) install or early adopter phase (2023-2024). Dr. Walter added that the SEFSC will make the final determination on the final spend plan, after consultation with the Council at its June 2023 Council meeting, and will also be responsible for reporting to Congress on the use of funds. He reviewed the three cellular vessel monitoring systems (cVMS) that the Council had requested be tested by NMFS and then explained the expected timeline for testing. Lastly, he noted that the original 3G system was intended to provide a random sample of vessels, so there needs to be consideration of how all vessels would have the capability to be selected for inclusion in the program.

An AP member commented, on Table 2 (page 7 of draft spend plan), that testing from July 15-August 1 would not be feasible, but that 30-40 days, or possibly longer, for a trip with testing would more reasonable during that time of the year. A shorter trip would be indicative of a vessel having maintenance problems, rather than having a full load of shrimp. He stated that having installation of devices on shrimp vessels prior to the reopening of Texas waters for shrimping, which has historically been about July 15th, would make logistical sense. The AP member added that there is a lot of uncertainty due to the economic situation in the shrimp industry this year and that there may be vessels that tie up to the docks for the rest of the year shortly after the reopening of Texas waters, which could affect availability of vessels for NMFS testing. Another AP member stated that the timeframe seems overly optimistic and then noted that the language in the FY23 Omnibus refers to *scientific shrimp fishing effort data*, with the caveat that the word *scientific* covers a wide array of disciplines, inclusive of biology, social science, and economics. An AP member responded that the word *scientific* was included in the Omnibus language in order to distinguish the data from enforcement monitoring. Another AP member, who is employed with Sea Grant, offered her assistance with recruitment of vessels for testing.

Council staff asked Council members participating on the webinar if the Council would prefer that the Shrimp AP be convened prior to the October Council meeting in order to respond to the testing

results. Mr. Schieble responded that it would be ideal for the Council to hear the Shrimp AP's recommendations. Mr. Gill added that, even if the AP meeting needs to be virtual, the Council would like to have the Shrimp AP be able to respond to the testing results. Mr. Strelcheck and the AP Chair echoed the sentiments of Mr. Schieble and Mr. Gill. Dr. Simmons and Dr. Freeman agreed to work closely with the SEFSC staff on the timing of the testing efforts on the five vessels to be sure the results could be presented to the Shrimp AP prior to the Council meeting.

An AP member inquired what the consequences would be if testing results are not available for the October 2023 Council meeting and if testing results are not available until a later Council meeting. Dr. Walter responded that there may be consequences with some of the mandates, that it would set rulemaking back, and that there is an increased possibility of more of the current cELB units failing over time. The AP member then inquired if the units type-approved in the lobster fishery (Table 1 on page 7 of draft spend plan) would also be tested. Another AP member also inquired if the 4G version of the current cELB's would be tested as these devices have been shown to be physically durable and as well as effective at collecting shrimp effort data. Dr. Walter responded that those units were not included in the testing phase, but some of those units could be considered in the install phase. Several AP members stated that testing of other potential units during the testing phase is vital, noting that shrimpers would likely not take the risk of choosing to install a unit that had not been part of the testing phase as that would be taking a risk of wasting their reimbursement on a unit that may not prove to be effective for shrimp effort data collection resulting in the fisherman having to pay out of pocket for a different unit in the future.

An AP member inquired if shrimp data could be transmitted to the Atlantic States Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), as the type-approved devices in the lobster fishery are designed to do. Dr. Walter responded that there would a cost to NMFS for ACCSP to receive data and that it would be appropriate to see if the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission would want to be involved in that process. Mr. Holley (SEFSC) added that removal of a third party in data collection allows for more timely data retrieval and that outside service fees related to setting up a RESTful[1] Application Programming Interface (API) to transfer data directly from vendors to the SEFSC were minimal; however, internal protocols may have costs associated with them. Mr. Strelcheck added that an approach is being explored of having the SEFSC serve as the point for data collection. He stated that NMFS should also be aware that 4G units could potentially be in the same position as 3G units in the near future. An AP member pointed out that at least one of the cVMS units operates on 4G, and as of yet, the member had not seen any type-approved cVMS units that were operating on 5G.

