


**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Wednesday March 16, 2022**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Darin Topping called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

Members

Jason Froeba, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Dan Ellinor, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Rick Burris, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Matt Hill, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Christopher Mace, TPWD, Rockport, TX
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Darin Topping, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Nicole Beckham, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Beverly Sauls, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Allan Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Staff

Charlie Robertson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ali Wilhelm, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Deanna Valentine, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Doug Snyder, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Angie Rabideau, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tershara Matthews, BOEM, New Orleans, LA
Mike Celata, BOEM, New Orleans, LA
Scott Bannon, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Andrew Peterson, Bluefin Data, Baton Rouge, LA
Andrea Dell'Apa, Council for Watershed Health, Pasadena, CA
Mark Rogers, USGS/Tennessee Tech, Cookeville, TN
Cindy Bohannon, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Susan Wilde, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Mike Eggleton, University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, AR
Wade Hardy, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Richard Cody, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Jeremy Timbs, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Laurie Rounds, NOAA, Silver Spring, MD
Jeff Stevens, University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, AR
Jamie Reinhardt, NOAA Silver Springs, MD
Scott Bannon, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Erik Broussard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Stephen Bullard, Auburn University, Auburn, AL
Glenn Constant, USFWS, Baton Rouge, LA
Haley Dutton, Auburn University, Auburn, AL
Deborah Epperson, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Stephanie Freed, FWC, Panama City, FL
Rusty Grice, MS-AL Sea Grant, Gulf Shores, AL
Marie Head, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Scott Herbert, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., New Orleans, LA
Margaret Lamont, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Erik Lang, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mario Marquez, TX Sea Grant, Palacios, TX
Trevor Moncrief, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Matt Nielson, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL
Zachary Olsen, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Andrew Peterson, Blue Fin Data, Baton Rouge, LA
Evan Pettis, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Laura Picariello, TX Sea Grant, Galveston, TX
Tony Resinger, TX Sea Grant, San Benito, TX
Jason Rider, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Alexis Sabine, TX Sea Grant, Corpus Christi, TX
Dominique Seibert, LA Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA
Joe Spraggins, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
James Swarthout, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Ted Switzer, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Deke Tompkins, USGS/ASMFC, Washington, D.C.
Cindy Williams, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Travis Williams, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Bob Zales, Capt. Bob Zales Charters, LLC., Panama City, FL
Zach Zuckerman, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Adoption of Agenda

John Mareska moved and it was seconded by Rick Burris to adopt the agenda. Motion passed with no opposition.

Approval of Minutes

Beverly Sauls moved and it was seconded by Jason Froeba to approve the minutes as written for the October 20, 2021 meeting. Motion passed with no opposition.

General Session

The first half of the TCC meeting consisted of a general session on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Aquatic Nuisance Species Small Grants Program. For more details on this general session, see the proceedings which can be found on the Commission's website under publications. These proceedings

serve as the administrative record of this session.

DWH Fish & Water Column Invertebrate Strategic Planning Update

Jamie Reinhardt provided an update on fish and water column invertebrates strategic plan whose purpose is to guide restoration planning in the Gulf of Mexico. The restoration team developed a species prioritization process by identifying threats to injured species and identified associated restoration objectives. Input provided by stakeholders during the process highlighted the desire to consider broad ecosystem characteristics when prioritizing species for restoration. A threats matrix was developed that allowed the team to focus the objectives on a species-by-species basis and understand how to reduce the effects or risks of bycatch, fishing, marine debris, post-release mortality, and other activities that could potentially affect resources. Representatives from NOAA will keep the TCC informed on the progress of the reports developed from this effort.

USGS Wetland and Aquatic Research Center/GSMFC Collaboration on Science & Research Needs in the Gulf of Mexico

Deke Tompkins highlighted the importance of the history of the partnership between USGS and GSMFC. He provided an overview of the primary research areas for which USGS could provide expertise and support such as invasive species, imperiled species, ecological stressors, and restoration.

Other USGS staff were on hand to discuss how animal movements and telemetry research are important tools for tracking species of interest. They explained how pairing telemetry data and eDNA detection results can provide strong inferences on movements and distribution of certain species. **Meg Lamont** outlined numerous studies that successfully tracked and collected data on various fish species across the Gulf of Mexico using networks of acoustic arrays. She also explained USGS has been working with NRDA on a project to understand animal movements in, out, and around the Gulf of Mexico.

