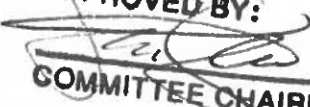


**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
New Orleans, LA
Tuesday, October 17, 2023**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Saucier called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Chairman Jason Saucier, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Peyton Cagle, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
Claire Crowley-McIntyre, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Carey Gelpi, TXPW, Port Arthur, TX (*proxy for Zach Olsen*)
Jason Herrmann, ALDMR, Dauphin Island, AL
Harriet Perry, USM GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Brian Stacy, NOAA, Gainesville, FL (*virtual*)
Elizabeth Bevan, NOAA, Gainesville, FL (*virtual*)
Doug Boyd, GSMFC Commissioner, Boerne, TX
Erik Broussard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rick Burris, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Zach Darnell, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ryan Gandy, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA
Jennifer McGee, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Jason Rider, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Keith Wilson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

Saucier moved to adopt the agenda as written; Herrmann seconded; Unanimously adopted.

Approval of Minutes

Following Subcommittee review, **Perry** requested removal of last two sentences in paragraph beginning 'Perry' per second page of minutes from Oct. 17, 2022 meeting in San Antonio, Texas. **Cagle moved to accept minutes as amended; Perry seconded; Unanimously approved.**

State Crab Monitoring Through SuRF Funding

State reps noted any activities related to Blue Crabs using the Commission's SuRF funding. Florida is conducting more fish house surveys which includes Blue Crabs as a priority species. Mississippi is working on alternate gears for long-term fishery-independent monitoring which includes catches of Blue Crabs. Louisiana continues to target biological data on Blue Crabs from the commercial docks. Texas and Alabama do not have any SuRF projects that include Blue Crabs at this time. VanderKooy noted that the next round of funds will be available starting in January 2024 and the project proposals are being reviewed by NOAA at this time.

Sea Turtles and Questions About Gear Interactions

Dr. Brian Stacy (NOAA Office of Protected Resources) spoke virtually to present info on Kemp's Ridley sea turtles, in relation to strandings and mortality in the region. **Stacy** indicated that anecdotal accounts of sea turtles being encountered in Blue Crab traps and possible entanglement with buoy lines have been reported to NOAA. The Subcommittee indicated that there was not much chance for a Kemp's Ridley or other sea turtle species to be encountered by crab fishermen in their gear with the exception of possibly hatchlings. It was believed that the reports may have been in regard to 'turtles' (terrapins), and not sea turtles. Florida noted that there have been a few sea turtle entanglements with buoy lines along the Florida coast. Those data should be available in the Strandings Network. The subcommittee members would forward any other reports of interactions should they locate any.

Update on Florida TED Research and Fisheries Requirements

McIntyre reported that the FWC was considering changes to trap regulations related to terrapins. The state had been looking at prohibiting the take of terrapins from wild, prohibiting possession of terrapins without a permit, and requiring bycatch reduction devices (BRD) in traps. The legislature had asked the FWC for any research related to terrapins and BRDs and ultimately decided to require a permit and require all recreational traps include a 2X6 BRD/TED.

McIntyre reviewed all the work that went into the final rule making and highlighted a study along the northeast Florida coast testing standard BRD/TEDs with another configuration which was narrower and taller than the approved 2x6 design. They found a high degree of success excluding terrapins with the new design (2-2.5" x 3") and found little to no reduction in crab catches in all sizes up to jumbos (190mm+ CW) and minimal escapement. The results from this new design are promising but there will be more design work ahead.

Upcoming Research

Darnell (USM) presented a project looking at quantifying and reducing discard mortality of undersized and ovigerous Blue Crabs in the Gulf. The goal is to develop estimates of discard mortality and best practices for culling in the Mississippi and Louisiana Blue Crab fisheries. **Darnell** will also begin working on a project to predict impacts of climate change on Blue Crab growth, size at maturity, and reproductive output. Preliminary results indicate that under higher temperatures, juveniles grow faster and molt sooner, and females reach their terminal molt at smaller sizes. A reduced numbers of eggs per brood with more frequent sponges has been documented. He reported that changes to overall fecundity under increasing temperatures will be assessed. Both projects shall run for two years. **Darnell** also said tagging final results were presented but have not been published to date due to COVID issues and changes in students.

Summary of Written State Reports

Each state rep gave a rundown of their derelict trap removals and plans moving forward. Each of the states is to receive a small grant through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to remove lost and derelict traps in 2024. The funds are being administered through the GSMFC similar to the SuRF projects. Subcommittee members also provide highlight on their respective landings and effort since the last meeting and any management or regulatory changes.

Several of the state representatives had submitted written reports prior to the meeting. Due to time limitations, the reports submitted by meeting time were accepted. Those provided are available upon request from the Commission.

Other Business

Perry once again requested the state reps on the Subcommittee try to help her recreate the indices of abundance we used for the GDAR01 stock assessment in 2011. With the turnover on the subcommittee and within the state agencies, the original data has been misplaced and **Perry** hopes that someone might have it to allow her to revise the indices through 2023. The members will look again and contact **Perry** directly with their findings.

Adjournment

*There being no further business, a Motion to adjourn made by **Cagle**; seconded by **Herrmann**; adjourned at 12:02 p.m.*