

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SHRIMP COMMITTEE

**Sea Palms Resort and Conference Center
St. Simons Island, GA**

March 8, 2011

SUMMARY MINUTES

Shrimp Committee

Robert Boyles, Chair
David Cupka
Dr. Wilson Laney

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Doug Haymans
Charlie Phillips

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Observers/Participants:

Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Dr. Jack McGovern
John Wallace
Lt. Chisolm Frampton
Capt. Doug Lewis

Monica Smit-Brunello
Bob Gill
Jessica McCawley
Otha Easley
Mike Kennedy

Other Participants Attached

The Shrimp Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Sea Palms Resort and Conference Center, St. Simons Island, Georgia, March 8, 2011, and was called to order at 9:42 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Robert Boyles.

MR. BOYLES: Good morning, everyone. My name is Robert Boyles. I'm the chair of the Shrimp Committee. This is my first meeting as chair so I'd like to call the Shrimp Committee Meeting to Order. The first item of business is the approval of the agenda which was included in the briefing book. Are there any additions or changes to the agenda? Seeing none, is there any objection to adopting the agenda as submitted? Seeing none, the agenda stands adopted.

The next item is the approval of the minutes from the March 2, 2010, committee and AP meeting. Those minutes were submitted on the briefing CD. Any changes, additions or deletions to those minutes? Seeing none, any objection to the adoption of those minutes? Seeing none, those minutes are adopted. Next I am going to turn the meeting over to the vice-chair, Charlie Phillips of Georgia, and also have Gregg walk us through the overview of the Shrimp Review Panel.

MR. WAUGH: Everybody should have received the Shrimp Review Panel Report. It was in that package that you got the e-mail notification – I'm sorry, it was e-mailed out separately, so pull that up. Kari is going to walk you through the report.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, for the record I'm relinquishing the chairmanship. I think it will be apparent why in a moment, but we have a request from the state of South Carolina for the committee's consideration. I appreciate your taking over to run the rest of the meeting.

MS. MacLAUHLIN: I'm Kari MacLauchlin. I am the social scientist for the council. I'm going to walk you through the Shrimp Review Panel Report, just kind of running through the document and some of the key things. The panel met via conference call on March 2nd to review the data that Georgia and South Carolina submitted and to make some recommendations.

In South Carolina there was an extended period of the cold weather where the water temperatures were below 9.3 degrees Celsius for more than a week. This figure shows around December is when the temperature started to drop. Some of the trawl samples for South Carolina; in December the average number of white shrimp was 975 and then in February the tows shows that they were harvesting zero live shrimp.

The percent reduction in the CPUE was 100 percent. In this table also we have included the information from 2000 and 2001 in which the CPUE dropped 99 percent. This is the last time that South Carolina requested a concurrent closure of the EEZ.

In Georgia kind of a similar situation with the water temperatures dropping low, although in February the temperatures were only 5 percent lower than what they usually are. There is more information in the appendices from this report. This year their trawl samples show the CPUE as 5.32 kilograms per tow in December and 0.14 kilograms per tow in February, so the percent reduction is 97 percent.

The panel reviewed the data and concluded that both South Carolina and Georgia have met the criteria to request the concurrent closure of the EEZ, and that is an 80 percent drop in CPUE after a winter freeze. However, at the time Georgia would most likely not request a concurrent closure. They feel that just keeping state waters closed for an extended period will be sufficient to protect the fall crop.

The review panel also discussed a little bit about developing some kind of mechanism so that state managers can do an immediate closure if they would like to. This is something that they also recommended to the council in 2010. Also, the panel recommends the issue of redefining overfishing for pink shrimp. That's the report.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, based on the business of the Shrimp Review Panel, I would make a motion that we request the Regional Administrator to close the exclusive economic zone off of South Carolina out to 25 miles to trawling until June 7th or until the state of South Carolina opens any or all portions of state waters to trawling.

MR. PHILLIPS: Seconded by David. Discussion? Robert.