Dr. Walter noted that the lobster fishery identified in Table 1 (page 7 of draft spend plan) is not federally managed, so it is a different situation in terms of reimbursement. He added that those units are not type-approved by NMFS but by the individual states. An AP member commented that the units type-approved in the lobster fishery were significantly cheaper than the cVMS units identified for testing and therefore present a lower cost of long-term ownership when considering the replacement of these units for all but the first unit is born by the fishermen. Another AP

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[1] A detailed description of Representation State Transfer (REST) and RESTful can be found at https://docs.oracle.com/en/database/oracle/application-express/19.1/aeutl/what-is-REST.html#GUID-A3CF9098-52B6-4064-93D2-CC9DC0B4AB38.

member stated that she did not see on the timeline when the outreach would be conducted with shrimpers. One AP member stated that it would be beneficial to have a second track of testing for additional devices beyond the 3 identified cVMS devices.

Dr. Simmons recommended that the phase-out year should be 2025 instead of 2023-2024 noted in bold on page 2, as the industry would need to continue returning Secure Digital (SD) cards with vessel position data through 2025. She also added that #4 in Table 1 (page 4 of draft spend plan) should be clarified that it would be side-by-side testing of 3 cVMS devices and checking that the current cELB unit is working properly to ensure the side-by-side comparison.

An AP member stated that a large proportion of the draft spend plan is being utilized internally by NMFS to cover salary of current staff and other projects and not on the stated purpose in the Omnibus. Dr. Walter responded that $360,000 is directed to purchasing units for vessels and that some funds are going to explore routes under both Alternatives 2 and 3 in the draft Shrimp Framework Action.

An AP member stated that, for #1 in Table 1 (page 4 of draft spend plan), $3,000 could be utilized differently if the Council office space could be utilized. Dr. Walter responded that the $3,000 had already been spent for a meeting held earlier in 2023 for code review of the shrimp effort algorithm by NMFS in Galveston. Another AP member then asked if any other monies had already been spent, and Dr. Walter replied no.

An AP member inquired, for #2 in Table 1, how the $120,000 was being spent. Dr. Walter responded that it would be used to improve efficiency in conducting reef fish stock assessments where they are bycatch in the shrimp industry, as well as shrimp stock assessments. The $120,000 would be utilized to create a database for central housing of observer bycatch data, port agent interview data, state trip ticket data, and the shrimp effort algorithm as well as many other data sources. Although NMFS currently has access to all of these data sources, they are not all easily linked together. Dr. Froeschke commented that the linkage between the effort algorithm and the Omnibus language is unclear.

An AP member inquired, for item #3 in Table 1, how the $41,000 was being spent, as most of the functions listed in the description of item #3 are activities NMFS has been historically performing without the aid of these additional Congressional funds, particularly that SD card returns have already been occurring for the past 2-2.5 years and cELB inventory and compliance monitoring and assistance has been ongoing for 11 years. The AP member stated that she was looking at how monies in certain line items, such as items #2 and #3, could be redirected to #4, #5, and #7 for additional testing, implementing an operational pathway outside of the Office of Law Enforcement for transmission of shrimp location data, and early adoption. Mr. Strelcheck stated that an effective program needs to be created in a holistic sense. He also commented that staff time is being reprioritized for this process, and so labor should be a component of this draft spend plan. The AP member commented that although items #2 and #3 would be nice, the immediate needs of the shrimp effort data collection program must be met first, and that, as there are not sufficient funds to fully meet those immediate needs, line items of #2 and #3 should not be considered at this time.

An AP member inquired if it would be feasible to still include a vessel shrimping in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for 18 days, rather than 30-40 days, to see how the results compare. Another AP member responded that he did not think one would find vessels targeting brown shrimp in the EEZ for that short of a time period and added that vessels had to travel a significant distance off Louisiana for that purpose.

Dr. Walter stated that it may be possible to test 1-2 additional types of devices in the testing phase, rather than do a second round of testing.

