


APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES  
Thursday, October 17, 2019  
Biloxi, MS**

**Chairman Joe Spraggins called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.**

**The following Commissioners and/or Proxies were present:**

Joe Spraggins, *Chairman*, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Carter Smith*)  
Read Hendon, *Citizen Representative from Mississippi*, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Scott Bannon, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Chris Blankenship*)  
Chris Nelson, *Citizen Representative from Alabama*, Bon Secour Fisheries, Bon Secour, AL  
John Roussel, *Citizen Representative from Louisiana*, Zachary, LA  
Senator Brett Allain, Jeanerette, LA  
Jason Froeba, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (*Proxy for Jack Montoucet*)  
Dan Ellinor, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Nick Wiley*)

**Staff**

Dave Donaldson, *Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Nancy Marcellus, *Administrative Officer*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Chery Noble, *Administrative Assistant*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, *IJF Program Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, *SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, *FIN Program Manager*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, *Systems Administrator*, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, *Sport Fish Restoration/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, *ComFIN Programmer*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Angie Rabideau, *Senior Accountant*, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Glenn Constant, USFWS, Baton Rouge, LA  
Allan Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Darin Topping, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Julie Lively, LASG, Baton Rouge, LA  
Chris Mace, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Jessica Graham, SARP, Panama City Beach, FL  
Paul Mickle, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Catherine Krickson, NMFS/MRIP, Silver Spring, MD  
Emily Satterfield, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Bill Walton, AU, Dauphin Island, AL  
Seth Blicht, TNC, Baton Rouge, LA  
Julien Lartigue, NOAA Restore Program, Ocean Springs, MS

## Brief Overview of Commission Voting Procedures

**D. Donaldson** gave a brief overview of the Commission's voting procedures and stated there is a quorum.

## Adoption of Agenda

**D. Donaldson** requested to move Items 12 and 15 to before lunch due to travel conflicts. He also requested to give a brief report on the For-Hire Project under *Other Business*. **B. Allain** moved to adopt the Commission Business Session Agenda with the requested changes and addition under Other Business. **S. Bannon** seconded and the motion passed.

## Approval of Minutes (March 21, 2019)

**J. Roussel** moved to approve the March 21, 2019 minutes as submitted. **S. Bannon** seconded the motion and the minutes were approved as submitted.

## GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

### Law Enforcement Committee (LEC)

**S. VanderKooy** reported the LEC met jointly with the Council's LETC and stated the majority of the agenda was Council items. They discussed the JEA funding, status of state water FADs, and a marine debris project by the MS Commercial Fisheries United and MSU Extension Service. He said the Red Drum TTF held its introductory meeting in June for the purpose of working on a Management Profile for the Gulf of Mexico and Scott Pearce, the LEC Representative on the TTF, will distribute the enforcement material to each state representative to prepare for the next meeting in November. Membership is being formed for a Technical Task Force to work on a Mangrove Snapper Profile. Jason Downey from Alabama will represent the LEC for this Task Force and an introductory meeting for this TTF will be scheduled early summer of 2020. He stated the two publications the LEC contributes to, the Annual License and Fees and the Annual Law Summary are complete. He said each state report was submitted before the meeting and the LEC accepted all of the reports.

**R. Hendon** moved to accept the LEC Report. **L. Robinson** seconded and the motion passed.

### Technical Coordinating Committee Report (TCC)

**D. Topping** gave the TCC report. He reviewed the topics discussed and the presentations that were given in each Subcommittee meeting. He stated the TCC approved two motions at their meeting and asked for approval from the Commission. The first motion was to accept the IJF Funding Process and the second motion was to establish the Molluscan Shellfish Subcommittee under the TCC utilizing the SOPs as amended.

**D. Topping** stated Steve Brown was elected Chairman and Darrin Stewart was elected Vice Chairman for the Data Management Subcommittee; Ryan Gandy was re-elected Chairman for the

Crab Subcommittee; and Ted Switzer was re-elected Chairman and Jill Hendon was re-elected Vice Chairman for the SEAMAP Subcommittee. Darin Topping was re-elected Chairman and Beverly Sauls was re-elected Vice Chairman for TCC. **D. Topping** then gave a brief overview of the General Session on the *2019 Freshwater Impacts to the Marine Natural Resources Along the Northern Gulf of Mexico*.

