

Data Collection Committee Report
November 6, 2024
Ed Walker, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab F, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab F, No. 2**) of the August 2024 meeting.

Presentation on Highly Migratory Species Proposed Rule (Tab F, Nos. 4a-e)

Ms. Karyl Brewster-Geisz and Dr. Clifford Hutt (Atlantic Highly Migratory Species [HMS]) provided a presentation reviewing a proposed rule that would modify and expand HMS data collection programs for commercial, charter/for-hire, recreational, and dealer reporting. A Committee member asked where the data would be transmitted, and HMS staff responded that data would be sent to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistical Program (ACCSP) and then be made accessible to the Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC). The Committee asked what would happen if a program participant held both an HMS and reef fish for-hire permit with differing reporting requirements. HMS staff responded that the permit holder would be held to the more stringent permit requirement. The HMS included a comparison between what has been proposed by HMS and what is being considered by the Gulf Council. Broadly, the timing of logbook and economic reporting differs between the two for-hire data collection programs.

A Committee member inquired about the attendance at the two virtual public hearings and HMS staff indicated that over a dozen stakeholders attended each meeting. They continued that the amount of public comment received so far was more than what they usually receive at this point in the proposed rule process. A Committee member asked about the source of funding for the modifications and HMS staff responded that some funding was already available for some of the existing programs. However, funds for expanding HMS data collection programs is still an open question. A Committee member asked how non-compliance with the permit requirements in the for-hire sector would affect permit renewal. HMS stated that the HMS charter/for-hire permit was tied to the vessel, so it would not be possible to simply add an additional permit to avoid required reporting.

A Committee member asked about the sentiment of HMS program participants to the collection of economic data. HMS staff responded that they received comments from the commercial industry generally supporting the action, but the for-hire industry had expressed hesitation on collection of those data. A Committee member asked about the consideration of fishermen burden in reporting discard information and that those data are often underreported. HMS staff responded that reporting 100% of discards is what is implemented for the commercial sector and requiring this of the for-hire sector would create consistency between the two reporting programs. Additionally, reporting dead discards is a requirement for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. Council staff took notes during the discussion and will generate a letter on the proposed rule to be submitted before the end of the public comment period (January 6, 2025).

Discussion on For-hire Data Collection Amendment (Tab F, No. 5)

Council staff presented revisions to the document and focused on modifications to Action 4 which considers collection of economic information within the new for-hire data collection amendment in the Gulf. Broadly, the sampling methodology would consider sampling a portion of participating vessels rather than trips. Operationalizing sampling by trip is problematic within the reporting application for several reasons including the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) not being able to

know which trip had been selected. A Committee member suggested having a presentation outlining the costs associated with the various alternatives in Action 4 to help inform the discussion of selecting a preferred alternative.

Southeast Region Headboat Survey (Tab F, Nos. 6a and b)

Dr. Michelle Masi (SERO) presented the 2023 annual report for the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. A Committee member inquired whether name switching between gag and black grouper species was observed by program port samplers. Mr. Rob Cheshire (SEFSC) indicated that regional misnaming between the two grouper species did not appear as prevalent now as in the past, but he theorized it could be happening to some extent.

Marine Recreation Information Program (MRIP) Pilot Study Update (Tab F, No. 7)

Dr. Richard Cody (Office of Science and Technology) provided an update on progress of the 2024 Fishing Effort Survey (FES) pilot study, calibration and transition to one-month data collection waves, a FES non-response mitigation approach, and current program priorities. A Committee member asked about the approach for upweighting FES non-responses. Dr. Cody indicated that the Annual Report for FES, linked within the presentation, provided a comprehensive documentation of that methodology and suggested reviewing that report for more detailed information. A Committee member stated support for the ongoing collaborative work to compare recreational fishing estimates between data collection programs in Texas.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.