

Data Collection Committee Report
June 1, 2026
Ed Walker, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab F, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab F, No. 2**) of the April 2026 meeting.

Public Hearing Draft of Generic Amendment: Modifications to Gulf For-hire Data Collection Program (Tab F, No.4)

In Action 1, the Committee discussed language requiring reporting of the logbook prior to offload of catch. There is concern that a dock-side sampler could begin interviewing a for-hire captain before they have a chance to submit their electronic report, which would violate the independent reporting assumption. A few Committee members indicated that the language of the alternative could be modified such that reporting would be required within some period of time of landing fish to potentially alleviate this issue. Other Committee members suggested that training of dockside samplers could address this concern to prevent conducting an interview before a captain's logbook is electronically submitted. The Committee reviewed the rest of the document and decided to retain the current selected preferred alternatives.

A Committee member inquired about funding and the implementation timeline for the program. Southeast Regional Office staff indicated they were aware of funding for the program that had been proposed in a recent budget and noted that modernizing fisheries data collection is a priority of the current administration. The program implementation timeline is difficult to estimate. The amendment would need to work through the rule making process, engagement of state agency partners would be required, and specifications for electronic reporting applications would need to be developed. The Committee acknowledged that some time may be required to operationalize the program and wished to move the document through the Council approval process.

The Committee recommends, and I so **move**: **To take Draft Generic Amendment: Modifications to Gulf For-hire Data Collection program out for virtual public hearings.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

Presentation: Review of Mid-Atlantic Tilefish Recreational Mandatory Reporting Program (Tab F, No.5 a-c)

After discussing the recreational mandatory reporting for blue line and golden tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic, the Committee acknowledged the difficulty of building out a similar reporting program for the Deep-water Grouper Complex in the Gulf of America. A Committee member reiterated the need to define the universe of recreational anglers targeting deepwater grouper and expressed a desire to continue exploring the feasibility of developing such a program. The Committee suggested some potential next steps including investigating the feasibility of a cooperative research program and engaging anglers through scoping. The Council should provide any further direction to staff during full Council.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.