The Commission discussed using the SOPs presented for the Molluscan Shellfish Subcommittee to be used as a template for all other Subcommittees to establish purpose and need. There was also discussion to include or not include Public Health officials on the Molluscan Shellfish Subcommittee. The Commission charged staff to have each Subcommittee establish purpose and need utilizing the Molluscan Shellfish Subcommittee SOPs template. The Commission charged staff to review the Molluscan Shellfish Subcommittee SOPs to include having Public Health Agencies from each state to participate on an “as needed” basis.

**R. Hendon** *moved* to approve the two motions and to accept the TCC Report. **J. Froeba** seconded and the motion passed.

### **State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee**

#### **GulfFIN, SEAMAP and Menhaden Advisory Panel Discussions**

**Scott Bannon** gave the S/FFMC Report and stated a motion was passed to fund Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities, Collecting, Managing, and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data, Operation of FIN Data Management System, and Trip Ticket Program Operations for a total budget of \$5.86M. The S/FFMC passed a motion to accept the proposed funding for SEAMAP surveys for 2020 for a total budget of \$1.95M. The S/FFMC moved to approve the proposed funding process for utilizing new IJF program funds developed by the TCC. He said the MAC elected Peter Himchak Chairman; and Scott Bannon was elected Chairman and Paul Mickle was elected Vice Chairman for the S/FFMC.

**J. Roussel** *moved* to accept the motion to approve the proposed funding for FIN activities for 2020. **R. Hendon** seconded and the motion passed.

**D. Ellinor** *moved* to accept the motion to approve the proposed funding for SEAMAP surveys for 2020. **J. Froeba** seconded and the motion passed.

**J. Froeba** *moved* to accept the motion to approve the proposed funding process for utilizing new IJF program funds developed by the TCC. **D. Ellinor** seconded and the motion passed.

**R. Hendon** *moved* to accept the S/FFMC Report. **D. Ellinor** seconded and the motion passed.

### **Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Meeting Report**

**Julie Lively** reported they had 5 members present including one remotely, so they had a quorum. She stated they discussed regional issues including depredation, primarily shark; aging of the fleet and workforce development; and barotrauma. Each state gave updates on current programs and

they were also updated on activities by the Gulf Reef Fish Shareholder's Alliance and Audubon GULF's Program that are relevant to Sea Grant. Laura Picariello will be the new Chairman and Dominic Seibert will be the new Vice Chairman. They have no actions to present to the Commission.

### **NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Comments**

**R. Crabtree** reported the full report is in Tab C of the briefing book. He stated the Gulf Council meeting will be held next week in Galveston and the two big issues will be red grouper and modifications to the red snapper and grouper IFQ programs, but he does not expect final action on these issues to be taken at that meeting. He said work is continuing on the electronic reporting program that the council approved for charter boats in both the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. Over 3,000 vessels will be affected by this program. They are currently working on developing the software and the screens that are necessary for reporting and working on making sure the data will be secure. The data will be housed with ACCSP at the ASMFC. They have been able to hire contract personnel through a grant within NOAA to work on this program. He expects the final rule for the Gulf Program will be made sometime in the fall and that the catch reporting portion of the program will go into place sometime in the spring. The requirements to have a geo-positioning device onboard will come in Phase 2 of the program. This requirement will be necessary for the fishermen to be eligible for reimbursement. This is a very complicated program but progress is being made.

He stated that Fishery Disaster declarations were made in September and \$165M has been appropriated. This includes a whole range of disasters, some on the west coast, two shrimp disaster declarations off South Carolina and Georgia, one for Hurricanes Florence and Michael, as well as the catastrophic fisheries disasters that were declared for Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama caused by the flooding from the Mississippi River.

