TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 13, 2018
Panama City Beach, FL

Chairman T. Switzer called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jill Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ted Switzer, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Brett Falterman, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Christian Jones, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

Others
Eric Hoffmayer, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Sean Keenan, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mark Lingo, TPWD, Austin, TX
Chris Mace, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Skyler Sagarese, NMFS, Miami, FL
Travis Williams, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA/SEFSC, Panama City, FL

Staff
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Sport Fish Restoration/ANS Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ashley Lott, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda
Under Agenda Item #5, need to add a discussion on a Vertical Line issue J. Mareska found. J. Mareska moved to adopt the agenda. B. Falterman seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes
J. Hendon moved to approve the SEAMAP minutes from the October 17, 2017 meeting as submitted. J. Mareska seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report
J. Rester reported that SEAMAP will begin its 37th year of sampling in 2018. The Spring Plankton and Bottom Longline Survey will begin in April. The Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Reef Fish Survey, Vertical Line Survey, Fall Plankton Survey, and Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey will start later this year. We will still be doing Real Time data this summer so please submit data as soon as possible in the correct format. At the October Commission meeting, the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) met and discussed SEAMAP surveys and SEAMAP funding levels. J. Rester gave the committee an overview of current SEAMAP surveys and their approximate costs. The S/FFMC sets the sampling for FIN, but SEAMAP is different because we do not have a budget as of yet. J. Rester will keep the S/FFMC abreast of SEAMAP activities. A Vertical Line Workgroup meeting was held in
December to discuss the vertical line database and ways to improve the accuracy of submitted and historical data within the database. The Work Group reviewed the Operations Manual and added new data collection fields to make the data more useful for stock assessment purposes. Please make sure to submit old and new data in the new format. At this time, SEAMAP is still unsure of FY2018 funding. Still hoping not to have as much taxes taken out. The Bottom Longline stations have been sent out to everyone. Alabama has received their 2018 vertical line stations. Louisiana and Texas should be receiving their stations in the next few weeks. J. Rester did mention to the group that he is seeing a lot less oil and gas platforms than in previous years.

SEAMAP Vertical Line Data and the Red Snapper SEDAR

E. Hoffmayer stated that an index was put together by M. Campbell based on SEAMAP data and at the last meeting this data was discussed along with concerns and issues with the data. Because of these concerns, it was decided not to use the index. M. Campbell sent out a paper regarding this, assuming all have received and read the paper. The biggest concern was that 70% of the drops were saturated and we are not capturing the abundance. Not sure how the committee would like to proceed with this. E. Hoffmayer recommended that if we want to continue with this, need to put cameras on the line. T. Switzer stated that a better approach would be to use GoPro’s to get species counts. J. Mareska noted that Alabama has been doing this with ROVs. They have dropped the cameras before and after the vertical line drop. He is giving a presentation to the TCC Committee tomorrow on cameras and fishing effort if you can stay for that. E. Hoffmayer feels that if we can put cameras on the lines, maybe we can glean some information that can help get a better understanding as to what is out there. B. Falterman has a concern over the time it will take to look at all of the archive data and video. J. Hendon noted that she is doing a pilot study in April using the unused plankton funds, and offered to do a trial run with cameras and lights. Can do some of the drops before and some after. J. Mareska stated that if we are going to do something like this, we need standards. Plus there are differences in the Eastern and Western Gulf of Mexico. All of these things need to be addressed. He is not ready to make any changes, but something needs to be done. Another meeting needs to be set up to address these issues/concerns. Need to have the Science Center involved. T. Switzer feels that ultimately this has to fold into the Reef Fish Survey. T. Switzer stated that he will send around a picture of the camera on the hook gear that Florida has been using, noting that in Florida this was used for habitats but can be modified for fish counts. Also look at a central reader to read the video so it will be standard across the board. No change to camera approach for 2018 Vertical Line. J. Hendon will get with T. Switzer to get the design for the GoPro, light and custom housing to be used on the pilot study. She will keep the committee updated as to what is happening with the pilot study.

J. Rester noted that a Vertical Line meeting was held in December. At that meeting, the group came up with another table that will handle multiple drops, however, J. Mareska found situations where each backbone had a different soak time because of hang ups on structures. So we are proposing, on the drop data table, to add a variable called backbone and backbone would be indicated by hook size. J. Mareska made the above motion, F. Martinez seconded and the motion passed.

2018 Shrimp/Groundfish Survey Station Selection Process

J. Rester wanted to go over the station selection process with the committee. E. Hoffmayer noted that in years past, the stations would be selected and then they would go back and eliminate stations based on hangs and sponge habitats. We are now trying to buffer on the front end, which will hopefully simplify the process and add buffers each year as get more information. With the goal of protecting the sponge habitats, came up with a 250m buffer for sponges. J. Mareska asked how did we get the 250m buffer? T. Switzer stated that it is based on distribution of tows with sponge biomass, and anticipation of what
we may find using new technology. It is based on some science and some educated guesses. Another question was how to handle hangs in the Western Gulf of Mexico. It was decided to apply a buffer on hangs gulf wide using 2000 data forward. There will also be a buffer around all coral catches. Will also incorporate a 250m buffer for artificial reefs. J. Rester will update the data and start the buffering process. Hopes to have station selection done by the end of the month.

2018 Joint SEAMAP Meeting Agenda Discussion
The Joint meeting is set for Wednesday, July 25, 2018 in St. Petersburg, Florida. The plan is to meet 1pm-5pm on Wednesday and run through noon on Thursday, July 26. At this time, the South Atlantic does not have a coordinator, but feel like they will be fine with whatever we have planned for the meeting. The goal of this Joint Meeting is to be more productive and more interactive than in previous years. Have presentations, tours, hands on activities. Trying to work out an agenda within the next month or so. Please share any topics/ideas you may have for this meeting to make it more interesting and informative. The Gulf SEAMAP meeting will be Wednesday morning, July 25, before the Joint Meeting.

SEAMAP Sampling in Louisiana
B. Falterman gave a presentation on the use of small boats in Louisiana for Bottom Longline sampling. Smaller boats (25ft) can run longlines. They can catch and handle sharks on smaller boats. They are a cost-effective solution to sample sites and are a back-up option to the larger vessels.

Fishery Independent Data Collection Prioritization
T. Switzer gave a presentation on Florida’s evaluation and prioritization of offshore survey activities. Preliminary evaluations are underway for many surveys and survey components. The goal is to have this completed by October 2018. The results from this will direct Florida’s survey prioritization. However, this all depends on funding so looking to adequately fund high-priority efforts rather than insufficiently fund all.

Other Business
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:07p.m.