

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Hilton Bayfront & Virtual St. Petersburg, Florida

November 6, 2024

**VOTING MEMBERS**

- 10 Ed Walker.....Florida
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 13 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 14 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 15 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 16 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 17 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 18 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 19 C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
- 20 Troy Williamson.....Texas

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 23 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 24 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 25 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 26 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 27 LT Jackson Morton.....USCG
- 28 Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
- 29 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 30 John Sanchez.....Florida

**STAFF**

- 33 Zeenatul Basher.....Coral and Habitat Biologist
- 34 Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
- 35 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 36 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 37 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 38 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- 40 Heather Graf.....Accounting & Human Resources Assistant
- 41 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 42 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 43 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 44 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 45 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 46 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 47 Verena Wang.....Fishery Biologist

1	<b><u>OTHER PARTICIPANTS</u></b>	
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3	Rob Cheshire.....	NOAA
4	Richard Cody.....	NOAA OST
5	Frank Helies.....	NOAA
6	Clifford Hutt.....	NOAA
7	Michelle Masi.....	NOAA
8	Clay Porch.....	SEFSC
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10		
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12		

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1 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
2 Management Council convened at The Hilton Bayfront in St.  
3 Petersburg, Florida on Wednesday morning, November 6, 2024, and  
4 was called to order by Chairman Ed Walker.  
5

6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST 2024 MINUTES**  
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
8

9 **CHAIRMAN ED WALKER:** I'll call the Data Collection Committee to  
10 order. The first motion, or step, is Adoption of the Agenda. All  
11 right. Can I -- If there's no discussion, can I get a motion to  
12 adopt the agenda?  
13

14 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.  
15

16 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Second.  
17

18 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Second by Dr. Sweetman. Next is Approval of the  
19 August 2024 Minutes. Any discussion, or can I get a motion to  
20 adopt the minutes?  
21

22 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So moved, Mr. Chair.  
23

24 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Do we have a second?  
25

26 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Second.  
27

28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Williamson. Thank you, sir. All right.  
29 First up, we have the Action Guide and Next Steps, by Dr.  
30 Hollensead, followed by a presentation on HMS. Dr. Hollensead.  
31

32 **PRESENTATION ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES PROPOSED RULE**  
33

34 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee may  
35 remember, at our last meeting, when we were discussing the for-  
36 hire document, there was some discussion that the Highly Migratory  
37 Species Division, HMS, would be also having their AP meeting  
38 shortly after our August meeting, and they would be discussing a  
39 rule that they were considering that would modify, and expand,  
40 some of their data collection reporting programs, including for  
41 their charter and for hire.  
42

43 There's a little bit of question of, as these -- As we started  
44 building up our program, and they started building up theirs, that  
45 it would be a good idea to invite them to come speak a little bit.  
46

47 During that AP meeting in early September, they published a  
48 proposed rule, picking some preferreds for those various options

1 that they're considering for their data collection programs, and  
2 so, after reviewing some of that, council staff had some questions  
3 for -- They asked for some clarification on that.

4  
5 Additionally, you know, asking some questions, based on what  
6 council staff had heard from around the committee, and anticipated  
7 that the committee may have for HMS, and so we had a discussion  
8 with them, and so you'll see that there is -- In your background  
9 materials, the presentation that they will give today, and so I  
10 don't want to steal that thunder, but a couple of background  
11 materials is that proposed rule presentation, the proposed rule  
12 itself, and then the regulatory impact review and the reg flex  
13 analysis that sort of goes into that informing that proposed rule,  
14 as well as that letter asking for some clarification on those sorts  
15 of things.

16  
17 We have staff here from HMS, and we have Ms. Karyl Brewster-Geisz,  
18 Dr. Clifford Hutt, and I believe Mr. Randy Blankenship is also  
19 back there, and so they are here in-person today to present and  
20 then take any questions from the group.

21  
22 This is a proposed rule, and so, right now, the public comment  
23 period is open, and it will be open through January 6th of 2025,  
24 and so not to be confused with the letter that we sent before.  
25 That was sort of a clarification, sort of a preemptive letter to  
26 sort of request information from them for this presentation.

27  
28 If you all would like to then create a formal letter, based on  
29 this proposed rule, and go through, staff will be happy to, you  
30 know, create that, get it reviewed, and then formally submit it,  
31 through their portal, by the due date of January 6, 2025, and so,  
32 if there's no other questions, I would hand it over to HMS staff  
33 for their presentation.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Hollensead, is there a link to this on the  
36 page? I don't have one on the page, and I'm going to follow on  
37 the computer.

38  
39 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** So are you looking for a link to this  
40 presentation?

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** This presentation.

43  
44 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and it's in the meeting materials page, on  
45 the webpage, and it's Tab F, Number 4a.

46  
47 **MS. KARYL BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Hello, everyone. Thank you for having  
48 us here today. My name is Karyl Brewster-Geisz. I'm the Rulemaking

1 Branch Chief in the Highland Migratory Species Management  
2 Division, or I'll call it HMS. With me today, as Lisa mentioned,  
3 is Cliff Hutt. He will be helping me with the presentation, and  
4 then we also have our Division Chief, Randy Blankenship, here in  
5 the back of the room.

6  
7 So, with that said, I'm here to talk about our proposed rule. I'll  
8 be giving -- I will be giving a little bit of the background in  
9 the letter and meeting, subsequent meetings. The council did  
10 request information more about how HMS works, and our regulatory  
11 authority, so I'll be providing that in the background.

12  
13 Cliff will then be talking about the various alternatives in the  
14 proposed rule, including alternatives for our commercial limited-  
15 access permits, our commercial and for-hire open-access permits,  
16 and, as a point of clarification, those for-hire permits are not  
17 just recreational. If they have the right endorsement, and various  
18 permits, they are also commercial permits.

19  
20 Then we'll also be talking about changes for our angling permit  
21 reporting and our dealer reporting, and, again, this is a proposed  
22 rule, and so we are looking for public comments. As Lisa  
23 mentioned, the comment period ends January 6<sup>th</sup>.

24  
25 A little bit about HMS. HMS stands for Highland Migratory Species,  
26 and we manage all of these species, the tunas, billfish, swordfish,  
27 and all the coastal sharks from the State of Maine through the  
28 State of Texas, including the U.S. Caribbean, and this also  
29 includes any U.S. vessels on the high seas.

30  
31 HMS are managed directly by NOAA Fisheries. There is no fishery  
32 management council, though our range overlaps with all five  
33 Atlantic-based councils. There are provisions of the Magnuson Act  
34 that apply to us, and most of these also apply to the councils,  
35 and so this includes the National Standards. We have to follow  
36 all of them, just like all of you do. It also includes the FMP  
37 content requirements in Section 303. Those apply to all of us,  
38 HMS and the councils.

39  
40 There are some council-specific requirements that do not apply to  
41 HMS. Additionally, there are provisions that are unique to HMS  
42 that the councils don't need to worry about. This includes the  
43 creation of an advisory panel for HMS, and this is done under  
44 Section 302(g)(4), which is different from the one that the council  
45 uses to create your advisory panels. Your advisory panels are  
46 created under 302(g)(2), and there are different provisions and  
47 requirements for us.

48

1 We also have to follow the provisions under 304(g) (1), which relate  
2 to what we need to have in our FMPs, along with how it relates to  
3 international management and considerations.

4  
5 A little bit more about HMS and our process, versus the council  
6 process, and this is a table that has our HMS process generally on  
7 the left-hand side and the council process on the right-hand side.  
8 I'm not going to try to interpret the council side, but I do want  
9 to point out some of the differences between what we do and what  
10 all of you do.

11  
12 I talked about how we have an HMS advisory panel. Anything we  
13 hear from an advisory panel is advisory in nature. We listen to  
14 what the advisory panel says. There is no voting. There's just  
15 advice that the individuals on the panel give to us. We, we being  
16 NOAA Fisheries, decide what actions we are going to consider and  
17 what actions we're going to implement, and we're the ones who  
18 consider all the comments we receive, and that can be from the  
19 advisory panel. Those comments can be from the general public.  
20 The comments can be from the different states, the councils. We  
21 consider all of it when we are looking at what actions to do and  
22 implement.

23  
24 We do not have an SSC, like the council does. Instead, we work  
25 with, directly with, the Science Center. We also take advice from  
26 ICCAT, the International Commission for the Conservation of  
27 Atlantic Tunas, their science body, the SCRS, and so that is where  
28 all of our science comes from. We also are participants in SEDAR,  
29 and so the same stock assessment process that all of you use.

30  
31 Our advisory panel meets about two times a year. One of the  
32 requirements, under Magnuson, is that we meet with the advisory  
33 panel when we are doing an FMP or an FMP amendment, and so, while  
34 we generally meet two times a year, there have been times we've  
35 met more than that, when we need to meet with the advisory panel  
36 about an FMP amendment.

37  
38 Anyone can nominate themselves to be part of the advisory panel,  
39 and we consider all those nominations. In the next couple of  
40 weeks, we will be releasing our annual request for nominations to  
41 be on our advisory panel, and that will include all that  
42 information you need to apply.

43  
44 Our advisory panel is composed of commercial interests,  
45 recreational interests, environmentalists, and academics. When we  
46 are looking at the nominations, we try to make sure that we have  
47 the range of the fisheries, and so people from all over, from the  
48 Northeast, from the Gulf, from the South Atlantic, from the

1 Caribbean.

2  
3 We also try to make sure we have panel members from among all of  
4 our species. It wouldn't make any sense for us to have all the  
5 academics be shark focused, and all the commercial fishermen to be  
6 our bluefin hand-gear fishermen. We try to make sure to have all  
7 of our species represented, all of the area represented, and all  
8 of the gear types represented, and then we are the ones that make  
9 the decision.

10  
11 Every year, about a third of our panel, the terms end, and so,  
12 every year, we're looking for about a third replacement. We  
13 recently implemented term limits, and so you're allowed to be on  
14 our advisory panel for three consecutive terms. After that, you  
15 have to be off for at least one year before you can reapply. I  
16 think that's all I want to compare. Thank you. Background is the  
17 next slide.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I may have missed it. How many people are on  
20 the advisory panel, total?

21  
22 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** It's somewhere between fifty and sixty, and  
23 thank you for that. One other thing I meant to say is our advisory  
24 panel also is composed of representatives from each individual  
25 state. Every council can provide a representative, and the two  
26 fishery commissions can provide representatives, and so, all  
27 together, that's fifty to sixty people.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So I applied. I think you said it just opened,  
30 though, didn't it? Didn't it open about a week or two ago?

31  
32 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** No, and that was for the SEDAR pool, which is  
33 different. Our advisory panel one will be coming in the next  
34 couple of weeks.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. Thank you.

37  
38 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Yes. So, in regard to this particular rule,  
39 this rule on electronic reporting, back in May of 2023, and so  
40 about a year-and-a-half ago, we released our advance notice of  
41 proposed rulemaking, where we outlined a whole bunch of potential  
42 options and the objectives for the rulemaking.

43  
44 We presented this to our advisory panel in May of 2023. We then  
45 went and presented it to all the different councils, along with  
46 the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. We held five in-  
47 person hearings and two webinars, and so you'll remember, last  
48 summer, I came down and I presented to all of you.

1  
2 At that time, that presentation was the electronic reporting, ANPR,  
3 but it was also scoping for Amendment 16, regarding sharks, and  
4 the proposed rule for Amendment 15, which had to do with spatial  
5 management. We received eleven written comments on our advance  
6 notice of proposed rulemaking. That comment period closed.

7  
8 One of the comments we received was from this council, that asked  
9 to be kept apprised of when we were moving forward, and we do that  
10 through our advisory panel meetings, and so we had an advisory  
11 panel meeting in September of 2023, where we talked about how we  
12 had received comments and we were working on the next steps.

13  
14 Come May 2024, in my rulemaking update to the advisory panel, I  
15 gave a quick summary of the comments we received, which overall  
16 were really supportive of where we were going and what we were  
17 doing, and I let the advisory panel know, at that time, we were  
18 hoping for a proposed rule out in the summer.

19  
20 Additionally, during this past year, we have actively participated  
21 in this council's IPT, regarding your own electronic reporting  
22 rulemaking, and so we have been in contact, and we knew generally  
23 which way you guys were going, along with working with the  
24 Southeast Regional Office.

25  
26 In our proposed rule, we have a number of objectives we are trying  
27 to achieve. One of those objectives is to switch from paper  
28 reporting to electronic reporting, and, through that, we are trying  
29 to modernize the way we collect reports, along with consolidating  
30 all the reporting deadlines. We also hope to expand our reporting  
31 requirements to the commercial and charter/headboat vessel owners  
32 that have our open-access permits.

33  
34 Right now, in our regulations, we have places where we can select  
35 for all of these people to report. We have taken advantage of  
36 that occasionally, but, overall, for the most part, it's been our  
37 longline fishermen, our swordfish shark fishermen, who have been  
38 required to report, and not as much our tuna commercial permit  
39 holders, or the charter headboats. We also are trying to collect  
40 additional information from our dealers that will help us with our  
41 stock assessments.

42  
43 Overall, we are trying to make sure that our reporting requirements  
44 are more consistent with some of the requirements across all of  
45 the councils and NOAA Fisheries, and we're trying also to augment  
46 the data we need for our management of HMS, including some of the  
47 data needs we are required to have under ICCAT, and our hope is  
48 that this rulemaking is a step, and it is only a step, toward the

1 agency initiative of one-stop reporting.

