

GULF COUNCIL

SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Lodge

Gulf Shores, Alabama

April 7, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 13 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 14 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 15 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 16 Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- 17 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 18 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 19 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 20 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 23 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 24 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 25 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 26 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 27 LT Jason Morton.....USCG
- 28 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 29 Ed Walker.....Florida
- 30 Troy Williamson.....Texas

STAFF

- 33 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 34 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 35 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- 38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 39 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 40 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 42 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 46 Leann Bosarge.....MS
- 47 Kyle Detloff.....NOAA
- 48 David Gloeckner.....NOAA

1 Frank Helies.....NOAA
2 Christopher Liese.....SEFSC
3 Alan Lowther.....NOAA
4 Charlie Phillips.....SAFMC
5 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
6 Jessica Stephens.....NOAA
7
8 - - -
9

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 20: Motion to request that NMFS continue with the Texas federal closure in the coming year in conjunction with the State of Texas closure in 2025. The motion carried on page 20.

PAGE 38: Motion to recommend the council approve the Framework Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 39.

PAGE 44: Motion to direct staff to begin development of a shrimp amendment to extend the moratorium on federal Gulf shrimp permits. The motion carried on page 44.

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1 The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 The Lodge in Gulf Shores, Alabama on Monday afternoon, April 7,
3 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Chris Schieble.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2025 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** At this time, I would like to call the
10 Shrimp Management Committee to order. The members of that
11 committee are myself as the chair, and Dr. Overton is the vice
12 chair. Dr. Banks, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. McDermott,
13 Mr. Osborne, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, General Spraggins, and Mr.
14 Strelcheck. All are present today.

15
16 The first item on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda, Tab D
17 Number 1. Does anyone have any other business to add to the
18 agenda? Seeing none, I need a motion to adopt the agenda as
19 written. Billy, and second by Dave. Thank you.

20
21 The next item on the agenda is Approval of the January 2025 Meeting
22 Minutes, Tab D Number 2. Are there any additions, deletions, or
23 edits to the minutes? I've got a couple quickies, in Bob Gill
24 fashion. On page 7, I see line 2, it reads: Staff can prepare a
25 final action document for the April of 2025 council meeting. We
26 need to scratch that "of", I think, and so page 7, line 2.

27
28 Then, also on page 16, lines 38 and 39 are redundant. It reads:
29 "OLE has access to this data, and it has access to this data", and
30 "it has access to this data", and so a couple of those "it has
31 access to this data", need to be removed out of that. That's all
32 I had. If anybody else has any others, can we adopt the minutes
33 as written, with those edits? Mr. Sanchez and Billy. Next up on
34 the agenda is the Action Guide, Tab D, Number 3. We'll let Dr.
35 Freeman wheel us through that, please.

36
37 **REVIEW OF THE TEXAS CLOSURE**
38

39 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Okay, and so, for the next agenda item, it's a
40 review of the Texas closure. The committee will be presented with
41 an update of the economics of the federally-permitted Gulf shrimp
42 fleet and a review of the 2024 Texas closure.

43
44 The Shrimp AP meeting summary and recommendation will be presented
45 to the committee, and the committee is requested to take action
46 and determine if the Texas closure should continue in 2025, and so
47 we have two presentations, the first being from Dr. Liese and then
48 a presentation from Dr. Lowther.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Liese, can you hear us? You may be muted.

3
4 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Dr. Liese, if you want to unmute your line.

5
6 **DR. CHRISTOPHER LIESE:** Okay. Sorry about that. You can hear me
7 now?

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and we've got you.

10
11 **DR. LIESE:** Okay. Once again, I'm Christopher Liese. I'm an
12 economist in the Social Science Research Group in the Miami
13 Fisheries Science Center. I gave this presentation on the
14 economics of the federally-permitted Gulf shrimp fleet to the AP
15 last month, and I was asked to sort of present it here, but in a
16 shorter form, and so I'm going to try to keep it short and
17 condensed.

18
19 I'll talk briefly about the background, in just a big picture
20 context of the fishery, and then the 2023 results and trends, which
21 is what we have data on, and then a couple of slides on shrimp
22 prices by size, imports, and Gulf of Mexico shrimp prices.

23
24 This is a graph of the total landings, and those are the lines,
25 and imports, in pounds, and those are the solid lines, and the
26 revenue in the U.S. sort of shrimp market, and, you know, as
27 everyone knows, in the last forty years, the shrimp market in the
28 U.S. has basically quadrupled, and the share of imports has just
29 steadily risen.

30
31 The share, obviously, of the Gulf of Mexico, or, sorry, the Gulf
32 of America portion of the market has sort of decreased, especially
33 in revenue terms. In terms of pounds, on a graph like this, the
34 landings have been fairly stable, with fluctuations, obviously,
35 year-to-year. You can see that, in 2023, there was somewhat of a
36 peak, you know, during COVID, in shrimp demand, and then, in 2022,
37 it went down. In 2023, it went much further down, and the revenue
38 crashed.

39
40 Looking at --This is the price of Gulf shrimp and imported shrimp
41 that are most comparable to the Gulf shrimp. No, and I take that
42 back. This one is average, just average, prices, and they're
43 inflation-adjusted terms, and you can see that, you know, the long-
44 term trend of Gulf -- Of shrimp prices in the U.S. has been
45 downward, with a bunch of fluctuations.

46
47 You can see that the red line is the Gulf shrimp price. You can
48 see it somewhat plateaued after 2005, or 2006, obviously with a

1 lot of variation, but then, in 2022, and in 2023, the price really
2 crashed, down to two-dollars, or below, and you can see that the
3 2023 price is hopefully below the trend line, though the trend
4 line is going down.

5
6 The consequences of these prices for the Gulf harvesting sector,
7 the fleet, and this is the last five years, and it's the total
8 shrimp fleet, and that's based on landings data. You know, you
9 see the active number of vessels. In 2019, they were 3,500. By
10 2023, they were down to 2,500, and so that's a thousand less
11 vessels, and so that's a big decrease in active vessels.

12
13 Landings have been fairly constant. I mean, they were only down
14 7 percent, from 150 million pounds to 107 million pounds, but, if
15 you look at the gross revenue, or the average price, that, you
16 know, dropped by half, and so that's a huge difference.

17
18 The bottom part of this table is the same numbers for those vessels
19 with federal permits to shrimp in the EEZ. They're usually the
20 bigger otter trawl vessels, and one can see that the number of
21 vessels that are actively shrimping has decreased too, from about
22 1,000 to about 800, but it's less extreme, and so, you know, it's
23 the smaller vessels that probably took the bigger -- That stopped
24 fishing more than the big vessels, but, in terms of revenue,
25 everyone got hit pretty hard.

26
27 We've been conducting an economic survey since 2006 for the federal
28 fleet, and so those who are federally permitted, and here are some
29 condensed 2023 results and the trends that got us. I'm showing
30 ten-year averages, and everything is inflation adjusted in 2023
31 dollars.

32
33 What to mention here is the number of crew has been fairly constant
34 over time. The owner-operators always fluctuate between about 40
35 percent and 50 percent of the vessels. In 2023, you see a drop to
36 32 percent, and so only one in three captains is owner-operated.
37 That is an outlier, and it probably represents the fact that the
38 smaller businesses, the smaller boats, have stopped fishing,
39 because these are active vessels.

40
41 The other big thing is that you can see the number of days at sea
42 has sort of like dropped, from around 160, or 170, days per year
43 to 127 and 125 in 2022 and 2023, and so that's a 25 percent
44 reduction, or, to put it differently, the vessels that were active
45 were operating at 75 percent capacity, compared to the previous
46 historical numbers.

47
48 Now, interestingly, the shrimp landed do not actually show any

1 type of downward trend. On the contrary, per vessel, on average,
2 the number is actually probably at the top-end of what has
3 historically been fished, and so it's the same amount of shrimp,
4 but with less days at sea, and even bigger fuel reduction. I think
5 the fuel reduction, in gallons, that you see towards the end there,
6 from 2022-2023, is about a 30 percent reduction in fuel use.

7
8 I'll mention there's more tables in the longer presentation to the
9 AP. Another interesting thing that I'm not showing here is that
10 the number of the vessels -- In ten years they've aged. The
11 average age has gone from twenty-six years to thirty-four years,
12 and so there's been really almost no new capital invested in the
13 industry, and the flip side is that the industry has become very
14 -- There's very little leverage, or liabilities, in terms of loans,
15 and so just because it's aging, and it's not been great economics.

16
17 These are the estimated prices that are provided by the
18 respondents, and so they're not outside, but they're actually from
19 the industry itself. Again, you can see that the shrimp price has
20 fluctuated, but it's been fluctuating, since 2009, around four-
21 dollars a pound, and then, in 2022 and 2023, it has just, you know,
22 dropped significantly, and just as the fuel prices came up, and so
23 that explains the pain of these most recent years.

24
25 As an economist, you know, we're doing these surveys so that we
26 can identify sort of the real economic productivity of this
27 industry, of the fishing industry, and not individual vessels, but
28 as the fishery as a whole, and so, to do that, we need to adjust
29 a little bit for opportunity costs of time, and make sure we
30 measure the right things, and that's sort of what we're doing here.

31
32 The best measure of that is, in my opinion, the net revenue from
33 operations, and you can see that, over this time period, you know,
34 it's been positive, but then, in 2022 and 2023, it's, on average
35 for the vessels, turned quite down.

36
37 The 2014, 2017, and 2021 were basically good years, from a
38 productivity perspective. The rest of the years were closer to
39 break even, and then 2022 and 2023 have been sort of demonstrably
40 bad years, you know, where people were making losses, and it
41 doesn't matter how you measure this. You know, if you look at it
42 at margin on revenue, then it's minus-5 percent, or 6 percent, in
43 recent years. Economic return, in terms of return on assets, it's
44 minus-4 percent, and so it pretty much -- You know, however you
45 look at it, it's the same qualitative results. It's been pretty
46 tough in the industry.

47
48 I'll just show briefly shrimp sizes by size, both imports, of the

1 imports, and the Gulf shrimp landings, and so this is the prices
2 of size by -- By size, in terms of counts per pound, for the
3 imports, in inflation-adjusted terms, and I'm focusing on, you
4 know, maybe half the imports, which are the warm-water shrimp,
5 frozen, shell on, and so they're probably the closest comparable
6 ones to what's being harvested by -- You know, what is being landed
7 by the Gulf of America shrimp fishery.

8
9 You can see that, generally, there's been a downward trend across
10 all size categories over these years. There's some exceptions,
11 but, generally, it's down, and then in 2023 is the lowest prices,
12 and, again, it's across all size categories, that it's just come
13 down.

14
15 In this next slide, I've broken out sort of the share of the
16 imports by size category, and what you can see is that, in 2012,
17 about -- You know, the biggest shrimp were about 40 percent of
18 total imports. By 2023, they were 63 percent of total imports,
19 and so there's been a shift to larger shrimp in the imports, and
20 the smallest sizes have lost market share, though I'll still add
21 that 1 percent at the bottom there of like greater than seventy,
22 that's 1 percent of 2 billion pounds, and it's still a lot of
23 pounds, 200 million pounds.