Chris Mace moved and it was seconded by John Mareska that GSMFC and USGS develop a cooperative partnership to work together on shared research needs in the Gulf of Mexico. Motion passed with no opposition.

BOEM Wind Energy Status

Mike Celata provided the TCC with an update on the progress BOEM has made with regards to renewable wind energy leasing in the Gulf. They received 39 comments from various stakeholders during the comment period. During his presentation, he individually addressed the major concerns gathered from the comment period. He also explained there will be an environmental assessment for lease areas that will include a programmatic assessment and incorporate analysis from background documents, which will cover the entire Call Area. Next steps in the process include starting the environmental assessment, analysis of wind energy areas, identifying lease areas, and conducting a proposed lease auction.

IJF Updates

Steve VanderKooy provided an overview of SuRF funding for 2022 projects. All states started with a base funding of \$194, 960 but moved unspent funds from 2021 into the 2022 awards. He explained next year's funding has not been determined but it will likely be more than this year. Regarding red drum profile, there will be a meeting in early May 2022 to do final editing before the TCC will be provided with a final draft for review over the summer with the goal of approving a final version in October 2022.

Mangrove snapper will be the next profile worked on and GSMFC will request a representative from each agency to establish a task force to begin working on that document.

CARES Act Program Update

Jeff Rester provided a summary on the CARES Act program, which has now ended. CARES Act 2.0 totals over \$26 million and is currently being implemented in some states. GSMFC paid 63 applicants in Alabama approximately \$2.9 million, 277 applicants in Mississippi \$2.9 million, 697 applicants in Louisiana \$12.17 million, and 99 applicants in Texas \$946,234.

Subcommittee Reports

Artificial Reef

James Ballard explained the group met on March 3rd, 2022, to discuss several important issues, including permit issues and western states dealing with rigs to reefs bankruptcy issues. They are working with the ASMFC to hold a joint meeting hopefully this summer. They also plan to finalize the Gulf/Atlantic Artificial Reef footprint project this summer. Other topics discussed were issues related to biological opinions, sea turtle entrapment and entanglement issues, and damage and movement of artificial reef structures from hurricanes and trawlers, and biological monitoring.

Crab

Zach Olsen said the Subcommittee heard presentations on predatory and habitat impacts to blue crab populations in the Gulf of Mexico. Each state provided an update on terrapin work related to bycatch reduction devices and updates on landings and fishery independent monitoring. During other business, they discussed what various states know about alternative gears for harvesting recreational blue crabs but there appears to be little knowledge in that area.

GulfFIN

Beverly Sauls the Subcommittee discussed that federal partners have expressed a desire to access state survey data along with survey design and implementation documentation in one location and have recommended the GulfFIN Data Management System as a preferred location. Currently GulfFIN warehouses Texas and Louisiana recreational data and makes that available to NOAA Fisheries partners. **Gregg Bray** asked about the willingness of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi to make their raw and estimate available through GulfFIN. Florida and Alabama were not opposed to the idea of providing their data and Mississippi is still discussing this internally. It was pointed out by Florida staff that providing data will still require assistance from state program managers to ensure proper use in complex analyses. **Bray** suggested warehousing state data using existing state database formats could fill short term needs for federal partners that already have processes in place to analyze state data as it is currently being delivered. The longer-term objective would be to develop a standardized database with input from all pertinent partners that could house all of the state survey raw data and estimates for use in science and management. After considerable discussion regarding the complexity of this topic the committee decided to create a workgroup of state, federal, council and commission staff to determine the best path forward to make data more accessible to federal partners. Commission staff will be seeking partner participants to develop this workgroup in the coming weeks and will hold an initial virtual meeting as soon as possible.

Bray stated that GulfFIN submitted their initial MRIP Regional Implementation Plan in 2017 and we have been requested to review and update our plan. The MRIP Regional Implementation Plan highlights regional needs in the Gulf of Mexico to improve recreational fisheries data for regional management and assessment. **Richard Cody** discussed the usefulness of regional plans for

developing their national MRIP Implementation Plan and seeking funding assistance from Congress to meet regional priorities. The Committee spent some time identifying new priorities that should be a part of this revised plan. Priorities identified included a redesign of biological sampling methodologies, continued research on differences between state and federal recreational surveys, better coordination of recreational surveys in the Gulf region to help ensure compatibility between surveys, and methods to improve data for recreational discards. This review and update will take most of the year to complete and Bray suggested starting with the GulfFIN Recreational Technical Workgroup to create the first draft before asking the GulfFIN Committee members to review and provide comments.