2  
3 One-stop reporting means that fishers, and dealers, would be able  
4 to open up an app, or go onto their computer, and report once and  
5 achieve the reporting requirements they need across the agency,  
6 across all the councils, across all the states, because, right  
7 now, we do have fishermen who are reporting their Gulf  
8 requirements, their South Atlantic requirements, their North  
9 Atlantic requirements, and their HMS requirements on different --  
10 By different methods. We want to simplify that for them, so they  
11 only have to submit one report.

12  
13 One of the things the council also asked us to include was  
14 information on the number of our permit holders, and so that's  
15 what the slide indicates. The top part is our limited-access  
16 permits, and so that's our tuna longline, both our swordfish  
17 directed and incidental, both of our shark directed and incidental,  
18 and our swordfish hand-gear. Those are all of our limited-access  
19 permits.

20  
21 I think it's important to note that, if you are going to use  
22 pelagic longline, you need what we call a tri-pack, and so you  
23 need that tuna longline category permit, in addition to the  
24 swordfish directed or a swordfish incidental, and either a shark  
25 directed or shark incidental, before you can use pelagic longline.  
26 Those are the limited-access permits.

27  
28 We also have a number of open-access permits, so this includes our  
29 charter/headboat permits, and, just so you all know, about a third  
30 of our charter/headboat permits also hold permits from SERO, and  
31 so that could be from the South Atlantic or the Gulf, and then we  
32 have our Atlantic tunas general and our swordfish general  
33 commercial. Those are hand-gear permits. For the most part,  
34 people who get the tuna general category also get the swordfish  
35 general category. That's why they're on the same line.

36  
37 Then we have the tunas harpoon category, and our HMS angling  
38 category, which has a lot of permit holders, and, lastly, we do  
39 have permitted dealers, and, with that, I'm going to hand the  
40 presentation over to Cliff.

41  
42 **MR. CLIFFORD HUTT:** Good morning, everyone. I'm Cliff Hutt, and  
43 I'm going to present on the different alternatives we considered.  
44 First off, I'll talk about our vessel reporting alternatives.  
45 First for these are the alternatives we considered for our limited-  
46 access permit holders that Karyl just listed. These are the permit  
47 holders that currently report to our commercial HMS logbook that  
48 is managed out of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, along

1 with the Southeast Coastal Fisheries logbook.

2  
3 Currently, under the status quo, these vessels are required to  
4 submit paper logbooks, and we are looking to require them to submit  
5 logbooks electronically, while uploading a file for their weigh-  
6 out slips with the logbook submission. Currently, those weigh-  
7 out slips are included with their logbook report, which is mailed  
8 in. In this case, they would have to basically have a PDF of that  
9 file and scan it and upload it with the logbook report.

10  
11 This, as Karyl said, was kind of meant to get to that one-stop  
12 reporting initiative. Currently, many of our vessel captains are  
13 reporting to this logbook. If they have GARFO permits, they are  
14 required to submit their trip reports on all trips to GARFO  
15 electronically, via their EVTR system, while they're still being  
16 required to submit paper logbooks to us, and so it's a big priority  
17 for the Science Center to get both of these logbook programs,  
18 because, as you know, there's a joint rule between the South  
19 Atlantic and this council to do a similar electronic reporting  
20 rule for the coastal logbook, to get these onto an electronic  
21 format, so we can kind of put an end to that double reporting  
22 that's going on.

23  
24 Just for simplicity's sake, I'm referring to vessel owners  
25 throughout this, but it could also be a vessel operator who has  
26 designated say a captain employee to report as well.

27  
28 Current timing requirements for our logbook, they are currently  
29 required to enter activities in a logbook within forty-eight hours  
30 after the end of the trip and mail it in within seven days of the  
31 end of the trip.

32  
33 If they are selected for cost earnings reporting, for which we  
34 currently do a sub-selection for this logbook, they are given  
35 thirty days after offloading for that portion of the logbook.  
36 Under this proposed rule, our preferred alternative is to  
37 consolidate all those timing requirements to seven days after the  
38 end of the trip, including the cost earnings portion of the report.

39  
40 We also analyzed alternatives of forty-eight hours and twenty-four  
41 hours and determined that, given the nature of these trips, the  
42 length of them, the amount of fish being offloaded, those timelines  
43 would not be reasonable for many of these vessels.

44  
45 This slide compares some of the current requirements between what  
46 we are proposing, what's being considered in the Gulf and South  
47 Atlantic commercial logbook rule and what is currently required by  
48 GARFO. Basically, where you see the colors are the same, that

1 basically means these different programs are either proposing or  
2 require the same thing. Where the colors are different, that means  
3 they have a different requirement.  
4

5 For us, on reporting information, we require, in the HMS logbook,  
6 reporting of all catch and all discards, including the disposition  
7 of those discards, whether they're discarded or they're dead. The  
8 South Atlantic and Gulf only require discards for selected vessels.  
9 GARFO, basically, like us, requires all catch and discards, but in  
10 pounds.  
11

12 For our logbook, we have both set and trip reporting requirements,  
13 depending on what gear type they are using and the length of the  
14 trip. Any trip under twenty-four hours, or no more than twenty-  
15 four hours, is just a single trip to report, but, for trips over  
16 twenty-four hours, which is typical for our pelagic longliners,  
17 they have to submit a separate catch report for each set of their  
18 pelagic longline gear. Under this, going to an electronic logbook,  
19 whether you do set or trip, that scenario would kind of be based  
20 on the gear type you use.  
21

22 We've identified, working with our partners, four primary HMS gear  
23 types that would trigger set-level reporting for trips, that being  
24 our pelagic longline gear, green stick, pelagic buoy gear, and  
25 harpoon, as those are traditional HMS gear types. Other gear types  
26 -- Since we're kind of combining the two logbooks, other gear types  
27 that are more primarily used by Southeast fisheries, you know,  
28 managed through this council and the South Atlantic, would just be  
29 trip-level reporting.  
30

31 In addition to that, the South Atlantic and Gulf are considering  
32 fishing location of the trip level, and GARFO is just trip-level  
33 reporting of both catch and effort.  
34

35 Both us and the Southeast councils are considering seven days after  
36 the trip for the report timing, whereas, at GARFO, it's forty-  
37 eight hours. Both us and the South Atlantic Councils are  
38 considering requiring a monthly no-fishing reports, whereas that's  
39 not required by GARFO, and, for economic questions, you know, both  
40 us and the Southeast councils require trip-level economic  
41 questions and additional annual surveys for selected vessels,  
42 whereas there's no cost or earnings reporting in GARFO.  
43

44 Here, we're looking at vessel reporting alternatives, the new  
45 reporting alternatives for our HMS commercial and for-hire open-  
46 access permits, and, for the commercial permits, we're talking  
47 about our Atlantic tunas general rod-and-reel permit and our  
48 swordfish general commercial permit and our Atlantic tunas

1 harpoon.

2  
3 Here, as Karyl said, we currently have authority to select these  
4 vessels for logbook reporting, but we have not done that very  
5 frequently, because, particularly for the for-hire vessels, you  
6 know, the recreational surveys, such as MRIP or our large pelagic  
7 survey in the Northeast, have been the traditional method for  
8 monitoring these fisheries, and so we didn't see a need to expand  
9 to logbook reporting for all of them.

10  
11 However, with the councils moving towards logbook reporting for  
12 these fisheries, we felt it was worthwhile for us to consider doing  
13 so as well, and so, under our preferred alternative here, we would  
14 expand species and trip recording requirements via electronic  
15 logbooks.

16  
17 This would be for all trips, regardless of whether fish are caught,  
18 for all species caught, including non-HMS. We plan to collect  
19 fishing location information, and, although we haven't exactly  
20 decided what format that would be, probably something like lat,  
21 long, minutes, degrees, similar to what we do in the large pelagic  
22 survey, but we're open to ideas on that, and have worked to discuss  
23 that with our partners, and requiring monthly no-fishing reports.

24  
25 Under this, you know, we currently have individual fish catch  
26 reporting requirements for these vessels for bluefin tuna,  
27 billfish, and swordfish. That would essentially continue under  
28 this requirement, but those reports would be collected as part of  
29 the logbook report. These logbooks would provide more detailed  
30 effort and catch data that could help determine CPUE and report  
31 more detailed data to ICCAT, which would contribute to stock  
32 assessments and management strategy evaluation efforts there.

33  
34 The location information would assist with analyses on such impact  
35 assessments for offshore developments, such as offshore wind and  
36 aquaculture, impacts to marine monuments, and management decisions  
37 related to climate impacts, or other changes in our spatial  
38 management.

39  
40 This slide compares what we are proposing and our proposed rule to  
41 what is either currently in place in various regional programs or  
42 is being proposed, in the case here by the Gulf. As I said, we're  
43 looking to require, you know, reports for each trip, including all  
44 species caught and amount kept and discarded, including discard  
45 condition.

46  
47 This is basically the same across all the other programs, although  
48 we're the only one that's looking to report discards, as to whether

1 they are alive or dead, and that largely is needed for us to meet  
2 ICCAT reporting requirements for dead discards.

3  
4 Regarding reporting level, you know, most all the programs here  
5 are the same, you know, primary for fishing location, and we're  
6 talking primary fishing location, and lat/long is what is being  
7 considered by most of the programs, although GARFO has more of  
8 like a grid-based reporting system, where catch and effort is  
9 reported for each fishing area.

10  
11 Regarding no fishing reports, we are proposing to do, as I said,  
12 monthly no-fishing reports, with no limit on how far in advance.  
13 The SEFHIER draft amendment has been considering monthly, whereas,  
14 in the South Atlantic, they currently require weekly no-fishing  
15 reports, to kind of work with their weekly reporting requirements,  
16 and, in the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, they have weekly  
17 no fishing reports, whereas, at GARFO, no-fishing reports are not  
18 required.

19  
20 Regarding timing, our preferred alternative here is to require  
21 these logbook reports to be submitted within twenty-four hours of  
22 the end of the trip. This is consistent with our current catch  
23 reporting requirements for bluefin tuna, billfish, and swordfish,  
24 and it would be more -- You know, a more strenuous, restrictive  
25 requirement than any of the current for-hire logbook programs that  
26 are currently in place.

27  
28 We also analyzed the forty-eight hours at the end of the trip,  
29 similar to what GARFO is doing, or kind of weekly reporting, you  
30 know, seven days, similar to what is currently being done in the  
31 South Atlantic, and, for various reasons, we decided, you know,  
32 twenty-four hours is a need for us, for some of our fisheries,  
33 particularly bluefin tuna, and we saw it was best to keep with a  
34 more consistent reporting requirement.

35  
36 This also kind of compares reporting frequency across some of these  
37 trips. This is the comparison across different programs. As I  
38 said, we're talking twenty-four hours after the end of the trip.  
39 SEFHIER Gulf, in their draft amendment, is currently considering  
40 requiring reports prior to offload, or prior to reaching the dock,  
41 or while tied up at the dock, in the case of bad weather. In the  
42 South Atlantic, they have a weekly reporting requirement, and the  
43 same for the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, whereas GARFO is  
44 forty-eight hours after entering port.

45  
46 These are all terms we consider for cost and earnings reporting  
47 for these logbooks. The status quo here, similar to our current  
48 commercial logbook, would be to report cost and earnings

1 information for each trip, if the vessel is selected, which will  
2 occur on a regular basis, or we also analyzed considering  
3 collecting cost and earnings data solely through an annual survey,  
4 if the vessel is selected, but what we settled on for a preferred  
5 trip was to require cost and earnings, trip-level cost and earnings  
6 information, to be reported for each trip in the electronic  
7 logbook, for all vessels, and, if the vessel is selected, they  
8 might, they would also be required to report an additional annual  
9 expenditure form, via annual survey, but, again, the trip-level  
10 would be required for all trips from all vessels.

11  
12 Detailed economic data would be used in cost-benefit and economic  
13 impact analysis for regulatory actions, to allow us to better  
14 monitor the economic health of the fishery and industry over time  
15 and facilitate economic recovery from fisheries disasters. We  
16 provide economic data, comparable to what is collected in our  
17 commercial logbook, and require submission of some expenditure  
18 information, via annual survey, would be more efficient and ease  
19 reporting burden.

20  
21 Part of the reason why we are proposing cost -- To have trip-level  
22 cost and earnings data on all trips has to do with kind of the  
23 size and diversity of our fishery and the broad regional area over  
24 which they are, and we have roughly around 4,000 of our for-hire  
25 vessels, spread from Maine to Texas and the Caribbean, and so  
26 there's a lot of regional spread.

27  
28 A sub-selection of vessels, say around 20 percent, which is what  
29 we currently roughly do for our commercial logbook-- You know, it  
30 would probably be enough, if we wanted to do a blanket analysis  
31 for the whole region, but, if we wanted to do sub-regional  
32 analyses, or seasonal analyses, or specific fisheries analyses, we  
33 would have severe concerns about sample size, in order to do proper  
34 analyses, particularly for some of our billfish and swordfish  
35 species, because we find, from other studies we've done in the  
36 recreational surveys, tuna trips can account for anywhere from 60  
37 to 70 percent of all targeted HMS trips.

38  
39 Again, this is the table kind of comparing what we're proposing to  
40 what other groups are proposing, or have required, and, again,  
41 we're looking at each trip for trip-level cost and earnings  
42 reporting. The Gulf, in its current proposed amendment, is looking  
43 at trip-level reporting for selected vessels. In the South  
44 Atlantic SEFHIER Program, they require trip-level cost and  
45 earnings reporting for all trips for all vessels. The same in the  
46 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, whereas GARFO does not collect  
47 cost and earnings information at all.