24
25 These are the prices by size counts per pound, inflation-adjusted,
26 for the Gulf shrimp landings, and so, in terms of how these compare
27 to the previous, to the import prices between 2015 and 2017, the
28 Gulf shrimp price has generally been less than the import price.
29 In 2018, they were -- Sorry. The Gulf shrimp price, ex-vessel,
30 has been less than the import price for the same size categories.
31 In 2018, it was about equal, and then, in 2019 through 2021, the
32 Gulf prices actually exceeded the import prices for a given size.

33
34 Then that reversed in 2022, for the smaller shrimp categories,
35 where basically the Gulf shrimp price once again was less than the
36 imports, and then, in 2023, all Gulf shrimp prices were
37 substantially below the import prices for the same categories, and
38 especially the forty-one-plus counts, the bottom three categories,
39 and they were almost a dollar below what was in the Gulf, or what
40 the import prices for the same categories were showing, and I think
41 that concludes my presentation.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Liese. Do we have any
44 questions regarding the economics? Mr. Sanchez.

45
46 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you for that presentation. If you're
47 still with us, intuitively, I have a hard time believing that a
48 wild-caught product fetches less money, the last couple of years,

1 than a farm-raised product. Is there an explanation for that?

2
3 **DR. LIESE:** The short answer is no, and I don't have an explanation
4 for that. I think it's probably that a lot of the -- You know,
5 there's just different parts of the Gulf shrimp fishery, and some
6 of it is, you know, very much a commodity, small shrimp, heads on,
7 that sort of thing, but, you know, versus, say pink shrimp that
8 are sort of big ones sold to restaurants, and so there's many parts
9 of it, but I -- You know, there was this whole issue of, you know,
10 the COVID uncertainty that messed with the planning of the -- You
11 know, there is basically anecdotes that the storage was full, you
12 know, and they had made -- That the importers had purchased too
13 many shrimp after the COVID rise in demand, and then, when
14 inflation sort of crimped the consumer, there was too much.

15
16 So, you know, we see that the imports came down, but I guess, to
17 a certain degree, the Gulf might have absorbed even more of that
18 impact, as the big buyers slowed down their buying and sold out
19 sort of their storage, but those are all sort of speculations on
20 my part.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Sanchez, do you have a follow-up?

23
24 **MR. SANCHEZ:** No, and just thank you for trying to attempt to
25 answer that. I appreciate that. It makes sense.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Frazer.

28
29 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm not on the committee, but
30 John asked the first question I would have asked, right, but the
31 example he used was pink shrimp, you know, and, again, even those
32 less than fifteen shrimp per pound are getting less than the
33 imports, and that is kind of surprising.

34
35 My bigger question is this, and I've just been trying to think
36 about just the shrimp industry in a bigger kind of context over
37 the last year or so, and what I don't understand is, if you're
38 only getting two-dollars a pound, on average, for your domestic
39 product, right, and the supply chain is much like any agricultural
40 product, right, and you have a processor, perhaps a packager, and
41 then, you know, a retailer.

42
43 It may vary just a little bit, but the general kind of, you know,
44 cost to the consumer, by the time you get to the retailer, is
45 about, you know, two to three times, and I wanted to know like,
46 when I go to the store, and I'm trying to understand why the shrimp
47 industry is in such a bad shape, why is the cost to consumer, that
48 increase, you know, ten-times or more, and so can somebody in the

1 economic space, either Chris or -- But explain to me how that
2 happens? Somebody is making money on shrimp, and it doesn't appear
3 to be the shrimp fishermen.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Liese, you want to tackle that?

6
7 **DR. LIESE:** I mean, I can -- Again, I can't give you the definite
8 answer because, I mean, to a certain degree, all these margins, at
9 all the different levels and layers of, you know, the value chain,
10 they're all sort of company secrets, and, you know, everyone tries
11 to buy low and sell high, and so that's the nature of these complex
12 supply chains and the market economy.

13
14 You know, the fact that there's a lot of markup at every level is
15 -- It does not surprise me, as it always surprises others, because,
16 you know, a product is sold at a certain place, at a certain time,
17 in a certain condition, and all those things -- You know, yes,
18 it's the same product, but, you know, as you know, when you go
19 shopping in airports, it has a totally different price than it
20 might have in a different setting, and so, you know, shrimp are
21 somewhat perishable, and they could be frozen, but, when they go
22 into the retail sector, they unfreeze them, and so there's probably
23 spoilage.

24
25 There's the cost, you know, and just running retail outlets is
26 expensive, as is driving things around the nation in trucks and so
27 on, and so I'm always hesitant to say that, you know, there's --
28 You know, probably everyone is -- You know, it's a competitive
29 market, and so no one should be getting away with like huge
30 profits, unless we knew there was a market failure, but I don't
31 know of one, and so I don't know if it's fair to say it's unfair
32 that someone is making a lot of profits.

33
34 I mean, you know, I've spoken to some fish house dealers, and, you
35 know, they don't mark up much, just a few cents on top, and then,
36 you know, it goes into the chain, but I -- I know that's not a
37 satisfying question, but there's been some research in the past,
38 the State of Louisiana and so on, looking at the markups, and they
39 are -- There's quite a few, but, the closer you get to the retailer,
40 the higher they go.

41
42 **DR. FRAZER:** Yes, and I appreciate, you know, the response, and,
43 again, I probably was out of place to say somebody is making a lot
44 of money, and so we can strike that from the record, but what I'm
45 interested in, really, is what's the fundamental difference,
46 right, in the supply chain? I just -- I don't see it, and so there
47 has to be some difference, in order to explain that markup.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Anson.

2
3 **MR. ANSON:** So this might go to some of your question, Dr. Frazer,
4 and I'm going to ask a question of Dr. Liese. The price that
5 you're showing that the fishermen are receiving is ex-vessel price,
6 or landed price, but what you're showing for the imports is what
7 is being shown on customs reports into the country, and is that
8 correct?

9
10 **DR. LIESE:** Yes.

11
12 **MR. ANSON:** So there is a little bit of a disparity there in the
13 two values, in that you've got transportation costs in the imported
14 shrimp, and you've got processing costs already included in that,
15 and so, if you take those out, it might be closer to what the
16 shrimp fishermen are getting, and it will be closer, but I don't
17 know if it will be exactly the same.

18
19 You know, in as much as why fishermen are getting what they're
20 getting at the dock, you know, that's -- At least in our part of
21 the Gulf, that's been a complaint for fifteen or twenty years, you
22 know, as long as I've been with the agency, is that the fishermen
23 feel like they are always getting a price that they feel is not
24 equivalent, or matches what they think they should be getting, and
25 so --

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. General Spraggins.

28
29 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** You know, I heard some encouragement. I
30 like the idea that imports are higher than what we have, because
31 I want it to be about twice as high, because, if imports are about
32 twice as high as what we're getting, then at least we're going to
33 be able to sell our shrimp on there, you know, and that's something
34 I look forward to, and, with the tariffs and everything else, I
35 hope they go even higher, and so that means that maybe we can at
36 least bring something in, to where our fishermen can be able to
37 get a nickel at least for what they do.

38
39 Right now, I don't understand, you know, and what really surprises
40 me is to see these numbers. When fuel price was about half of
41 what it is today, they were bringing in over double what they're
42 bringing as today's market, and that's what bothers me more than
43 anything, to see that, to look at -- You know, to say that they
44 were getting -- For \$21.25, they was getting \$5 a pound in 2019,
45 when fuel prices were the way they are, and now they're getting
46 \$2.93, with the price of the fuel the way it is.

47
48 That's telling me why our fishermen can't stay in the market.

1 That's telling me why we can't do it, and so, somehow, some way,
2 and, Dr. Frazer, I understand your thoughts, and somehow, some
3 way, we've got to get that number up, and we've got to get that
4 number, and I'm hoping that the tariffs and other things are going
5 to do something for this, but we got to get the number that we're
6 buying it, and one thing that we're going to do in Mississippi is
7 we're going to start a big campaign, and that's buy American, and
8 it's buy Gulf, and we're going to try to get people to buy Gulf,
9 and, you know, we can't say that you can only buy Mississippi
10 fresh, but you can buy Gulf fresh, and that's what we're going to
11 look for, and so I appreciate it.

12
13 I just -- Looking at these numbers, it really shocks me at how
14 much the price has really went down, and, I mean, you know, when
15 you talk to the fishermen, they're getting seventy-five cents a
16 pound, in a lot of places, instead of this dollar, or even at \$1.05
17 for sixty-eight-plus, and they're getting seventy-five cents a
18 pound for something that's thirty-one to forty, and so, you know,
19 the numbers, to me, it's hard to be able to figure out, but I just
20 hope that something changes this.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Geeslin.

23
24 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** All good discussions, and I would certainly
25 recognize this as not only a, you know, a national, but maybe even
26 a worldwide crisis that we're dealing with, and somewhat that we
27 created ourselves.

28
29 I would maybe request, and I know Leann is going to give us the AP
30 report here momentarily, but maybe carve off a little time. Ms.
31 Bosarge, if you would like to opine and chime-in on some of this
32 speculation that's going on around the table.

33
34 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Thank you. I appreciate it. As far as to Dr.
35 Frazer's question, that's not one that -- That's above my paygrade.
36 That could go either way, right, and so, as a business owner, you
37 have to understand that there is a lot of overhead, right, and
38 that it's unseen sometimes, and so maybe there really is -- Maybe
39 there really are that many extra costs built in somewhere in
40 between that dockside, you know, offloading and the actual getting
41 to the retail consumer. I don't know.

42
43 Maybe it is just a whole lot of markup, with a whole lot of
44 middlemen, and that's a question I would like answered too, but,
45 to me, slide 4 was the most telling in this presentation, and
46 that's the one that General Spraggins just spoke to, and so that's
47 talking about the prices that we get.

48

1 That is our revenue stream, right, period. That's how we make our
2 money. We catch the shrimp, and we offload them for a certain
3 price per pound, and that's what the shrimpers have been telling
4 people for years, is we're trying to operate on a revenue stream
5 that's at or below what we made in the 1980s, but paying out
6 expenses and costs in 2025 dollars, and we have pushed it, and we
7 have pushed it, and we've done more with less, and more with less,
8 and more with less, and we just got nothing left to give.

9
10 We can't squeeze any more efficiency out of what we do, and that's
11 why you see more than half the fleet tied to the dock, because
12 they can't make a living. You know, that's just where we're at,
13 and so I appreciate everybody really listening to this, and
14 listening to the news, and we hope and pray that we can do something
15 about it. It's all driven by the trade practices overseas, the
16 unfair ones.

17
18 You know, we pay our people, right? We don't use slave labor in
19 this country. It's hard to compete with a product that's produced
20 with forced labor, and slave labor, where they're not paying their
21 people. The government doesn't subsidize the shrimp industry,
22 right? They're not buying our boats, and they're not paying for
23 our fuel, and they're not subsidizing our operations. Overseas,
24 they are, and, unfortunately, some of our tax dollars, my tax
25 dollars, are even subsidizing my competition overseas.

26
27 I think just bringing this to light, and having people realize it,
28 is the first step. I'm so excited about this marketing program.
29 Thank you, and I just hope people will buy American, and hopefully
30 we can live to fight another day, but, yes, we're strong. That
31 slide is living proof. Thank you.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. General Spraggins.

