

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

**Panama City Beach, FL**

**Chairman T. Switzer** called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members**

John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Jill Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ted Switzer, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Erik Lang, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Darin Topping, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Adam Pollack, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Travis Williams, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**Staff**

Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Eric Hoffmayer, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Matt Womble, Sairdron, Fairhope, AL  
Zach Zuckerman, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA  
Chris Swanson, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

**J. Mareska moved to adopt the agenda. J. Hendon seconded and the motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**E. Lang moved to approve the SEAMAP minutes from October 19, 2021 as submitted. A. Pollack seconded and the motion passed.**

**Administrative Report**

**J. Rester** stated that the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place last year from October 4 – November 23, 2021. SEAMAP sampled 274 stations during the survey. He stated that SEAMAP originally hoped to sample approximately 300 stations, but sampling effort was impacted by weather. **J. Rester** reported that the Environmental Data Work Group met on February 22 and reviewed the environmental section of the trawling operations manual. He stated that the Commission worked with the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Inc. to acquire an acoustic camera and hardware for sampling reef fish. The Commission was able to purchase two Kongsberg Flexview HF Sonar cameras, underwater housings, and peripherals for FWRI to use during SEAMAP reef fish sampling. He reported that FWRI will use the cameras to develop techniques and protocols for reef fish sampling that SEAMAP can use in the western Gulf of Mexico. The equipment will be inventoried and managed by the FWRI's Fisheries Independent

Monitoring program. **J. Rester** stated that he did not have word yet on the SEAMAP FY2022 budget yet. He stated that Kelly Donnelly would let us know as soon as she knew something. **J. Rester** stated that SEAMAP would send real time data out again this summer as part of the SEAMAP Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. He asked that everyone send him all data by noon every Tuesday. He also asked that everyone send in all data and cruise reports as soon as you can and use the approved data formats/templates when sending in the data. He stated that he still had not received representatives from all SEAMAP partners for representation on the CTD Bottom Photography Work Group. He requested that everyone send him a representative as soon as possible. **J. Rester** reported that the SEAMAP Joint Meeting would be held in Puerto Rico during the week of July 25. The meeting location and travel information would be distributed in the next few weeks. The Subcommittee would like to discuss mapping for the symposium topic. **J. Hendon** stated that she would like to present ideas on how to streamline the SEAMAP Management Plan at the meeting so the other components can think about it before beginning another Management Plan revision.

### **Using Sairdrones for Ocean Data Collection**

**M. Womble** discussed the capabilities of autonomous drones for fishery independent sampling. **M. Womble** stated that Sairdrone vehicles were self-supported drones that can supply several data streams that would be beneficial to fishery independent sampling and fisheries management. SEAMAP's main interest would be fisheries acoustic and multibeam sonar data. Sairdrone has three vehicles with various levels of data collection capabilities that range in price from \$2,700 to \$15,000 per day based upon vehicle size. Since Sairdrone can supply several data streams at the same time, SEAMAP was interested in partnering with other researchers and agencies to potentially supply data for several projects while collecting fishery independent data.

### **Review of the Trawling Operations Manual**

The Subcommittee reviewed the trawl operation manual. **J. Rester** stated that the Environmental Data Work Group met in February and reviewed the environmental data collection section. He stated that the Environmental Data Work Group discussed how each partner collected environmental data and how close to the bottom each partner lowered the CTD. The Environmental Data Work Group defined the bottom was the closest point to zero if real-time data streaming and an altimeter were available or the bottom was between 1 and 2 meters above the station depth if real-time data streaming was not available. The max environmental depth was defined as the bottom using the definition above.

**J. Rester** stated another update to the operations manual was additional photos for sex determination and reproductive macro staging. **E. Lang** stated that he provided several more photos for helping determine if a fish was ripe. He stated that he would provide additional photos of additional species in the future. The shipboard data entry system (FSCS) does not currently have a way to add a new field for maturity. **E. Hoffmayer** stated that Chuck Schroeder continues to work on a FSCS update and that it should be ready for next year. **J. Hendon** asked about fish measuring boards. **E. Hoffmayer** stated that Ryan Caillouet was building additional measuring boards.

After discussion regarding the usefulness and accuracy of collecting gonadal staging, **E. Lang made a motion to eliminate males from gonadal staging. J. Mareska seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

The Subcommittee decided each partner should try to acquire an altimeter for use on the CTD to lower the CTD as accurately as possible to the bottom.