48

1 Here we're going to talk about some of our terms for HMS angling  
2 permit reporting requirements. These changes are pretty minimal.  
3 We did consider -- As I've said before, we currently have catch  
4 reporting requirements for bluefin tuna, billfish and swordfish.  
5 We did analyze, and consider, potentially expanding that to pelagic  
6 sharks, as well as the BAYS tunas, the big eye, albacore,  
7 yellowfin, and skipjack.

8  
9 We decided against that, at this time. There were -- When we  
10 started this process, there were things going on at ICCAT that  
11 made us think we might need that reporting, but that has not  
12 materialized, as of yet, and so, at this time, we're not moving  
13 forward with that. However, we are proposing to remove the option  
14 of submitting these catch reports via telephone.

15  
16 That's how we first started doing these reports, decades ago, and,  
17 at this point, it makes a very small portion of the number of  
18 reports we get, and it takes an outsized amount of staff time to  
19 collect that data, due to the need for follow-up calls, and so we  
20 are proposing to get rid of that as a reporting option and  
21 requiring them to use the various electronic options that are  
22 currently available.

23  
24 Now, finally, our dealer reporting alternatives. Currently, we  
25 require dealers to report individual fish weights for bluefin tuna,  
26 whereas other species can be reported individually, or in  
27 aggregate, and they have to submit biweekly bluefin tuna reports,  
28 in addition to their regular dealer reports.

29  
30 Here, our preferred alternative is to expand those requirements  
31 for reporting individual fish weights to include other ICCAT-  
32 managed species, namely swordfish, the BAYS tunas, and pelagic  
33 sharks, and so basically -- Which, with the shortfin mako  
34 prohibition, it basically comes down to thresher, blue sharks, and  
35 porbeagles. These would be reported individually on federal dealer  
36 reports, and we are also preferring a requirement to eliminate the  
37 submission of those biweekly bluefin tuna reports.

38  
39 That was an additional requirement on top of their other bluefin  
40 tuna reporting, and, at this point, with the expansion of  
41 electronic reporting, that data is effectively being collected  
42 elsewhere, and so it's kind of a duplicate reporting effort, and  
43 we're deciding to eliminate it.

44  
45 Expanding these individual fish reports would help expand  
46 individual fish weights information for additional gear types and  
47 geographic ranges that are not represented on our HMS logbook  
48 weigh-out slips. Currently we kind of get that data, as I said,

1 from those weigh-out slips that are submitted with the HMS logbook,  
2 but that, obviously, only covers certain gear types.

3  
4 With all these fish being reported individually by dealers, it  
5 would essentially expand that requirement to landings for all our  
6 other various fisheries. This would expand data availability for  
7 ICCAT stock assessments and reduce uncertainty in results for  
8 sample size used in assessments for size distribution, gear size  
9 selectivity estimates, and identifying strong recruitment and  
10 recruitment failure events. It would also expand data available  
11 to estimate revenue for economic analysis.

12  
13 For our request for public comment, the proposed rule was  
14 published on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The comment period extends until  
15 January 6<sup>th</sup>, and here you see links for where those can be  
16 submitted. We've also been holding a series of public hearing  
17 webinars. We have one left in early December, and we have been  
18 expressing that we will consider requests for in-person public  
19 hearings at specific locations of interest, although, as of yet,  
20 we have not had anyone really follow-up on that request, at this  
21 time.

22  
23 That is just a slide for information, where you can find more  
24 information about this rule, and the main documents have already  
25 been provided to you here. Carrie Soltanoff is coordinating the  
26 efforts in the drafting of this rule, and so she is the primary  
27 contact, and here you have a list of the rest of the people working  
28 on our electronic reporting team, and, with that, I'm ready to  
29 take any questions the council may have.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hutt. Dr. Sweetman, please.

32  
33 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Cliff and Karyl, it's  
34 good to see you. Can you go to Slide 14, Bernie? I think that's  
35 a lot of the crux of some of the discussion we've had at the table  
36 here.

37  
38 I just want some clarification, because you said some things here  
39 that intrigued me, and maybe we were a little off-base when we  
40 were talking about this, and so it wasn't crystal clear in the  
41 proposed rule. I guess some of the concern that we have, at the  
42 council, is the for-hire data reporting system that we're  
43 developing right now and how that intersects with what you all are  
44 proposing in your preferred alternative, because you're including  
45 all species, including non-HMS.

46  
47 The way you described this, as kind of a one-stop shop for  
48 reporting, I'm wondering if maybe we're off-base, in terms of our

1 concerns about double reporting, along those lines, and so I guess  
2 I'm wondering what the mechanisms would be if the Gulf Council  
3 chose to move forward on our data collection program here for for-  
4 hire.

5  
6 How -- Are the fishermen then responsible for getting this data  
7 over to HMS? Is this going to be passed through the Science  
8 Center, and then ultimately to you all for this one-stop shop  
9 reporting system? I'm just -- I'll start there with my -- That's  
10 probably the larger question that I have.

11  
12 **MR. HUTT:** Yes. Absolutely. The last thing we want is to create  
13 a system where any captain has to submit two reports for the same  
14 trip. That's the last thing we want, and we have been working  
15 with our various partners, particularly ACCSP, and the folks at  
16 Bluefin Data, who manage the VESL reporting application, to get  
17 our data elements integrated into their primary reporting systems.

18  
19 Currently the HMS data elements have been integrated into SAFIS  
20 eTRIPS, ACCSP's platform, and the folks at Bluefin are working to  
21 integrate our data elements into VESL, including the forms  
22 currently used by SEFHIER, and they anticipate having that work  
23 done by the end of the year, and I do not see any situation where  
24 an HMS for-hire logbook would be implemented before that.

25  
26 Once that work is done, essentially any captain would have the  
27 option of using either of those applications. You know, if they're  
28 both approved, and I know VESL is one that is popularly used in  
29 the Gulf, and they should be able to go in, submit a single report,  
30 and that data would then -- That would meet both programs'  
31 requirements, and then that data would be then -- Currently, it is  
32 being shifted through ACCSP's SAFIS database, where it would be  
33 available to all the various partners to get.

34  
35 I know there are other applications in the works, and you know, we  
36 are working with those parties as well to make sure our data  
37 elements are implemented there, but, at least initially, you know,  
38 SAFIS eTRIPS and VESL are the two primary applications being used  
39 for this style of reporting, and both should be one-stop reporting  
40 options for these fisheries.

41  
42 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that. That's good to know. I guess  
43 then a follow-up on that. So, because our data reporting is in  
44 full-on development right now, you know, and we don't necessarily  
45 know what those finalized data fields are going to actually be,  
46 how would you resolve issues where there's different reporting  
47 requirements on the HMS side?

48

1 I'm thinking maybe economic questions, and things along those  
2 lines, that might be a little bit different from what we are  
3 working towards, and so I'm just wondering how that would be  
4 resolved, if there's different requirements for each of the  
5 programs.  
6

7 **MR. HUTT:** We are actively in communication with our various  
8 partners, the folks at SERO, folks at, as I said, VESL and ACCSP,  
9 and negotiating on that. We do not, in our rule, list out, you  
10 know, specific questions that we're going to require, just for  
11 that reason. We want flexibility.  
12

13 You know, we have suggestions of the kinds of data we're looking  
14 for, but we did not want to tie ourselves to specific questions  
15 where, you know, we couldn't make those kinds of compromises and  
16 work those things out between our regional partners, which I think,  
17 as we're moving towards this, that kind of flexibility is needed.  
18

19 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Further questions? Dr. Frazer.  
20

21 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thanks, Cliff. So, on the same slide, and so  
22 this is really about open-access permits, right, both commercial  
23 and for-hire, and the preferred -- It's not clear to me, and I  
24 think it probably includes discard data for the commercial open-  
25 access permit holders, because, when you go to B-15, or the next  
26 slide, and excuse me, it's explicit, for the for-hire, that the  
27 discard data will be collected, but it's not explicit that the  
28 discard data will be collected for the commercial. I assume that's  
29 the case. I just want to make sure.  
30

31 **MR. HUTT:** Yes, that's the case. We focused on the for-hire on  
32 that next slide, because we knew, coming here, the primary  
33 discussion was around that for-hire comparison.  
34

35 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** On the same thread, I just still don't quite  
36 understand, when we have the potentially sympatric programs, like  
37 SEFHIER versus this, and the differences in the timing of  
38 reporting, not just what's reported.  
39

40 For example, on Slide -- I think it's 16, and the report -- You  
41 said it would be submitted within twenty-four hours, and, you know,  
42 at least the Gulf Council and the South Atlanta Council have worked  
43 back on this whole concept of the data needs to be validated in  
44 order to be used in assessments and management, and we decided  
45 that, you know, that didn't meet the bar of validation, and so  
46 does it go the other way as well?  
47

48 If a vessel has a reef fish and an HMS permit, they would have to

1 submit, and the SEFHIER program said you've got to submit it before  
2 landing, you've got to do that. You know, I guess, just as a  
3 general question, I would be interested in like how does your  
4 program -- Have you guys discuss the validation quality of the  
5 data, and how that meets the bar that we're trying to meet, or  
6 not?

7  
8 **MR. HUTT:** Okay. Regarding the first question, if they're dual-  
9 permitted, of course, they would have to report whatever the more  
10 stringent reporting requirement is. Both programs are talking  
11 about requiring all trips. If you've got one permit that says  
12 you've got to report before you hit the dock, then you've got to  
13 report before you hit the dock, and that's all there is to it, and  
14 we've got no problem with that in HMS, whatsoever.

15  
16 Regarding the second question about validation, yes, obviously, we  
17 are very concerned about that. Our issue is, as I've said multiple  
18 times, you know, we're from Maine to Texas, plus the Caribbean,  
19 and, as we were working on this process, you know, there were no  
20 validation surveys in place, and given, as you all know, the size  
21 of the HMS Division, and the resources available to us, you know,  
22 we're not going to be able to put up our own validation survey  
23 covering the entire Atlantic and the Gulf.

24  
25 You know, we don't have those resources. We're going to have to  
26 leverage partner resources, and so we're interested in what kind  
27 of programs the regions, the science centers, you know, the agency,  
28 puts forward. We are currently particularly interested in a  
29 proposal that ACCSP has put forward to MRIP for MRIP certification.  
30 They put it forward about a year ago, and it's a program that would  
31 use -- It would match data from trip reports in the APAIS to  
32 logbook data, to try to match up and validate reports.

33  
34 They submitted that, as I said, like about a year ago now. It's  
35 gone through at least two rounds of peer review. They're currently  
36 bringing on a statistician, to do a bunch of statistical analyses  
37 and simulation modeling, to satisfy some of the terms of those  
38 peer reviewers, and so we're interested in that, because the APAIS  
39 obviously covers a large portion of our region, but we did not  
40 want to move forward with proposing more stringent regulations, at  
41 this time, without kind of a finalized validation survey put  
42 forward.

43  
44 Now, once that happens, we will absolutely consider taking action  
45 to implement whatever requirements are needed for our logbook to  
46 effectively work with such a program, but we just didn't want to  
47 get ahead of the process, and, for right now, the twenty-four-hour  
48 reporting requirement, that's one that our captains have had to

1 meet for over a decade now, for that catch reporting, and so  
2 they're familiar with it. You know, we've been working to build  
3 up compliance to that, and it meets our immediate needs within the  
4 division, and so that's what we went forward, at this time, with  
5 this initial proposed rule, but we are absolutely willing to  
6 consider any more stringent, or additional requirements, based on  
7 what validation efforts are eventually approved and implemented by  
8 the agency.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Frazer.

11  
12 **DR. FRAZER:** Just to follow up on John's question a little bit, so  
13 there's a number of kind of requirements, right, and the timing of  
14 reporting is just one of those, and so what -- Which of those  
15 criteria, of those reporting requirements, is the one that is  
16 considered to be the most stringent, right, because the concern,  
17 obviously, is, if it's timing, right, and it's twenty-four hours,  
18 and you can't validate it, then it limits the utility of the  
19 information for the other entities.

20  
21 **MR. HUTT:** Well, I mean, reporting before they reach the dock is,  
22 you know, more stringent than what any of the current for-hire  
23 logbooks that are currently being conducted are is required, and  
24 so that was some concern to us. The requirement to only land at  
25 approved access sites was another one we had big concerns about  
26 implementing, you know, unless all of our regional partners are,  
27 you know, joining in that, because, to my knowledge, I don't know  
28 of any particular efforts of the GARFO in the Northeast to  
29 implement that, as of yet, and we also have to consider we have  
30 permit holders in the Caribbean, and so that's one that concerns  
31 me about its practical implications in our fishery, because I know  
32 a lot of our vessels now use private access sites.

33  
34 You know, if it becomes a requirement for a widely-based validation  
35 effort, throughout the various regions that we operate in, it is  
36 obviously something we will have to consider, but I don't think  
37 it's something that we could implement in any region by ourselves  
38 in HMS.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks, and then Andy.

41  
42 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of  
43 questions, if you all will entertain them. The first is you said  
44 you've done webinars for public comment. How well attended are  
45 those?

46  
47 **MR. HUTT:** As our webinars go, they've actually been very well  
48 attended. We've had -- Both of the ones we've had so far have had

1 multiple attendees, probably over a dozen, at least, and had closer  
2 to twenty-four, and have involved lengthy discussions, that lasted  
3 nearly two hours, and so they've been well attended, and not just  
4 by for-hire captains, but by commercial, you know, pelagic  
5 longliners, by dealers, and so we've gotten a lot of feedback  
6 already.

