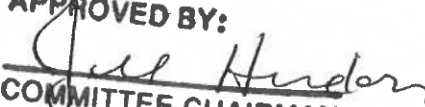


**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 17, 2023
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman T. Switzer called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.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
Zach Zuckerman, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Adam Pollack, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

Staff

Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Sarah Wakefield, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Eric Hoffmayer, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Christian Jones, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Darin Toppin, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Chris Mace, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Peter Himchak, Little Egg Harbor, NJ
Audrey Baetz, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Daniel Burke, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA

Adoption of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

A. Pollack moved to approve the SEAMAP minutes from March 14, 2023 with a minor change. **J. Mareska** seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester started by introducing S. Wakefield as the new SEAMAP Data Manager. **S. Wakefield** stated that she was currently revising and updating the ingest routines for the trawl and bottom longline databases. She was also working on ways to visually display the data for online web mapping and migrating the databases over to Oracle.

J. Rester stated that the fishery independent surveys project finished up in early July. The recommendations that were presented at the March meeting were prioritized by the Steering Committee. After this prioritization process the project developed three survey design scenarios

based on available funding. Scenario 1 anticipated level or potentially reduced funding. The primary recommendation under this scenario would be to increase the number of bottom longline stations in the NOAA Fisheries Bottom Longline Survey and secure long-term funding for the SEAMAP Reef Fish Survey, at the expense of discontinuing some lower-priority surveys or conducting them every other year. He stated that scenario 2 anticipated a short-term funding increase (e.g., Inflation Reduction Act funding) followed by a long-term decrease in funding. The primary recommendation under this scenario would be to immediately invest in research initiatives that would be highly likely to yield significant cost savings in the long-term (e.g. automation of video reading, CKMR). Scenario 3 planned for a long-term sustained increase in funding. In this scenario, a larger suite of priority recommendations outlined in the report could be implemented. This included implementation of new surveys to cover gaps that were not easily filled by the current surveys, including habitat mapping, a forage fish survey, a marine mammal, seabird, and sea turtle abundance survey, and pelagic fish surveys.

J. Rester stated that SEAMAP had proposed starting to cut fish open, take photos, take notes on what the researcher was seeing, and classifying what they were seeing to determine how well the proposed reproductive staging classification system worked. **J. Rester** asked how that went this year. Everyone stated that they were unable to do that this year. **J. Rester** proposed that the Trawl Work Group discuss reproductive staging at their next meeting.

J. Rester also asked about placing a camera on the top of the CTD to photograph the bottom every time the CTD was deployed and how well that worked this past year. **Z. Zuckerman** reported that Louisiana had tried a few videos, but visibility was limited. The Subcommittee suggested that the Bottom Photography Work Group discuss 2023 effort at an upcoming meeting.

J. Rester asked that as 2023 sampling was winding down, to please send in data and cruise reports as soon as possible. He reported that the SEAMAP Subcommittee would meet March 19-21, 2024 in Charleston, South Carolina in conjunction with the SEAMAP joint annual meeting.

J. Rester reported that he felt there were several issues that needed to be addressed before they got worse. He stated that he was starting to see a potential lack of attention to detail with all SEAMAP partners. He stated that with the increased funding this year and subsequent survey expansions, everyone needed to pay attention to detail and collect the best quality data as possible. He stated that a major concern was survey staff not reading or following the protocols set forth in the various operation manuals. He stressed the need for everyone involved in sampling to attend work group meetings and read over the manual before they started sampling each year. As part of this discussion, the Subcommittee felt that the Bottom Longline Work Group needed to meet to clarify the information in the operations manual on moving stations.

SEAMAP 2023 Sampling Review

T. Switzer stated that Florida was 90% complete with their reef fish sampling. Florida completed 93 stations during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. Numerous specimens were retained for age and growth, diet, genetics, and mercury sampling. Florida began using trawl sensors on the doors during the trawl survey and were currently evaluating how to use the data. **T. Switzer** reported that Florida completed 789 stereo baited remote underwater video system (SBRUV) reef fish stations. Thirty-two mapping surveys were completed. **T. Switzer** stated that Florida was

gearing up and training staff to participate in the 2024 SEAMAP Bottom Longline Survey. Florida plans to sample approximately 50 stations per season in stat zones 3-9. **T. Switzer** stated that Florida hosted the invertebrate training workshop in April. He reported that 90% of the 2022 reef fish videos had been processed.