MR. BOYLES: As was presented by the Shrimp Review Panel discussion, I think the evidence is fairly clear that we have serious concerns about the status of our shrimp stocks, particularly for what will become the fall shrimp crop. I would ask that the committee favorably consider this motion in an effort for us to hold what we've got and ensure that there is a fall white shrimp crop.

MR. PHILLIPS: There was some discussion earlier about could we close just South Carolina and not Georgia. Has Monica weighed in on that yet?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Charlie, I was having a sidebar; would you repeat your question to me.

MR. PHILLIPS: Monica, there was some discussion earlier about if Georgia agreed with South Carolina closing their waters and South Carolina agreed with closing their waters; could the two states agree for a closure but the closure only be off of one state?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay, and your question is, is that all right?

MR. PHILLIPS: That is the question.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think it is. I'll review the information again, but you should discuss I think on the record as to why that is occurring and why Georgia is not asking for Georgia waters to be closed as well. I think that would be good for the record.

MR. BOYLES: Jack, can you give me a sense of how quickly, should the committee approve the motion and the council approve it, how long it would take the regional office to implement that closure?

DR. McGOVERN: I wasn't around when they had the last closure so I'm not sure how quickly it can be done. I think it can be done – Monica might have been around when we did the last one and she may recall how quickly this proceeds.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Monica was around but it has been a while and we've had a lot of actions in the meantime. I know it's a truncated process and it's supposed to go very quickly so by full council I'll be able to give you a better idea as to how quickly it can go through. I'll discuss it with Roy.

MR. CUPKA: I'm like Monica; there has been a lot of water over the dam since that time, but it seems to me like it could have been as short as four days, but it's probably closer at least to a week because it has to be published in the Federal Register and all and get notices out. It's not going to happen tomorrow should the council approve it, but it's a fairly quick process. It's not immediate, though.

DR. LANEY: This is just a general question I guess for Robert or you or David or anybody else. As a shrimp biologist in a former lifetime, I was wondering – I know the purpose for closing it I guess is to try and protect whatever brood stock is left out there and give you good recruitment for the next season.

Do we know much about the recruitment dynamics of shrimp post larvae? In other words, where they originate; so if we're closing the EEZ off South Carolina, obviously that's going to protect some brood stock, but I'm wondering what leaving things open off Georgia does if in fact a lot of the post larvae that recruit to South Carolina estuaries might be coming from brood stock off Georgia. I don't know the answer to that question, but I just pose it as a biological consideration for the committee to think about.

MR. HAYMANS: Well, I don't think we have a very good understanding of where that larvae comes from. From Georgia's perspective, for the record basically we see a significant difference in the January-February, month-to-month, year-to-year differences. There is a significant difference there indeed. We're 97 percent down; but at the same time the last time we closed we have a dramatically different economy than we did then.

We have a dramatically different amount of fishing pressure than we did then. Even during the height of our season where fuel prices are, we have less than 40 boats out per day and that number is much less during this time of the year. We've got 300-plus square miles closed in Georgia, 600 or so square miles off of South Carolina.

That's pretty healthy spawning grounds in themselves. Quite honestly, the amount of flak that we've over closed fisheries in this past year, Georgia doesn't think that closing this one provides you enough biological benefit to outweigh the political capital that it's going to cost to do it at least from our viewpoint. We think that what we gain here is not worth it. However, we would like to see a mechanism put in place that maybe we could react a little quicker than having to come to the March meeting. I agree with Robert on that point.

MR. BOYLES: Just for the record, I believe the plan – and, Gregg, I'll ask you for some guidance – I believe the plan still allows for large-mesh trawling greater than four inches. The intent here is to protect shrimp. That's certainly the intent of my motion.

MR. WAUGH: Yes.

MR. BURGESS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee but I just had a question for Robert. Is there much shrimping off of Georgia in the EEZ prior to state waters being opening? My point is about how much this is going to affect the commercial fleet; and as Doug had said, expressed some concerns about it. Fishermen might need to work as much as they can so it's just a question about how it would affect the fleet.