7  
8 **DR. BANKS:** My second question is what's the funding source for  
9 this? Is this IRA funding or --

10  
11 **MR. HUTT:** That's a good question. It varies. I mean, it varies.  
12 You know, the dealer, and the commercial, logbooks already have  
13 established funding. I think the commercially expanded open-  
14 access logbook reporting, that funding is still kind of TBD.

15  
16 **DR. BANKS:** Then last question. So the South Atlantic was sent a  
17 letter saying that they had low compliance, and that limited the  
18 data use. Since you also have open-access permits, I can see this  
19 becoming an issue. What is the plan to enforce compliance, since  
20 you can't tie it to a permit, like we're discussing with SEFHIER?

21  
22 **MR. HUTT:** Well, we can tie it to a permit, but, yes, as you said,  
23 it is an open-access permit. Our permit holders, they have  
24 accounts in our system and so, essentially, they're renewing the  
25 same permit each year, as long as they have the same vessel, and  
26 so, really, it's kind of tied to the vessel, and so we could  
27 conceivably be able to deny renewal of those permits, and that is  
28 something we talked about in the rule, but just didn't really  
29 include in the presentation.

30  
31 **DR. BANKS:** So just a follow-up, or a clarification, for that. If  
32 say I have a charter HMS permit, and I'm not compliant. I just  
33 forfeit that permit. You're saying you could go back and deny  
34 another open-access, or you're going to tie it to the vessel, or  
35 -- Because, right now, I think that's the issue with the South  
36 Atlantic, is they're just getting another permit.

37  
38 **MR. HUTT:** For our purposes, unless you get a new vessel, or a new  
39 Coast Guard registration number, and the permit is really tied to  
40 the vessel and not the person. Unless you upgrade to a new vessel,  
41 and you go back to renew, we're not going to issue you like a  
42 separate permit, you know, under that same Coast Guard number. It  
43 would just be a renewal of the original permit. The point of it  
44 being open-access is just that any new vessel that wanted to come  
45 into the fishery could get a permit. There's not a limited number  
46 of them.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Right. That HMS permit that we use in the South

1 Atlantic for swordfishing is a little different than the charter  
2 boat permits down there, and it is -- When you go to renew it,  
3 your vessel pops up, and you're either renewed, or you're expired,  
4 and that's it. There's not a -- You don't just go buy a new one,  
5 and so there is a little bit of an overlap there. I had Andy and  
6 Mr. Dugas.

7  
8 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** A comment and a question, and so, kind of  
9 getting back to the earlier comments about determining which system  
10 is more restrictive, right, the way we set it up, with the previous  
11 SEFHIER program, Gulf and South Atlantic, is, if you were dually-  
12 permitted, had both permits, it's going to default to the most  
13 restrictive system, based on the permit you have, right, and so,  
14 in this instance, HMS is now in the mix, and we also have to  
15 consider GARFO, and other permits to the Northeast, right, for our  
16 Greater Atlantic Region.

17  
18 My question, and apologies if you said this during the  
19 presentation, is, you know, a huge sticking point for this council  
20 has been the trip-level cost and earnings information, and so what  
21 feedback, and information, have you gotten from your advisory panel  
22 about both providing this information as well as maybe opposition  
23 to providing that information?

24  
25 **MR. HUTT:** Like many things, it depends on who you ask. Our  
26 commercial fishermen, who have been having to provide this  
27 information for, you know, a decade or two now, they're very much  
28 in support of seeing the for-hire industry being required to do  
29 the same.

30  
31 Naturally, from the for-hire sector, we have gotten comments, and  
32 opposition. I think, any time you try to propose collecting  
33 economic data from a fishery, you're going to get some of those.  
34 My response to that is, you know, economic -- All of these  
35 fisheries agree that economic data is important, and, if we're  
36 going to have and be able to conduct economic analyses that are  
37 equitable across sectors, we can't do that without the data. I  
38 think you can have an open debate on whether or not it should be  
39 required on all trips, versus, you know, a sub-selection of trips,  
40 but I think the data itself is needed.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That's something I was going to point out too,  
43 is what hasn't been mentioned in all this is the burden on the  
44 fishermen. This is all just adding -- We've had, as Andy  
45 mentioned, great debates on economic reporting. We actually lost  
46 a lawsuit in our SEFHIER program, and, in my view, because someone  
47 in the system regarded economic reporting as an open-ended throw  
48 everything you want in there, because, yes, more economic data is

1 better, but we -- The argument in this room, over and over, has  
2 been where is better economic data and the burden required with  
3 all that, and where is the line in between those? It's something  
4 to go further into here, but Mr. Dugas?

5  
6 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So someone -- Sorry. Some  
7 of the other folks touched on my points, and one of them is -- My  
8 question was funding. You know, are you all prepared to take on  
9 another 4,200 folks? I'm wondering, and how is that going to work?  
10 You know, we discussed a cut coming to NOAA next year, and here we  
11 are talking about adding costs for you all, and so that's -- I'm  
12 confused. That's one question.

13  
14 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, we recognize it is an open-ended question.  
15 There is a lot of uncertainty with budgets, and I think that's  
16 going to be one of the big deciding factors on whether or not this  
17 is something we're able to move forward with. Yes, this rulemaking  
18 process is a long process, and we've seen those things can change  
19 pretty quickly, and so that is absolutely an open-ended question,  
20 when we started this process, and it continue to be.

21  
22 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** I'll just add that this is a proposed rule.  
23 We're looking at a variety of options. This is our preferred  
24 alternative, but it does not mean that it will be the final  
25 alternative, once we consider all the comments.

26  
27 **MR. HUTT:** I would say, you know, an electronic reporting program  
28 is going to be cheaper than, you know, a paper reporting program.

29  
30 **MR. DUGAS:** To follow-up on that, you mentioned that there were  
31 twelve to twenty-four attendees in public meetings, with eleven  
32 comments, and, to me, that's a very, very small number, compared  
33 to, again, over 4,200 or more folks.

34  
35 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Sorry, and the eleven comments were written  
36 comments that we received on the ANPR. We have received more  
37 written comments so far in the proposed rule than we did on the  
38 ANPR, and we have had more attendees at the webinar than we had  
39 attendees at any of the in-person or webinars on the ANPR.

40  
41 **MR. DUGAS:** So would you -- Could you estimate that number? Is it  
42 anywhere near 4,000 folks?

43  
44 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** No, but we never receive comments from all  
45 folks, unless it is a form-letter type of comment, but, for the  
46 number of comments we usually have on rules, we are above what we  
47 normally get.

1 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Porch.  
2  
3 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. So, thinking of burden on the  
4 fishermen, I noticed that there's the requirement for 100 percent  
5 reporting of discards as one of the options, and I was curious why  
6 100 percent reporting there, when, at least, you know, the major  
7 commercial fisheries, and pelagic longline is probably our best  
8 observed fishery with, you know, typically over 10 percent  
9 coverage, and so, for discards, we would use that information,  
10 since self-reported discards typically are underreported, often  
11 zeroes, when we know they're not actually zero, but, you know,  
12 obviously, when they're fishing, it's hard to keep track of all  
13 the discards, and so I was just curious what the thoughts were  
14 there.  
15  
16 **MR. HUTT:** Basically, we have always required 100 percent discard  
17 reporting in our commercial HMS logbook, and, you know, felt it  
18 was needed to be consistent between the logbooks, and, at least  
19 for the dead discards, that is an ICCAT requirement, you know, for  
20 our species. We are required to report that to ICCAT, and so we  
21 need to collect that data.  
22  
23 **DR. PORCH:** But isn't that satisfied by the observer information,  
24 which is going to be more accurate?  
25  
26 **MR. HUTT:** You know, maybe for the commercial logbook, but we don't  
27 have observers on those open-access fisheries, the general  
28 category and the for-hire, and so --  
29  
30 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** I would just turn it back to the Science  
31 Center, in that I believe, when they are pulling together the Task  
32 1 and Task 2 data, they do use and compare the observer program  
33 data with the logbook data, in order to get those results.  
34  
35 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Anson.  
36  
37 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you for the presentation. Going back to  
38 the economic data, and the collection that you mentioned during  
39 the open-access permits, what are you currently using for your  
40 percentage of the vessels, and, if you don't have any, what is  
41 your proposed percentage that you're going to target?  
42  
43 Then, relative to the selection of the individual vessels, is that  
44 done independent from the reporting process, or would that be  
45 included in the reporting, so that, if a person were to submit a  
46 report, they would get notification, at the time of that report,  
47 that their vessel has been selected at that time?  
48

1 **MR. HUTT:** In the commercial logbook, the existing logbook, and  
2 we're talking for pelagic longliners, we have a selection process  
3 that we conduct each year, in the fall, and they are sent letters,  
4 and they are notified that your vessel has been selected to submit  
5 cost and earnings reporting, and they are required, going forward,  
6 to submit those reports with every logbook report.

7  
8 What we're currently proposing is, for the open-access permit  
9 holders, they would have to provide trip-level cost and earnings  
10 on all trips for all vessels. There wouldn't be a selection. It  
11 would just be like a census, but we would do a selection for those  
12 annual surveys.

13  
14 I mean, we didn't propose a specific selection rate. I know, in  
15 our commercial one, it's usually roughly around 20 percent. It  
16 just kind of varies depending on -- We do stratifications, to make  
17 sure different regions are adequately sampled, and different gear  
18 types are reported in that one.

19  
20 In this case, most all of them would be rod-and-reel, but we would  
21 still do some kind of regional selection, and so we would probably  
22 -- I'm not sure what exactly we would finalize for a selection  
23 rate, but it would be based on analysis of what kind of minimal  
24 sample size we would need to do -- To gather adequate data for  
25 analyses, if we decided to go that route in the final rule.

26  
27 **MR. ANSON:** Just to follow-up, so the selection process would be  
28 independent from the reporting, right, just as it is in commercial?

29  
30 **MR. HUTT:** Yes, and it would be once a year. If you're selected  
31 for it, you just have to do it all year, because, right now, none  
32 of the reporting apps really kind of support the idea of randomly  
33 selecting individual trips. It's a great idea, you know, once you  
34 can get it to work, but, right now, they don't.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Hollensead, do you have something to that?

37  
38 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Not quite on that, and just a question. I think  
39 I read it in the -- But this would also include reporting in the  
40 logbook of baitfish collected, correct?

41  
42 **MR. HUTT:** Yes. I mean, basically, it would be all fish collection,  
43 and so, yes, it would essentially include baitfish, I believe. I  
44 know, in the large pelagic survey, they collect catches of  
45 mackerel, which are commonly used as bait in that fishery, and so  
46 it would be all fish.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks. Your turn.

1  
2 **DR. BANKS:** Lisa jumped the gun, because I remember this  
3 conversation at the AP, and so I was going to ask you to explain  
4 a little bit. This would include -- If you cast netted menhaden  
5 for bait, you would have to count each one of those as part of  
6 these all species, and so thank you.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thanks for pointing out the absurdity in that.  
9 Dr. Simmons.

10  
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could  
12 we go to Slide 15? Thank you all for your presentation and trying  
13 to hit on some of the points that we laid out in the letter. I  
14 think that was very, very helpful and so just bear with me.

15  
16 I'm just trying to understand, as things currently stand with our  
17 program for the federal for-hire headboat data collection program  
18 compared with HMS, what's proposed for the charter/headboat  
19 program, and so, if you have both those permits currently, based  
20 on the preferred, and based on what we're working on, my  
21 understanding is your requirements right now are more onerous, and  
22 so we would have to -- If you have both of those permits,  
23 potentially you would have to follow those requirements, and that  
24 includes for reef fish, right? I just want to make sure that's  
25 reef fish and HMS species.

26  
27 All that data is going to go to -- Or it's going to go to ACCSP,  
28 and it's going to have a different, potentially different,  
29 validation process, potentially, than what the Gulf Council is  
30 working on. Then now, if you just have our permit, that data is  
31 going to go to ACCSP, but the validation process could potentially  
32 be different. Now we have those two data streams for reef fish  
33 that we're going to try to reconcile, right, and then we also, if  
34 you have South Florida species -- Is that not correct?

35  
36 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, without knowing the specifics of the validation  
37 programs that are being proposed, and I'm sorry to say, but, if  
38 they had both permits, and they are required, under yours, to  
39 report before they arrive at the dock, and there's a validation  
40 survey that you're doing at the docks, they would still be required  
41 to report before they get to the dock and participate in that  
42 validation survey.

43  
44 The things in ours that are more strenuous just have to do with  
45 some additional data elements, like reporting all the discards,  
46 reporting cost and earnings, and so that would have to be included  
47 in their report, but that would not negate their core requirement  
48 to report under the Gulf before they reach the dock and participate

1 in the validation survey. It would just be some extra data  
2 elements that would be included in their report. At least that's  
3 my understanding of how that would work.

4  
5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sorry, and just a quick follow-up.  
6 That would also include the discard condition and then the trip-  
7 level economic information, potentially. Okay, and so it would  
8 not be different, necessarily. Okay. Thank you.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay, and so I haven't heard much about the  
11 hardware. There would be, I mean, obviously it's trying to be  
12 compatible across the board, but you had something about position  
13 reporting here. That would be just self-reported positioning, and  
14 not mandated electronic tracking?