J. Mareska reported that Alabama sent staff out with NMFS during the July portion of the NMFS reef fish sampling. Alabama plans to build one SBRUV system and two vertical stereo cameras this fall. **J. Mareska** stated Alabama completed all bottom longline stations in 2023 and took out Florida staff to train them on longline sampling. He stated that three staff members participated in the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey and that four staff members would participate in the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey.

J. Hendon stated that Mississippi sent three representatives to the April invertebrate training workshop. Mississippi completed 39 bottom longline stations while completing 32 trawl stations with a crew from Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. The joint crew recently completed 62 stations during the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. **J. Hendon** reported that Mississippi had hired a dedicated reef fish specialist.

Z. Zuckerman reported that Louisiana had completed 83 of 93 assigned bottom longline stations. He stated that they completed 15 of the 22 assigned trawl stations during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. **Z. Zuckerman** stated that Louisiana had collected 17 videos for the bottom photography effort. He reported that low visibility and memory limitations were challenging. Louisiana completed 49 reef fish stations using baited and non-baited cameras as well as three 5-minute soaks following the NMFS protocol. He stated that it was taking several hours to review each video.

F. Martinez stated Texas sampled 28-30 stations per year during the Bottom Longline Survey with four vessels stationed out of Seabrook, Port O'Connor, Rockport, and Port Isabel. For the past couple of years, Texas A&M Galveston had sampled two stations per year in stat zone 17. **F. Martinez** reported that Texas proposed to sample 8-16 reef fish stations per year in stat zones 19-21. **F. Martinez** stated that Texas proposed to map 12-16 stations with the side scan sonar that they purchased last year. Texas staff were sent out with NMFS in August for mapping training. **F. Martinez** stated that a map to deploy the side scan sonar unit was still an issue.

A. Pollack stated that while NMFS completed 85 stations during the Spring Plankton Survey, significant additional sampling opportunities were lost when OMAO cut seven days at sea from the survey. NMFS was unable to conduct MOCNESS sampling and adaptive sampling for close kin mark recapture. NMFS completed 69 stations during the Fall Plankton Survey due to 15 lost days at sea. **A. Pollack** stated that NMFS completed 183 stations during the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, but NMFS lost 21 days at sea due to OMAO staffing issues. Nine hundred ninety-six stations were sampled as part of the Reef Fish Survey and NMFS mapped 1,250 linear nautical miles.

Proposed 2024 Sampling

J. Rester stated he would like for everyone to state what their plans were for 2024 reef fish sampling. **T. Switzer** stated that workshops would be held for video processing training and

habitat mapping. They would also hold reef fish sampling training where they would discuss camera options that everyone could use for sampling. **T. Switzer** stated that a spherical camera would be the preferred camera system, but he realized that everyone would not be able to afford it or have the equipment to deploy it. **J. Rester** stated that he would try to schedule a call before the end of the year to discuss standardized cameras and to prepare for the various reef fish workshops next spring.

Collecting Additional Data Fields During the Trawl Surveys

A. Pollack stated he did not remember why he wanted to put this item on the agenda. Therefore, the Subcommittee did not discuss the issue.

Review of OMAO Letter

Due to time constraints, **J. Rester** stated that he would send out a clean copy of the draft letter that the Subcommittee had reviewed before the meeting. After the final Subcommittee review, he would send the letter out for further review by the Commission before sending the letter to OMAO.

Review of Trawl and Bottom Longline Manuscripts

A. Pollack stated that he had made all the suggested corrections by the reviewers. He stated that one reviewer wanted to see quite a bit of additional analyses. He said the reviews were all over the place and that he would try to resubmit the revised manuscript by October 20.

J. Hendon stated that some of the data used in the analyses used non-SEAMAP data. **E. Hoffmayer** stated that he needed to redo some of the analyses before submitting the revised manuscript. **E. Hoffmayer** stated that he wanted to revisit some of the early data dealing with predation. Older data had information that was excluded from the SEAMAP database because it did not conform to the data standards of the time. **E. Hoffmayer** suggested that each partner review their earliest bottom longline data currently in the database and see if additional predation data could be added to the database.

Election of Officers

J. Rester stated that the Commission would like to move toward electing officers in even number years with officers serving a two-year term. Therefore, unless someone objected, he suggested keeping the current officers of T. Switzer as chair and J. Hendon as vice chair until next October. No one objected to keeping the current officers until next year's election.

Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m.