

**Data Collection Committee Report**  
**April 7, 2025**  
**Ed Walker, Chair**

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

***Loss of Southeast Region Headboat Survey (Tab F, No.4)***

Staff from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) provided a report regarding the recent loss of funding for dockside validation sampling within the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) from Texas through Alabama. The loss of monetary support and staffing reductions are expected to continue into the foreseeable future. To mitigate this loss, SEFSC will explore using existing port samplers or rotate sampling efforts in different Gulf states each year.

Several Committee members acknowledged the importance of the SRHS as a long-term data collection program and its use in a substantial number of stock assessments. A Committee member asked how spend plans are justified within the agency. Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff indicated that executive administrative budget priorities are determined at a national level within the Department of Commerce each year. Several Committee members recognized the current funding levels and suggested that Council communicating data needs could help the agency develop funding priorities.

***Discussion on For-hire Data Collection Amendment (Tab F, Nos. 5 a-c)***

SEFSC staff provided a presentation comparing administrative costs for three economic data collection methods considered in Action 4 of the draft document. The highest administrative cost would be for the no-action alternative (Alternative 1) which would require the development, implementation, and analysis of ad hoc surveys. Alternatives 2 and 3 would cost much less relative to Alternative 1 while providing better economic data. Alternative 2, the census-level approach, would mostly work completely within the logbook application; and therefore, would be slightly cheaper than Alternative 3, the sampling approach, which would require a sampling design, notification, mailing, and tracking of selected participants, and more advanced statistics.

The Committee reviewed the Ad Hoc Charter/For-hire Data Collection Advisory Panel (AP) February 2025 meeting summary and the draft amendment. For Actions 1 and 2, the Committee agreed with the AP's rationale that submitting a logbook after each trip would aid in memory retention and reporting accuracy. This would especially be helpful for charter and headboat vessels taking multiple for-hire fishing trips in a single day.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move, In Actions 1 and 2, to make Alternative 2 the preferred.**

**Alternative 2:** Require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid Gulf for-hire permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species to submit trip, catch, and effort information for ***each trip*** via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved software). If fish are harvested during the trip, electronic reporting is required prior to offloading fish. If fishing did not occur within a weekly period, a "Did Not Fish" report would be

required to be submitted.  
*Motion carried with no opposition.*

For Action 3, Capt. Jim Green (AP chair) reviewed the rationale for the AP's recommendation. The AP recommended amending Alternative 2 to require a trip declaration only when leaving to conduct for-hire fishing or any for-hire activity (i.e. sunset or dolphin cruises). The AP recommended not repeating the multiple hail-out issues encountered in the first iteration of the program and suggested explicitly adding that language in the alternative to address that issue. The Committee agreed with the AP and decided to additionally modify that same language in Alternative 3.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, **In Action 3, to include for-hire in Alternatives 2 and 3.**

**Alternative 2:** Require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid charter vessel/headboat federal permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of **For-hire** fishing *or for-hire* activity.

**Option a:** Charter vessels

**Option b:** SRHS Headboats

**Alternative 3:** Require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid federal charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of **For-hire** fishing activity.

**Option a:** Charter vessels

**Option b:** SRHS Headboats

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

Council staff stated they would work with the Interdisciplinary Planning Team to make sure the modified alternative language in Action 3 would be aligned with that in Actions 1 and 2. The Committee then discussed the merits of including the hail-out requirement for trips that conduct for-hire activity that does not include fishing. Several Committee members stated that activities, such as cruises, do not require a federal charter permit and do not result in the catch or harvest of federally managed species. Therefore, the hail-out provision should only pertain to for-hire fishing trips.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, **in Action 3, to make the modified Alternative 3, to include Options a and b, the preferred.**

**Alternative 3:** Require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid federal charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of **For-hire** fishing activity.

**Option a:** Charter vessels

**Option b:** SRHS Headboats

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

In Action 4, the Committee discussed an AP recommendation for an alternative to the trip fee reporting requirement and the mechanism for collecting economic data. The three economic questions that will be asked in the survey are the trip fee, fuel used, and price of fuel per gallon. The trip fee question was controversial in the first iteration of the program and the AP had discussed an approach to increase buy-in for the new program. The AP had suggested using the term market value in place of trip fee. This would allow for program participants to report an estimate of the trip but not be beholden to a particular number for any specific trip in the event of an audit. SERO and Council staff economists responded that they were concerned that asking for the market value would be interpreted too broadly and would reduce the transparency and accuracy of the data for management and other purposes. Economists are most interested in the actual price paid for the trip (i.e., the total revenue collected for the service). The trip fee provides an estimate of this price (or revenue) and the fuel used and fuel price variables provide some estimate of the cost to run the trip. The top line price or total revenue information (trip fee), on its own, is important for fishery resource disaster determination requests, as well as for modeling the economic value of individual trip components to for-hire anglers. Together, the revenue and cost data allow economists to calculate the net revenue of a trip, a measure of producer surplus and profitability for for-hire trips. By reporting trip fee and fuel information separately, the usefulness of the data for fishery management advice and disaster relief determinations would be much greater. To address participants' concerns while still providing explicit direction as to what to report, they instead suggested exploring the use of language such as "estimated trip fee". NOAA General Counsel explained that regardless of the specific terminology used, the Council and NMFS would need to be explicit about the definitions for the fields to be collected. For the data collection methodology, the Committee determined that a sampling approach would balance the reporting burden for program participants while also providing data needed by fisheries economists.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**, **In Action 4, to make Alternative 3 the preferred.**

**Alternative 3:** Require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid federal charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish or Gulf CMP species submit economic data as part of the logbook when the vessel is engaging in any type of chartered fishing or chartered activity, if selected. Annually, a stratified random sampling design of permitted vessels will be used for selecting vessels that are required to report economic data. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center will determine the strata (based on previous years' data and minimum sample sizes by strata) sufficient for providing scientific and management advice.

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.