He said they are working with the USACE and EPA on two finfish aquaculture projects. One is the Velella Epsilon project which proposes to culture almaco jack in a single cage in federal waters about 45 miles southwest of Sarasota. The comment period has ended and they are hoping a decision will be made by EPA soon. The other project is with Manna Fish Farms to establish an 18-cage commercial scale finfish operation about 20 miles off the coast of Pensacola. In addition, NOAA Fisheries is working with a recipient of Department of Energy ARPA-E macroalgae funding who is interested in culturing macroalgae species (*Euchema* spp.) in the Gulf.

Finally, NOAA is involved in a number of artificial reef projects that have gone to the USACE that range from the Gulf of Mexico up to North Carolina. NOAA will be providing Section 7 consultations as some of the proposed projects are in critical habitats and will require biological opinions. NOAA is of the opinion the USACE needs to look more carefully on how these projects fit into the overall goals and objectives of the fishery management plans that the Council has in place.

**J. Spraggins** thanked R. Crabtree and NOAA for their quick response to declaring the disaster due to the flooding from the Mississippi River in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. He said the states are working very hard to provide all information needed to secure disaster funding.

## **USFWS Region 4 Office Comments**

**Alan Brown** thanked the Commission for the invitation and for James Ballard's and other staff member's efforts in the administration of their small grants program. Although it is a small amount of funds, it takes a lot of work off their regional office staff. He said he continues to support Glenn Constant's involvement with the Commission and Council in providing his expertise on the issues they are currently involved. He stated as most are aware, the continuing resolution continues through November and it does impact their ability to process and distribute grants and funding that other entities are depending on. He said the FWS fisheries budget was approved in both the house and senate with significant increases. There has also been an increase to states that are trying to manage and control Asian Carp. He said as reported on at the last Commission meeting, the DOI is trying to align all the Bureaus into the same geographic boundaries so the FWS has went from eight regions to twelve effective October 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be some administrative changes but he does not expect it to affect how the FWS interacts with the Commission or the Council.

## **Presentation of Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)**

**Jessica Graham** gave a presentation on the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. She said the program was first conceived in 2000 and GSMFC was one of the founding members. The mission of the program is how to conserve aquatic resources across traditional boundaries. SARP is formally under the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA), as a joint party committee bringing together state and federal partners across the 14 Southeast states and the MOU forming SARP was signed in 2004. In 2007, SARP was recognized as one of the founding members of the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

The Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan was published in 2008 and it outlines the objectives of the program and since then a number of different products have been published on conserving fish habitat. She reviewed the different activities of the programs under SARP and stated they have an opened RFP through the National Fish Habitat Partnership with a December 6, 2019 deadline and all information is on the website [www.southeastaquatics.net](http://www.southeastaquatics.net). A copy of the full presentation can be obtained upon request to the GSMFC office.

## **Executive Committee Report**

The following Executive Committee Report was submitted to the Commissioners:

### **Discussion of GSMFC Audit**

**A. Rabideau** reviewed the 12/31/18 Single Audit with the committee. Piltz, Williams and LaRosa was the auditing firm. An unqualified opinion was received which means that the financial statements were fairly presented in all material aspects. **A. Rabideau** pointed out that page 31 of the audit report outlines the summary of the audit results. **S. Bannon** moved to accept the audit report. **The motion was seconded by D. Ellinor and L. Robinson and passed unanimously.**

### **Discussion of Department of Commerce IG Audit**

**D. Donaldson** reviewed the final audit report from the Department of Commerce Inspector General audit. He stated that the Commission was awaiting a determination from the NOAA Grants Management Division after submission of the Commission's response following receipt of the final report. If nothing was heard from NOAA by the end of November, **D. Donaldson** would contact the NOAA grants office. **D. Ellinor** expressed concerns that the Commission and gulf states could be held responsible for the approximately \$6 million in questioned costs. **J. Spraggins** suggested that the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' (MDMR) legal team review the audit report. After the Commission receives a determination from NOAA, the Executive Committee will meet to determine any additional steps in the audit resolution process.