34
35 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Leann, when they talk about the fleet twenty-
36 seven to twenty-four years old, can you afford to buy a boat?
37 They're talking about the age of the fleet. You can't afford to
38 buy a new boat, can you?

39
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, and, unfortunately, there was a regulation, a
41 Coast Guard regulation, that went into place years ago that
42 essentially said, if you build a new boat in this country, a new
43 fishing boat, you have to build it as close to class and load line
44 as possible.

45
46 For a shrimp boat, you're looking at over a million dollars to
47 build it to those specs today. There's not a million dollars'
48 worth of profit in that industry for one individual in the past

1 forty years. I mean, I can't -- That's just not -- We don't have
2 the capacity to build or buy a new boat, no. That's why we're
3 trapped in our older boats, and we're just finding a way to keep
4 them going. That's what we do.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Leann. I know, in Louisiana last
7 year, at the start of brown shrimp season, the hundred-count shrimp
8 started at thirty-five cents a pound off the boat, and, if you
9 went to the marina to go recreationally fishing, and you bought
10 live shrimp, you paid thirty-five cents apiece, per shrimp, and so
11 there's quite a disparity between a live shrimp and a dead shrimp
12 in Louisiana.

13
14 Anyway, also keep in mind, over the past three years, the USDA has
15 purchased massive amounts of shrimp, and so that's also
16 artificially inflating the sales of the shrimp that have taken
17 place, especially in Louisiana, from product that was frozen in
18 storage and sold. Had we not had the USDA purchase those shrimp
19 over the past three years, these prices would plummet even worse
20 than what you're seeing here. Do we have any other questions for
21 Dr. Liese before we dismiss him? Dr. Freeman, real quick.

22
23 **DR. FREEMAN:** Not a question, but, again, just to provide some
24 context for this presentation, and I appreciate Dr. Liese
25 presenting not only to the Shrimp AP, but also to the committee.
26 During the discussion about the Texas closure last April, there
27 was a request by committee members, given that a lot of the drivers
28 for the Texas closure revolves around economics, that folks would
29 be interested in seeing the prices associated with the larger-
30 count shrimp, and so that being one of the components of Dr.
31 Liese's presentation, and so, again, I just wanted to provide some
32 context of why this is under this specific agenda item.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any further questions? Thank you, Dr.
35 Liese. Great presentation. I think you're free to go for now,
36 and I'll go back to Dr. Freeman for the next item in the action
37 guide. Is it Texas closure?

38
39 **DR. FREEMAN:** Dr. Lowther is next.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Lowther, you're up with your
42 presentation, if you can hear us.

43
44 **DR. ALAN LOWTHER:** Hi. Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir. Take it away.

47
48 **DR. LOWTHER:** All right. Well, good afternoon, Gulf Council, and

1 so this is -- I presented this at the Shrimp AP that we've been
2 referring to, and the original title was "The Biological Review of
3 the 2024 Texas Closure". There wasn't a whole lot of biology in
4 here, and so I took out the "biological", and, as you'll see, it's
5 difficult to discern trends as we go through this, but we'll take
6 a look at some graphs and see what we can make of it.

7
8 In case some of you are new to the history of this, I'll just very
9 briefly go over this. The Texas closure was implemented in 1981,
10 for the offshore fishery, to increase the yield of brown shrimp
11 harvested from offshore Texas waters, and so the idea here was to
12 give a pause, where the shrimp could have a larger size in the
13 mid-May to mid-July time period, and so there was a moratorium on
14 the shrimping during that period, and with the theory that larger
15 shrimp would then be available after mid-July and would bring in
16 a higher market price. Since then, the nearshore area has also
17 been closed in conjunction with that.

18
19 Here is a graph of the Texas offshore brown shrimp, for August in
20 the red line, and then for July in the blue line, and so, for July,
21 there's basically half a month of shrimping available, and then
22 August is the month after it closes, and you can see that there is
23 a -- There appears to be a bit of a trend, in that it seems to be
24 going down, I would say, if I was just eyeballing that, but there's
25 an awful lot of variability too in the August catch numbers.

26
27 You know, so one of the things is we could -- Do we attribute --
28 I think there's an attribution question, when it comes to trying
29 to assess the Texas closure, and it's that, you know, could
30 variations be explained by other economic or weather factors, and
31 that would require, I think, a deeper analysis.

32
33 That actually is something that Christopher and I have talked about
34 a little bit, as part of once the SEDAR 87 work is all complete,
35 and everything is done, is seeing if we can look at things, and
36 investigate a little more, and try to put a stronger picture on
37 this, but, for now, I think we'll just see that there is quite a
38 bit of variability, but there does appear to be -- Despite the up
39 and down, it looks like maybe the overall trend is a little bit
40 lower for August.

41
42 For July, I would say it's not quite as clear, but maybe really
43 the same picture, where it seems like it's gone down, but you'll
44 see, in 2023, there were increases in both months, July and August,
45 and then, in 2024, it decreases, and so -- to squeeze too much
46 knowledge out of this, I would say, and so let's go to the next
47 slide.

48

1 Okay, and so this is the corresponding graph for white shrimp,
2 and, again, you see a large amount of variability. Again, we see
3 maybe an overall decline, but then there's an increase in 2024,
4 and so we saw decreases in the brown shrimp from 2023 to 2024 on
5 the previous slide, and now we're seeing some increases for white
6 shrimp for both months.

7
8 The lines coincide for 2023 and 2024, and the July and August lines
9 are actually coinciding, or appear to be, and so we did go back
10 and double-check that, just to make sure that those were the actual
11 numbers, and they are, and so it's just a coincidence that those
12 lines are coincident for that time period.

13
14 This graph looks at the offshore on the top and white shrimp on
15 the bottom, and so it's the offshore catch for July and August,
16 again divided up into the size categories. If the closure is doing
17 what we would expect, we would be seeing fewer of the smaller
18 shrimp caught in the later time periods, and it does appear to be
19 -- There's some evidence of that.

20
21 The size bins are along the bottom axis, and so you can see that
22 the largest bar for the brown shrimp in August are the twenty-six
23 to thirty size category. There aren't as many shrimp in the
24 smaller size categories, the forty-one to fifty and to the right
25 of that, and so there may be some evidence of the effect of the
26 closure.

27
28 For the white shrimp, on the bottom, you do see the large majority
29 of the catch in the larger size categories, and, again, smaller
30 numbers means larger size category, zero to fifteen shrimp per
31 pound, and so perhaps some evidence that, for the white shrimp,
32 it's a more dramatic effect than for the brown shrimp, I would
33 say.

34
35 Here are the shrimp prices per month for 2024, and, again, if we
36 had a very strong signal from the closure, we would expect that,
37 when it reopens, that the prices would go up, and I think, if you
38 look at -- Because under the theory that you're getting larger,
39 more desirable shrimp, and, if you look at the brown shrimp, there
40 maybe is some evidence that that's what's happening, in that it
41 does seem to be increasing over the course of the year, and once
42 there's a unexplained August drop.

43
44 For the white shrimp, it's more up and down, and really hard to
45 say, and, you know, like I said before, there may be other economic
46 factors that contribute to a large degree. You know, there could
47 be weather-related factors, or, you know, other tourism-related
48 factors, other factors that could be providing a stronger signal

1 than the closure, but it's -- You know, I can't really tell from
2 here.

3
4 This is a graph of landings. The other ones were based on the
5 area of catch, and this is just showing what part of Texas most of
6 the shrimp landings are coming to, and, again, not really a strong
7 pattern here. I think there's a little bit of a -- It looks like
8 there's a little bit of a trend towards more landings in the -- So
9 a little bit more of the landings coming from upper Texas, around
10 the Galveston area, and maybe a little bit lower in the lower
11 Texas, the Brownsville area, but, again, nothing -- It's not very
12 dramatic patterns here, but perhaps a little bit of a trend in
13 that direction.

14
15 So that was that, and I -- Again, these -- I wanted to make the
16 point that these are graphs that have historically been shown to
17 the AP, and to this committee, and, at the AP, we started a
18 discussion about how to make this more useful, in terms of how to
19 really try to figure out if the Texas closure is doing what it's
20 intended to do.

21
22 There were some good suggestions for things we might look at. We
23 haven't had a chance to do that yet, but it is a hope that we'll
24 -- That I will have a chance to work with Christopher, and perhaps
25 some of the SEDAR 87 team, and see what we can -- What we can pull
26 out of the available data, and I guess that is all I had to say,
27 and so I'll take any questions.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Lowther, for your
30 presentation. Do we have any questions, or comments, regarding
31 the Texas closure? Mr. Geeslin.

32
33 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes, and I've got to pipe in here. One of the things
34 that we -- The purpose of the Texas closure is also biological,
35 right, and you're allowing those shrimp in the bays to immigrate
36 during their life cycle off into the Gulf to get bigger, and, Dr.
37 Lowther, I appreciate the riveting presentation there.

38
39 I would also encourage you to maybe consider working with the
40 state, and some of the state's data, and maybe to incorporate that
41 into your next presentation at the next closure discussion that we
42 have in this same timeframe in next April.

43
44 Just some of our bag seine data, and our catch rates, and our mean
45 length, this April were the highest we've seen in twenty years,
46 and so that's a good sign that those shrimp, as they're immigrating
47 out into the Gulf, they're growing into larger size classes,
48 getting into that more desirable portion of the market, so that,

1 when we open that fishery up, back on July 15th, those shrimpers
2 are able to capitalize on those larger shrimp and bring those to
3 market at a higher price, and so there's also a biological
4 rationale, a purpose, and justification for the shrimp closure.
5 Thank you.

6
7 **DR. LOWTHER:** Thank you for that. I meant to say that, and so I
8 apologize if I didn't say that it was to allow them to go to a
9 larger size, but so I -- I'm interested in who made that comment,
10 because, if you're from Texas, I would like to follow-up with you,
11 and just kind of pick your brain a little bit on this, as we, you
12 know, get into next year and try and do a more useful presentation.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Lowther, that was Dakus Geeslin, and so he
15 is our Texas state director representative here.

16
17 **DR. LOWTHER:** Okay. Fantastic. Thank you very much.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Do we have any other questions regarding the
20 Texas closure presentation from anyone in the committee? If not,
21 we'll move to the summary of the March 4 Shrimp Advisory Panel
22 meeting with regards to the Texas closure. Dr. Freeman.

23
24 **DR. FREEMAN:** Thank you. Bernie, when you get a moment, can you
25 open the Shrimp AP summary for me, and, Bernie, if you could go to
26 the top of page 5 and scroll down just a little bit, so we can do
27 that second paragraph and the motion.

28
29 Just to highlight some of the conversation, I think, in the past,
30 even within the Shrimp AP, they look a lot to the folks who are
31 shrimping off Texas, to get feedback on how the Texas closure has
32 been working for them, and so two comments just to highlight here.

33
34 One AP member added that the Texas closure is doing what it is
35 intended to do, and another AP member emphasized that the Texas
36 closure is more important now than when it first began, and so,
37 following conversation, the AP made a motion, which is before you
38 on the screen, to recommend that the council requests NMFS to
39 continue the federal Texas closure in conjunction with the State
40 of Texas closure in 2025, and that motion carried unanimously. As
41 you all probably heard from her already, we do have the AP chair,
42 if there's additional questions related to that conversation.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we have a recommended motion here
45 from the Shrimp AP that the council requests NMFS to continue the
46 federal Texas closure in conjunction with the State of Texas in
47 2025. Any discussion about the AP's recommendation? All right.
48 Seeing none, Bernie, I sent you a motion to put up on the board

1 with regards to the Texas closure. Did you get that? I'll just
2 read it, while she's finding my email.

