

Summary Report

Joint Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting

April 24-25, 2024

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels (APs) convened in Charleston, SC on April 24-25, 2024.

The APs approved the minutes from the January 2023 Shrimp AP meeting, the January 2020 Joint Law Enforcement and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting, and November 2020 Joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting and the agenda for the April 2024 meeting.

Advisory Panel Members:

Janie Thomas (Industry Representative, FL)*

Gary Exley (Commercial, GA)*

Bryan Fluech (Scientist, GA)

Nancy Jones (Commercial, FL)

Jeffery Milliken (Commercial, NC)*

Stephen Morrison Jr. (Commercial, GA)*

Jody Shirley (Commercial, FL)

Marilyn Solorzano (Commercial, FL)

Tim Willis (Scientist, NC)

John Woods (NGO, GA)*

Mike Merrifield (Commercial, FL)

Jason Vogelsong (Commercial, FL)

Lee Vogelsong (Commercial, FL)*

Damien Solorzano (Commercial, FL)

*not in attendance

Committee Chair Remarks

Laurilee Thompson, Chair of the Shrimp Committee for the Council, provided opening remarks.

1. Citizen Science Update

Julia Byrd, the Citizen Science Program Manager, gave an update on the Council's Citizen Science Program including the program's goals, research priorities and the following projects:

- **SMILE Project** – collecting length info on data limited species via handheld dive camera.
- **SAFMC Release** – logging information on released shallow water grouper and red snapper.
- **FISHstory** – gathering catch composition and length for select species through volunteer analysis of historic fishing photos.

2. Updates

Coral Amendment 10

Kathleen Howington, Council staff, provided a brief history of Coral Amendment 10, including details of the original submission and disapproval. The AP was given an overview of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's (SEFSC) visual survey of the proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA). The APs, specifically the Deepwater Shrimp AP whose constituents participate in the rock shrimp fishery, recommended the Council continue work to resubmit the amendment, providing the following comments:

- Regular use of the area would be variable due to the nature of the fishery but, if open, the area would be very important in years when the rock shrimp are present.
- Shrimpers noted that they did not interact with coral when the area was previously open.
- Due to sea conditions and currents, only experienced fishermen tend to trawl within the area and are experienced in avoiding the coral and trawling responsibly.
- Trawling tends to take place roughly 300 yards away from the coral pinnacles.

Fishery Disaster Relief

Allie Iberle, Council staff, gave a brief presentation to prime discussion on the current economic state of the South Atlantic shrimp industry, which included information on dumping and anti-dumping policies, current anti-dumping investigations, information on the NOAA Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP), and how each South Atlantic state was handling state level disaster declaration requests as of March 2024. It was noted that two Gulf states (Louisiana and Alabama) submitted a request for a disaster determination but were ineligible because the shrimp resource still exists and is accessible and that a similar outcome would be given for any South Atlantic states that request this determination. SEFSC staff will be giving a presentation on the recent changes under the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) as a result of the Fisheries Resource Disasters Improvement Act at the [June 2024 Council Meeting](#). The APs noted the following with regards to the state of the fishery:

- The shrimp fishery is facing many challenges including low prices for product, the inability to compete with low-priced foreign product (which AP members noted come with product quality and labor concerns), high fuel costs, labor shortages, and the loss of working waterfronts.
- While the imports of shrimp from certain countries already have tariffs, they do not directly aid domestic fishermen.
- The APs recommended that the Council aid in making the connections between fishermen/industry and the agencies or legislators that have the ability to provide support or change since it is not in the Council's direct purview to do so.

3. White and Rock Shrimp Fishery Performance Reports

With input from the APs, Fishery Performance Reports (FPRs) have been developed for several South Atlantic species. The intent of the FPRs is to assemble information from AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. Additionally, input was received from Pat Greer and Sonny Gwin on the developing shrimp fishery off of VA and MD.