### **Financial Report**

**A. Rabideau** noted that the commissioners receive the financial report every month by email. She pointed out the new fund code 601 SEAMAP Supplemental or Optimizing Fishery Independent Surveys in the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Presentation of 2020 Budget**

**A. Rabideau** reviewed the 2020 budget. She pointed out that the commission budget is slightly higher than last year's budget due to projected increases in contractual numbers and an increase in Interjurisdictional Fisheries funding. The total projected budget for fiscal year 2020 is \$8,910,364. Since final numbers haven't been established for IJF and SEAMAP and discussions are being held Thursday morning concerning the FIN budget, the total budget will change. It was determined that the budget should include another column that shows a "proposed" budget and an "actual" budget for the prior year to clearly demonstrate changes to the approved budget. **D. Ellinor moved to accept the 2020 budget. The motion was seconded by S. Bannon and passed unanimously.**

### **Staff Compensation**

The Executive Committee recommended that any increases in staff compensation be postponed until the OIG audit is resolved.

**Sen. B. Allain moved to accept these recommendations. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

***L. Robinson moved to accept the Executive Committee Report as submitted. B. Allain seconded and the motion passed.***

### **NOAA Fisheries Budget Update**

**D. Donaldson** gave an update on the NOAA Fisheries budget. He said, as mentioned earlier, they are still under a Continuing Resolution but the House has passed an appropriations bill for Commerce, Justice and Science. The full Senate has not passed one yet but the Appropriations Committee and one of their Subcommittee's details on the bills are in Tab C of the Briefing Book. He stated the NMFS budget is on pages 24-28 and they recommended \$955M for NOAA Fisheries which is about \$140M above the President's budget. There is \$171M for Fisheries Data Collection



Surveys and Assessments which is the line item that includes the FINs and SEAMAP. There is \$13M for Aquaculture and the Regional Council and Commission line item is above the President's budget at \$41.5M and it does not approve the proposed reduction in the Interstate Commissions and provides the FY19 funding levels to the Commission. IJF is level funded at \$3.5M and rejects the proposed elimination from the President's budget of IJF, and enforcement is up in the House over \$73M which is almost \$20M above the requested amount and disagrees with the proposed elimination of JEAs and recommends funding at FY19 levels. On the Senate side through the Appropriations Committee budget fisheries data collection and survey is about the same level as the house at \$170M, Aquaculture is a little higher at \$15M, the regional Council's and Commission's line items is about what the House is at \$40M. IJF is level funded and enforcement is a little lower in the House at \$70M.

**D Donaldson** said there is a couple things to note on Exempting Fishing Permits for Red Snapper Fishing. The committee commended the gulf states for developing a strong proposal for reef fish management and within the fisheries data collection survey and assessment line item they provided an additional \$5M to NMFS to deliver technical support for each of the states to insure successful implementation of each state plan, then \$23M for the FINs which is an increase from last year. There is \$2.5M for the regional pilots for aquaculture to continue on each coast and that is approximately \$500K to each of the Commissions. There is about a 12% increase over the FY18 allocation to the Councils and Commissions. He said he will keep the Commission apprised on any changes and the final budget when available.

#### **Discussion of Legislative Issues and Actions**

**D. Donaldson** reviewed several bills of interest that are in the Briefing Book Under Tabs D-G.

He said there is a discussion draft of advancing the quality and understanding of American Aquaculture, the AQUAA Act, and it essentially establishes a system for marine aquaculture in the EEZ and provides more flexibility for aquaculture activities. The Forage Fish Act is to improve the management of forage fish but this is mainly an East Coast focus. It will give the authority to the Councils to manage forage fish and it was suggested to exclude menhaden from this Act. H.R. 3697 is an act to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to provide flexibility for fishery managers and stability for fishermen, and for other purposes. There have not been any concrete discussions on this amendment. The final Act, S.2166 Regional Ocean Partnership Act, authorizes regional ocean partnerships to coordinate cross-jurisdictional efforts to help reduce duplication and to maximize efficiencies.