3
4 **In typical fashion that we do annually, the motion would be for**
5 **the committee recommends, and I so move, to request that National**
6 **Marine Fisheries Service continue with the Texas federal closure**
7 **in the coming year in conjunction with the State of Texas closure**
8 **in 2025.**

9
10 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** Second.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Billy seconded it. Do we have any discussion
13 on the motion on the board? **Is anyone opposed to the motion on**
14 **the board as written? Looks like all in favor. Motion passes.**
15 Dr. Freeman.

16
17 **FINAL ACTION: MODIFICATION OF THE VESSEL POSITION DATA**
18 **COLLECTION PROGRAM FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO SHRIMP FISHERY**
19

20 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure. I'll give Bernie just a moment. Bernie, we'll
21 be at the action guide next. Great. So, for the next item, this
22 is Final Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data
23 Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery. Staff
24 will also provide a summary of written and virtual public comments
25 received during the comment session held March 31, 2025.

26
27 Next, staff will summarize the draft framework action, including
28 any updated administrative cost estimates provided by the Science
29 Center that were integrated into the document. The committee
30 should ask questions and provide any final recommendations before
31 reviewing the codified text and forwarding the documents to the
32 Full Council for final action.

33
34 The committee could recommend that the council deemed the codified
35 text as necessary and appropriate and give staff editorial license
36 to make any necessary changes in the document, and so the first
37 item within this agenda item will be receiving the summary of
38 public comments, and so we have Ms. Muehlstein available for that.

39
40 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you. So, for this topic, since
41 it was a framework, we don't typically go out to in-person public
42 hearings, but understanding that the industry was very interested
43 in the topic, we did conduct a direct mail-out, and so that direct
44 mail-out was sent to 1,116 permit holders. We did have ten of
45 those letters bounce back to us, but two of them provided
46 forwarding addresses, which we then sent the letter to. We also
47 published a public hearing video that earned 150 views.

1 We did a social media push, as well as a press release to announce
2 the availability of the public comment form, as well as the virtual
3 public hearing, and so we did conduct a virtual public hearing
4 meeting on March 31, and we had thirteen members of the public
5 attend, and I'll just briefly summarize what we heard during that
6 meeting.

7
8 We did hear support for data going to NOAA's Office of Science and
9 Technology. We heard that the data must be safeguarded, because
10 it is the livelihood of the industry. We heard support for
11 Alternative 3, because there has never been any issues with the
12 cELBs, and AIS contract vessels.

13
14 We also heard that cell towers and repeaters work up to fifteen
15 miles from shore, and so the cELBs are very useful for the
16 industry. We heard that the industry also provided money for new
17 units in support of this alternative. We did hear that there was
18 no money for a new program and that the industry is already
19 struggling, and can't pay their own expenses as it is, and we heard
20 concern for lack of federal funding for any alternative. We heard
21 that, if worse comes to worse, NOAA needs to program the remaining
22 units and continue to use the current program. We also heard that
23 any new program needs to have a strong outreach and customer
24 service component when it's rolled out.

25
26 We also gathered comment through an online public comment form.
27 We got fifteen -- I'm sorry. Five members of the public submitted
28 comments, and a brief summary of that is we heard that shrimpers
29 can't afford the requirements that are more costly to the
30 individual. We heard that data should not be transmitted to an
31 Office of Law Enforcement server, and instead it should be sent to
32 the scientists, and allow law enforcement to access the
33 information, but that folks didn't want shrimpers to be treated
34 like criminals.

35
36 We heard that there's no reasons for the shrimpers to have their
37 location data collected six times per hour and that no other
38 fishery is monitored as heavily as the shrimp industry and that
39 cellular units are more feasible. We also heard that the shrimp
40 industry is struggling and shrinking. We heard that the industry
41 has buy-in -- Or the industry buy-in will be much better for the
42 cellular electronic logbooks.

43
44 We heard that the cellular electronic logbooks will preserve
45 scientific shrimp monitoring, without allowing it to become a real-
46 time enforcement tool, by transmitting archived data to a non-
47 Office of Law Enforcement server, and, finally, we heard that
48 National Marine Fisheries Service should provide more information

1 on how and where the VMS data will be transmitted and how it will
2 be accessed and integrated once transferred away from the Office
3 of Law Enforcement. This may impact the alternatives in the
4 document and should be carefully considered by the council and the
5 public before final action is taken, and I am happy to answer any
6 questions.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Emily. I appreciate the summary.
9 I would just like to say I attended this meeting virtually as well,
10 just to listen in, and, if at any time I expected some input from
11 the industry, other than what we've heard from the AP, this would
12 have been it, in my mind, and we didn't.

13
14 We didn't hear anything contrary to what the AP has been telling
15 us pretty much the entire time here, and so I think that's a pretty
16 good summary. There were not a lot of comments made, but, to me,
17 that was the opportunity for anybody to voice their opinion
18 contrary to where this council is going with this action. J.D.,
19 you had your hand up?

20
21 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Similar comments, and a
22 question for Emily is -- You know, I also attended the public
23 hearing, and my question here is for Emily, and you mentioned the
24 1,000 letters, and the social media push, and also this public
25 hearing, and, amongst these three different opportunities, did you
26 get any feedback from the industry favoring Alternative 2?

27
28 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Not specifically. In the written public comment,
29 we did just hear that the shrimpers can't afford requirements that
30 are more costly to the individual, and so you would kind of have
31 to use your judgment as to which one that was supporting, or not
32 supporting, I think, but there was no specific I support
33 Alternative 2.

34
35 Typically, when we go out to public hearings, we do go out with a
36 preferred, and we did it in this case, with the Preferred
37 Alternative 3, and, you know, people do tend to take that as an
38 opportunity to speak against the preferred alternative, and, to
39 your and Mr. Schieble's point, you know, that was not hugely
40 recognizable in this effort.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Emily. Any other questions
43 regarding the public hearing summary comments? Seeing none, I
44 guess that will carry us to the document, Dr. Freeman, correct?
45 It's Tab D, Number 5(b).

46
47 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Great. Bernie, can you go to the action,
48 just the one action, and I'll discuss the alternatives, and so

1 these will look identical to what the committee saw in January
2 when the preferred was selected.

3
4 Alternative 1 still is our no action, where the shrimpers would
5 continue to mail in the SD cards off of their current cellular
6 electronic logbooks, or cELBs. Alternative 2 would be to implement
7 a vessel monitoring system requirement for the Gulf shrimp fishery,
8 providing, at a minimum, archived position data compatible with
9 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center shrimp effort algorithm to
10 a NMFS server.

11
12 Preferred Alternative 3 implements a cELB requirement for the Gulf
13 shrimp fishery that provides archived position data to NMFS that
14 is compatible with the Science Center shrimp effort algorithm,
15 nothing that Preferred Alternative 3 -- The NMFS-approved cELBs
16 would be type-approved for the Gulf shrimp fishery through a
17 process external to 50 CFR 600.1501.

18
19 A couple of things to add here, before I note some of the updates
20 to the document from January. Listening to some of the questions
21 and feedback that we got from the webinar on March 31, I did want
22 to highlight that, yes, Alternative 3 refers to a cellular
23 electronic logbook, but I want to note, again, those are not going
24 to be the same devices as what are on vessels currently with
25 Alternative 1.

26
27 I think there was some confusion, thinking that they would be
28 retaining those same devices, whereas Alternative 3 would be
29 moving, in essence, still to a VMS device, and there's a footnote
30 in the discussion of the alternatives that, due to industry
31 feedback and concern about how a VMS is described in federal
32 regulations, they felt more comfortable referring to it as a cELB,
33 and so, noting some of the updates to the document, and let's see.
34 Bernie, if you can go forward two pages.

35
36 There's a footnote on page 11, and we'll go into more detail
37 momentarily. I'm just going to do a more high-level description
38 of some of the updates. There's a footnote here addressing that
39 we had correspondence from the Science Center on March 4, in
40 response to a letter that the council sent to the Science Center.

41
42 In that correspondence, it says that NMFS has agreed to transition
43 the administration of the VMS program from OLE to the Office of
44 Science and Technology, and so, again, I want to highlight that is
45 a difference from the document that you all saw in January, and,
46 as you all heard from Emily, that has been a concern with
47 Alternative 2 for shrimpers, that the data would be housed within
48 OLE, and so the Science Center has responded that the VMS program

1 will transition to the Office of Science and Technology.

2
3 The next update, and, again, this was based off that correspondence
4 that we received from the Science Center, the section for the
5 effects on the administrative environment, and so, basically, the
6 government costs versus industry costs within Chapter 4, and that
7 has been updated to reflect the numbers that the Science Center
8 provided us, again back on March 4.

9
10 I will pause there see, and see if there's any questions, or, if
11 the committee would like, I know we have some folks available from
12 the Science Center that perhaps would like to discuss that letter
13 sent back to the council on March 4 and what some of the
14 implications of that are, and so, Mr. Chair, how would you like to
15 proceed with that?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think, you know, let's go to the letter, and
18 just go through it in in response to the request from the council.

19
20 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, Bernie that will be Tab D, Number 5(d), and,
21 Bernie, if you can keep us posted, and I believe we'll probably
22 have Dr. Porch or Dr. Walter available that may be able to discuss
23 that letter with the committee, and so, Dr. Porch or Dr. Walter,
24 Bernie is looking for a hand raised, if either of you all would
25 like to discuss that, or if you all are waiting for specific
26 questions from the committee.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** If either are you speaking, you're muted, and
29 we can't hear you, but, if you're choosing not to, that's fair as
30 well. Dr. Porch, can you hear us?

31
32 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Yes, I hear you, and I just wasn't exactly sure
33 where we were, in terms of there had been discussion about
34 presenting a graphic, and I didn't know if Andy wanted to start,
35 but, if we want to just go walk through the table, Dr. Gloeckner
36 could do that for us.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Bernie is scrolling up now, and, Dr. Gloeckner,
39 can you hear us?

40
41 **DR. DAVE GLOECKNER:** I can hear you.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Go ahead.