Dr. Chip Collier, Council staff, provided an overview of the draft white and rock shrimp [Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation \(SAFE\) Report](#). The SAFE report included information on life history, stock criteria, population abundance trends, and economic and social trends for both species. The APs suggested that the following would be useful for the SAFE report:

- Deisel prices compared to landings
- Socio-economic factors driving the fishery
- The emergence of niche or alternative markets
- The number of rock shrimp peelers
- Lake Okeechobee discharge and the effect on landings

The APs based their input on a series of discussion questions, from which the FPR for white and rock shrimp will be developed. A copy of the full report, as well as other FPRs, will be uploaded to the [FPR database](#).

4. Southern Shrimp Collaborative

Dr. Robert Dunn, the research coordinator at North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, presented an overview of research conducted by the Southern Shrimp Collaborative. The project aims to better understand changes in brown, pink, and white shrimp populations in response to environmental variability due to changing climate conditions, weather events, and habitat modifications. Its focus is mainly on the post larval phase where shrimp reside in the estuarine environment, which is crucial nursery habitat. The project combines 4 different components:

1. Analyses of long-term surveys and historic samples.
2. Stakeholder interviews.
3. Density-dependent growth and mortality experiments.
4. Field samples.

The AP discussed the following:

- Predictions of abundance on a yearly basis would be beneficial.
 - Predictions could be used to help support domestic product, predicting when there will be more domestic product and lowering the amount of imported product in those years.
- AP members stressed the importance of fishermen knowledge and continuing to pair this knowledge with the research as fishermen tend to be the first ones to notice changes.

5. Giant Manta Ray and Smalltooth Sawfish Biological Opinion Updates

Jennifer Lee, with the Protected Resources Division at NOAA, presented an update on reinitiation of the Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation on giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish. Reinitiation is needed due to the amount of incidental take and emergence of new information on giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish. For giant manta ray, updates included life history and bycatch data. For smalltooth sawfish, updates included life history and information on the current mortality event occurring in the Florida Keys.

6. Shrimp Futures Project

Dr. Carissa Gervasi, Postdoctoral Associate with NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), presented an overview of NOAA and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Shrimp Futures project. The project aims to characterize the current state of the shrimp fisheries in the Gulf and South Atlantic, develop short-, medium- and long-term goals for the fishery and identify and address major pathways, impediments and uncertainties moving forward. To achieve these goals the project will:

- Create **Conceptual Modeling** that will build a picture of the current Southeastern US shrimp fishery.
- Using **Vision Identification**, develop short- and long-term visions for the fishery.
- Perform an **Uncertainty Analysis** to identify critical factors influencing the fishery.
- Use **Scenario Planning** to develop short and long-term scenarios for the shrimp fishery considering identified uncertainties.

The AP noted that the following would be valuable for the project:

- Understanding the grant process and criteria for application would be helpful for those seeking grant funding.
- The scenario planning should include some of the following important points:
 - Promoting domestically harvested shrimp
 - Fuel prices
 - Graying of the fleet
 - Identifying which governmental organization can take which actions with regards to imports and disaster response.

This project will also be presented to the Council at the June 2024 Council meeting.

7. Other Business

Submarine Cables

The APs discussed the location and ways to avoid interaction with submarine cables. Flyers were provided that show the location of cables in the Florida region and staff provided information for [Sea Risk Solutions](#) – a company that helps provide cable information to fishermen as well as the [North Atlantic Submarine Cable Association](#), which provides a comprehensive coordinate set of southeastern Atlantic cable locations.

Coast Guard Proposal – Merchant Mariner Card Requirement

The APs discussed the recent proposal from the US Coast Guard (USCG) that would require commercial fishing vessel (CFV) operators of less than 200 GT hold a valid USCG issued Merchant Mariner's Credential, and additional measures to require crewmembers on CFVs hold crew competency certificates or Merchant Mariner's Document (Docket # [USCG-2024-0231-0004](#)). The APs were not in favor of additional commercial credential requirements.

Resources and Programs

The AP discussed several programs that are beneficial for the southeastern shrimping industry including:

- [Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Young Fishermen's Initiative workshop](#)
- [U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program](#)
- [Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Grant Program](#)
- [Gulf of Maine Research Institute's Marine Resource Education Program](#) – email Kim Iverson (kim.iverson@safmc.net) for more information