MR. BOYLES: Tom, it's a good question. Your question was off of George; I think you're asking me about South Carolina, though, and, yes, we do have trawling. Of course, it's very much related to the resources out there. Certainly, the price of diesel is going to have an impact this year as well.

We don't make this motion lightly. There will be an impact and it will be significant to those folks who are accustomed to fishing in the EEZ before we open our state waters. Again, for the record, we have been alarmed at the lack of shrimp that we have seen in our sampling as recently as several weeks ago. It's not going to be easy; it's going to be tough. I think it's these kinds of conditions for which the plan was written exactly, so South Carolina doesn't make this motion lightly.

MR. PHILLIPS: Any other discussion? **All in favor say aye; all opposed. The motion passes.**

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make another motion that we ask staff to begin the development of an options paper to be brought back to the Shrimp Committee to allow a more timely response to these cold water events that we have been plagued with now two years in a row.

In talking with some members of our industry and some of our staff, it seems clear that there is some thought that this action that we have just taken might be like locking the barn after the horse has been stolen. It sure would be nice to know if we could have staff work on some options that might be available that could lead to an amendment. **I would ask a motion to ask staff to begin development of an options paper for the Shrimp Committee to allow for a more timely response to cold water events.**

MR. PHILLIPS: Doug seconds. Discussion? We've talked about this and I think it's pretty straightforward. **All in favor say aye; opposed. The motion passes.** Is there anything else to come before us? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, I don't know how you might want to proceed with this, but in light of our former discussion and in light of some of the information that has been presented to us in the Spiny Lobster Committee, I'm wondering if there would be some way we could encourage I guess the Science Center, Bonnie, to maybe look into recruitment dynamics for penaeid

populations in the South Atlantic and maybe begin to tease out some of those patterns so we have some sense of where the post larvae that recruit to all the South Atlantic estuaries actually originate.

I know with modern genetic techniques I guess we might be able to tease some of that information out, and I would sure like to know where they come from and I think all the state managers would as well. If there is some way we can encourage that kind of work to be initiated, that would be a good thing.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would expect the team to work with Bonnie on that kind of stuff and that's probably all the direction you needed, Gregg. David.

MR. CUPKA: Mr. Chairman, the panel also made a suggestion or a recommendation relative to this whole issue of overfishing for pink shrimp. I wonder if we ought to ask staff to revisit that issue – it has been several years – and see if there is any way to do a little better job on addressing the overfishing for pink shrimp.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think Robert just seconded it.

MR. CUPKA: My motion is to ask staff to examine better definitions of overfishing for pink shrimp.

MR. PHILLIPS: Discussion? All in favor say aye; opposed. The motion passes. Is there any other business to come before the Shrimp Committee? Gregg, do we have any timing and task?

MR. WAUGH: Well, I think you just gave us the two tasks. What we will do for the first motion about the closure is we will draft a letter patterned on the one we used back in 2001 and have that for you all to review at full council; and should this motion pass, then that letter would be handed over to NMFS immediately here at the meeting.

And then the other two items are items that we would work with the Shrimp Review Panel and draft options. We didn't talk timing, but I'm assuming we're looking at some time September or December so that they have some time to do some work and we have time to clear out our backlog, but certainly to begin looking at some of these changes so that you have the opportunity to put this in place prior to next year, if at all possible.

MR. BOYLES: Gregg, could you scroll back up to the first motion about the closure; and just to clarify my intention – and I don't know if this is in order, Mr. Chairman – my intention here is that the ending of the closure would be whichever occurs first, either June 7th or when South Carolina opens its states waters. I just wanted to clarify that.

MR. PHILLIPS: Is there any other business? Well, if there is no other business, then I suppose we will adjourn the Shrimp Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 o'clock a.m., March 8, 2011.)

Shrimp Committee
St. Simons Island, GA
March 8, 2011

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Graham Transcriptions, Inc.
April 2011

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2010 - 2011 Council Membership

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PLEASE SIGN IN

So that we will have a record of your attendance at each meeting and so that your name may be included in the minutes, we ask that you sign this sheet for the meeting shown below.

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