15  
16 **MR. HUTT:** Yes, and we are not considering VMS for this reporting.  
17 In the large pelagic survey currently, they ask them for location,  
18 the lat, long, minute, and degree. It would probably be something  
19 similar, but, like I said, we're open to working with our partners  
20 on how that kind of reporting -- How that data would be collected,  
21 because it does seem that that is something that the different  
22 programs are interested in collecting.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I'm sure you know it's been a highly-  
25 controversial topic. That and the economic reporting were our  
26 most controversial here. Just so I'm clear, a for-hire vessel,  
27 like myself, that has an HMS permit, just in case I catch a tuna,  
28 or a swordfish, which is not really what I do, but we all carry  
29 one in the Gulf, to my knowledge.

30  
31 Almost every charter boat in the Gulf has one, but that would --  
32 Under the proposed regulations here, it would require you to report  
33 all species, every trip, discard condition down to -- Even if I'm  
34 red snapper fishing, I have to report my entire catch to HMS, or,  
35 you know, through the system, and maybe a -- A hopefully  
36 overlapping report goes to you, but that would add additional  
37 things, reef fish things, yet it's being handed to us by HMS, and  
38 so I'm not sure if that's just a comment or a question, but is  
39 that correct?

40  
41 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, based on what has been proposed, yes. As Karyl  
42 said earlier, just because it's what we prefer at this time, it  
43 doesn't necessarily mean it is what will be finalized. We will be  
44 considering everyone's comments on this and how best to address  
45 them.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks and then Dr. Sweetman.

48

1 **DR. BANKS:** So one more question. I have, in my notes here, when  
2 you were talking about economic reporting, that you're requiring  
3 it from every trip, because of a sample size issue. You can't  
4 subset? Because we're discussing subsetting to reduce burden, and  
5 so I want a little clarification on that, please.  
6

7 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, there's nothing to stop us from doing  
8 subsetting. We prefer doing all trips, just for simplification of  
9 communication, because, you know, that's a lot of permit holders  
10 you've got to notify if they've been selected each year, and just  
11 constantly answering those questions of whether I have submit on  
12 every trip and all, but, given the breadth of the region over which  
13 we extend, from Maine to Texas -- I mean, 4,000 sounds like a lot,  
14 but it's spread over a wide area, and so our concern is, unless we  
15 sampled a very large sub-selection, we may have issues, in certain  
16 regions, where we just don't have enough sample size to do  
17 effective, more targeted analysis, you know, if we were only doing  
18 say a 20 percent selection rate. You know, we might have to  
19 consider something higher than that.  
20

21 **DR. BANKS:** A follow-up to that. So we've had many discussions,  
22 around this table, regarding the price of gas doesn't typically  
23 change between one trip and another, and so, to reduce the burden,  
24 maybe not having each trip level would be beneficial. The cost of  
25 a six-hour trip doesn't typically change, and so is there comments  
26 that have come from any of your participants, in the webinars or  
27 written comments, that have suggested maybe stepping slightly back  
28 on the economic would be preferable, and then they would be willing  
29 to give the data, because, as has been mentioned many times, that  
30 is a contentious issue in our SEFHIER program.  
31

32 **MR. HUTT:** It has come up, in the public comments, that they would  
33 rather see either a reduced selection rate or just no. Honestly,  
34 the most comments, that I can recall, is just don't collect cost  
35 and earnings at all, and I don't necessarily see us going that  
36 way, but, I mean, as I said, this is what's proposed. It could  
37 change at final, but, I mean, that was kind of one of our main  
38 concerns, was just those issues of sample sizes and being able to  
39 do more targeted analysis at different regional levels.  
40

41 I know this council has considered selection rates as low as 10  
42 percent. I can't see how that could possibly work for us. We  
43 might be able to consider a selection rate, but it would need to  
44 be higher than that, I think, to effectively use the data.  
45

46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so I kind of want to build off of Dr.  
47 Simmons' questions there, and sorry for beating this to death. I  
48 just want to make sure that I fully understand it, and so, using

1 kind of an example that Andy gave, when we were talking about our  
2 old SEFHIER program, relative to the South Atlantic, and, yes, we  
3 would have to follow the most restrictive of them, in the Gulf, we  
4 previously had a VMS requirement that was associated with that.

5  
6 That typically would have been as the more restrictive of them.  
7 Then you would have the reporting requirements that are associated  
8 with that program. We had different validation components  
9 associated with that, and so I guess what I'm wondering here, and  
10 Cliff, based on what you were saying earlier, it sounds like --  
11 This is what I'm trying to understand. It almost seems like a  
12 little bit of mix-and-matching, relative to what we might  
13 potentially require and any additional things that you also  
14 require, and so it's not just a full-on -- How do I ask this  
15 question?

16  
17 It's not just a full-on programmatic -- It's individual components,  
18 rather than the entire program, that would be viewed as more  
19 restrictive, I guess is what I'm asking there, and so like -- So,  
20 clearly, for us, the validation is very important for utility of  
21 that data, and I think that's one of our main concerns relative to  
22 the inclusion of reef fish, with everything in there, and so we  
23 just want to make sure that we're able to utilize that data. Then  
24 so you're saying the more restrictiveness is relative to individual  
25 components of the programs, and not the entire program in and of  
26 itself?

27  
28 **MR. HUTT:** Yes. Exactly. As I was saying to Carrie, it would be  
29 a case where -- Given what you had put forward as a proposal, yes,  
30 they would have to report before they got to the dock. They would  
31 have to participate in the validation survey.

32  
33 Just, if they had our permit, there would be some additional data  
34 elements that they would have to report, and these forms are  
35 designed to be somewhat adaptive, and so what questions you get  
36 are dependent on what permits you have and whether or not they're  
37 required or not, and, I mean, those are technical issues that we're  
38 kind of working on, and, you know, there's growing pains, but  
39 that's basically how it would work. It would not be a total which  
40 program is more restrictive. It would be which parts are.

41  
42 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and just a quick follow-up to that then, and  
43 so just like how that would work operationally, and so we would  
44 have a reporting requirement associated with whatever we put in  
45 place there, and then how would they get that information that you  
46 guys are requesting from your program? Would it be like a separate  
47 follow-up survey, or something along those lines, or just how are  
48 you going to get that information, if those are components that

1 we're not asking within our program?

2

3 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, my understanding is all the data elements needed  
4 would be built into eTRIPS and VESL. It's just, depending on what  
5 permits you have, you may not be required to answer all of them,  
6 and communicating to our permit holders what is required of them  
7 to meet HMS would be something that would be an outreach burden  
8 upon us, to get the word out and make sure they understand what  
9 they need to report to be compliant with our requirements.

10

11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. Any more questions? Ms. Levy.

12

13 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thank you. It's not a question. Just, for those  
14 listening, a number of statements have talked about the proposed  
15 Gulf requirements being before you hit the dock. I don't want  
16 people to freak out, because that's not one of the alternatives,  
17 right? It's before offload, or there's one that was twenty-four  
18 hours, and so I know we had a lot of discussion about that when we  
19 were first implementing this program, and so I just wanted to make  
20 that clear.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you. Okay. Seeing no more questions,  
23 thank you both for coming down here and hearing what the Gulf  
24 Council has to say. It might not always be a great environment,  
25 you know, bringing what some might consider bad news, but I  
26 definitely appreciate you listening to what we have to say around  
27 here. Thank you.

28

29 **MR. HUTT:** We appreciate all the input, and we're going to be  
30 staying here all day to listen, to the public comment session, any  
31 comments that may come at that time as well. Thank you.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Great. Dr. Hollensead.

34

35 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, just for some  
36 housekeeping, I'm thinking that the committee would like us, based  
37 on the discussion here, the questions that we had, and we can  
38 certainly also talk about our document coming up, but it seems  
39 like a formal letter is something that would be desirable for the  
40 committee, just so that staff has some directions. That will not  
41 only be catching the conversation here, but we'll certainly do it  
42 as we bring up the document.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think that's an excellent idea.

45

46 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay.

47

48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you for putting that out there. I believe

1 that's something we should definitely do. I think that's a great  
2 idea. A letter from us outlining some of what we brought up here  
3 today would be a great idea. Okay. What's next?  
4

5 **MR. DUGAS:** Mr. Chair, we're going to take a break. Mr. Sanchez.  
6

7 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Before we do that, I just want to wish Carrie  
8 a happy birthday.  
9

10 **MR. DUGAS:** A fifteen-minute break, until about 10:10.  
11

12 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)  
13

14 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Up next for the Data Collection Committee, Dr.  
15 Hollensead is going to review our draft document for the SEFHIER  
16 work that we've done so far, I guess we'll call it, and then, after  
17 that, I would like to have some discussion on how that may overlap  
18 with what we just heard with the HMS program, and so, Dr.  
19 Hollensead.  
20

#### 21 **DISCUSSION ON FOR-HIRE DATA COLLECTION AMENDMENT** 22

23 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, to give some general  
24 updates about the document, the last time the committee met, there  
25 was some discussion of including consideration for did-not-fish  
26 reports as a method of validation.  
27

28 Remember those sort of suite of data components that would be in  
29 there, and the did-not-fish reports wasn't in there, but it is  
30 now. There's a section holding for it, and we'll probably get  
31 that section fleshed-out a little bit better when the IPT can meet  
32 again. Unfortunately, we had some setbacks, with the weather and  
33 things, and so the IPT will probably still need to review that,  
34 and come forward, and so I wanted to let everyone know that that  
35 is in there, as well as some language in the document that would  
36 include stipulating a regular five-year review of the program, as  
37 we had discussed a little bit earlier, in the last -- So I just  
38 want to let everybody know that that language has been added to  
39 the document.  
40

41 For the sake of time today, I want to focus on Action 4  
42 specifically. If you recall, that is the economic data collection.  
43 When this action was last presented to the committee, it was  
44 presented based on analysis that came out of the Science Center,  
45 which had suggested an approach of collecting that economic  
46 information at a trip level, right, some percentage of trips, and  
47 we talked about various options that it could be, you know, 10  
48 percent, up to 50 percent, those sorts of options.

1  
2 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the for-hire document,  
3 please, and I believe that's Tab B, Number 5, and then going to  
4 Action 4. So, as discussed a little bit earlier, when the HMS  
5 staff was giving their presentations, what they've got in their  
6 proposed rule would be a little bit different than what we've  
7 considered here, although we do have an alternative for census-  
8 level trip-level reporting of that information.

9  
10 That's Alternative 2, but what the committee has sort of been  
11 considering, and thinking about, was this Alternative 3, some sort  
12 of sampling the fleet within that, and, again, I mentioned that we  
13 had talked about -- We had received a proposal, sort of a research  
14 proposal, from the Science Center that indicated that, okay, trip-  
15 level reporting was something that would be robust enough for their  
16 needs, but also seemed to be something that stakeholders would be  
17 amenable with.

18  
19 Well, after some further discussions with IPT, it appears that  
20 operationalizing that methodology may not be something that's  
21 feasible. Having a within application go ahead and select randomly  
22 trips is something that's problematic for validation, and so, when  
23 going back and speaking with the economists, sort of a subgroup  
24 of, okay, well, what would be sort of a plan B, they proposed for  
25 us what is in here in Alternative 3, and so, Bernie, if you wouldn't  
26 mind scrolling down just a little bit.

27  
28 You see the options for selecting, you know, percentages has now  
29 been removed, and what this alternative says is require the owner  
30 or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid federal  
31 charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species  
32 submit economic data as part of the logbook when the vessel is  
33 engaging in any type of chartered fishing or chartered activity,  
34 if selected. Annually, a stratified random sampling design of  
35 permitted vessels will be used for selecting vessels and are  
36 required to report economic data.

37  
38 So, in general, this is very similar to what's done in the  
39 commercial. If a vessel is selected -- You know, every year a  
40 selection process happens, those vessels are selected. I think  
41 there's still a little bit of discussion of whether or not perhaps  
42 a program participant would have to then provide that economic  
43 data on trips for an entire year, for a few months. I think that's  
44 still a little bit of discussion.

45  
46 In terms of why, the rationale for this change, I would probably  
47 kick it over to someone at the Regional Office to help explain  
48 some of those nuances a little bit, as they were the ones that

1 provided some rationale for the need for changing this approach,  
2 and so I did want to make the committee aware that this action has  
3 changed a little bit differently, and, when we spoke about going  
4 from sampling to trips to vessels, it's not just inserting a word  
5 difference in there. It's a very different methodology to do those  
6 two things, and so I just wanted to make the committee aware.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That's interesting. So, in short, it could still  
9 be 10 percent, or 20 percent, that we've batted back and forth  
10 around, but it will be annual reporting, if you're part of that  
11 percent. Interesting. Any discussion on that? Andy.

12  
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I have Jessica Stephen and Michelle Masi here,  
14 and they're certainly the experts in the technical details of this.  
15 I would maybe recommend that they could speak a little bit more,  
16 in terms of this specific change, with regard to trips versus  
17 vessels. I think it's really important that we try to design  
18 something that's administratively going to work and not be overly  
19 burdensome on the agency, and complicated, and so that's part of  
20 the rationale for this.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Sure. That's good with me. Dr. Stephen.

23  
24 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** We did a little investigation of looking at  
25 how you would do trip-level selection within an app, and we have  
26 more than one vendor. It would have to be some sort of random  
27 selection. There's a possibility that you could just skip it, and  
28 not do it, and there's also the concern that the agency would not  
29 know who was selected without significant application development  
30 to kind of translate that information back.

31  
32 There's also a little concern that, if they do the random sampling  
33 in a different mechanism between each of the different types of  
34 vendors, that we would have a little bit more trouble compiling  
35 that data and making sure it was statistically valid.