44
45 **DR. GLOECKNER:** All right, and so I think we're just going through
46 the -- These are incremental costs, and so these are the additional
47 costs that we would see to our base budget that we would see if we
48 implemented either Alternative 2 or Alternative 3, and so I think,

1 if we walk through this, the first line was just setting up the
2 data interface for monitoring and compliance, and so we estimated,
3 you know, for the VMS program, their incremental cost to do this,
4 under Alternative 2, would be thirty-grand.
5
6 For the SEFSC, that wouldn't cost us anything, because VMS would
7 be running the program. The increased data security posture for
8 the VMS program under Alternative 2, that wouldn't cost them
9 anything. They're already at the level they need to be at. As
10 far as the data interface for monitoring and compliance, they gave
11 me an estimate of about twenty-five-grand a year.
12
13 As far as a customer service contract, and so taking requests from
14 vessels that had problems, they estimated -- They already have a
15 customer service contract, and they already have that ongoing, and
16 so they estimated maybe an additional hundred-grand a year. As
17 far as their cost to maintain the system once operational, it's
18 already being maintained, and it's already within their budget,
19 and there's no additional incremental costs.
20
21 Vendor approval and testing, and so, for each new unit that comes
22 onboard, that's an additional eighteen-grand. There's no telling
23 how many units in a year, and so we didn't really estimate how
24 many units we thought that would be, and we used one.
25
26 As far as development of the technical specifications, the vendor
27 approval process, they already have that set up, and so that wasn't
28 an incremental cost either. As far as our personnel cost at the
29 center for the analysis, that would be \$250,000 a year, and that's
30 across-the-board, whether it's the center running it or if it's
31 the VMS program running it.
32
33 If we want to go through the center costs for Alternative 2, it's
34 mostly negligible, and we'll be going back up to the top of the
35 chart, and so most of the center costs were nothing. The total
36 for Alternative 2 was mostly coming from just the VMS program
37 costs, which weren't a lot compared to Alternative 3 for the
38 center.
39
40 If we go through the center costs for Alternative 3, the data
41 interface and monitoring compliance, that is -- We estimated that
42 as a \$200,000 startup cost, to get vTrack connected to the center
43 and work through the myriad of IT tasks that have to be done to
44 make that happen. We also have what we think at this point, having
45 discussions with the VMS program IT folks, that we're looking about
46 a \$200,000 increased data security posture cost on startup, and
47 then ongoing maintenance of about a \$100,000 a year.
48

1 Our customer service contract, we have not been maintaining a
2 customer service line, like would be needed. We have one for the
3 coastal logbook program, but that is fairly limited to, you know,
4 asking fishers about errors in their data. This would be more
5 technical. You would need staff that actually know about the
6 units, and are working with the vendors, and so we estimated that
7 at about \$250,000 a year.

8
9 As far as our cost to maintain the system once it's operational,
10 we also thought that would be around \$250,000 a year. The same
11 vendor approving and testing costs of the \$18,000 per unit was
12 also included for the Alternative 3 for the center.

13
14 We also need to develop the technical specifications. If you want
15 to go down to that line, that's at \$300,000 to develop those
16 specifications in the approval process, and, of course, like I
17 said, analysis and sample frame selection, that would be \$250,000
18 a year in staff time.

19
20 I did try to estimate the total cost for the first five years,
21 and, for the center, for Alternative 2 -- Let's see. I think that
22 was \$1,250,000 for the VMS program, and that was \$745,000, for a
23 combined total across those two programs of \$1,995,000 for
24 Alternative 2. For Alternative 3, we estimated that cost would
25 be \$5,040,000, and I'm not sure if there's questions. I'm sure
26 there are.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Gloeckner, and, just for
29 reference for everybody, this table has been condensed in the
30 document, on page 41, and it's Table 4.1.4. Correct, Matt? Is
31 that right?

32
33 **DR. FREEMAN:** It's Table 4.1.4.1 on page 41. It just happened,
34 and, that way, if anybody needs to sort of what these numbers add
35 up to, and certainly they provide very detailed line items, and I
36 think that's appreciated I think as well, but it's helpful to see
37 that condensed version, too.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So one other bit of housekeeping. The letter
40 from the council that requested this letter was Tab D, Number 5(c),
41 in the order of things before this, and it specifically requested
42 that it would be ideal if this information to be presented to the
43 Shrimp AP for their meeting on March 4. That's when they received
44 this letter that we just went through, just for understanding
45 there. Mr. Sanchez.

46
47 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you Mr. Chair. Yes, and that's correct. At
48 our last meeting as a council, we decided to vote on a preferred.

1 We settled on Alternative 3. Then, also during that meeting, a
2 couple other motions were made.

3
4 One was to go ahead and convene the Shrimp AP to have a chance to
5 look at these budgetary figures, because we're not in alignment
6 with the Southeast Science Center, or NMFS', numbers on this, as
7 far as the industry is concerned.

8
9 The goal, the motivation, for having the Shrimp AP convened was to
10 have that dialogue, and, as our letter, written by the council,
11 there was -- You know, we were hoping for a presentation, but
12 instead what we got was a March 4 AP meeting, where a letter was
13 bounced off, this very letter, on March 4, and so that kind of
14 probably set the not wonderful tone for the balance of that
15 meeting, but we do have some discrepancies, and I guess I will get
16 into them now a little bit.

17
18 I don't know when we're going to resolve that, as to whose numbers
19 are right and whose numbers are wrong. We tried to do that with
20 what I felt was the right group, the Shrimp AP and the agency, but
21 that didn't exactly work out that way, and so we have a suggestion
22 that Alternative 3 -- You add it all up, and it's going to cost
23 \$5,040,000, but the industry believes that you can back out several
24 of these line item budgetary figures, just going through them, by
25 virtue of they've already been done, some of them.

26
27 \$300,000 to develop the technical specs, and that's already done,
28 and it's Appendix D, and it's been approved, and so you take that
29 off. Then you look at the \$200,000 for increasing data security
30 postures. We've been doing this already this way with the
31 industry, and having, you know, this data analyzed, and it seems
32 like another duplicative expense.

33
34 Then you look at how they budget these things over the five-year
35 period, where -- Why we're thinking of looking at budgeting things
36 for five years, in the current environment we're at for budgeting
37 things, it is a little beyond me as well.

38
39 Customer service contracts, you've got \$250,00 for Alternative 3,
40 five years, and there's \$1.25. Then you look at a series of items,
41 sample frame selection, another \$1.25. The industry feels a lot
42 of these things have already been done, but the short and skinny
43 of it is all is, if you back out all those items that we think are
44 not needed, necessarily, or at least not to the extent that they're
45 the depicted, or presented, here, that's \$3.5 million you can take
46 out, arguably, of that over \$5 million, and so it brings it down
47 to like \$1.54, and so it's hugely different.

1 I was hoping we could arrive at some kind of understanding and
2 agreement on that and realize that we're in a budgetary environment
3 where we need to be operating with our needs, and not our wants,
4 and not adding all kinds of bells and whistles to these systems,
5 but get it going, and keep doing what we're doing, and, in the
6 meantime, let's go ahead and extend this permit moratorium too,
7 while we sort all this stuff out and figure out where we're at
8 with the actual monies we have to do this, that, and the other.

9
10 I don't think that was accomplished with the goals that we had set
11 forth to have the Shrimp AP weigh-in and do that, but here we are
12 at final, and I don't feel like we're ready. We haven't resolved
13 the final of this, but I will let the rest of you speak, and I
14 just wanted to, I guess, respond to the numbers as they've been
15 presented. Thank you.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez, and I tend to be in
18 agreement. You know, this morning, in the Data Committee, we spoke
19 of budget issues for SEFHIER, right, and I see similarities here
20 between these types of programs that we're trying to stand up, and
21 maybe both need some streamlining, in order to make them work. We
22 don't have a true idea what budgets are going forward, and we may
23 not for a while, but at least we may need to consider that, and so
24 any other comments, or questions, regarding this letter or this
25 table of data? Mr. Strelcheck.

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and Clay alluded to it. I would like to give
28 just a couple of slides, to essentially present this in a different
29 format. I think that will be helpful for the committee, and I've
30 shared it with Bernie.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Bernie, can you pull those up for us, please?

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I've talked to a number of council members,
35 and other stakeholders, and, obviously, there's been a lot of
36 debate around the actual cost estimates themselves, right, and the
37 agency has felt like we rolled up our sleeves and really looked at
38 and scrutinized these very carefully, but, ultimately, at the end
39 of the day, they're estimates, right?

40
41 There are things that, obviously, we're going to get right, and
42 we're going to nail now, and, obviously, they may be higher or
43 lower, you know, in the future, but there are costs to inherently
44 just running these programs, and so I had asked my team to work
45 with the center on just doing a diagram, right, of showing
46 Alternative 2 versus Alternative 3.

47
48 We used dollar signs, rather than the absolute values, so you can,

1 you know, argue for yourself, right, whether or not those dollar
2 signs are an accurate reflection of the true cost or not, but it
3 was kind of our way of just taking away the numbers from this
4 discussion and really focusing in on the differences, right, and
5 so the data flow for both slides -- You'll see, at the upper-left-
6 hand corner, it's very similar for both Alternative 2 and 3.

7
8 The only difference is that Alternative 2 does allow for satellite
9 transmission, and so you see an arrow from satellites to the vendor
10 receiving the data. Once it gets to that VMS data system and
11 program support, right, that's the catcher's mitt that the agency
12 has, and the data flow from there with regard to where it goes,
13 right, and so, if the Science Center is going to draw on receiving
14 data from the current VMS data system, we need a secure transfer
15 of that data to the Science Center for analysis.

16
17 There's also an interface that we use called vTrack that helps to
18 map and query the data, and so down below, obviously, you can see
19 kind of the blow-up of those costs that were just talked about in
20 the previous document, but what we wanted to, I guess, emphasize,
21 right, is that all of those green check-marks are things that we
22 have already existing support for the program, right, and there's
23 additional startup costs, and additional maintenance costs, that
24 are going to be associated with that, just by bringing the shrimp
25 program into the overall VMS program, and as we've talked about
26 moving the VMS program from the Office of Law Enforcement to
27 Science and technology, which is something that we're actively
28 working on, right, and so that's Alternative 2.

29
30 If you could flip to the next slide, and you can see it's very
31 similar, obviously, on the upper portion of this graphic. The
32 data flow, once it comes into the Science Center data system, on
33 the right-hand side of the graphic is a little bit different, but
34 has a lot of the same functionality, but all of that at the bottom,
35 with the Science Center essentially operating the catcher's mitt
36 and running the data and information, are things that we don't
37 currently have in existence at this point, or only in partial small
38 existence, right?

39
40 Now the costs, and I'll caveat once again, right, that we can
41 debate the numbers all day, but the point here is that we have
42 been showing that the costs are greater for Alternative 3, versus
43 Alternative 2, which I know has been the subject of a lot of
44 debate, but the reason for that is we are building a duplicative
45 system, that accomplishes largely the same thing as what we
46 currently have, but having to build it, obviously, at the Science
47 Center.

1 None of the information in this is different than what I -- Then
2 what Clay or the Science Center has provided. It's just a graphic
3 way of, obviously, showing that same data. This is, obviously,
4 the agency costs, and we're not even talking about the industry
5 costs, which would be also greater under Alternative 3, but I'm
6 hoping that this also is helpful to the council, and I'm happy to
7 answer questions, or have one of my team members answer questions
8 about this, if you have further questions.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Mr. Sanchez, I think
11 you had your hand up, and then Dr. Froeschke.

12
13 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think, when we use words
14 like "duplicative", and marry them in National Standard 7, I think
15 what's duplicative here is some of the expenses that show up on
16 items that arguably have already been performed, and so that that's
17 my take on, you know, duplicative, that there's a lot of duplicity
18 going on here, I guess.