#### **Discussion of Wind Farms in the Gulf of Mexico**

**D. Donaldson** reported on the issues of wind farms on the East Coast with marine mammals and fisheries interactions. He said there has been discussions about having wind farms in the Gulf of Mexico but nothing has happened yet. He asked the Commission if they would want the staff to pursue facilitating discussions on this issue or maybe have a general session to discuss avoiding some of the pitfalls the East Coast has encountered before any formal activity takes place to pursue wind farms in the Gulf of Mexico. **L. Robinson** said Texas has had a wind energy industry since 2007 and TPWD has been working actively with them. All of Texas' wind farms are land based

but there have been discussions to have them offshore. He said he would be happy to be involved in any discussions and sharing information. The Commission directed staff to stay apprised of the situation and if they see a reason to have a general session, bring it to the Commission's attention.

### **Status and Overview of Aquaculture Activities**

**S. VanderKooy** stated a complete report is under Tab I of the Briefing Book. He reported the Commission has been involved with some small grant opportunities through NOAA Aquaculture for a few years. In 2019 the Oyster Program decided to go to a consortium-based approach for funding projects. Nine groups submitted larger, long-term projects that could last as long as 5 years. He said they also started a pilot program for aquaculture projects other than oysters. These totaled \$450K and includes three projects, two of which were continuations of previous work. The RFP has been released for next year and a total of \$600K will be available to fund the new pilot projects.

### **Discussion of Gulf Shellfish Initiative**

**Bill Walton and Seth Blich** gave a presentation on the Gulf of Mexico Shellfish Initiative (GoMexSI): A Regional Challenge and Opportunity. The goals of the program are to create new jobs and business opportunities, meet the growing demand for seafood, create additional habitat for important commercial, recreational, endangered and threatened species, focus on species recovery, have cleaner water and nutrient removal, and shoreline protection. There has been a suggestion to create a regional "Mega-hatchery" to produce 100 billion eyed larvae per year but it has not been adopted but has provided a template for states with scaled down goals. GoMexSI has held several stake holder meetings to provide input to the program. A full report is available on the feedback from the meetings <http://masgc.org/assets/uploads/publications/1397/18-015.pdf>. There are now five integrated goals in the revised draft GoMexSI – ensure appropriate quantities of water to support thriving shellfish populations; ensure clean water to protect and enhance shellfish beds; increase the abundance of shellfish to promote commercial shellfish harvest, restore oyster stocks and increase associated environmental benefits by integrating fisheries, restoration and aquaculture; encourage a regulatory and enforcement environment that promotes a sustainable fishery, productive restoration projects and thriving aquaculture; and improve communication among resource managers, regulatory agencies, academia, non-governmental organizations and industry to inform management and promote collaboration. GoMexSI will help leverage external funding, magnify voice to other agencies and increase public awareness, stewardship and support of ongoing and future efforts. There is a living draft and it was suggested to house GoMexSI at Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. The complete presentation can be obtained upon request to the GSMFC office.

The Commission agreed they can provide space to house GoMexSI personnel. D. Donaldson will keep the Commission updated on this issue.

### **Update on Great Red Snapper Count**

**M. Dryman** gave an update on estimating absolute abundance of Red Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. He said the project started August 1, 2017 and the project will end March 31, 2020. He



said when the project was set up it had five milestones – data mining and habitat mapping; calibration and validation; sampling; results; and conclusion. He said they spent the first 30% of the project period collating the amount of habitat data that already exists and building a strong experimental design based off that already existing habitat data. He then showed a map of the distribution of sampling gears and where the sampling is taking place. The second milestone, calibration and validation are nearly complete and has been taking place across all the five gulf states that encompass the great red snapper count. This will ensure accurate estimates of fish density and abundance. In the western Gulf of Mexico, they are using ROV: VideoRay Defender and Towed Camera: TARAS Phantom to compare samples and in the eastern Gulf of Mexico they are using ROV: Outland Technologies and Towed Camera: C-BASS. The third milestone, sampling, is nearly complete. He reviewed the sampling portion of the project and noted the High-reward tagging segment received national coverage by the media. He said they will start working on the results and conclusions to end the project in March 2020 and the final report will go to NOAA Fisheries by the end of June 2020. A copy of the presentation may be obtained from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's office upon request.