The committee discussed a request from the Gulf Council SSC to look at federal Shrimp Observer Bycatch data and identify priority state-managed species that state stock assessment analysts may benefit from having timely access to. **Trevor Moncrief** stated the SSC recently became aware of this potential source of data and recognized the large bycatch estimates could impact state stock assessment results. There was also concern that some species are lumped together in unspecified groups, making the information less useful for state stock assessment analysts. After some discussion amongst committee members the committee made the following motion:

John Mareska moved and it was seconded by Jason Froeba that GSMFC send a letter to the SEFSC requesting they present to the TCC the verification process of the bycatch of state managed priority species in the shrimp observer bycatch program. Motion passed with no opposition.

Alan Lowther from NOAA Fisheries SEFSC followed up with SEFSC staff about this motion and they suggested that summary level tables could possibly be provided that would not cause confidentiality issues but further discussions would be needed.

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2023. Items were categorized as ongoing work or potential new work to be considered for available funding. The committee was tasked with identifying high priority projects that will be forwarded to the State/Federal Fishery Management Committee for their review at the October 2022 meeting. At that time, they will decide which items will be included in the 2023 FIN Cooperative Agreement. All items listed as high priority will require budgets and statements of work to be delivered to GSMFC staff by August 31, 2022. The committee approved including all the ongoing tasks as high priority for inclusion in the 2023 FIN Cooperative Agreement. The committee also identified Biological Sampling of recreational landings for age and growth as a high priority need to support state and federal stock assessments. Currently, funding provided through the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to support this task is set to run out on December 31, 2022, and there is no indication that this funding will be continued in 2023. Therefore, biological sampling was added to the list of high priority projects for FIN funding in 2023.

John Mareska moved and it was seconded by Matt Hill that the TCC include all ongoing GulfFIN tasks (Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities, Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data, Operation of FIN Data Management System, Trip Ticket Program) and reinstating Biological Sampling for Age Structures and Lengths as high priority funding items for 2023. Motion passed with no opposition.

Molluscan Shellfish

Evan Pettis reported the Subcommittee learned about a database summarizing oyster restoration projects funded by DWH settlement funds. They discussed impacts of hurricanes on AOC with all states except TX reporting significant impacts in recent years. Oyster shell recycling programs were discussed by each state with several states indicating there are non-profits participating in these programs as well. Most of the states have developed oyster strategic management plans that outline priorities within each state. Oyster restoration is a priority within many of the states and each state has been implementing restoration activities to varying degrees while many are evaluating strategies to improve success of restoration. Remote setting hatchery facilities are being used to supplement restoration activities.

SEAMAP

Matt Womble from Saildrone discussed the capabilities of autonomous drone for fishery independent sampling. They can supply several data streams that would be beneficial to fishery independent sampling and fisheries management. SEAMAP is interested in partnering with other researchers and agencies to potentially supply data for several projects while collecting fishery independent data.

Jeff Rester stated the SEAMAP subcommittee discussed FY2022 SEAMAP budget based on level funding of \$5.125 million. They also discussed the SEAMAP Trawl Shrimp Data and Index Estimation Work Group Report, which developed best practices for Gulf shrimp species abundance indices as well as verified the spatio-temporal alignment of the SEAMAP survey and where the fishery is operating in the Gulf during the summer and fall months.

Matt Hill moved and it was seconded by Rick Burris that the TCC asks the Commission to provide a resolution in honor of Thomas Van Devender in recognition of his efforts towards Mississippi fishery resources over the course of his career. Motion passed with no opposition.

State/Federal Reports

Darin Topping stated all state reports except Florida's have been submitted. They were provided by GSMFC staff in the pre-meeting materials for the TCC to review.

John Mareska moved and it was seconded by Rick Burris to approve all submitted state and federal reports as written. Motion passed with no opposition.

Discussion of Election of Officers

Charlie Robertson provided a brief update of the discussion on this topic from the previous meeting and the options available for the TCC to consider, which included keeping the status quo, electing new officers, or establishing a rotational chairmanship based on state.

John Mareska moved and it was seconded by Rick Burris to defer election of officers until the October 2022 meeting and revisit it on an annual basis. Motion passed with no opposition.

Other Business

No additional topics were discussed under this section of the agenda.

With no other business to discuss, Rick Burris moved and it was seconded by Chris Mace to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 p.m. Motion passed with no opposition.