36  
37 The other thing is that, while that technology most likely does  
38 exist, I'm not sure we have, at hand, the experts that would be  
39 able to kind of ensure that it's working properly in the right  
40 way, and so, for a lot of those reasons, particularly the fact we  
41 wouldn't know who was selected, and therefore we wouldn't be able  
42 to necessarily hold them accountable to answering the questions,  
43 we thought that the vessel selection, which has kind of been a  
44 proven ground that works fairly well in commercial, would be the  
45 better opportunity and way to go.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So can you tell me what percentage of the  
48 commercial is selected for economic reporting, because I can't

1 recall a year that I wasn't.  
2  
3 **DR. STEPHEN:** I might toss that to Clay, but I was thinking --  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think it's 50 percent, or something, but it's  
6 --  
7  
8 **DR. STEPHEN:** That seems -- I believe it's --  
9  
10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** It's 100 percent at Ed Walker's house. I mean,  
11 it's not a big deal. I'm just curious.  
12  
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Don't we make you report twice, Ed?  
14  
15 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Don't get me started.  
16  
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Clay is sitting next to me, and can confirm, but  
18 I believe it's 20 percent sampling, but we also collect a lot of  
19 economic data through dealer reports, and other mechanisms, right,  
20 and so it's not just solely the logbook program that we're  
21 collecting economic data from the commercial sector.  
22  
23 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. I think that's it, Dr. Stephen. Dr.  
24 Hollensead, do you want to continue?  
25  
26 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** So I could certainly -- Mr. Chair, I could go  
27 through and just very briefly summarize what sort of -- I mean,  
28 HMS did a fairly good job going through what's different from our  
29 program, versus theirs, but I could also speak to a little bit  
30 about, you know, what we're doing with commercial.  
31  
32 If you're all comfortable with this, and everybody has got their  
33 questions answered about this particular action -- Based on what  
34 I'm hearing here, just a little bit, it seems like this is a  
35 perhaps a pathway that the committee would entertain going forward,  
36 and, if that's so, you know, the guidance of the IPT would then be  
37 to keep this in here as-is and also go through and sort of better  
38 flesh-out some of the other actions, just to make sure those are  
39 all buttoned-up, before we bring them back to you, but, largely,  
40 then it would sound like all of the elements and pieces of the  
41 program would be in place. Now we're just -- You know, we would  
42 be discussing sort of the nuances within those, if I don't get any  
43 further sort of direction.  
44  
45 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So, to me, as just a member of the committee,  
46 and I would love to hear other committee members thoughts on it,  
47 but, you know, I think I would be okay with this, as a charter  
48 boat guy, you know, a different way of randomly sampling, and what

1 we deal with in commercial anyway, and so, personally, I think  
2 that would work, and we could keep Alternative 3 in there.

3  
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I think I agree with you, and, even just from a  
5 scientific sampling design, obviously, this would seem to make a  
6 lot of sense, in terms of statistical validity of the data that  
7 we're getting, and so I would be supportive of that too,  
8 particularly if our for-hire folks are supportive of that as well.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay, and so I guess we'll leave that Alternative  
11 3 in there and continue to work the document with that in there,  
12 and, yes, I think it would be helpful to us if you kind of compare  
13 what we just heard from HMS with some of what's going on here, and  
14 maybe this committee can pick out some issues that we have with  
15 HMS to include in our letter. Andy.

16  
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess not to that point, but I guess I have two  
18 things. One, does council staff want a motion, since this is a  
19 change to the alternative from what we previously had in the  
20 document, or are you good with the direction?

21  
22 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** (Dr. Hollensead's comment is not audible on the  
23 recording.)

24  
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** You're good with direction? Okay. Then the  
26 second that I think is, you know, kind of like we just spoke, or  
27 talked about, with shrimp on Monday, right, and I think it's going  
28 to be really informative to be able to walk through and look at  
29 any sort of cost differences between these various approaches, and  
30 really understand the administrative burden on the agency, cost to  
31 the government, cost to the fishermen, any sort of reduced burden  
32 on the fishermen.

33  
34 I know we got a very lengthy economic presentation about how we  
35 use the data, and what I'm focused on is more of the comparison of  
36 alternatives going forward, and being able to present that  
37 information to the council, so we can understand the benefits and  
38 tradeoffs of collecting this data, and so I don't know, timing-  
39 wise, if that that would be appropriate for January, or a later  
40 meeting, and I would leave that open-ended for council staff to  
41 help decide with the IPT.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

44  
45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I would be certainly supportive of learning a little  
46 bit more along those lines, Andy. You know, we've talked about  
47 how we're going to stand up some of these programs, even for some  
48 of the other things that we're talking about here, and so I

1 certainly would be interested to see what the burden would be like  
2 on the agency and feasibility of what we're asking basically here.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Carrie.

5  
6 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, just to be  
7 clear, you're suggesting, Andy, a presentation, perhaps in  
8 January, that would outline the agency's burden on administering  
9 this program? Is that what you said? I missed it. I apologize.

10  
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and maybe not on the whole program, because  
12 that's going to be something that we're going to be developing as  
13 this amendment moves forward, but certainly I think there's -- The  
14 argument has been made as to why we shouldn't collect economic  
15 data from every single trip, right, and so I want to be able to  
16 understand, you know, what it's going to cost the agency, from the  
17 standpoint of sub-sampling trips, changing software, all of that,  
18 and is there kind of an upfront cost, but, long-term, it's, you  
19 know, a cost savings to the agency, and to just have that presented  
20 to the council early on, because we're going to get the preferred  
21 at some point, and I want to be able to inform the preferred  
22 decision.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Simmons.

25  
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and I think that makes good  
27 sense. I guess one question I had, and I think we have talked about  
28 this a little bit, but I'm not sure I fully understand it, and  
29 will there have to be another type-approval process for this  
30 fishery that we went through after the council finalizes it, as  
31 far as the vendors, the software?

32  
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know the answer to that. I'll rely on  
34 Jessica, or Michelle, to answer.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Did we not already go through that, or we're  
37 still working on it? It seems like we've been over that somewhat.

38  
39 **DR. STEPHEN:** I can speak to this a little bit. It's a type-  
40 approval differently than how you think about VMS, and so I want  
41 to kind of be a little bit clear about this. In this case, for  
42 the SEFHIER program, we would have open tech specs that any vendor  
43 would have to meet.

44  
45 They would have to show us that they can transmit and submit the  
46 data, both showing errors where it would be rejected, if it wasn't  
47 correct, versus coming through correctly. We would most likely  
48 try and align it, again, with where the South Atlantic program is.

1 We know we have two vendors that have already played this game  
2 before, and most likely would come back, and that's both ACCSP's  
3 eTRIPS application, their mobile devices, as well as the VESL  
4 application that works on mobile devices.

5  
6 We had, at one point, some interest from other vendors, but it  
7 never really materialized, back when we had the Gulf program  
8 before, as well as with the South Atlantic program. On a good  
9 note, we have a lot of those tech specs pretty much written, and  
10 so we would be modifying them.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Was the impracticability in the software or just  
13 in the whole program of trip-level reporting, versus annual? Was  
14 it a technical issue, or was it not a valid way to do it?

15  
16 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** It was a statistically-robust design. It's my  
17 understanding that, technically, that authorization of it isn't in  
18 the validation component, which Dr. Stephen has sort of mentioned.  
19 You don't know who has been selected, and you don't know if they  
20 actually -- Those components then cause an issue.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Dr. Banks.

23  
24 **DR. BANKS:** I have a question, and I don't know who this gets  
25 directed to, but, with HMS putting in potentially a similar  
26 economic reporting for Alternative 2, and maybe 3, how does that  
27 play into the burden on the agency, and our analysis for this  
28 program, since some of the data would then maybe go to a different  
29 source?

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

32  
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We'll have access to that data that's submitted,  
34 and so that would actually reduce the burden, at least on the  
35 SEFHIER program, to the extent that it's being collected elsewhere,  
36 and reported accurately, right, and I think the challenge would be  
37 if, for some reason, we're not getting the data for reef fish, or  
38 coastal pelagics, based on HMS-reported trips, then that could be  
39 a challenge, or if that data is very different, you know, based on  
40 the trip characteristics of targeting HMS versus the species that  
41 we manage and how we ultimately use that, but, yes, all of that -  
42 - It gets funneled into, you know, the same datasets that we're  
43 able to then pull data from.

44  
45 One other thing, while I have the mic, is I noted, in Alternative  
46 1, the no action, that we state that there is no economic reporting  
47 requirements for federally-permitted data. For headboats, right  
48 now, we still do require anglers' fuel price and gallons of fuel

1 to be reported, and so it's not the economic trip costs, but there  
2 is some economic information that we're collecting from them, and  
3 so I just wanted to note that.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, there's a lot of questions, and, if we're  
6 going to be handed more rigorous economic requirements, as for-  
7 hire guys, from HMS, I guess what we're saying is we're not going  
8 to even need to do it in the SEFHIER program, because we're trying  
9 to say we're not doing it twice. It looks like it's pretty similar  
10 reporting, and so I have many questions. Dr. Banks, help me out.

11  
12 **DR. BANKS:** I don't know that we can just not do it, because there  
13 are charter vessels that do not hold federal HMS. If you look at  
14 the overlap, and I don't have it on me, and maybe Lisa can show it  
15 for us, but there are several in the Gulf that are federally-  
16 permitted for reef fish, or CMP, but do not hold a federal HMS,  
17 and so we're still -- We would still have to have something.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, you are exactly right. That answers that  
20 question, and I suspect there will be a lot less of them that have  
21 an HMS -- Guys that are carrying it, that don't really need it  
22 that much, that may or may not be strapped with increased  
23 requirements.

24  
25 I know wahoo and blackfin tuna are not considered HMS species,  
26 and, where I live, that's two that, you know, you can still  
27 participate in all that. We don't have swordfish, or really  
28 yellowfin, and so I can see a lot of our guys getting rid of that  
29 permit in a hurry, if it came with increased burden. I bet you  
30 400, or 500, guys in the Gulf would get rid of that thing. That's  
31 just a guess. Okay. I guess we'll continue, Dr. Hollensead.

32  
33 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** If you would like, Mr. Chair, I can then sort of  
34 go back to the HMS presentation. Like I said, they had some  
35 comparison tables, and then we can discuss a little bit what we've  
36 got, versus what they do, and so, if you want to think about how  
37 you want to structure your letter, we can provide some context for  
38 that. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going back to the HMS  
39 presentation, Tab F-4a, and then go to Slide 12, please.

40  
41 When HMS was giving their presentation, they did touch on, and  
42 I'll just sort of remind the committee that we do have -- Already  
43 it's going, I believe, through the final rule process, but there  
44 was a joint amendment between the Gulf and the South Atlantic to  
45 transition the coastal logbook program for reef fish and CMP  
46 species here in the Gulf to an electronic logbook, and so basically  
47 taking what was in the paper and putting it into the electronic  
48 logbook.

1  
2 The timing, the seven days to report your catch, and things like  
3 that all stayed the same. The economic portions, those stayed the  
4 same. Those sorts of components stayed the same, but it was taking  
5 that paper and moving it to the electronic.

6  
7 What HMS is proposing, in their proposed rule here, is very similar  
8 to what we did in that document, and so, in that case, there's  
9 some general agreement in there. There are some things that look  
10 a little different here, depending on if you have that pelagic  
11 gear type that the HMS has.

12  
13 That's a little bit more stringent than what we have for the  
14 coastal logbook program, but, largely, this seems to be more of a  
15 transition from just what is generally on paper to commercial, and  
16 so just to provide some context on that. Then, Bernie, if you  
17 wouldn't mind going up one more slide, to Slide 11, and so you can  
18 see those alternatives laid out here. Actually, it's -- I'm sorry,  
19 Bernie. It's page 10 and 11.

20  
21 That would sort of be like what's included in the logbook, and  
22 then the timing of it, and so it's in general agreement with what  
23 we have here in the Gulf for our coastal commercial logbook, and  
24 so just to give you some context, if you would like to comment on  
25 that, either sort of a, hey, we're -- Or a bit of a thumbs-up on  
26 that, because that would kind of get to reducing a little bit of  
27 the burden. It's very similar to what our program is. If you've  
28 got those dual permits there, you're sort of a little bit closer  
29 to that one stop shop reporting.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I would have to think about that, but let's move  
32 on, and I'll consider that. Thank you. I think it's mostly the  
33 SEFHIER, the for-hire comparisons, that we're most interested in  
34 here.

35  
36 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes. Absolutely, Mr. Chair. In which case,  
37 Bernie, can we go to Slide 15? This gets into the comparison that  
38 you had mentioned, a little bit more for the for-hire, our  
39 document, versus what HMS has proposed and various programs  
40 throughout the South Atlantic, the headboat, and the Greater  
41 Atlantic Region.

42  
43 If you look at those, the second and third column there, that's  
44 sort of the comparison here. The logbook information being  
45 reported, again, may include, for the HMS, HMS and non-HMS species,  
46 as well as the discard condition, and so that is what's slightly  
47 different there, as well as the no-fishing reports. Again, the  
48 committee is sort of exploring those. Likely, monthly did-not-

1 fish reports probably meets the requirements of our program.  
2  
3 It's likely something we would certainly propose as a suite of  
4 alternatives there that the committee would consider, but I think  
5 that, you know, based on what we have discussed earlier this  
6 morning, some of the major concerns are, you know, sort of the  
7 reporting of the reef fish species, discard condition, reporting  
8 of bait fish, those sorts of things, and so that's what would fall  
9 under this part of the action. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind  
10 scrolling up to page 14, that has the alternatives for those  
11 requirements.

12  
13 **MR. DUGAS:** Mr. Walker, you have a question.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I'm sorry. I was reading the preferred. Please,  
16 Dr. Banks.