19
20 I wanted to ask you if -- On Alternative 2, who is going to pay
21 for the costs of the units, the VMS units? Who is it, because I
22 don't see that line item appearing under Alternative 2, and I'm
23 guessing it's probably going to be about a million dollars.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so the VMS program has a reimbursement
28 process for VMS units, right, and so we have you know two ways of
29 paying for VMS units right now, right, and one would be the
30 \$850,000 that's been allocated by Congress that LGL has been
31 helping to administer. That's been, obviously, part of the pilot
32 process, and so, if those same units are then approved as part of
33 the VMS program, then those would be for ready use by the industry,
34 and already paid for, as well as cellular service being paid for.
35 The other pot of money is, obviously, funding that comes from the
36 reimbursement program for VMS that currently exists now.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke, did you have your hand up?

39
40 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Yes, and just, I guess, one quick question,
41 and then a different one. On the tech that -- The item to develop
42 tech specs and approval process and the vendor unit testing and
43 type approval, I guess, from a staff perspective, my understanding
44 is those, whether it was Alternative 2 or 3, is it's the same units,
45 regardless, and it's the ones that we were considering in Early
46 Adopter, and so it's -- I think it might help us understand if we
47 -- Why it's a different cost under Alternative 3 than under
48 Alternative 2 if it's the same.

1
2 Then the other question I had was on the customer support. Since
3 these are third-party units, on the customer support, what would
4 they call the Science Center for? In my understanding, if it
5 didn't work, they would call the vendor that actually sold them
6 the unit.

7
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know Jessica or Dave Gloeckner on the
9 line and want to answer any of those questions.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Gloeckner, can you hear us? We can't hear
12 you, if you're speaking. Dr. Stephen, go ahead.

13
14 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Great. Can you guys hear me?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes ma'am. Thank you.

17
18 **DR. STEPHEN:** Let me take the two questions a little bit
19 separately, and then, if Dave can join in, that will be helpful
20 too, and so, when we're looking at what the technical specs are,
21 this is of the hardware, and so think of that as very different
22 than software, in assuring that it meets all the standards we want
23 to have, like secure transmissions and things like that, and so,
24 currently, the VMS program outsources this work, and they have a
25 contract that supports it.

26
27 What would happen, if we went with Alternative 2, is that
28 additional money would be added to double-check the new units
29 coming in, so that they are type-approved for this particular
30 fishery, and so, incrementally, it's not a huge cost.

31
32 If you're looking for Alternative 3, where the Science Center would
33 be doing it, first, it would have to gain experiences in those
34 technical hardware components. That's not something we have within
35 the agency at this point, because VMS does outsource that, and so
36 that would either require training of biological staff or IT staff
37 to do it, or creating another contract that is similar in scope to
38 the one that VMS has, and then if you can remind me what your
39 second question was.

40
41 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and the second question was with regard to
42 customer support on Alternative 3. My understanding is, since
43 these are third-party vendor units, if they had a problem with
44 them, that they would simply contact the vendor, like we do for
45 the other reef fish VMS and things, and so I'm just -- I just
46 wasn't understanding what scenarios they would actually call the
47 Science Center, rather than the vendor.

48

1 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sure, and so I can give some answers to that, based
2 on how the commercial VMS works and how the SEFHIER program worked
3 with the cellular units, and so, under that, we did go through the
4 VMS system. Oftentimes, you have to get your unit not just on,
5 but like listed onboard, so we can start connecting it to permits
6 and other such issues that are there.

7
8 Typically, when someone is having trouble with their unit, their
9 first call is the agency. When it's outside sort of some technical
10 easy to do things, then it gets transferred over to the vendor,
11 and so, obviously, if the unit wasn't turning on at all, that's
12 probably a vendor issue, where, if it's something about making
13 connections work, that could be something that the customer support
14 would have, and so that customer support also helps to monitor
15 those units, as it's going through, and so that's the other thing
16 that they do.

17
18 They have a variety of different work that they do. If you want,
19 we can probably talk more in-depth with some of the VMS techs, and
20 get the list of that, but that was typically what we even paid for
21 within SEFHIER, is we paid for two additional VMS techs to sit
22 down there and do all that customer support. Dave, I don't know
23 if you're able to talk and if you have anything you want to add.

24
25 **DR. GLOECKNER:** I'm unmuted now. All right. I think you covered
26 the gist of it. I mean, I think the letter that we provided,
27 further down in that second table, described what they would be
28 doing, and so, you know, you've got greater resources, due to the
29 nature of the hardware. You know, normally, we're not -- We're
30 not working with hardware requirements. We're working with
31 software requirements.

32
33 On the coastal logbook side, that's all we're dealing with. Here,
34 we're talking about hardware, and so activating units, hardware
35 approval, hardware troubleshooting, and then we also have, you
36 know, for this service desk, would be responding to FOIAs, data
37 requests, answering regulatory questions, providing outreach to
38 the fishers, contacting the fishers regarding reporting
39 compliance, and so there's a whole slew of things they would be
40 doing.

41
42 You know, in general, you've also got the fact that the data
43 requests here require communications with the General Counsel
44 attorneys before we can release data, and so there's a whole slew
45 of things that this service desk would be doing that we currently
46 don't do on the coastal logbook side. That's why there's such a
47 difference. Thanks.

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen and Dr. Gloeckner. We
2 appreciate the help with that. Do we have any other questions for
3 them regarding the presentation? General Spraggins.

4
5 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I've just got a couple questions,
6 and, Mr. Strelcheck, I saw what you gave, and I'm looking at it.
7 I'm trying to ask a question to myself, and the fishermen, or the
8 AP, I guess, that met, and came back and said that they preferred
9 Alternative 3, even though that's going to cost them money, and,
10 in Alternative 2, you're going to pay the money for them.

11
12 What's pushing this to where the fishermen wanted Alternative 3
13 more so, and what is it -- I guess the question is what is making
14 it that much better for the fishermen? I would like to know more
15 about it, if I could, if somebody could explain that to me. Maybe
16 Leann even could, just being a part of the AP, right?

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Bosarge, as the AP chair, maybe would be
19 best to address that.

20
21 **MS. BOSARGE:** All right. You got me up here now. Get ready. So
22 you even heard it in some of your public comment in the public
23 hearing. The fishermen would definitely want the government to
24 pay for their boxes, if at all possible right, but the fishermen
25 feel like, as an industry, we've done our part to help out on this,
26 because we've heard we don't have the money, we don't have the
27 money, we don't have the money from the government, right, and so
28 we went to Congress, and lobbied Congress, and we managed to get
29 Congress to give the Science Center, for the extension of our ELB
30 programs, and not for anything else, but for our shrimp ELB
31 program, \$1.7 million, and, \$1.7 million later, they couldn't buy
32 these boxes for the fishermen.

33
34 The boxes that we would use under Alternative 3 range from \$199 to
35 \$549. You do that math, and it's not hard to buy 500 of those
36 boxes. That's what our current sample size is for the shrimp fleet
37 for this program. \$1.7 million later, we couldn't get 500 boxes
38 for fishermen, and still have money left over to continue our
39 shrimp ELB program.

40
41 There's two parts broken in our shrimp ELB program, all right, and
42 this is a program we've had for twenty years. We had two problems,
43 which is what brought this amendment forward to the council.

44
45 Number one, our boxes needed to go from 3G to 4G on the boats,
46 right, and we needed a newer technology, so they would transmit,
47 and we needed to replace that old physical dinosaur of a server,
48 that we had been sending our data to, to a virtual cloud-based

1 server at the Science Center. That's all that was broken. That's
2 it.

3
4 \$1.7 million later, we have managed to get a virtual server at the
5 Science Center. That part is fixed, and it looks like we'll have
6 about 300 Early Adopter boxes, and so boxes paid for with that
7 \$1.7 million that got paid to the fishermen to put those boxes on
8 their boat. We'll have about 300 boxes.

9
10 Where did the rest go? Why are we even having to discuss trying
11 to go and get a VMS box and be tracked by law enforcement twenty-
12 four-seven in order to have our boxes paid for? I think that's
13 where the fishermen are frustrated, and I think an even more
14 fundamental question, in this budget environment, is, if you'll
15 notice, in small print somewhere in the document, it says you'll
16 get that VMS reimbursement if available.

17
18 VMS is funded nationally, to reimburse all programs nationwide to
19 fishermen that need a box, nationally at \$250,000 a year. You
20 can't do that. \$250,000 won't cover the shrimp VMS reimbursement,
21 because the government wants it to be a census. That's 1,257
22 boxes. The max reimbursement we can get would be \$950. You do
23 that math.

24
25 They're going to need about a million bucks or so to do this
26 reimbursement, at a minimum, right, and so I don't see how we can
27 sit on here on one hand and say we just -- We're having budget
28 cuts, and we're not going to have the funding to do this, but don't
29 worry fishermen, and we feel real confident that we're going to go
30 out and find extra money to cover the reimbursement for your boxes.
31 I just think that's disingenuous. We need to have a real
32 conversation here.

33
34 This on the screen is hard for me to understand this, and so I'm
35 going to try and be constructive for a minute. Let's have some
36 positive conversation, and so Alternative three, the shrimp ELB
37 program, that was the industry's alternative.

38
39 The crux of that alternative, when it was first introduced by the
40 industry, by me when I was on this council, was to continue the
41 shrimp ELB program that we've always had, but fix the two problems,
42 the two pieces that were broken. Somehow, that has been warped
43 into this idea that, no, the only way that we can have a shrimp
44 ELB program through the Science Center is to totally duplicate the
45 VMS program through the Science Center.

46
47 That's why you see all these bells and whistles on here that we
48 don't need, that we've never had, and don't need them. It

1 functions perfectly fine just like it is, without these bells and
2 whistles, because it's not a law enforcement program. We don't
3 need those bells and whistles.

4
5 We had a streamlined, efficient program without these bells and
6 whistles, and it never dawned on me, for some reason, until I read
7 this report for the umpteenth time, this AP summary, that that's
8 what the agency's trying to do now with Alternative 3. Instead of
9 continuing the shrimp ELB program, and fixing the two pieces that
10 were broken, they're trying to set up an entirely new VMS program
11 under the Science Center.

12
13 We don't need that, and that's not what that alternative was
14 intended to be. Those red Xs are just inaccurate, in my opinion.
15 Customer support, you have a customer support line through the
16 shrimp ELB program in Galveston. You've always had it, and, in
17 fact, their responsibilities are going to go down once you make
18 this change with Alternative 3.

19
20 In the past, and you all stay with me, and it's going to get deep.
21 In the past, that customer service line, and so, the last set of
22 boxes that we that we have on the boat right now, the 3Gs, we
23 didn't have the vendors and all this.

24
25 The government went out and sole-sourced that, through a company,
26 and had those boxes built. The government bought them, and then
27 they shipped them to the fishermen to put on the boats, and so,
28 right now, the government is both the vendor and the runner of the
29 program. When our boxes quit working right now, we call Galveston,
30 to the help desk line that's already in existence, and they've got
31 to help us try and figure out what's wrong with the box. In
32 addition to that, they have to make sure they can see the box on
33 their end.

34
35 When you implement this new program, we've got vendors now. When
36 our boxes go down, we don't call the government. We've got to
37 call the vendor. All we call the government for now is to make
38 sure they can see it pinging.

39
40 Their responsibilities, from a help desk standpoint, go down under
41 Alternative 3, and yet they want to say they need an extra \$250,000
42 a year for fewer responsibilities, people they already have on
43 staff, that are that are doing this already for ten or twenty
44 years, and so I don't think that's a red X right there.