### **GSMFC Program Reports**

#### **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)**

**S. VanderKooy** stated the full report is under Tab J of the Briefing Book. He said they are working on two documents - the Red Drum Management Profile for the Gulf of Mexico and they will begin a Mangrove Snapper Management Profile next spring. Work is continuing on the Otolith Manual and it is near completion. He stated that following the completion of the SEDAR63 Menhaden Benchmark Assessment, the MAC agreed to begin exploring potential reference points for management. The MAC and a number of invited stakeholders participated in two workshops to develop potential objectives that could be acceptable to all and begin exploring candidate reference points for future consideration to meet those objectives. He said MSC Certification was announced yesterday for the Gulf menhaden fishery. He said they are continuing to work on the Gulf Fishery Independent Database (GFID) that was started a couple years ago as an attempt to consolidate all of the fishery independent data into one centralized location. He then gave a presentation on the Tripletail Acoustic Tagging effort. A copy of the presentation may be obtained from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's office upon request.

#### **SEAMAP**

**J. Rester** reported that since March, SEAMAP has completed the Spring Plankton Survey, Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Bottom Longline Survey, reef Fish Survey, and Fall Plankton survey. The Vertical line Survey and Fall shrimp/Groundfish Survey are currently ongoing. More details on these surveys is in the recently distributed *2019 SEAMAP Annual Report to the Technical Coordinating Committee*. He said SEAMAP held a trawl workshop in March where state and federal SEAMAP partners reviewed trawling protocols, discussed gear specifications, reviewed data entry and QA/QC procedures, and reviewed species identifications. The group also discussed recent taxonomic changes and how to handle historical species identifications when taxonomists have now determined that what they thought was one species could actually be two to three species that look very similar. SEAMAP partners have been conducting crew exchanges

the past few years to assure that all SEAMAP trawling operations were being conducted consistently amongst all partners. The workshop continued those efforts as well as serving as a good review for 2019 trawling operations.

He said five weekly and one end of survey real time mailings were distributed this summer during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish survey to approximately 100 individuals. Several people requested the data right before the Texas Opening. A representative from the Texas Shrimp Association stated many requests have been made for the plots and that they were very useful. This is in stark contrast to twenty years ago when the Texas Shrimp Association asked SEAMAP not to produce the real time plots as it caused pulse fishing.

The Joint Annual SEAMAP meeting with the South Atlantic and Caribbean components was held in July to discuss budget needs, updating the *SEAMAP 2021-2025 Management Plan* and the possibility of hooked gear surveys and the data from the surveys could be used in stock assessments. The Commission continues to manage SEAMAP data and distribute the data to interested parties. The Commission fulfilled 15 SEAMAP data requests since March. The various SEAMAP databases have been downloaded 97 times since March. In the last year, SEAMAP data from the gulf have been submitted for use in SEDAR stock assessments for Red Grouper, Gray Triggerfish, Gulf Menhaden, Yellowtail Snapper, Vermillion Snapper, Scamp and Blacktip Shark.

#### **Sportfish Restoration Program (SPRP)**

**J. Ballard** stated the SFRP detailed report is under Tab L of the Briefing Book. He gave a brief slide presentation on the current work ongoing under the SFRP. The final draft of the third edition of the ASMFC's and GSMFC's *Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials* has been distributed to the Technical Coordinating Committee for review and approval. The deadline for changes is January 1, 2020 and hopefully, final action will be taken at the March 2020 meeting. This will be electronically available through the GSMFC and ASMFC websites and it will be a "living document" where individual sections will be updated as needed. He said they are finally starting the field work component of the Gulf Artificial Reef Monitoring and Assessment Program (GARMAP) that started several years ago. He reviewed several slides of the work and gear, and partners participating in the program. He said they continue to support the *Jimmy Sanders Memorial Lionfish Challenge*. This is an effort to try to expand removal of lionfish across the Gulf of Mexico modeled after Florida's efforts. The tournament will run all year long as opposed to just the summer months to improve participation from divers that target red snapper during the summer months. He reviewed recent legislation that will affect the program. He said they will be hosting the next Joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee meeting in conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission at the Florida's Artificial Reef Summit in April 2020.