17  
18 **DR. BANKS:** So, Lisa, are you asking us to, just for clarification,  
19 pick what we, as a council, may be requesting HMS to do? Can you  
20 clarify the instructions for me?

21  
22 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** If it's the desire of the committee, absolutely.  
23 If you would like to be, you know, a little more explicit of what  
24 you want in the letter, we can certainly make sure that what you've  
25 got here would go straight into that letter, to that end.

26  
27 If you would like to -- For example, I have certainly -- Based on  
28 what I've heard, and I guess what I can do is this is what I've  
29 heard, and you can let me know if you would like anything  
30 additional put into the letter.

31  
32 What I heard, when reviewing this was, you know, there's a little  
33 bit of concern for including non-HMS species in the logbook  
34 reporting. There's also concern about collecting of baitfish  
35 species, and things like that, and so I don't know that that  
36 necessarily requires that the committee selects, you know, another  
37 preferred that they would like to see, other than saying, you know,  
38 the preferred that has been, you know, reported-out here, and  
39 here's our concerns with those various things, and how it may  
40 interact with that program, and so that's what I heard for this  
41 one, and so I just wanted to double-check with the committee. If  
42 there's anything I've missed, I'm certainly happy to include that.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Those are the two low-hanging fruit here, for  
45 sure. I also have some concerns about what seems to be open-ended  
46 economic reporting requirements. There's really no specificity on  
47 what type of -- There's nothing here that says they can't put ten  
48 pages of economic reporting data in there, which has been, as you

1 know, controversial in this group, and so we can maybe add that.  
2 Anybody else on the committee have any things they'd like to see  
3 addressed in our letter regarding this subject to HMS? Dr. Banks.  
4

5 **DR. BANKS:** Just looking at this slide that's up, fishing location  
6 information, and maybe we should add a statement regarding  
7 expansion to VMS, or any positioning, since our fleet in the Gulf  
8 had a strong reaction to that originally. While I know it's not  
9 currently being thought, it, down the road, could be something  
10 that's incorporated later.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I couldn't hear you that well, Dr. Banks. Could  
13 you -- I heard you say "VMS" though, and I perked right up, and so  
14 what was it that you were saying, again?  
15

16 **DR. BANKS:** Maybe including something along the lines, with this  
17 fishing location information, to limit it to not including VMS, or  
18 an electronic position system. While it is not currently being  
19 considered by HMS, it is something that could later, down the road,  
20 be incorporated, and, since our fleet here in the Gulf had a strong  
21 reaction to that, we might consider at least having a statement in  
22 the letter.  
23

24 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Sure, and I think we could include something  
25 along the lines of, based on vigorous discussion at the Gulf  
26 Council, there's skepticism toward VMS.  
27

28 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, Dr. Banks, and I think that's a good idea,  
29 considering it seems like they're going through their preliminary  
30 thought process for this program, and methods of validation are  
31 still on the table. I think that that is something that we could  
32 certainly add, even though it's not in this. We can do that.  
33

34 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Anybody else have any concerns about the  
35 HMS reporting proposed, versus the SEFHIER proposed? Dr. Banks.  
36

37 **DR. BANKS:** I have a procedural question, I guess, and I'm  
38 struggling with getting my brain to wrap around. If HMS puts this  
39 in, and the boat has an HMS permit, they report through this  
40 system, but they're unable to mandate compliance. How does that  
41 affect the reef -- Because they still have to be compliant on our  
42 side, and so they could potentially lose their reef permit, even  
43 though they're not reporting, and I'm struggling with the meshing  
44 of the two programs.  
45

46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** (Dr. Simmons' comment is not audible  
47 on the recording.)  
48

1 **DR. BANKS:** Sorry. Compliance mechanism. Carrie got it. I'm  
2 struggling with that.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think what you're saying is would some kind of  
5 a violation with HMS take away your Gulf reef permit, and would it  
6 affect that, and that's a legitimate question, I think.  
7  
8 **DR. BANKS:** I mean, you said, yourself, that a lot of people in  
9 the South Atlantic have it for incidental catch, and so you forget  
10 the monthly no-fishing reports. We decide here not to have that,  
11 and what's the compliance mechanism, because now it's tied. Maybe  
12 you can help me get my brain around this.  
13  
14 **MR. HUTT:** I mean, I'm hearing this being talked about a lot. I  
15 mean, compliance, on our end, as I see it, shouldn't affect your  
16 end, if you don't want it to, and your permits. We would just be  
17 interested in looking at compliance to our reporting requirements  
18 and how it might affect their HMS permits, but, you know, that  
19 shouldn't affect their SERO permits, or the Gulf permits, because  
20 those are two separate permitting systems. Now, for the commercial  
21 logbook, they're combining those logbooks into one electronic  
22 logbook reporting program, and so it would be kind of a compliance  
23 check. That's different.  
24  
25 **DR. BANKS:** Is that not what we're talking about doing with one-  
26 stop reporting between the SEFHIER program and the HMS SEFHIER  
27 program, for lack of a better term?  
28  
29 **MR. HUTT:** The one-stop reporting is more about making sure they  
30 can submit a single report that meets all their different programs  
31 data collection needs, and that different programs will have access  
32 to that data, but, beyond that, when it comes to things like  
33 determining compliance, and what the implications of that are, as  
34 I see it, that would be down to the individual programs.  
35  
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Hollensead, maybe we could put on our list  
37 to clarify that, rather than as I see it, because it does -- To  
38 your point, Dr. Banks, it is an overarching, preceding other  
39 things, you know, if you have to comply with the most restrictive,  
40 and so it does seem like it is an umbrella, but I do understand  
41 what you're saying too, that, you know, if you're noncompliant on  
42 your king mackerel permit in the Gulf, they don't renew your king  
43 mackerel permit, and that's it. Your other -- Your charter boat  
44 permit still gets issued, and so I understand what you're saying,  
45 but it wouldn't hurt, I don't think, to just clarify that, or have  
46 some questions about it. Thank you, sir. I guess I'll kick it to  
47 you, Dr. Hollensead. Are we done with that, or is there more?  
48

1 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Well, there's certainly more, in their proposed  
2 rule, dealing with the private angling and the dealers, but I don't  
3 think that this committee necessarily has any strong  
4 recommendations either way on those items, unless they do, in which  
5 case, I'll make sure I get it noted and put in the letter.  
6

7 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.  
8

9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just for the record, Dr. Hollensead, a lot of the  
10 discussion that we had in the previous presentation I feel like is  
11 applicable to some of the points that we can make in our comment  
12 letter here, and so I just wanted to throw that out there. Even  
13 though not everything is being discussed at this exact moment, I  
14 feel like we did discuss those previously.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Well, if you are finished, let's see,  
17 what else do we have? We have a scheduled break. Should we take  
18 a fifteen-minute break, or we just took one?  
19

20 **MR. DUGAS:** (Mr. Dugas' comment is not audible on the recording.)  
21

22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right, and so we'll keep going then. I'm  
23 getting the move along, and so next up would be the Southeast  
24 Region Headboat Survey Report from Dr. Masi. Is Dr. Masi here?  
25 She's in-person.  
26

#### 27 **SOUTHEAST REGION HEADBOAT SURVEY REPORT**

28

29 **DR. MICHELLE MASI:** Hello, everyone. I'm in-person. All right,  
30 and so I'm actually the SEFHIER Program Manager, but I'm here today  
31 as the Acting Branch Chief for the Southeast Region Headboat Survey  
32 Program, and what I'm going to be doing, in this presentation, is  
33 just an overview of the annual report for the program, and just to  
34 note that our analyst in the branch, Rob Cheshire, is the one that  
35 put these analyses together, and this presentation together, but  
36 he wasn't able to be here today, and so I'm presenting for him,  
37 but he is available on the phone, if anybody has any questions.  
38

39 The annual report, the purpose of it is just to share information  
40 about the status and trends of the Southeast Region Headboat  
41 Survey, and the intended audience of the report is our headboat  
42 survey operators, as well as our regional councils, both the South  
43 Atlantic and the Gulf, and, importantly, we're using this data in  
44 many of the stock assessments in the Southeast.  
45

46 The report includes information on the most recent year, which in  
47 this case is 2023, and then we compare that to the five and ten-  
48 year averages. A really great thing about this reporting process

1 is it does allow us to identify any potential data issues, and  
2 I'll identify one of those towards the end of the presentation.

3  
4 We will see, in the report, there's an introduction section, which  
5 just reminds that the Southeast Region Headboat Survey Program has  
6 been in operation since 1972 in the South Atlantic and 1986 in the  
7 Gulf, and we have been producing these annual reports every year  
8 since 2014, for both regions independently.

9  
10 Then you'll come to the different sections in there, including the  
11 total landings by species, the total discards. There's also an  
12 effort section, which provides effort in angler days, from 1981 to  
13 present, and we also have a summary of our dockside sampling, and  
14 so remember that this program does have port agents out in the  
15 field who are intercepting these vessels.

16  
17 Next, you're going to come to the species summary section, and  
18 these are essentially one-pagers on each of the species. There  
19 are seventy species represented in the Gulf annual reports and, in  
20 those species summaries, those one-pagers, you're going to see  
21 data on the annual landings and discards over the last decade, as  
22 well as the species-specific positive trips, the number of  
23 biological samples. Again, that's our headboat survey port agent  
24 data. Then also the nominal CPUE, which is just an unstandardized  
25 CPUE index.

26  
27 Importantly, if you see the abbreviation "conf", that just means  
28 it's representing a confidential data point, meaning that the data  
29 point represents less than three vessels, and so we had to remove  
30 it and replace it with that "conf" abbreviation.

31  
32 Moving on, you'll see Table 1 in the report, and this table is  
33 just a snapshot here of what you'll see in the report, essentially  
34 the top-half of the table, and it's showing the species landed, in  
35 thousands of pounds, and so anything more than 1,000 pounds landed,  
36 and it's actually in descending order, and so you'll see that, in  
37 2023, the most landed species in the headboat survey was red  
38 snapper, at over 588,000 pounds.

39  
40 Then we compare that, in the next two columns, to the five and  
41 ten-year average, and that's shown as a percent difference, and so  
42 that five-year value there for red snapper is showing that the  
43 five-year average was 8 percent less than the 2023 value. Then  
44 the next column over is landings and numbers, and, again, comparing  
45 that to the five and ten-year average.

46  
47 Then this table here is Table 2 in the report. It's the species  
48 discarded, for anything over 1,000 fish, and so you can see, again,

1 that top one, in descending order again, is gray triggerfish, and,  
2 again, in the next two columns, comparing that to the five and  
3 ten-year average. Importantly, the headboat survey program did  
4 add two new fields to the logbook. That's the vented and descended  
5 fields for discarded species, and so we're now showing that data  
6 in the report as well.

7  
8 This is a snapshot of Table 3, which is the species sampled  
9 dockside. Again, it's in descending order, and you can see that  
10 the top species sampled by our port agents in 2023 was vermilion  
11 snapper, and this table is a little bit different. It's comparing  
12 that sample to the different state regions. That first one is  
13 west Florida and Alabama, and then Louisiana and Mississippi, and  
14 then Texas. You can see, for vermilion snapper, most of those  
15 were sampled in the west Florida/Alabama area. Then the last two  
16 columns are that five and ten-year average again.

17  
18 Now we get to that species one-pagers. This is just an example of  
19 one of them in the report. This is vermilion snapper, and so this  
20 is the top-half of that report, and the next slide will be the  
21 bottom half, but what we're looking at is the annual landings and  
22 discards. It's over the last decade, as I mentioned, and, if you  
23 can go to the next slide, this is the positive trips and the  
24 dockside intercept survey information, which does include the  
25 length and weight for that species, and also that nominal CPUE  
26 index.

27  
28 I mentioned one of the values of this reporting process is that we  
29 can identify any data issues, and so we did this year, actually.  
30 You can see that there was a species ID issue between black and  
31 gray snapper, and we can identify that when we see that big spike  
32 in that nominal CPUE index, which we saw in 2023, and so we can  
33 mitigate that by creating some information that we can pass out  
34 and help inform our vessel operators.

35  
36 Our port agents are doing that, as I mentioned. They're out there  
37 in the field. They're interacting with our vessel operators, and  
38 so it creates this really great opportunity for education, and  
39 that helps us improve the data in the program over time.

40  
41 All right, and so, with that, that's pretty much all I have here.  
42 This is just a reminder that these reports come out each year.  
43 Next year, in 2025, you can expect the 2024 analysis about mid-  
44 year, and, if you have any questions, or suggestions, about the  
45 reporting process, or any of the information provided, you can  
46 reach out to Rob Cheshire, at the email there, or myself,  
47 michelle.masi@noaa.gov. Thank you.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Masi. I have one question.  
2 Looking at your species reporting error, I wondered, and is there  
3 still -- I don't know that it exists on the headboat side, but do  
4 you see any gag and black grouper where they -- You know, they  
5 used to call gags black grouper, back in the day, and it was just  
6 a nickname. Do you still see any of that, because I know they  
7 call mangrove snapper black snapper somewhere too, and so that  
8 might just be like a regional nickname issue, but do you still see  
9 that with gag, or has that passed now?

10  
11 **DR. MASI:** I can't tell you what this program is seeing. I know  
12 that, when I worked at FWC, you know, in 2017, it was still an  
13 issue. I was part of that assessment that didn't go through, but,  
14 if Rob has any information, and, like I said, he's on the line,  
15 and if he has any -- I mean, he's looking at the data more than  
16 me, and so he might be able to answer that better.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** You there, Rob?