45
46 This idea about developing tech specs and approval, the approval
47 process, and so I heard that for a long time when I was on the
48 council, too. That's \$300,000 that NMFS says that's going to cost

1 the Science Center.

2

3 Well, I would love to know when I'm going to get my check in the
4 mail. If you turn to Appendix D in your document, I wrote them,
5 because, when I was on this council, I got tired of hearing we
6 don't have the funds, we don't have the expertise, we just don't
7 have the ability to write those. I wrote them.

8

9 All they need at this point is a blessing from a NMFS attorney and
10 publish them in the Federal Register. I based them on the type-
11 approval specs and the approval process for the VMS program, so
12 that it would be very easy for a NMFS attorney to bless something
13 that they've already blessed, that only has a few tweaks. I made
14 them fit shrimp. They're in your document. It has already been
15 done.

16

17 This interface for monitoring and compliance, that's one of those
18 bells and whistles. That is essentially, in a nutshell, saying we
19 need to pay \$200 as a start-off cost, and \$100,000 a year, to build
20 a special interface so that law enforcement can remote into the
21 Science Center's shrimp data collection warehouse and see it
22 anytime they need to see it.

23

24 We've been collecting this data, and law enforcement has been able
25 to call or email the Science Center, when they have an ongoing
26 case that they may need some of this data for, and get what they
27 need, and it does not cost us \$100,000 a year to maintain. This
28 is another one of those bells and whistles that I'm talking about.

29

30 The system security and maintenance, I'll give you that one. You
31 may have to do that, but it does blow my mind, as a fisherman,
32 that you've been receiving the same data, and storing it at the
33 Science Center, on your databases, for twenty years, and are you
34 telling me you didn't safeguard it and protect it all that time?
35 We just realized it needs protecting, but I gave you that one. I
36 didn't throw it out of the cost.

37

38 When you add all this up, and you throw out the frivolous stuff,
39 and you get it back to barebones basics, just continuing the ELB
40 program we had, and fixing the two things that are broken, this
41 becomes a very low-cost alternative. If you actually take
42 Alternative 2, and put the government cost of reimbursing the
43 fishermen for the boxes in there, it becomes almost one-for-one.
44 In fact, it may be more expensive than Alternative 3 for the
45 government than to do Alternative 2, and it depends on what you
46 want to call the cost of the box.

47

48 I don't expect you all to get into the weeds on this, with all

1 these costs, but just know that this infographic is depicting
2 something that Alternative 3 was never intended to be. Alternative
3 3 was supposed to be a continuation of the program that we had,
4 and not something brand new, with all these bells and whistles,
5 and, if we'll get back to basics, we can get there with the money
6 that the shrimp industry went and got for the Science Center to
7 continue that program. Thanks.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. Mr. Strelcheck, you
10 had your hand up earlier, and do you have any comments for what
11 was shown?

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I guess a few comments, and so she was
14 asked, obviously, about the industry's, you know, choice with
15 regard to why preferring Alternative 3 versus Alternative 2, and
16 went into, obviously, a much longer discussion here about costs.

17
18 It's long been a concern of industry about the data going to law
19 enforcement, right, and I think that has been the biggest sticking
20 point that I've understood for quite some time, right, and we've
21 worked on this for the last four or five years.

22
23 The agency stepped up, and we've been looking at it from not just
24 the shrimp industry, more broadly about moving, obviously, the
25 system from law enforcement to our Science and Technology office,
26 and that's something that's ongoing now, and so I feel like that
27 is one of the biggest roadblocks that we've worked to address here.

28
29 When I presented these graphics, I caveated them with we can debate
30 these costs until we're blue in the face, right, and Leann may
31 very well be right that some of this may not be as needed, or may
32 not be as costly, but I'll also argue that, over twenty years, the
33 requirements for government security and government technology and
34 systems and everything else has only gotten more rigorous and more
35 complicated and more secure, not less secure, and so comparing it
36 to a past program, versus the current program, obviously, is very
37 different.

38
39 With that said, I continue to stand behind the fact that there are
40 duplications of effort and cost here. I'm not wanting to get into
41 a debate between who is right or wrong here, right, and I'm just
42 trying to lay out that, in terms of making these decisions,
43 obviously, there are differences in the alternatives, and I wanted
44 to share, obviously, graphically what those differences were, and
45 so that's all I wanted to emphasize. Thanks.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck, and I agree. I
48 don't think we need to continue down with a tit-for-tat discussion

1 on which one of these is right. This is like the fourth or fifth
2 iteration of comparison that we've had over the past two years of
3 the cost of this system. I would just caveat it with the fact
4 that we have an industry that's bankrupt, basically, telling us
5 this is their preferred alternative. Mr. Sanchez.
6

7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I agree. I think we're not going to reach
8 a meeting of the minds on these, you know, line items that we're
9 not in alignment with, and so it might not be the most fruitful
10 thing to continue this discussion, and, with that, I'm pretty clear
11 that, you know, we're just going to maybe have to disagree on this,
12 and certainly we can do without being disagreeable. With that,
13 I've sent a motion to staff, if they can bring that up.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Bernie, you should have an email with the
16 motion in there, but we also need to go through the codified text
17 for that preferred alternative, whenever Dr. Freeman feels that's
18 appropriate.
19

20 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so I'll look to SERO staff to review
21 the codified text before we get to that motion.
22

23 **MS. LEVY:** I mean, we can pull it up. All I'll say is it's very
24 short, and I don't think that it would be what actually is
25 implemented once we go down the road, right, and so, if you want
26 to look at it, it's just almost the current paragraph right now
27 that talks about -- If we put it up, it would be easier. Let's
28 see.
29

30 It essentially just says that the owner or operator would have to
31 install NMFS-approved hardware and software that archives the
32 position while on a fishing trip in the Gulf, and so on a shrimp
33 fishing trip, but I think that -- You know, whatever happens, and
34 as we move forward, it probably is going to need to get fleshed
35 out a little more, but we didn't have a lot of information exactly
36 about how things were going to look, and so we didn't like really
37 have those nuts and bolts to put into the codified text, and so
38 it's one of those things that will probably come back to the chair
39 for re-deeming, when we get to that point. Thanks.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Bernie, were you able to find the motion
42 from Mr. Sanchez? Mr. Sanchez, do you want to read it?
43

44 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I recommend the council approve Framework Action:
45 **Modification of the Vessel Data Collection Program for the Gulf of**
46 **Mexico Shrimp Fishery and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of**
47 **Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text**
48 **as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to**

1 make the necessary changes in the document. The council chair is
2 given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as
3 necessary and appropriate.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. We have a motion on
6 the board. Do we have a second for this motion? Billy Broussard
7 seconds the motion. Any discussion going forward here? All right.
8 Seeing no discussion, do we have anyone opposed to this motion?
9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I abstain.
11

12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck abstains. **Any other opposition**
13 **to the motion? Okay. The motion passes with one abstention.** All
14 right. Back to our action guide, right? Dr. Simmons.
15

16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we leave
17 this topic regarding your correction to the minutes from the
18 previous meeting, staff did listen to the recording, and that
19 person did say that thing three times, and so we're going to
20 recommend not modifying the minutes, because that's what was stated
21 verbatim.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I was going to bring it up at the end, before
24 we left, as housekeeping, but yes, and so Dr. Walter actually
25 emphasized the statement. That's why he said it three times
26 apparently, is my understanding, and so I had brought up the
27 correction on page 16, line 38 and 39, "OLE has access to this
28 data, and it has access to this data, and it has access to this
29 data" is correct. He was emphasizing the point. It looked like
30 to me somebody just kept hitting the return key on the computer,
31 and so it is correct, and it does not need to be fixed, but,
32 anyway, moving on. Dr. Freeman, the next -- J.D., you have a
33 question?
34

35 **MR. DUGAS:** Mr. Chair, I recommend we take our break.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank God.
38

39 **MR. DUGAS:** Let's take a break. We'll reconvene at four o'clock.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Good recommendation.
42

43 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We will pick up on the agenda with a
46 Presentation on the 2023 Gulf Shrimp Fishery Effort Presentation
47 by Mr. Dettloff. That's Tab D, Number 6. Mr. Dettloff, if you're
48 there. Sorry, and Dr. Freeman is going to give us the action

1 guide. Hold on, Mr. Dettloff. Thank you.

2
3 **2023 GULF SHRIMP FISHERY EFFORT PRESENTATION**
4

5 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, for this item, the committee will be presented
6 with information regarding the 2023 Gulf shrimp fishing effort
7 calculations. The committee should consider the information
8 presented, ask questions, and provide recommendations for future
9 considerations.

10
11 **MR. KYLE DETTLOFF:** All right. Good afternoon, everyone. This is
12 the same presentation I gave to the Shrimp AO about a month ago on
13 the 2023 Gulf of America commercial shrimp fishery effort
14 estimates.

15
16 The methodology is largely the same as you've seen over the past
17 couple years with the new Science Center methodology, essentially
18 scaling the ELB effort estimates up to the fleet based on landings
19 and area-time strata. That's documented in a SEDAR 87 working
20 paper, and then really the only adjustment to that methodology is
21 documented in a working paper, a new working paper, for SEDAR 98
22 to address some of the deficiencies in the chip-collected data
23 these past few years, to get some more realistic estimates from
24 those data relying on the observer, shrimp observer, program.

25
26 The main assumptions behind the method, we're assuming that the
27 devices are capturing all fishing activity, that they're on for a
28 duration of a trip, and we're assuming that there's no systematic
29 bias in the classification of effort based on speeds, that we're
30 not over or under quantifying effort, and so those are the two
31 assumptions that are required under any kind of sample from a
32 fraction of the fleet up to a census.

33
34 The following, 3, 4, and 5, are tied to the fact that we are in
35 fact working with a sample, and so we're having to make the
36 assumptions that the CPUE of the vessels with ELBs onboard is
37 representative of the total fleet, that the spatial distribution
38 of the ELB vessels is representative of the total fleet within the
39 time and space strata, and that reporting of landings, in terms of
40 quantity and accuracy, is similar between the ELB and non-ELB
41 vessels.

42
43 A recap of the 2022 effort estimates, after the observer correction
44 has been applied, we get a slight increase from what was presented
45 previously, but still following the downward trajectory and effort
46 that we've seen over the past few years, with 13,459 estimated
47 twenty-four-hour tow days occurring in the red snapper restricted
48 zone, Stat Zones 10 through 21, in the ten through thirty fathom

1 depth zone in the western Gulf, which represents an 83.7 percent
2 decrease from the effort cap baseline set of 2001 through 2003.

3
4 Then Gulf-wide, a similar reduction from the previous year, with
5 45,187 estimated tow days Gulf-wide, and then the spatial
6 distribution you see in the figure below looks largely the same as
7 previous years with the brown and white shrimp fishery, primarily
8 Stat Zones 11 through 21, and then a spot for the pink shrimp
9 fishery down around the Tortugas, and this is just vessels with
10 ELBs on board that we're getting that fine-scale resolution for.

11
12 Then the same numbers for 2023, a slight reduction from 2022 in
13 both Gulf-wide and the red snapper restricted area, with 14,022
14 estimated tow days in the red snapper restricted area, 35,945
15 estimated tow days Gulf-wide, and similar numbers, in terms of
16 landings, and not as much of a decrease as an effort, and so
17 slightly higher CPUE we're estimating in 2023 than 2022, but,
18 overall, in terms of effort, still a massive reduction from the
19 2001 through 2003 baseline, and a similar looking spatial
20 distribution.