**T. Switzer** asked when would be a good time to hold the invertebrate workshop that SEAMAP had been planning for several months. The Subcommittee agreed that it would be best to hold it after 2022 sampling had been completed. The Subcommittee decided to hold the invertebrate workshop at FWRI in December 2022.

The Subcommittee decided to have the Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group meet in the coming weeks to review the operations manual and sampling protocols before beginning the 2022 sampling season.

#### **Review of the Bottom Longline Operations Manual**

J. Rester stated that the only changes to the Bottom Longline Operations Manual were the inclusion of the HOOKSDEPLOYED and HOOKSRETRIEVED fields. J. Hendon wanted to provide another hook photo for the manual. With those changes, **J. Hendon made a motion to accept the Bottom Longline Operations Manual. A. Pollack seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

#### **Review of the Trawl Sampling Universe**

**J. Rester** stated that he had made modifications to the trawl sampling universe to remove small, isolated areas where you could not tow a trawl for 30 minutes. He was also investigating ways to remove areas where you could not tow in a straight line for approximately two miles. He stated that he would be sending out 350 trawl stations soon and that he would make sure that stations did not need to be moved before beginning the survey.

#### **SEAMAP Survey Costs by Survey**

The Subcommittee discussed SEAMAP survey costs per stations. **J. Rester** stated that the Commission was working on a fishery independent survey project where the group needs the cost per station for the various fishery independent surveys. The SEFSC also needed detailed costs for the surveys to know how much the SEFSC was spending on surveys and how much funding was coming from state and other funding sources to support SEAMAP surveys. **J. Rester** stated that he would send the current information he had for each partner out so they could review the amounts they were spending on each survey along with the number of stations that they sampled each year. **J. Rester** stated that each partner needed to account for all costs associated with the survey. This included gear, bait and preparation for the survey, costs while sampling, as well as any costs accrued after the sampling had been completed.

#### **Proposed 2022 SEAMAP Fishery Independent Sampling**

NMFS will sample all stations for the Spring Plankton Survey. The Subcommittee decided to attempt 350 stations during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. The Subcommittee discussed exchanging representative fish samples for identification purposes between the partners after the

survey this year. Developing methodology for collecting and analyzing these representative samples will be an agenda item for the Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group meeting. All partners stated that all statistical zones will be sampled this year during the Bottom Longline Survey. **E. Lang** stated that LDWF had budgeted for two days of plankton sampling for the Fall Plankton Survey. The Subcommittee stated that they would attempt 300 stations during the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey.

The Subcommittee discussed the Vertical Line Survey and future vertical line sampling. Everyone was unsure whether the data can be used for stock assessment purposes. While the Vertical Line Survey may provide data on Red Snapper, everyone was unclear on the utility of the data. **T. Switzer** stated that there were other surveys that provided better data on Red Snapper. **E. Hoffmayer** stated that stock assessment staff had commented that they do not need multiple data inputs into the stock assessment for the same age and size classes. **T. Switzer** stated that the Red Snapper SEDAR Data Workshop was coming up in May.

**J. Rester** asked what the Subcommittee wanted to do about the Vertical Line Survey in 2022. He asked if the Subcommittee wanted to conduct the Vertical Line Survey in 2022 or hold off until after the SEDAR Data Workshop to decide if SEAMAP will discontinue the Vertical Line Survey. **J. Hendon made a motion that the SEAMAP Subcommittee revisit the Vertical Line Survey for the 2022 funding cycle at the conclusion of the Red Snapper SEDAR Data Workshop in May 2022. E. Lang seconded the motion. T. Switzer** called for a roll call vote. **D. Toppin** voted no. **J. Mareska** voted no. **A. Pollack** voted yes. **T. Switzer** voted yes. **E. Lang** abstained and **J. Hendon** abstained. Therefore, the motion did not pass. The Subcommittee agreed that if SEAMAP discontinues the Vertical Line Survey that there needed to be a plan and training to transition to another form of reef fish sampling, habitat mapping, or a combination of the two in place before discontinuing the survey.

#### **Other Business**

**J. Hendon** stated that Thomas Van Devender recently passed away and worked as the SEAMAP Coordinator from October 1986 to January 1990. He also served as the Chief of Saltwater Fisheries for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and later the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. **J. Hendon made a motion to ask the Commission to provide a resolution in honor of Thomas Van Devender in recognition of his efforts toward Mississippi fishery resources over the course of his career. J. Mareska seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.**

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.*