19  
20 **MR. ROB CHESHIRE:** Can you hear me?

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, sir. Go ahead.

23  
24 **MR. CHESHIRE:** I think that issue is somewhat resolved. I think  
25 there was some education that happened, at least on the Atlantic,  
26 after the gag assessment, where, you know, this was brought up,  
27 but I think the port agents are, you know, keeping an eye on the  
28 species that are reported and, you know, relative to what they see  
29 dockside, and so I think, if there was a reporting issue, it would  
30 most likely get caught, and then corrected, but that's not to say  
31 that it's not still happening to some degree.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Thank you. Any more questions for Dr.  
34 Masi from the committee? Okay. Thank you, Dr. Masi. Let me turn  
35 the page back and see where we're at. I guess next up is the MRIP  
36 Pilot Study Update with Dr. Richard Cody. Dr. Cody.

37  
38 **MRIP PILOT STUDY UPDATE**  
39

40 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Thank you. This is a pretty short update that  
41 I'll provide today. Essentially, it's just a summary of the status  
42 of the benchmark study that we've been conducting since the start  
43 of 2024 with the FES and is scheduled to be finished by the end of  
44 this year.

45  
46 For this talk, I've basically set it up as four different areas  
47 for discussion. The first is the Fishing Effort Study follow-up  
48 study progress to date, and the timeline for completion of all of

1 the different components. I'll describe a little bit about  
2 calibration, since things have changed since we initially began  
3 the process of looking at calibrations for the new survey methods,  
4 and then the last two sections are on the FES nonresponse  
5 mitigation approach used for the comparisons between the current  
6 FES and the benchmark, the new updated FES, and then a list of  
7 current priorities with timelines for completion.

8  
9 For those of you who may not be familiar, we initiated a large-  
10 scale benchmark study in January of 2024, and, essentially, it is  
11 a side-by-side FES alternative design that can be compared to the  
12 current methodology, and so, basically, it's a follow-up from two  
13 previous pilot studies that looked at one-month waves and the  
14 changing of question order for asking about fishing activity in  
15 the previous two months versus twelve months.

16  
17 Those are the changes that are introduced into the new survey  
18 design that are being compared, and the idea is that a one-year  
19 benchmarking study would allow us to gather enough data to do  
20 calibration, so that we can re-estimate the historical time series.

21  
22 So, as I mentioned, the revised data is being currently tested,  
23 and, so far, results align well with the previous two pilot studies  
24 that I talked about. We're seeing a large reduction in the amount  
25 of reporting errors and illogical responses.

26  
27 I mean, by illogical responses, I mean things like where more  
28 fishing is reported for the two-month period than the twelve-month  
29 period, things like that, and so that's something that has been  
30 let's say corrected in the new design that's being looked at, and  
31 then we still have a large amount of data to collect. We've  
32 completed four waves of data collection so far, and we start Wave  
33 4 mailouts this week, and so those are going out currently, as I  
34 speak, for the first month and for the current FES, and so those  
35 are ongoing.

36  
37 I think it's safe to say that, although the results are consistent  
38 so far, I don't want to make too many claims regarding the  
39 direction or the magnitude of differences between the current FES  
40 and the pilot FES, since we don't have a complete dataset yet.

41  
42 This slide was really meant for another venue, but it points to  
43 the -- It's just making the point that basically where FES, the  
44 current FES, is being used, the guidance is to continue its use  
45 while we wait for the review process and the data collection  
46 aspects of the revised design to be completed.

47  
48 Some of the timeline, and some of the things that have been

1 completed so far, and, as I was saying, we started the study at  
2 the start of 2024, and we're on schedule to complete the data  
3 collection for December of this year. That data collection period  
4 is in January and February, and so that's when the mailouts will  
5 occur for that, and so that's when the study would be completed.

6  
7 Currently, we are looking at the different options for calibration.  
8 Initially, we wanted to build on the reviewed calibration model  
9 for the current FES, but, as I'll mention later, we're going in a  
10 slightly different direction there that allows us a bit more  
11 options, and so that's ongoing right now, and, as that model is  
12 being developed, we are training it with data, as it becomes  
13 available.

14  
15 In spring of 2025, we should have our final estimates for 2024,  
16 for both studies, and those estimates will be made available in a  
17 public report, which will be used as the basis for a peer review  
18 of the methodology, to be begun somewhere around mid-2025. There  
19 will also be a separate review, independent review, of the  
20 calibration methodology, and that's expected to start at the same  
21 time.

22  
23 Lastly, the last couple of items on that table refer to the  
24 earliest we would expect to field the new survey design. If all  
25 goes well with the review process, and we're able to address any  
26 recommendations that we get from that review, 2026 would be the  
27 earliest that we could field the new FES, revised FES, and, also  
28 in 2026, that would be the time when we would produce the  
29 calibrated historical time series for catch and effort.

30  
31 I mentioned a little bit about a little bit of a deviation from  
32 the methodology that we used for the previous FES calibration. As  
33 you'll recall, that was reviewed as a joint review workshop that  
34 involved CIE and SSC members from different councils, and,  
35 basically, we used what's called the Fay-Herriot approach, as a  
36 small area estimation model, to calibrate between the old Coastal  
37 Household Telephone Survey and the new, or current, FES, and this  
38 model is commonly used for this purpose.

39  
40 The approach that we used produced separate models, basically for  
41 private boat, versus shore, with time series framework, and so  
42 it's a mixed model that contained both fixed effects and random  
43 effects and accounted for spatial state level as well as wireless  
44 phone effects as well. That was a large component in the final  
45 years of the calibration model.

46  
47 The updated FES calibration, as I said, we were hoping to build on  
48 the previous version, and we thought that it would be possibly

1 just to expand that model to include the new information, but it  
2 turns out it's a little bit easier for us to work with a new, an  
3 entirely new, model that accounts for the changes from the CHTS to  
4 the current FES and from the current FES to the new revised design.

5  
6 For that model, we're using a Bayesian approach, which is something  
7 that has been recommended by SSC members, as well as the National  
8 Academies, for us to look at more Bayesian types of approaches for  
9 modeling, and this will account for the question order and one-  
10 month wave effects, and so it's really not a huge change to the  
11 overall methodology, but this framework allows us a little bit  
12 more flexibility, or options, and so that's in development right  
13 now.

14  
15 We're working with the National Opinion Research Center, out of  
16 the University of Chicago, and Jay Breidt is the lead on that, and  
17 NORC, as it's called, has been involved in the U.S. Fish and  
18 Wildlife fish hunt redesign as well, and so there's a lot of  
19 experience there, and Jay had been involved with the previous model  
20 that we used as well, the small area model.

21  
22 In anticipation of being able to produce one-month waves, we are  
23 working with the Access Point Anger Intercept Survey as well, to  
24 make some adjustments there to allow us more efficient estimation,  
25 or calculation, of estimates. We're going from two-month waves to  
26 one-month waves, and so there's some changes that need to happen  
27 there, especially if we were to adjust the entire time series going  
28 back.

29  
30 Then, as well as that, we have to look at the for-hire mode as  
31 well, so that we align their estimation schedule with the one-  
32 month waves that we're using for shore and private boat.

33  
34 As part of the comparisons that we're doing right now with the  
35 current FES, and then the revised version, we have received, from  
36 some of the presentations that we've given regionally, questions  
37 on what we were doing about nonresponse and how we adjust for  
38 nonresponse.

39  
40 There's a link, in the PDF that was provided, that goes to the FES  
41 annual reports, and also to the data, if you're interested, but it  
42 has a more we'll say in-depth description of the methodology, but,  
43 basically, it's a three-step process, starting with sample weight  
44 class adjustment, and so the classes are a combination of sub-  
45 state regions, and those are basically coastal and non-coastal.

46  
47 You've got fishing license status, and fishing boat registry status  
48 as well, and so, obviously, a consideration, going forward with

1 one-month waves, will be obtaining more frequent updates to those  
2 frames, the fishing license frame and the boat registry  
3 information, and so, within these classes, the respondents are up-  
4 weighted to represent nonresponse, and so that's the first stage.  
5

6 The second stage, we add in information from the CDC, from their  
7 National Health Interview Survey, and also from the Census Bureau,  
8 from the Current Population Survey, and the American Community  
9 Survey as well, and those variables are described in that step  
10 there, but, basically, a raking adjustment just means that it's a  
11 smoothing process, to try and get a better handle on, or profile,  
12 the respondents.  
13

14 Then the last stage is that poststratification, and so that  
15 involves just getting the summed weights to match up with household  
16 totals, and so that's generally the process that we're using, and  
17 it allows us quite a fairly in-depth comparison between the  
18 profiles for the samples coming back from the revised FES, versus  
19 the current FES, in terms of sample weighting adjustments and who  
20 is responding, versus who isn't.  
21

22 Our current priorities, right now, are to finish the FES sampling  
23 for 2024. That should be completed sometime mid-February, because  
24 there's two data collection periods for the monthly waves, and so  
25 we have two chances to get data for a single month, with the new  
26 design, and that involves another wave of mailouts.  
27

28 We are preparing for the FES, for the Wave 5 sample distribution,  
29 and that went out this week and working with the consultant team  
30 from NORC, as I mentioned, on the final two waves of data. Jay  
31 has been -- As the data become available, he has been integrating  
32 it into the model, to try and train it, so that we can adjust it  
33 as we go, rather than take the approach of waiting for the annual  
34 estimates to come in and then trying to do it all at once, and  
35 that work has been going very well so far.  
36

37 We're working with our Gulf and Atlantic, as well as Hawaii,  
38 partners on the transition planning. Obviously, there are some  
39 changes that have to occur with information that we get from the  
40 APAIS, and so we're working with them to try and refine that  
41 process, and make it as efficient as possible, and then planning  
42 a new review process for the design changes and calibrations, and  
43 so we expect to have more information on the review -- We'll say  
44 the review design for calibration, as well as the estimation part,  
45 sometime later this year, or early 2025.  
46

47 Then, lastly, I just wanted to point out that, you know, this isn't  
48 happening in a vacuum. Essentially, what I've pointed out to you

1 is just the first box on this slide. If you go to the second one,  
2 there's some ongoing work that Texas is involved in, with the  
3 Southeast Center, on looking at calibration options for their  
4 survey. We'll be working with the Southeast Center in Texas to  
5 review those at some point.

6  
7 Also, you have effort estimates from the LA Creel design that  
8 Mississippi and Alabama are working on right now, that we expect  
9 to become available early 2025, that we'll be looking at to compare  
10 with the effort information that we have from our two surveys now  
11 at this point, two different FES versions, and so there's quite a  
12 bit of comparisons that can be made, which I think will be very  
13 helpful, in terms of being able to look for sources of error  
14 contributing to the different surveys, and also to come up with  
15 adjustments that would allow us to get a better handle on  
16 calibration going forward.

17  
18 Particularly, when it comes to composite estimation, the goal would  
19 be, sometime after 2026, to be in a position to be able to produce  
20 a composite calibration method that would use all of the state  
21 data together to combine for a single Gulf-wide estimate, and so  
22 those are some of the things we're working on that are identified  
23 here on this slide. I think that's about it.

24  
25 I have one last slide, but it's just contact information for Sarah  
26 Lazo, who is our communication specialist, which I obviously am  
27 not, and then my contact information is there as well, if you need  
28 it, and we would be happy to address any questions you might have  
29 that were generated by this presentation.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. Questions for Dr. Cody?  
32 Mr. Anson.

33  
34 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Cody, for the presentation.  
35 I'm just curious about the up-weighting of nonrespondents. Can  
36 you briefly describe that, the scale?

37  
38 **DR. CODY:** Briefly, and I might need -- There is the document  
39 that's pointed to in the slide presentation, but, essentially,  
40 there are three different stages to the weighting process, and the  
41 first part really is just to get a handle on, within the classes  
42 that I described, coastal and non-coastal, and then a few other  
43 variables that we included there as well, to get a sense of what  
44 the respondents looked like, versus those that didn't respond.

45  
46 So we were able to, you know, parse that information together, to  
47 compare those two, and, in that profile, we'll say, that allows us  
48 to adjust for that nonresponse, and so, for instance, if there is

1 one component that say is overrepresented in the respondents, then  
2 we can down-weight that, or, if it's underrepresented, we can up-  
3 weight that.

4  
5 The ranking process though allows us a little bit more resolution,  
6 when it comes to getting a better handle on, you know, the weights  
7 for that. because we have additional things that we can point to  
8 to help with that weighting, but the methodology is pretty in-  
9 depth, in that annual report for the FES, if you're interested.

10  
11 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any more questions? Mr. Geeslin.

14  
15 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Well, more of a comment, Dr. Cody, and I  
16 appreciate the presentation, and I know the challenges, you know,  
17 facing the team, as we struggle through this FES pilot, but I do  
18 want to acknowledge, and applaud, your team, and the agency, for  
19 that collaborative effort with our team, specific to, you know,  
20 working through some of the calibration issues that we identified  
21 early on. I believe our teams are meeting as of today, and so I  
22 do want to just recognize that effort, that collaboration.

23  
24 As I mentioned to Andy, I'm not sure where it's going to go, what  
25 the end outcome will be, but, you know, we can't say that we didn't  
26 try, and so I do appreciate that, specifically Katie Siegfried and  
27 the team there, and so I did want to just recognize that effort  
28 there. I appreciate that.

29  
30 **DR. CODY:** Thanks, Dakus.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. No more questions? Back to you, Mr.  
33 Chair. That concludes our Data Collection Committee report.

34  
35 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on November 6, 2024.)

36  
37 - - -