#### **Aquatic Nuisances Species Program (ANS)**

**J. Ballard** stated the detailed report is in Tab M of the Briefing Book. He gave a brief slide presentation on the program. He reviewed the projects that have been funded over the last five years through the small grants program with the USFWS. He then briefed the Commission on the FY2019 Projects selected for funding. He stated the Traveling Trunk has been updated and they have been utilized for 1,469 days since their release in 2012. He reviewed the new GSARP website

and stated the fall ANSTF meeting is scheduled for November 5-7 at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland and the GSARP's fall meeting is scheduled for November 19-20 in Charleston, South Carolina.

### **Fisheries Information Network**

**G. Bray** said the report is in Tab N of the Briefing Book and it has all the funding items that will be submitted for 2020. He said all is going as expected for the 2019 fishery dependent and biological sampling and he will give a summary report on the surveys at the March meeting. He said their biggest priority from a fishery dependent standpoint is to try to assist in the process of calibrating state survey data that are used in management. He gave details on the impending Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program (SEFHIER) and how it will affect for-hire sampling.

He said they have completed an overhaul of the data management system aimed at data modernization, improving the quality control process and developing new data entry systems on the biological side, new and user data query capabilities, and it is all focused on increasing the amount and quality of data and getting it clean so it can be fed into stock assessments quicker. He said they have provided biological data for the King mackerel assessment and they will be providing vermilion snapper data, scamp data, greater amberjack data and gag grouper data in 2020. He said they have received NOAA Fisheries funding to transition the three MRIP states to tablet electronic data collection methods for the MRIP dockside surveys. They are also working to get the GulfFIN 5 Year Cooperative Agreement in place as the current agreement ends on December 31, 2019.

### **State Directors' Reports**

All detailed state reports were submitted before the meeting and are in the briefing book. Each state Director gave a brief overview of their report.

### **Future Meetings**

**N. Marcellus** reported Alabama will be the host for the March 2020 meeting. She has proposals from the Grand Hotel in Point Clear and the Lodge at the Gulf State Park. She stated Alabama prefers to have the meeting at the new facility at the State Park but they cannot accommodate the Commission during the week the meeting is normally scheduled. They submitted a proposal for the week of March 9-13, 2020 which is the week before the meeting is usually held. **J. Spraggins** asked the Commissioners if they would want to have the meeting that week and they all agreed to do that. **N. Marcellus** stated the October meeting is scheduled for October 13-15, 2020 in Florida and she is working with Dan Ellinor on suggestions for where the meeting will be held.

### **Publications List and Web Statistics**

**D. Donaldson** stated Tabs U and V of the Briefing Book has the information on publications and the website. He said if there are any questions to contact him or J. Ferrer.

## Election of Officers

**D. Donaldson** reviewed how the officers are elected and the current state rotation. **J. Spraggins** opened the floor for nominations.

**R. Hendon** moved to elect **D. Ellinor** Chairman. **S. Bannon** seconded the motion and it passed.

**D. Ellinor** moved to elect **L. Robinson** 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman. **S. Bannon** seconded and the motion passed.

**C. Nelson** moved to elect **S. Bannon** 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman. **R. Hendon** seconded and the motion passed.

**J. Spraggins** thanked everyone for their support this past year as Chairman. **D. Donaldson** presented him with an outgoing Chairman's gift. **J. Spraggins** presented **D. Ellinor** with the incoming Chairman's gift.

## Other Business

**C. Nelson** updated the Commission on the importation of European Union Shellfish and the potential risk for spreading the oyster herpes virus (OSHV1) and the concerns of the industry. The AFIS is doing a risk assessment on how it can potentially impact the domestic stocks of oysters if they are allowed to be imported. He wanted to make the Commission aware of what was going on and he will keep the Commission informed on the decision of the risk assessment.

**D. Donaldson** stated he was contacted by George Lapointe asking the Commission to plan a workshop on electronic reporting. They have the funds for the workshop they just want the Commission to handle all logistics including reimbursing travel. The Commission approved staff to pursue planning for the workshop.

**D. Donaldson** offered the Commission to administer any disaster funds the states may receive as they have done in the past. He stated there would be administrative costs but wanted to make the Commission aware this is an option if they deem it appropriate.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.*