21
22 Just a breakdown, if you want to drill further into the scaled
23 estimates. These are fleet-scaled estimates by region, depth zone,
24 and species, and so this is a table that will be new, at least to
25 the council, and I think it was presented for the first time to
26 the AP back in March, with the addition of the species-specific
27 breakdown, and so a lot to digest in there, but, if you would like
28 to go back and explore how it's breaking down by species, those
29 are now estimates that we're producing.

30
31 Gulf-wide total effort, really a drastic decline beginning in the
32 early 2000s, with some stabilization throughout the 2010s, but
33 then the tail-end of that figure, to the right, we are seeing some
34 pretty substantial declines in recent years, the post-COVID era,
35 with a downward trend in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

36
37 A similar figure, but just broken down into species-specific
38 estimates, where it appears that it's really the brown shrimp
39 fishery in the western Gulf, and somewhat the white, that are
40 driving those declines. A little more stability in the pink shrimp
41 fishery, but a decline nonetheless in recent years.

42
43 We would like to thank the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
44 Council, the SSC, and the Shrimp AP for continuing feedback on
45 these estimates, the Gulf commercial shrimp fishermen and ELB
46 device holders that make these estimates possible, and also the
47 Southeast Center Shrimp Bycatch and Effort Working Group that we've
48 had together here for the past few years that has led to the

1 development of these updated estimates, and so, with that, I'll
2 take any questions.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Dettloff. That was a very
5 concise and informative presentation. It's interesting, or not
6 interesting, but I guess depressing to see the 83 percent reduction
7 in shrimp effort in consecutive years in a row. I would also like
8 to, I guess, remind everyone on the council that this effort
9 estimation has a lot to do with the snapper bycatch, obviously,
10 and Mr. Dettloff mentioned that, and it's in those specific zones,
11 and Dr. Freeman may be able to elaborate a little bit more on that
12 for us, please.

13
14 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly, and so, particularly for some of our newer
15 council members, just to provide some context, and, Bernie, can
16 you scroll back up to where Kyle had the 2023 estimates? I think
17 maybe one more slide. One more. Great.

18
19 You'll see a presentation every year from the Science Center, and
20 not only for total Gulf effort, but specifically for the western
21 Gulf, in zones 10 through 21, and it will show a percent decrease
22 from the baseline. That started back with Shrimp Amendment 14,
23 and then was updated in Shrimp Amendment 18, to assist with
24 rebuilding of the red snapper stock.

25
26 The target reduction goal related to juvenile red snapper bycatch
27 mortality is 60 percent less than the benchmark years of 2001 to
28 2003, and so, as Kyle has presented, they are well within that
29 reduction, but, again, that is something that the council receives
30 every year, and something that Science Center monitors.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman is -- I was just going to make the
33 point that, so as we see an 83 percent reduction in shrimping
34 effort for two consecutive years, the industry is going to be,
35 obviously, well below the threshold for snapper bycatch, and,
36 obviously, there's a whole lot less snapper bycatch than
37 historically we've seen in the past when that effort has been a
38 lot higher, correct?

39
40 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. That's exactly right, and so that 60
41 percent reduction in effort is, again, the target. They are, like
42 in 2023, 83 percent, and so, in terms of the bycatch mortality of
43 juvenile red snapper in those statistical areas, they are fine.
44 Nothing of concern.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Moving on in the agenda, and thank you,
47 Mr. Dettloff. We appreciate the presentation. The next item up
48 is the Potential Expiration of Moratoriums for the Federal Gulf

1 Shrimp Permits. Dr. Freeman will lead us through the action guide
2 for that, real quick.

3
4 **DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL EXPIRATION OF THE MORATORIUM FOR FEDERAL**
5 **GULF SHRIMP PERMITS**
6

7 **DR. FREEMAN:** For this item, the committee will be presented with
8 information regarding the potential expiration in October 2026 of
9 the moratorium on federal Gulf shrimp permits, including the Shrimp
10 AP's recommendation. The committee should consider the presented
11 information, ask questions, and provide direction to council staff
12 whether to begin work on a document to extend the federal Gulf
13 shrimp permit moratorium.

14
15 There's not a presentation associated with this item. We have two
16 amendments as background information, and we also have an
17 associated Shrimp AP motion, because this was a discussion at the
18 March Shrimp AP meeting as well.

19
20 To provide a little context, the moratorium with the Gulf federal
21 Gulf shrimp permits was initially established in Shrimp Amendment
22 13 and was in place in 2006 for ten years, and then Amendment 17B
23 extended that moratorium for another ten years, and so it's set to
24 expire October 26 of 2026.

25
26 The intent there, with both amendments, it referenced the
27 prevention of overcapacity in the federal shrimp fleet and so, you
28 know, we had this discussion with the Shrimp AP, and, you know, I
29 was interested in making sure we had industry input on that, prior
30 to discussing it with the council.

31
32 Bernie, on page 4, and so I think one page down, after much
33 discussion, the AP made a motion to recommend that the council
34 extend the moratorium on the issuance of federal Gulf commercial
35 shrimp vessel permits for an additional ten years, and so, if that
36 is something that the committee is interested in, I'll note that
37 this would require a full amendment, rather than a framework
38 action, but there should be sufficient time to have that in place
39 prior to the expiration of the moratorium next year.

40
41 I'll add as well, in that discussion, the AP noted, you know, that
42 the AP and the Shrimp Committee and the council are also receiving
43 updates on the number of valid and renewable permits and the
44 potential development later of a permit pool, but wanted to ensure
45 that that was discussed in a separate document. This was more of
46 a timely, urgent issue, and so, again, that AP recommendation is
47 in front of you, and, again, we have the AP chair, if anybody has
48 questions or would like additional input on that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman, and, also, just
3 I guess for background information, those two historical
4 documents, 17A and B, we worked on back in 2018, correct, was when
5 those came through, and we moved, or reduced, the threshold twice
6 now, right? It started at 72 percent for the shrimp effort
7 threshold, and then it went to -- I'm just mentioning that, is
8 what I'm trying to get to, and so that's included in those
9 documents, is what I'm trying to tie together here as part of what
10 we just did, within the same thing, and so if the Shrimp AP chair
11 could give us a real quick rundown on this motion, real rapidly,
12 and I think we're short on time.

13
14 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and I won't get off on any tangents this time.
15 This was a simple one, a straightforward motion put out by the AP,
16 and so the AP was in support of continuing the permit moratorium,
17 and, when we had our discussion, we felt that -- We hoped it would
18 come out in the report, and it did, that we hope that the council
19 will keep that document to a one-action document, just the permit
20 moratorium, so that there's no way to get wrapped around the axle
21 on anything else, and we can take action on that and get it
22 implemented before the current moratorium expires in October of
23 2026, because that's a pretty tight turnaround, and so that's what
24 we were hoping for with this motion.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. Do we have any
27 discussion on the on the motion from the AP? Mr. Sanchez.

28
29 **MR. SANCHEZ:** If everybody is comfortable, I would like to see
30 that moratorium extend, and I would want to make a motion to that
31 effect, if now is the right time.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Sure. That would be fine.

34
35 **MR. SANCHEZ:** All right. If staff could kindly bring up that
36 motion. There it is. **To direct staff to begin development of a**
37 **shrimp amendment to extend the moratorium on federal Gulf shrimp**
38 **permits.**

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. We have a committee motion on the board.
41 Do we have a second for the motion? Mr. Broussard seconds the
42 motion. Any discussion regarding this from the committee? **Seeing**
43 **no discussion, is anyone opposed to this motion? No opposition?**
44 **The motion passes.** Moving back to Dr. Freeman.

45
46 **DR. FREEMAN:** Give me just one moment to capture that motion in my
47 notes.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So I think we're to the last item in the action
2 guide, which is the remaining items from the --

3
4 **REMAINING ITEMS FROM THE SUMMARY OF THE MARCH 4, 2025 SHRIMP**
5 **ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**
6

7 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, and so the last item, which is the remaining
8 items from the summary of the March 4, 2025 Shrimp AP meeting, the
9 committee will be presented with any remaining AP recommendations
10 that were not covered under other agenda items and determine if
11 they wish to take any action on the AP's recommendations, and there
12 was one additional motion. Bernie, if you can go to the bottom of
13 page 10.

14
15 One of the items that was on the Shrimp AP's agenda was an update
16 on SEDAR 87, which is the stock assessment for Gulf brown, pink,
17 and white shrimp. At the conclusion of that presentation, the AP
18 made a motion requesting the council not to use the results of the
19 SEDAR 87 stock assessments for brown, white, or pink shrimp to
20 establish a harvest control rule or any form of catch restrictions,
21 given these are annual species covered by the Magnuson-Stevens Act
22 exception from annual catch limits, unless the fishery for such
23 species is subject to overfishing.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. We have a motion from the Shrimp AP on
26 the board here. Do we have any discussion regarding this motion
27 in any way? I would just say that part of some of the discussion
28 we've had over the amendment has been with regard to that stock
29 not having an annual catch limit, or a TAC, or anything like that,
30 and so we've questioned the need for real-time monitoring, as well
31 as the full census survey, and so I'm not quite sold on this one
32 way or the other yet with this motion, in my opinion. Dr. Freeman.

33
34 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and I was going to add that certainly, when
35 the council receives the results of SEDAR 87, I can bring this
36 motion back in front of the committee, to review that at that time
37 as well.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I would agree with that. I mean, I
40 see where this is going, intending to do that, but, to quote Mr.
41 Strelcheck, I don't want to be pre-decisional on something like
42 this until we get the results of it. I think that would be the
43 wise way to go, and so, if you're good with that, we can do it.
44 Ms. Bosarge, the AP chair, real quick.

45
46 **MS. BOSARGE:** The AP didn't expect the council to take any action
47 on this motion. This is just informational, and the reason that
48 we did this is because, even throughout this stock assessment

1 process, the analysts that were working on this stock assessment,
2 because everybody works on finfish for most of their time, and
3 it's just instinctive that, okay, what's the catch limit going to
4 be, and what are we going to set this quota at, and we've heard
5 that even in the stock assessment process, as we've gone through,
6 and they always had to catch themselves and step back and say, oh
7 yeah, this is an annual species, and it's exempt from catch limits
8 and harvest control rules, and that's not what we're managing for
9 here.

10
11 We're managed a little bit differently. We're wanting to make
12 sure we're not overfished or undergoing overfishing. If we were
13 subject to overfishing, that's the only time that you start to
14 kick into some kind of harvest control, but we're not. We never
15 have been, in the history of assessing this species, and so this
16 was just more like a don't forget, when you see this stock
17 assessment, and the AP is not going to meet again before that, and
18 so this is our last time to get in front of you all, and don't
19 forget, and that's not what you're looking for out of this, and so
20 it was just a reminder.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Bosarge, and so I guess, when
23 we get the SEDAR 87 results, let's bring this back around at the
24 same time, if you're good with that, Matt.

25
26 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. That sounds good to me.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. It seems we have no other business on
29 the agenda, and this concludes the marathon Shrimp Management
30 Committee meeting.

31
32 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 7, 2025.)

33
34 - - -