An AP member asked if the SEFSC was required to take the $850,000 from other places in its budget to fund additional shrimp work or research, or if the $850,000 was in additional to NMFS's normal budget. Dr. Walter responded that the SEFSC gets funds for all fisheries and monitoring efforts and that the funds being discussed during this AP meeting were provided separately to the SEFSC by Congress and were in addition to the normal budget. Mr. Strelcheck stated that the agency as a whole will put forth a budget request, but it is with broad management purposes rather than for specific fisheries. Another AP member added that NMFS receives significant annual budgetary funds due to anti-dumping duties collected from illegally imported shrimp and that those should be used by NMFS for the domestic shrimp fishery.

An AP member then presented a revised spend plan[2] which includes modifications to Table 1 on page 4 of NMFS' draft spend plan, which redirects funds across the 8 categories and adds more detailed language to the description of several line items. Mr. Strelcheck cautioned against being overly prescriptive in revisions. The AP discussed the proposed revisions to item #5, noting that one of the key revisions would operationalize a pathway for shrimp vessel position data, during the 2023-2024 period, and this pathway shall have the potential capacity to handle the full suite of shrimp vessels reporting in the future, rather than simply costing-out a pathway as the original spend plan stated. When asked why the language for item #5 was changed to contract-out a portion of standing up this pathway, instead of it being a purely internal NMFS function, the AP member responded that NMFS on several occasions has voiced opposition to implementing a separate pathway for shrimp data as the agency saw it as a redundancy and inefficient use of taxpayer funds. The AP member stated that as such, it seemed more prudent to allow an independent third party to flesh out this pathway as the contractor would have vested interest in establishing a successful pathway for the data. Several other AP members expressed their support for redirecting funds towards #4, #5, and #7 in the presented revised spend plan; however, they noted that they were uncertain how much should be redirected into each of #4, #5, and #7. An AP member stated that he would prefer keeping funds in #6 for outreach to shrimpers, and another AP member agreed with that statement.

> **Motion: The Shrimp AP conceptually supports the revised plan in the sense that it recommends the Council and NMFS consider redirecting funds from #2 and #3 to #4, #5, and #7 in the draft spend plan that NMFS presented, expands the testing phase to**

[2] Added to the Shrimp AP Meeting Website as "Proposed Changes from the Shrimp AP to NMFS' Draft Budget Proposal for Congressional Funds for Shrimp Vessel Position Data Reporting"

include additional devices, and puts more emphasis on operationalizing an alternative pathway (other than OLE) for shrimp effort data during this program

Motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Walter noted that having a server capable of receiving data during some of the proposed phases may require funds. He also added that testing of 4G units could be cost-prohibitive, as each would need to be individually reprogrammed along with other technical modifications, but agreed to look into it further and continue the conversation.

Public Comment

Mr. Greg Lovingfoss (Atlantic Radio Telephone) noted that there are 10 shrimp vessels in the Gulf currently equipped with their cVMS devices from the previous testing conducted by NMFS, which might be utilized in future testing by NMFS and would therefore reduce costs in the spend plan. He reminded the AP that, while the Zen VMS LTE device is currently type-approved by NMFS, the units in use in the lobster fishery identified in NMFS' draft spend plan are not currently type-approved by NMFS.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:44 pm eastern time on May 18, 2023.

Meeting Participants

Members Present:
Leann Bosarge, Chair
Corky Perret, Vice-Chair
Steve Bosarge
Ricky Brown
Thu Bui
Glenn Delaney
Gary Graham
Lance Nacio
Laura Picariello
John Williams

Council Staff:
Matt Freeman
John Froeschke
Lisa Hollensead
Jessica Matos
Bernadine Roy
Charlotte Schiaffo
Camilla Shireman
Carrie Simmons

NMFS Staff:
David Gloeckner
Michael Holley
Peter Hood
Kimberly Johnson
Mara Levy
Alan Lowther
Michelle Masi
Jack McGovern
Joy Merino
Elizabeth Scott-Denton
Katie Siegfried
Rebecca Smith
Molly Stevens
Michael Travis
Brendan Turley
Farron Wallace
John Walter
Jo Williams

Council Members:
Bob Gill
Chris Schieble (representative)
Andy Strelcheck